

George Henry Gardner

Captain, 21st (Empress of India's) Lancers, attached 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars

Age: 31

Born: 13 December 1883

Died: 21 August 1915.

Killed in action

Medals: 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal

George Gardner was born on 13 December 1883. He was the son of Sir Robert Gardner (1838-1920) of Ashley House, Dublin, and his second wife, Lady Jean Gardner. Sir Robert, who was knighted in 1905, was a partner in the chartered accountancy firm, Craig Gardner & Co of Dublin and Belfast. Robert Gardner was also a magistrate in Dublin and High Sheriff of Dublin County in 1914 and he had also been Chairman of Pembroke Town Council from 1902 to 1909. George was the second child of the second marriage, there being five children from the first marriage.

George married Dorothy Hatt Noble Lyon-Campbell in St Mary's Church, Aylesbury on 12 August 1912, she being the twin daughter of the late Major Lyon Campbell of the 74th Foot of Williamstone, Perthshire, and Mrs Lyon-Campbell of The Gate House, Aylesbury. The couple moved to Whitchurch and their son, Patrick, was baptised in St John's Church on 21 March 1915.

Educated at Malvern, George was commissioned into the 21st Lancers as a Second Lieutenant on 26 April 1902, being promoted to Lieutenant on 21 September 1908 and to Captain in October 1912. He received his signalling certificate in 1905 and attended the Cavalry School at Netheravon in 1910. A keen polo player, George returned from service with his regiment in India to take up his secondment as regular Adjutant to the Royal Bucks Hussars in March 1914.

Having mobilised at Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham and High Wycombe in August 1914, the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars spent the autumn of 1914 training and undertaking anti-invasion duties in East Anglia. Part of 2nd Mounted Brigade in 2nd South Midland Mounted Division, the regiment was embarked at Avonmouth for Egypt on 5 April 1915. Stationed initially at Alexandria and then Cairo, the regiment was trained as infantry in early August. Two of the three squadrons - B and C Squadrons - were then taken to Gallipoli as dismounted troops, A Squadron remaining in Egypt with the horses. The men left Alexandria for Mudros Bay on the island of Limnos on 13 August, and transferred to Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli peninsula on 18 August 1915. Three days later they were in action.

Following Turkish entry to the war as an ally of Germany in October 1914, British and French naval forces attempted to force the Straits of the Dardanelles in February and March 1915. The naval attack failed in the face of Turkish minefields and coastal batteries, leading to the commitment of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to the Gallipoli peninsula in April 1915. Unfortunately, it proved just as impossible to breakthrough at Gallipoli as on the Western Front, and the campaign became a battle for the high ground. On 6 August 1915, fresh British forces were landed at Suvla Bay. Once more stalemate ensued and, on 21 August, 2nd Mounted Brigade including the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars attacked across the open ground of the so-called Salt Lake

in an attempt to take two prominent features known as Chocolate Hill and Scimitar Hill. A mist that blurred the targets for the British artillery veiled the sun but it was not sufficient to mask the advancing troops, and actually formed a background against which they stood out for the Turkish defenders. In any case, there was not enough ammunition for more than 30 minutes' preliminary bombardment before the advance began at 0300 hours. In face of heavy artillery and machine gun fire, and amid the confusion of bush fires in the scrub started by exploding shells, the 2nd Mounted Brigade successfully took Chocolate Hill and reached the Turkish trenches on Scimitar Hill. They were unable to hold the position and, under cover of darkness, withdrew back to Chocolate Hill. The dead included the brigade commander, Lord Longford. Of the nine officers and 250 men of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars taking part, seven officers and 100 other ranks became casualties. Gardner was the only Royal Bucks officer killed while, among the other ranks, Frank Wood was also killed. Frederick Lawson, later 4th Lord Burnham, wrote to his father, Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. W A W Lawson, that no one had seen Gardner hit and it was only later it was realised he had been killed.

There was a memorial service for George in St Mary's Church, Aylesbury on 5 August 1916 conducted by the vicar of Aylesbury, the Rev. V L Whitchurch, assisted by the Bishop of Buckingham, Dr Shaw, who was to lose three of his own sons in the war. According to the account in the Bucks Herald on 12 August 1916, which also carried a photograph of George, the service began with 'Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand' and included 'I Heard A Voice from Heaven' and 'On the Resurrection Morning'. Trumpet Major Stanley of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars and Trumpeter Williams of the 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars sounded the Last Post, while Colonel Lord Burnham, Major Coningsby Disraeli, and a number of NCOs and Troopers also represented the regiment. The flowers were arranged by the same man who had done so for George and Dorothy's wedding in the same church four years previously. A report of the forthcoming memorial service also appeared in the Bucks Advertiser on 5 August.

George Gardner is buried in the Green Hill Cemetery, Gallipoli (Grave Reference: I.E.7). The cemetery was created from a number of isolated graves from the battle sites in August 1915 that were brought together after the war. It contains 382 identified, and 2,472 unidentified graves.

