

= Richard Garnons Williams =

Not to be confused with the rugby union and rugby league footballer of the 1940s and ' 50s Dickie Williams

Not to be confused with the Australian rugby league footballer Richard Williams (rugby league)

Colonel Richard Davies Garnons Williams (15 June 1856 ? 27 September 1915) was a British Army officer and Welsh rugby union player who represented Wales , Brecon and Newport . He played in the first Wales international rugby union match in 1881 .

Garnons Williams became an officer in the British Army in 1876 , and retired from regular service in 1892 , though he continued to serve in a voluntary capacity until 1906 . Already aged 58 at the outbreak of the First World War , he rejoined the army and was killed in action in 1915 .

= = Early life and family = =

Richard Garnons Williams was born on 15 June 1856 in Llowes , Radnorshire , the second child of the Reverend Garnons Williams of Abercamlais , Powys , and his wife Catherine Frances , the daughter of Fenton Hort , of Leopardstown , Dublin , and sister of Fenton John Anthony Hort . Garnons Williams was educated at Magdalen College School , Oxford before being prepared for University by private tuition in Wimbledon , Surrey . He then went to Trinity College , Cambridge , in October 1874 .

His siblings were Reverend Arthur , Richard Davies , Captain Aylmer Herbert , Gerald , Katharine Frances Helena , Annabella Mary , Hugh , who died an infant , Mark Penry Fenton , and Mary Elizabeth . Aylmer Herbert joined the Royal Navy in 1871 and , after receiving his commission in 1880 , served until his retirement in 1902 , having reached the rank of captain . He then took command of the training ship HMS Cornwall until 1904 when he was appointed to command the Lancashire Navy League Sea Training Home at Liscard . He died on 8 February 1916 aged 58 . Gerald was married in April 1892 to Minnie Lilian Court , the youngest daughter of Major Henry Court of Iwerfarne , Buckinghamshire . Mark Penry was Fleet Surgeon aboard HMS Hampshire and died when his vessel was wrecked in 1916 .

Richard Garnons Williams married Alice Jessie Bircham on 8 January 1885 . They had a daughter , Barbara , who married Captain Hume Buckley Roderick of the Welsh Guards on 9 November 1916 . Her husband was killed in action on the Western Front in 1917 . She was herself serving in France at the time .

= = Rugby = =

After going up to Trinity College , Garnons Williams represented Cambridge at rugby , but did not win a Blue . He played three matches for Newport RFC in 1880 , after he had joined the army : against Manchester Rangers (2 October) , Gloucester (4 December) , and Cardiff (18 December) . In 1881 he was selected to represent Wales in its first ever match , against England on 19 February at Blackheath . The challenge to England came from Richard Mullock of Newport , who was not an official of the South Wales Football Union , but wanted to bring Wales up to the same level as the other home nations , rather than settle for playing against English and Irish provincial teams . England , for its part , had recently beaten Ireland by two tries and two goals to none , and the previous season had become the first winners of the Calcutta Cup by beating Scotland by three tries and two goals to one goal . The date offered to Mullock by the English Rugby Football Union (RFU) , 19 February , coincided with a match for the South Wales Cup between Llanelli and cup holders Swansea , thereby limiting Mullock 's selection options . England won by eight goals to nil . It was Garnons Williams ' only appearance for Wales .

International appearance

= = Military career = =

Deciding to follow a military career Garnons Williams was accepted into the Royal Military College Sandhurst , and is also recorded as representing the Sandhurst rugby team . He completed his officer training in 1876 , and was commissioned as a sub @-@ lieutenant on 26 February . He was posted to the 38th Regiment of Foot , promoted lieutenant on 17 January 1877 , and with his army rank (but not regimental seniority) backdated to his original commission as sub @-@ lieutenant , and a month later , on 17 February 1877 , transferred to the 7th Regiment of Foot .

By February 1885 he had been promoted to captain , and his unit had been renamed the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) . On 10 January 1887 he was appointed adjutant of the 4th Battalion of the regiment , the Militia unit of the regiment . A regular officer was normally given this post in Militia units to organise training and generally maintain standards . His posting lasted the usual 5 years . He then retired from the regular army on 4 May 1892 . On 8 August 1894 he was commissioned major in the 1st (Brecknockshire) Volunteer Battalion , South Wales Borderers , and on 1 November 1895 was appointed Brigade Major for the South Wales Brigade of the Volunteer Force . On 12 July 1899 he was granted the honorary rank of lieutenant colonel . He resigned his Volunteer commission on 26 May 1906 , retaining his rank and with permission to continue wearing his uniform .

= = = First World War = = =

He rejoined the British Army shortly after the outbreak of World War I and was posted to his original regiment , joining the 12th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers as a major on 26 September 1914 . He was promoted temporary lieutenant colonel on 3 October 1914 , and transferred back to the South Wales Borderers to command the Brecknockshire Battalion . He was later posted back to 12th Royal Fusiliers , and , according to official sources , was killed on 25 September 1915 while leading his battalion at the Battle of Loos . He is commemorated on the Loos Memorial to the Missing . At 59 years of age , he was the eldest of the 13 Wales international players to be killed during the war .

A soldier under the command of Colonel Garnons Williams wrote an account of his commanding officer 's death , which puts the date of his death as 27 September . Col Garnons Williams was in temporary command of the 12th Royal Fusiliers when on 25 September he led his battalion in an attack on German trenches . However , the flanks were exposed and on 27 September , Garnons Williams gave the order to retreat . He was at that moment shot in the head from a house nearby . The soldier who gave the account said : " I was very sorry for him , as we could not have had a better , braver officer . He was with us all the time in the front trench , and looked after us as well as he could ; no man could have done better . Nobody could get back to him . " The following evening , the battalion was relieved , Garnons Williams being declared officially wounded and missing in action , unofficially reported killed .