

Godfrey Ballard

1895 - 1915

Born at Woodstock

Educated at Oxford High School and Corpus Christi College Oxford

Died at Loos, aged 20, on 27 September 1915

Family and Education

Godfrey Adolphus Ballard was born on 11 June 1895 in Woodstock. His father, Adolphus, was a solicitor and held several public offices, including serving as Town Clerk of Woodstock from 1894 until his death. His father was also a notable historian, and became a Methodist local preacher. His mother was Mary Elizabeth Henman of Islip.

In 1911 Godfrey was at Oxford High School and living with his parents, two sisters, two servants, another relative and a lodger. He began studying at Corpus Christi College in 1913 and joined both the University Officers' Training Corps and the Wesley Society (forerunner of the John Wesley Society at Wesley Memorial). When war broke out he interrupted his studies and joined the army on 1 September 1914.

War Service: 1/23 Battalion, London Regiment

Godfrey served first in the ranks, but was later commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in a territorial battalion in the London Regiment. After training in England he was given compassionate leave to visit his father, who was seriously ill. He arrived in France on 21 July 1915, where his battalion formed part of the 47th (2nd London) Division. It had been in two engagements in May, but Godfrey's first experience of action was at the Battle of Loos, starting on 25 September. As an officer he had to lead his men into the fray, and this was the first battle to produce huge casualties: he did not return.

Godfrey's body was never recovered, but his death was recorded by the army as being on 27 September, at the age of 20. His mother suffered particular grief as her husband had died a fortnight earlier on 12 September, at the age of 48.

Godfrey left her £531 16s 6d and she lived on until 1965. Godfrey was remembered by his platoon sergeant in 1975 as 'a very clever and well-educated young man ... well-liked by all his comrades'. He is named on the Loos Memorial and on the Corpus Christi College war memorial.

This is the story of one of the men who appear on a war memorial at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford, UK. These stories were compiled in 2018-19 from a variety of family history and military sources. In particular, Chris Baker's site, 'The Long, Long Trail' has provided valuable details of the men's experience of battle:

<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>