

## Lance Sergeant Robert Hugh Chalke

Robert Hugh Chalke was born in 1883 in Lampeter, Carmarthenshire, in South Wales, the eldest of Frank and Emma Chalke's (nee Holmes) six children. Around 1884, the family moved to Chelsea in London where his father found work as a railway porter.



On 5<sup>th</sup> June 1904 Robert married Clara Adelaide Drewett in the parish church of St Dionis, Parsons Green and they settled in 40 Newry Road, St Margarets (see left for a 2017 photo of the house). In 1907 their only child, Rosie Edna, was born. Robert worked as a window dresser for a tobacconist shop. In those days tobacco shops were rather grand emporiums with smoking lounges, selling all kinds of tobacco, as well as snuff, pipes, cigars and accessories.

He wasn't one of the early volunteers but by 1916 there was a lot of pressure on men to join the army and conscription was being introduced. On 1<sup>st</sup> June 1916 Robert Hugh Chalke enlisted at the recruiting office in Hounslow and was appointed to the Royal

Fusiliers regiment. He was later transferred to the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment (10th Battalion) fighting on the Western Front in France and Belgium. Just one year after enlisting, he was killed in action on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1917.

Following the heavy allied losses in the Battle of the Somme under the command of Sir John French, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig was appointed Commander in Chief of the British Armies in France and Flanders. In his fourth dispatch he reports on the battles of Arras, Messines and Ypres and describes

the extensive preparations with troops from England, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. The assault on the German lines began on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1917 and it seems probable that Robert was one of the casualties of this action. He is

buried in Bus House cemetery in Ypres, West Flanders, Belgium. His widow Clara was granted £3 -10s war gratuity. Robert Hugh is also remembered on the memorial in All Souls Church, St Margarets (see left)

