

War Memorial – The Green, Castle Bromwich

World War II 1939-1945

2nd Lieutenant Harold Leonard James Thomas (1911-1940) 113341 Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 8th Battalion Infantry died aged 29



Lenny Thomas

Harold (known more commonly as Lennie) was born on 1st July 1911 at 16 Southern Road, Ward End, Birmingham to parents Leonard James and Hilda Gertrude Maud Thomas (née Smith) the eldest of four sons, his brothers being Victor, Hubert and Stanley.

In the early 1920's Lennie attends King Edward's High School for Boys, the ancient, elite secondary school in New Street, Birmingham. Following his schooling he enrolled at Birmingham University on a degree course in Modern Languages where he specialised in Spanish. He was also a member of the university's Officer Training Corps (OTC). At some point between 1929 and 1932 Lennie studies at university in Madrid - possibly 'La Complutense'. After he graduated from university, Lennie joined the Diplomatic Service and was posted to the British embassy in Santiago, Chile.

His parents James and Hilda living at 204 Bradford Road, Castle Bromwich proudly rename their house 'Santiago' in honour of their son's achievements.

Records show Lennie did officer training with the 165th OCTU in September 1939 in Dunbar, Scotland and received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in January 1940. On 14th April 1940, Lenny joined up with the 8th Battalion, B Division undertaking traffic control duties, probably due to his linguistic skills, with the 2nd Royal Warwickshire's in the Calonne region, near Tournai, South West Belgium.

The timing of Lennie's death between 19th and 21st May is uncertain, but his body was found close to his commanding officer Colonel Baker. On 21st May, Colonel Baker led an attack to Calonne. The attack failed due to heavy mortar and machine fire and a number fatalities were found close together, all are buried in the Communal Cemetery.

A few weeks later Lenny was reported missing, presumed dead of wounds on Casualty List No 288, missing 21st May 1940, killed at or shortly after 19th May 1940.

A letter from Sergeant Lloyd dated 10th October 1942 to Lenny's father reads:

"...I am directed to inform you that a report has been received from a prisoner of war, the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva, to the effect that your son was last seen wounded near Tournai, and in the absence of any evidence since he was reported missing which would indicate that he survived, the Department has, with deep regret, reached the conclusion that he lost his life. It is consequently being recorded that 2nd Lieutenant H.L. J. Thomas, is presumed to have died of his wounds on or shortly after 19th May."

Lenny is buried and remembered at Calonne Communal Cemetery, Antoing, Arrondissement de Tourne, Hainaut, Belgium, the inscription reads *"O for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still!"*. He is also commemorated at the war memorial at The Green, Castle Bromwich as L Thomas.