



LIEUTENANT
GEORGE REGINALD STUART LAYNG
10TH BATTALION, GLOUCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT
ATTACHED TO 1ST TRENCH MORTAR BATTERY

George Reginald Stuart Layng was born on 21 August 1895, the third son of Ada Louise and Dr Henry Layng who was a Physician; they were living in Swatow, Kuang-Tung, China and Henry may have been a medical missionary.

George was educated at Abingdon School, where his uncle The Rev Thomas Layng was headmaster, and between May 1909 and July 1913 he was a Day Boy at Cheltenham College.

The census of 1911 shows the family living at Coniston, Eldorado Road, Cheltenham. George's father Henry had died in 1908 and the family comprised his mother, two sisters, an aunt, a cook and two visitors who were both medical missionaries.

After completing his education George was articled to Messrs Winterbotham & Gurney, Solicitors of Rodney Road, Cheltenham.

On 4 September 1914 George joined the Public Schools Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers at the Drill

Hall and he appears in a list of names in the following article in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* on 19 September 1914:

Local War Notes. Old Public School and University Men's Force Recruiting in Cheltenham.

The following have been recruited in Cheltenham for the Old Public School and University Men's Force, which is to be called the Public Schools Battalion, Royal Fusiliers Company. It will be seen that forty have offered themselves, the majority residents of Cheltenham, though in some few cases recruits come from as far away as Kidderminster, Cardiff, and Bristol. In all, some 5,000 have joined this Force throughout the country to date ...

The brigade recruited volunteer university and public school men from towns all over England and also Aberystwyth and Edinburgh. In fact volunteers were sought from all the universities and public schools of the Empire. They had to be between the ages of 19 and 35 (or 45 if they had previous experience as a soldier).

LIEUTENANT GEORGE REGINALD STUART LAYNG

George applied for a Temporary Commission on 1 December and received a commission to the Gloucestershire Regiment on 9 January 1915. He attended military and officer training with the 11th (Reserve) Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment stationed at Grays, Essex. On 24 October he was posted to the 10th (Service) Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment which was part of the 1st Infantry Brigade, 1st Division. He joined them at Lillers, north-west of Bethune. The battalion had suffered great losses in the Battle of Loos in September/October. They were in the first wave of the attack near Bois Carré opposite Hulluch where nearly 900 men of the battalion went into action; more than 600 of them became casualties by the time the battalion was relieved.

George served with the unit until he applied for and was transferred to the General List on 21 April 1916 for duty with Trench Mortar Batteries and was subsequently promoted to acting Lieutenant on 1 August 1916 whilst serving with 1st Brigade Trench Mortar Battery.

In the summer of 1916 the battalion was involved in the battles of the Somme and mid-August marched from Becourt Wood to relieve the 16th Royal Scots in the front line at Bazentin-le-Petit. It was on 18 August that George was killed; he was 20 years of age.

The battalion's War Diary for 17 to 19 August reads: *Co-operated by a bombing attack with the 1st Battalion Royal Highlanders who were making an attack on the enemy intermediate line in front of MARTINPUICH. The attack was unsuccessful and in it we lost Lieut C J B De La Bere (missing), Capt H St H Jeune, Lieut L F C Chaplin and 2/Lt A J N Grieves (all wounded). At about the same time a shell blew in a dug-out in the support line killing Lt L S H Griffin and wounding Capt J A Riddle. Our casualties in other ranks in the action were 10 killed, 52 wounded and 4 missing.*

Co-operate with the 8th Royal Berks in a similar attack to that on the night 17/18 August. The attack was also unsuccessful. During the day a shell sought and killed Capt T H B Rorie and 2/Lieut G R S Layng who had just left Battalion H Qrs, whilst our casualties in other ranks were 20 killed, 50 wounded.

