

GUY RANDOLPH YERXA

Lieutenant 434060

50th Canadian Infantry Battalion (The King's Own Calgary Regiment)

71st Canadian Infantry Battalion (The Carleton York Regiment)

Background

Lieutenant Guy Randolph Yerxa was born on the 15th of February 1890 in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Guy grew up with his father, Randolph Yerxa, also of Fredericton, and mother, Mary E. Torrens, of Fairville, NB, situated in present day Saint John. They lived at 527 King Street, and also had a son named Roy and a daughter named Gladys Faye Yerxa who would have been 13 years of age when Guy went off to war. At the time of his enlistment in December of 1914, Guy was living in Calgary Alberta, having left Fredericton to work with the Immigration Works of the Interior Department. He had served 2 years in Fredericton with the 71st Canadian Infantry Battalion, also known as the Carleton York Regiment and worked as a surveyor for the Royal Bank of Canada while living here. He was well known and admired by many in Fredericton. At the time of his enlistment with the 50th Canadian Infantry Battalion, known as the King's Own Calgary Regiment, he was 24 years of age and single. He was 5 feet 9 inches tall, had blue eyes, and dark hair.

Wartime Experience

According to newspapers at the time, Guy was a non-commissioned officer quickly working his way up the military ranks. It would not be until October 27th, 1915 that Guy would embark for England from Halifax, Nova Scotia on the SS Orduna. He would arrive in England approximately a week later on November 4th. It would be in Bramshott Camp, England where he would complete much of his training before accepting a commission and promotion to Sergeant with the King's Own Calgary Regiment. Before embarking for Le Havre, France on August 10th, 1916, Guy was given a 6 day leave of absence. Records indicate that it may have been granted so he could be with his newly-wed wife, Louise King-Yerxa, for the birth of the couple's only child, a son named Randolph. Upon arriving in France in the fall of 1916, Guy was quickly given

recognition for his excellent work in the field by being promoted to lieutenant in November, and was already being considered as the next captain of his battalion. However, his military service would be short-lived. On April 9th, 1917, Lieutenant Yerxa was an integral part of the 4 day assault by all four Canadian Divisions against German positions on the coveted Vimy Ridge, just north of Arras. More than 10, 600 Canadians were killed or wounded during the 4 days of fighting with the first two days claiming the highest number of casualties. It was here on April 10th, that Guy lost his life. A fellow officer with the 50th Battalion, Lieutenant Stewart Moore, noted that he had been killed during their first attack on German positions while Lieutenant Colonel L. F. Page offered that while Guy was killed leading his men into action, his sacrifice and action turned out to be one of greatest victories for Canada and the Allies during the First World War. Guy's sacrifice and service record in the winter and spring of 1917 earned him the Military Cross, awarded for his work in a raid on enemy trenches on March 21st, 1917 and, according to the London Gazette, "for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty leading his men to the enemy second line with great courage and skill under heavy fire. Later, he personally superintended the collection of the wounded and set a splendid example throughout". Guy was 26 years old when he died, his body lost forever to the landscape.

Lest We Forget

Lieutenant Guy Yerxa is the only Great War recipient of Military Cross named on the New Brunswick Provincial Cenotaph. Guy is memorialized and remembered with honour at the Vimy Memorial, overlooking the Douai Plain from the highest point of Vimy Ridge. The highest point was chosen as the site of the great memorial to all Canadians who served their country in battle during the First World War and to the 60,000 who gave their lives in France. It honours the names of approximately 11,000 Canadian servicemen who died in France - many of them in the fight for Vimy Ridge - who have no known grave.