

Second Lieutenant Douglas Lambert

6th Buffs (The East Kent Regiment)

Douglas 'Daniel' Lambert (Gonville 1899–1902) is well known as the College's first rugby international. Local historian Tom Hollobone, whose father fought in the same battle and survived, though wounded, visited the area recently and brought back pictures and information which help to describe Lambert's sad death at the age of 31. Lambert left a widow and a son who was born two months after his death.

The Loos Memorial commemorates over 20,000 men who have no known grave and who were killed in the area. It stands on the site of a German strong point, known to the British as the Lens Road Redoubt, which was captured by the 15th (Scottish) Division on 25 September 1915, the first day of the battle. The walls on three sides of the memorial hold panels on which are inscribed the names of those who died.

The British High Command agreed to support a major attack by the French south of the mining/industrial town of Lens. The plan was for six British infantry divisions on a front of 6½ miles to attack, through the village of Loos-en-Gohelle, the German lines to their east and north of Lens. The strategy was to give support to the French as well as drawing German troops from the eastern front, thus easing pressure on our Russian allies. If the combined French and British attack had been successful, it would have created a pincer around the occupied town of Lens, and squeezed the Germans from it. The British attack by all six divisions started on 25 September 1915 and on part of the front made impressive progress but the initial gains were not consolidated despite addi-

tional divisions being thrown into the battle. Attack was followed by counter-attack, the last serious effort by the British to force a breakthrough being on 13 October. As a result of its failure, British offensive efforts at Loos were formally called off from 15 October and the battle area then became a holding operation. Overall the battle of Loos was a serious failure, the British suffering over 60,000 casualties, of which about 26,000 were killed or missing. The average number of soldiers killed in each of the six divisions on the first day of the battle was actually higher than on 1 July 1916, the first day of the battle of the Somme.

Second Lieutenant Douglas Lambert served with the 6th Battalion of the Buffs, the East Kent Regiment, which was one of twelve infantry battalions in the 12th (Eastern) Division, one of the reserve divisions thrown into the battle. On 13 October, the last serious effort by the British to force a breakthrough, the 6th Buffs were required to make an attack over open ground on the Quarries, a strongly fortified position about 2½ miles north of Loos, which the British had won earlier in the battle and then lost. The German machine gun fire was so effective that no one from the 6th Buffs advanced more than about 100 yards and over 400 men, from the nominal battalion strength of 1,000, were killed or wounded. The 12th Division lost over 3,300 men, killed, wounded, or missing in the three weeks between 30 September and 21 October 1915. Douglas Lambert was one of those who died and his body was not recovered.



Second Lieutenant Douglas Lambert (photo: World Rugby Museum, Twickenham)



Tom Hollobone OBE **The Loos Memorial**