Notices of his death appeared in the 1916 Christmas edition of *The Abingdonian*: *10th Gloucestershire Regiment; died of wounds inflicted by a shell on August 18th, a few days before his 21st birthday. He was the son of the late*

Dr Henry Layng of Swatow, China, and of Mrs Layng of Eldorado Road, Cheltenham. He was at Abingdon School from September, 1906 to Easter, 1909, when he went on to Cheltenham College. He joined the Public Schools Battalion in August, 1914, and was afterwards given a commission in the Gloucester Regiment. He went to the front in the Autumn of 1915 and was attached to a Trench Mortar Battery and saw considerable service.

The *Cheltenham Chronicle* on 26 August : *Sec Lieut G R S Layng (OC). The death occurred in France on Friday last (only three days before he would have completed his 21st year) of Sec Lieut George Reginald Stuart Layng, third son of the late Mr Henry Layng of China and of Mrs Layng of Coniston, Eldorado Road, Cheltenham. He was at Cheltenham College from 1909 until 1913. He received his commission in the Gloucesters (Service Battalion) in January 1915.*

The *Gloucester Journal* on 26 August: *George Reginald Stuart Layng who was killed August 18th, aged 20, was the third surviving son of the late Dr Henry Layng, of Swatow, China, and of Mrs Layng, of Eldorado-road, Cheltenham. He was educated at Abingdon School and Cheltenham College, and was articled in 1913 to Messrs. Winterbotham and Gurney, Solicitors, Cheltenham. On the outbreak of the war he joined the Public Schools Brigade, and he afterwards received commission in the Gloucester Regiment. He went to the front last October.*

In April 1917 a meeting at Christ Church, Cheltenham was reported in the *Gloucestershire Echo* where, amongst other topics, the effects of the war on the parish were discussed:

The Vicar [Canon Cox] addressed the meeting on the events of the year. Amongst items of interest in connexion with Christ Church was the fact that the daily intercession in time of war had been kept up since the outbreak of the war without intermission, and only on three occasions in the three years had the congregation, owing to state of weather, consisted only of the clergy and clerk. The 'roll of honour' had been added to and deepest sympathy was expressed towards the relatives of those who had fallen. Mr Frank Cypher, of the choir, had been severely wounded, but had sufficiently recovered to have arrived in England on the previous day. Mr Barker, assistant master of the schools, had been twice wounded, but has recovered. Mr Juliff, headmaster, had temporarily relinquished his position for military service. Mr Yabsley was on

LIEUTENANT GEORGE REGINALD STUART LAYNG

garrison duty at Malta. The year's bereavements through the war included the following names; Ernest Robert Swiney (to whom a memorial tablet was being erected on the south wall of the church), Robert Crosby Halahan, Fred Hawker, Ellis Mather, Hugh Gareth Thomas, George Reginald Stuart Layng, Maurice Cazalet Harrison, Hubert du Boulay, Hugh Bertie Johnston, Arthur William Aldridge, and Percy Gosling. All but two of those names were officers, and every one a true soldier of the best type. There were others less directly connected with the congregation whose loss had brought sorrow to many a home represented in the Church.

Lieutenant George Reginald Stuart Layng is buried in Warloy Saillon Communal Cemetery Extension, Plot III, Row D, Grave 6. He is remembered on the

Christ Church Roll of Honour, Cheltenham War Memorial, a plaque in the Abingdon School Chapel, the memorial for Solicitors and Articled Clerks in Holborn, London and his name appears in the University of London's War List which was published in 1918.

George's brother Thomas Malcolm Layng had a distinguished war record being awarded the Military Cross. He went on to become the Archdeacon of York and the Chaplain to King George V and Queen Elizabeth II.

Sources:

Leaving all that was dear : Cheltenham and the Great War by J Devereux & G Sacker

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www.forces-war-records.co.uk

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Cheltenham College Archives

www.cheltenhamcollege.org

The Gazette

www.thegazette.co.uk

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

www.cwgc.org

The Long, Long Trail

www.longlongtrail.co.uk

Find My Past

www.findmypast.co.uk