

Charles Frederick KING

Born Dawlish, 28 October 1882

Died Flanders, 20 September 1917, aged 34

2nd Lieutenant Devonshire Regiment (attached to 1st/9th Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment)

Charles Frederick King came from a family based in Gillingham, Dorset until his father became a school master in Dawlish. His grandparents, George and Elizabeth King, were born in Gillingham and George King (1830-) was a tailor employing one man and two boys in his business. They had five children by the 1871 census, being James Frederick (1855-), Ellen J (1857-), William C (1859-), Lucy A (1865-) and Kate Eliza (1867-).

James Frederick King was a pupil teacher after an education at Gillingham Grammar School. He married Frances Mary Nicholls in 1881 (GRO ref Newton Abbot, 1881, Apr-Jun, Vol 5b, page 214). Frances was the daughter of Joseph Nicholls of White Hall, Handsworth, Birmingham.

Charles Frederick King was baptised at St Gregory the Great, Dawlish on 10th December 1882. (Birth ref GRO Q4, 1882, vol 5b, page 122)

The 1891 census shows the family at 3 Longlands, and James F King is an 'Elementary School teacher'. The family comprised: James Frederick King, 35, Frances, his wife, 28,

Charles Frederick, 8, Winifred Mary, 6, Eileen Dorothy, 4, Muriel, 2, and Ethel M, 5 months.

In the 1901 census James F King described himself as schoolmaster & organist with three more children, Marjorie (1897-), Mervyn (1900-), Marion (1900-).

By 1911 James F King was a 'Head Schoolmaster of a Council School', most probably Dawlish Boys' School. His wife, Frances, was an assistant teacher.

In the Western Times of 21 December 1914 it was reported that 'Dawlish Parish Church choir carollers, under the direction of Mr. J. F. King, organist and choirmaster, commence this evening. The proceeds to be given to the local Red Cross Society.'

James Frederick King initiated the Boys' School Roll of Honour which hung in the lobby of the School and was recorded in the *Dawlish Gazette* of December 19, 1914 as 'containing the names of those Old Boys of the school who have either given their lives for their country or been wounded in battle. At present the number is eleven, five killed and six wounded.'

Charles' mother, Frances, became a volunteer with the Dawlish Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) and worked as Head Cook from November 1914 to April 1915 and then as a needleworker until April 1919. Mildred King was a Nurse at Torquay V A Hospital during 1916.

Charles Frederick King was educated at Dawlish Boys' School and is recorded on their Roll of Honour. After leaving school he joined the Royal Navy in 1900 as an Assistant Clerk (Paymaster's Branch) and was promoted to Clerk in July 1901, and to Assistant Paymaster in October 1903, a rank that he held until retirement in 1913.

On the outbreak of war he joined the Gloucestershire Regiment, 13th Battalion, in August 1914 in the rank of Captain, but resigned in 1916 when he enlisted with the Coldstream Guards as a Private, no 17806. He served with the British Expeditionary Force in France from March 1916 and was promoted in the field "for courage in the trenches". He was gazetted 2nd Lieutenant, Devonshire Regiment on 26 June 1917, and was then attached to the 6th (Territorial) Battalion the King's (Liverpool Regiment). While he was home on leave in Dawlish he 'gave an instructive

lecture to the Dawlish Volunteer platoon. He might have stayed behind as Lecturer and Instructor, but he chose to go to the Front, and was taken from the Devons and attached to the King's Liverpool Regiment.' In the course of a letter he wrote to his parents in following days he said, "I am honoured by having to lead over the first rush... I'm lucky, but it's a hard nut to crack."

Charles Frederick King was killed in action on the Menin Road on 20th September 1917. The plan prepared by General Plumer was to capture the Gheluvelt Plateau which gave commanding views of the German lines and there were to be a series of attacks at six-day intervals, supported by reinforcements of medium and heavy duty artillery. It was to start on the 20th September with the aim of destroying German strong points, pillboxes and fortified farms. A famous painting by the war artist Paul Nash shows the shattered trees, deep shell holes filled with water and heavy thunder clouds menacing two lone soldiers.

On 20th September 1917 the 9th Division attacked at 0540 with the 27th and South African Brigades. The front line was east of the village of Frezenburg and along the line of the Frezenburg Ridge and the attack was in the direction of Zonnebeke 2400 yards away, although the final objective that day included the capture of Zonnebeke and Bremen Redoubts some 800 yards from the start line. Hanebeek Wood was quickly taken and the 27th Brigades' final objective the Zonnebeke Redoubt the enemy made no show of strength and 40 prisoners were taken.

The first news to reach his family reported him 'missing since 20th - 25th Sept' (*Dawlish Gazette* in Documents, q.v.). He was killed by machine-gun fire and death was instantaneous.

The Colonel wrote "He had not been with us long, but we all took to him at once, and I am certain he was a very fine soldier, and a great loss."

He is recorded on the Devon Roll of Honour, Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: KING C.F. LIEUT. DEVON REGT.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: KING, CHARLES FREDERICK Second Lieutenant
20/09/1917 Age: 34 Devonshire Regiment, attd. 1st/9th Bn. The King's (Liverpool Regiment) Panel Ref: Panel 38 to 40. [Tyne Cot Memorial](#), Flanders
Son of James Frederick and Frances M. King, of 3, Longlands, Dawlish, Devon. Formerly Asst. Paymr. R.N., 13th Bn. Gloucestershire Regt. and Coldstream Guards.

Last known address: 3 Longlands Terrace, Dawlish

Next of kin: father, James Frederick King

References:

Dawlish World War One Project

Free Birth Marriage Death refs

Red Cross VAD records for Dawlish

Refs via subscription website, Ancestry:

- The Navy List

- UK, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914-1919

- Census records

- UK, medal records