



LIEUTENANT
THOMAS NOEL CHENEY GARFIT
2ND BATTALION, DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

Thomas Noel Cheney Garfit was born in London on 9 September 1891 to Gertrude Arabella (née Noel) and Thomas Cheney Garfit.

In 1901 the family were living in Great Cumberland Place, London and Thomas's father was a JP living on his own means. It was a large household. Thomas had two sisters, Mary and Violet, and a brother Edward, and the family employed a governess and 12 servants.

Thomas was educated at Wellington College in Berkshire from 1906 - 1910 being in the Benson, an out-of-college house in its own grounds. He was good at sports and games and played racquets for the college at Queen's Club in the latter year.

At the time of the 1911 census Thomas was staying with his uncle, Bartholomew Claypon Garfit JP, at Dalby Hall, Spilsbury, Lincolnshire.

Thomas went up to Trinity College, Cambridge as a pensioner on 1 October 1910. The term 'pensioner' means that he was an undergraduate student without financial support from his college. He received his BA degree in June 1914.

In August 1914 he was commissioned into the 2nd Battalion, Durham Light Infantry as a Second Lieutenant and promoted to Lieutenant on 23 October.

Thomas arrived in France with his battalion on 4 January 1915 and he was killed in action in the trenches near Armentières on 30 April; he was 22 years of age.

In letters sent to Thomas's family his Major wrote: *"He was in the trenches with his company, when he was hit by a rifle grenade. He was very popular with his brother officers, and very keen and enthusiastic about his regiment, and was a most promising officer. His loss will be felt by us all."* and his Captain wrote: *"Your poor son was so popular with us all, and had proved himself a gallant and capable officer and one whom we could ill afford to lose, and the only consolation is that his end must have been painless, as he became unconscious immediately. With other of the regiment I was present at his simple funeral, and we all returned feeling more than ever that we had lost not only a good soldier*

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but a dear comrade. During all the time he was in my Company he did his duty splendidly, and was a great favourite with the N.C.Os. and men, who all miss him dreadfully."

The following appeared in the *Grantham Journal* on 8 May 1915:

LINCOLNSHIRE OFFICER KILLED

Lieut Thomas Noel Cheney Garfit, 2nd Durham Light Infantry, was killed in action on Friday week. In his 23rd year, he was the son of Mr and Mrs Thomas Cheney Garfit of Kenwick Hall, Louth, and grandson of the late Hon Henry Lewis Noel Garfit. He was educated at Wellington College, and played racquets for his School at Queen's. He graduated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and took his BA degree in June, 1914. He was gazetted to this regiment in August, and obtained his lieutenancy in October. He was very popular with his brother officers, and very keen and enthusiastic for the honour of his regiment.

At the time of Thomas's death his parents were living in Legbourne, Lincolnshire; his father was a Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff of the county. A memorial service was held at All Saints' Church, Legbourne on 14 May. In June, Wellington College held a memorial service "... for those of our school fellows who have laid down their lives for their country."

Lieutenant Thomas Noel Cheney Garfit is buried in Houplines Communal Cemetery Extension, Plot III, Row C, Grave 8. He is remembered on the Christ Church Roll of Honour, Wellington College Roll of Honour, Trinity College War Memorial and Legbourne War Memorial.

Thomas's brother Edward served in the Coldstream Guards and survived the war.

Thomas had no direct link with Cheltenham but his uncle, retired army officer Colonel Frances Boyd Garfit, was a resident in the town.

Sources:

Leaving all that was dear : Cheltenham and the Great War by J Devereux & G Sacker

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Durham at War

www.durhamatwar.org.uk

Find My Past

www.findmypast.co.uk

Forces War Records

www.forces-war-records.co.uk

National Archives

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

The Gazette

www.thegazette.co.uk

The Long, Long Trail

www.longlongtrail.co.uk