

Robert Call

Robert Call was born in Hammersmith in about 1888. His mother Jane and father Robert, were Irish by birth and already had five other children, one of which was born in India. The family certainly moved around a great deal and can be found on the censuses living in Lambeth, Newcastle, Rotherhithe, Hammersmith and finally Castle Road in Isleworth.



It is not known exactly when Robert joined the army. His Battalion (1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, City of London Regiment) were serving with the 17th Brigade, 6th Division, in Kinsale, Ireland, when war broke out. His Battalion returned to England and proceeded to France in September 1914, landing at Nazaire in the west - later reinforcing the British Expeditionary Force. In October 1915 - a year later - the 17th Brigade transferred to the 24th Division. In 1916, Robert's Division suffered gas attacks at Wulverghem and fought the Battles of Delvile Wood and Guillemont, and in spring 1917 they were in action at The Battle of Vimy Ridge.

However, it was on the first day of The Battle of Messines in June 1917, that Lance Sergeant Robert Call would lose his life.



Spanbroekmolen or the Pool of Peace was formed by a 91,000lb explosion underneath of the then highest German Frontline positions on Messines Ridge. It is now a memorial pond.
©Wernercv - Wikimedia

The main attack was launched on 7th June, and began at 3.10 am with the detonation of over 450 tons of explosives which (after six months of tunnelling) had been placed 24-37 metres below the enemy lines on the Messines Ridge. It was the largest conventional man made explosion in history and was heard as far away as London and Dublin. One mine (Spanbroekmolen) exploded 15 seconds late, killing soldiers in our infantry who had been instructed to advance immediately after the main explosions started.

The Battle of Messines, which was regarded as the first Allied victory of the First World War, lasted for 7 days and took the lives of, at least, 25-35,000 men on both sides.



Robert is remembered on the Menin Gate in Ypres