

Lieutenant (George) Geoffry Pharomond Fielding

Invalided out of the army, became a civilian victim of a V1 Flying Bomb explosion in London

Details

Date of Birth	31 July 1919 ^[2]	Date of Death	2/3 August 1944 ^[22]
Place of Birth	Croydon, Surrey ^[8,20]	Age at Death	25
Unit	York and Lancaster Regiment	Cemetery or Memorial	Fleet Cemetery, Fleet, Hampshire ^[20]
Service No	143494	Plot or Panel	Plot 1403

Biography

Geoffry was born in 1919 in Surrey^[8,20] to George Basil Fielding (1889-1959) and his first wife Esme *née* Kellie McCallum (1892-1961)^[2,8] of Monowai, Fleet, Hampshire^[17]. He had a younger sister, Cecil Dolores, always known as 'Dolores' (born 1922 and alive as of May 2015)^[2,20] whose married name later became Auchmuthy^[2].

His father, a descendent of the Earls of Denbigh and Desmond, was born in Tasmania and had been an RAF Lieutenant in the Great War^[2,8] and was later instrumental in setting up Cuba's rail system as an engineer for United Railways of Havana^[14,24]. His mother was born in India to Scottish parents^[16]. They married at St George's, Hanover Square, London in 1918^[8].

Geoffry spent much of his childhood abroad. He went to Cuba when he was very young and Dolores was born there^[24]. There are several records of the family travelling to and from England as first class passengers^[3].

He went to Hordle House in 1928^[17]. Dolores remembers taking him back to school on one occasion. His mother had worn a red hat which Geoffry found embarrassing and he instructed her "never to appear in that again". Dolores missed her brother greatly when he was there.

In 1932, his parents divorced^[1] and his father married Gertrude *née* Vickers the same year^[8]. His sister, Dolores, described their childhood at that point:

"Mummy came back to the UK, leaving our father, and we went to live with our grandparents, but our grandfather died around that time. Our granny, Elizabeth Kellie McCallum [1855-1934], was wonderful to us. We had a privileged childhood and a very happy one in Fleet [Hampshire]. He loved



Family photo portrait of Geoffry^[22]



Top left, Harris (son of "Bomber" Harris) standing next to Geoffry. Bottom right, Philip Douglas Campbell sitting next to Nicolas Underhill Jay, May 1929^[15]

riding and I can remember being in a play with him. Sadly, we had little contact with our father from then on.” [24]

In September 1933 he arrived as a cadet at *HMS Conway*, a training institution for officers of the Merchant Navy, which in the thirties retained many of the characteristics of a British boarding school. *Conway* was a physical ship, moored in the Sloyne off Rock Ferry, Merseyside and Geoffry completed his two year course there and is recorded as having acted in the end of term play of 1933^[18,19]. He also wrote to Hordle House in 1935 with news that he had been made a Cadet Captain and expected to go to sea in six months’ time^[17].

After passing out of *HMS Conway* in August 1935, he began his career in the merchant navy, joining the Harrison Line, which ran passenger and cargo services to South America, South Africa and India^[20].

When war broke out, Geoffry joined the army and, after a period at an Officer Cadet Training Unit, was commissioned into the York & Lancaster Regiment as a 2nd Lieutenant on 17 August 1940^[12]. He later received promotion to Lieutenant^[1].

Geoffry’s battalion was stationed in the North of England at the beginning of the war and Dolores had also volunteered for service as a messenger, “tin hat and all”. She later “took the place of two soldiers” at the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) and subsequently worked for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) repairing tank parts^[24]. Dolores’s daughter, Sue, thought he was a good big brother during this period:

“[According to Mum], he was a bit of a tease and great fun. He invited her to some ‘do’ when he was stationed up north to show her off, I rather think – Mum was very beautiful! I’m also grateful to him for my existence, because he met my father [Charles William Auchmuty, 1912-2003] and told him to look up his mother and sister when he travelled to Farnborough.” [24]

Geoffry resigned his commission on the grounds of ill health on 1 June 1942 and returned to life as a civilian^[1,12]. Dolores remembers that he had “many jobs” as he recovered from his illness. He also had a girlfriend that Dolores “really liked”^[24].

60,000 civilians were killed in bombing raids during the war. The ‘Blitz’ was by no means a five year affair and really only lasted eight months from September 1940 to May 1941. Nonetheless it claimed 43,000 of those civilian deaths^[10].

