

Captain George Edwin Thomson DSO MC



DoB: 27th September 1897

Died: 23rd May 1918

Age: 20

Buried: Wolvercote Cemetery (grave has his age as 21)

Family: Born in Rangoon, Burma, the only son of James and Ellen Thomson of Helensburgh, Dumbartonshire. He was educated at Glenalmond and Glasgow University, where he was studying with a view to joining the Civil Service. He was described as an “excellent swimmer and rugby player”.

Military Career: George joined the army (KOSB) in 1914 as a 2nd Lt, but transferred to the RFC in September 1916. During flight training, Thomson was badly injured in a crash which left him with a permanently scarred face. He became a Flying Officer with a temporary rank of 2nd Lt on 30th December 1916. In June 1917, he joined 46 Squadron in France and scored one victory in a Sopwith Pup in September, before the squadron received the new Sopwith Camel fighter. He was promoted to Captain and Flight Commander on 23rd November 1917 in recognition of his skill and courage. During March 1918, he scored 15 victories in that one month alone - 4 in one day - bringing his total to 21. Of those, 11 were single-seater fighters. He was by now a leading Sopwith Camel “Ace” with only 16 Camel pilots scoring more victories.

He was very popular with his colleagues. On 3 occasions his aircraft came to grief but managing to reach his own lines. On 25th March he was posted to the Home Establishment, went on leave to Helensburgh where he was treated as a local celebrity, and on 28th April was appointed second in command of 7 Training Depot Station at Feltwell in Norfolk as an instructor. Awarded the Military Cross on 22nd April and the Distinguished Service Order, posthumously, on 22nd June 1918. He was described at the time as a “keen airman”.

Accident: Pixey Meadow Wolvercote. George was flying a Sopwith Camel F1 D9545 on a cross country flight from his base in Norfolk. He stopped at Port Meadow briefly to refuel. Shortly after taking off again, the aircraft caught fire due to an engine carburettor fault, falling from 600 ft in flames.