

# ALEXANDER GAWAIN DOUGLAS



15th August 1916

1895-1916 Age 21



## Lieutenant, 10th (Reserve) Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, attached 1st Battalion.

Alexander Gawain Douglas was born on 20th June 1895 in Bradford. He was known as Guy. His parents were both Scots, from Dundee and Lanark. His father George Henderson Douglas held M.A.s from the Universities of St. Andrews and Cambridge (Corpus), and he was a long-serving Mathematics master at Bradford Grammar School. His mother, Jessie Isabella Reoch, bore five children of whom four survived. Guy was their second child.

Guy's educational career was one of outstanding achievement. He started at Bradford Grammar in 1903 in the most junior form when he was eight, and he left in 1914 aged 19. He was frequently first and won prizes for one or more subjects. In his final years he gained seven higher certificates, three with distinctions, and he went to Queens' College, Oxford as a Hastings Mathematical Exhibitioner. He was not only a talented scholar, but he also captained the second XV and organized the paperchases for the younger boys.

Douglas went up to Oxford in Autumn 1914, where he joined the Officer Training Corps, and he applied for a commission in the Army. This he obtained in July 1915, in the 10th Battalion Leicester Regiment. This was a reserve battalion for training recruits to feed units at the front. Guy was promoted to Lieutenant (temporary) on his 21st birthday in 1916. On 12th July he landed in France, and five days later he joined the 1st battalion of his regiment near Ypres. At the start of August, the 1st Leicester battalion was transferred by train to the Somme front—severe loss of life was narrowly avoided when part of the train broke away while it was ascending a steep incline. The quick thinking of a pointsman spared a collision.

On 14th August the battalion relieved the Grenadier Guards in the trenches opposite Beaumont Hamel. That night, British artillery and machine guns fired a thirty-minute bombardment of the German positions. The Germans retaliated by firing gas shells for three hours. Although the battalion War Diary states no casualties were caused, it also noted that Lieutenant Douglas was killed by shrapnel. He had been at the front less than a month. His body was taken for burial to Knightsbridge Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart.



## **Acknowledgements:**

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