The next three years were known as ‘The Lull’ where aerial attacks were less frequent and on a smaller scale, although there was a four month ‘Baby Blitz’ in retaliation for Allied saturation bombing over Berlin in early 1944. Casualties, however, were relatively light at 3,000 and the Luftwaffe suffered badly at the hands of British flak gunners and De Havilland Mosquito night-fighters^[10].



George (centre) in a school play at the all-boys *HMS Conway*. The younger cadets often played the female roles^[18]

On 13 June 1944, Hitler launched the first of his new *Vergeltungswaffen* – ‘Vengeance weapons’ – on London in retaliation for D-Day. Known as V1 flying bombs, or doodlebugs, these rocket-powered, pilotless drones could fly at 400mph. The effects of this campaign were both physical and psychological. When the rocket’s fuel ran out, their droning noise would stop and the 1870lb warhead would plummet to earth and explode. Up to 50 a day were launched against London, day and night^[10].

On the night of 2/3 August 1944, a V1 bomb hit Brompton Road in southwest London^[10], where Geoffry lived at number 56^[13]. 29 people were injured^[10] but Geoffry was one of the six fatalities. The event was witnessed by an undergraduate of Imperial College London:

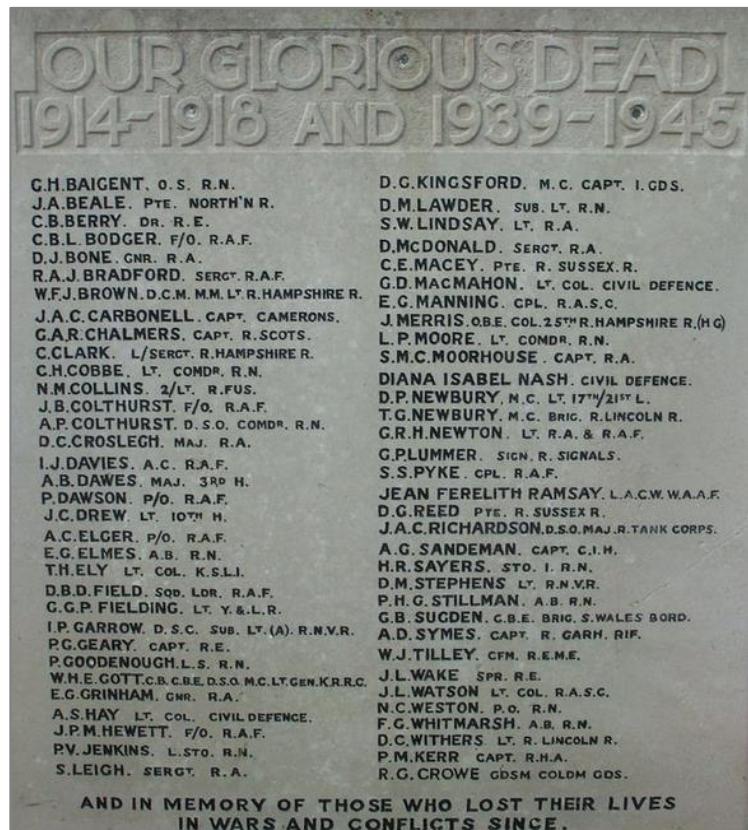
"I and some classmates had a close escape when walking down Exhibition Road towards South Kensington tube station; we heard a flying bomb cut its motor, which normally meant that it would dive down. It fell and exploded at the junction of Brompton Road and Exhibition Road. We had instinctively shot into the middle of Exhibition Road and had lain on our faces. You can still see the damage to the stone façade of the Science Museum."^[11]

Geoffry was 25 at the time and his death “by enemy action” was reported in *The Times* on 5 August^[3]. His mother was understandably grief-stricken and “never really recovered from his death”^[24]. He was buried in Fleet Cemetery, Hampshire, alongside his beloved grandmother, Elisabeth^[23,24].

By tragic coincidence, he and Anthony Thompson (qv) died on the exact same day.

Notes

His name ‘Geoffry’ is correctly spelt^[20].



George's name on the Fleet War Memorial (two thirds down on left)^[21]



George's shared grave with his grandmother in Fleet Cemetery, Hampshire^[23]

The Times, 5 August 1944, p. 10.

See also the obituary in The Times, 12 August 1944, p. 10.

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Outstanding Enquiry

Alfie Windsor at HMS Conway