

PRIVATE HENRY ALBERT GREENING

5303, 6th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 32 on 3 September 1916

Buried with honour in *Auchonvillers Military Cemetery, Arras, France*; II H 4

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross



Auchonvillers Military Cemetery



Gloucestershire Regiment

HENRY ALBERT GREENING was born in 1884 in Alderton, the youngest son of Alfred Greening, an agricultural labourer, who died at the age of 48 just before his son was born. Henry's mother, Emma (formerly Hiles or Iles), was born in Aston-on-Carrant. In 1897, some years after she was widowed, Emma married William Haines, the Parish Sexton of Cemetery Lodge, Gloucester Road. In both 1901 and 1911 the family was living at Cemetery Lodge and William employed his stepson, Henry, as a grave-digger.

Henry attended the Abbey School but little is known of his early life until he enlisted in March 1916 at Bristol in the Gloucestershire Regiment. Initially he was posted to the 3rd/5th Battalion, which was the regiment's training battalion at the time. Soon afterwards Henry was transferred to the 1st/6th Battalion, a Territorial Force unit which had already been sent to France. The battalion landed at Boulogne on 30 March 1915 and became part of the 144th Infantry Brigade, 48th (South Midland) Division.

Henry married Sarah J. Smith from Malvern in Upton-on-Severn in May 1916 whilst he was on leave and just before he left England. He probably joined the 1st/6th Battalion in France

later that month or in June in time for the start of the *Battles of the Somme 1916*. The division was involved in two of the early actions, the *Battle of Albert* (1-13 July) and the *Battle of Bazentin Ridge* (14-17 July).

During the fighting in July alone the 1st/6th Battalion suffered heavily, sustaining nearly 400 casualties, killed, wounded and missing. The division then took part in one more phase of the Somme campaign – the *Battle of Pozières* (23 July-3 September), an eventual success albeit at great cost. On 3 September, officially the final day of the battle, the battalion was in the front-line trenches at Thiepval. The Battalion War Diary noted that: *'Were heavily shelled by heavy howitzers from 5am to 3pm'*.

Private Henry Albert Greening died on 3 September when a shell fell on the parapet of the front-line trench, burying Henry and killing him instantly. It was reported that *'He passed away to his eternal home without any pain'*. Henry's body was recovered and he is buried in *Auchonvillers Military Cemetery* near Arras. He is commemorated in the Abbey as **A. Greening**.

Henry's widow, Sarah, re-married in Upton-on-Severn in 1919 to Archibald Blick.