

PRIVATE LEONARD ROSSELL

13795, 8th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 24 on 3 July 1916

Remembered with honour on *Thiepval Memorial*; Pier & Face 5A & B

Commemorated on Ashchurch Memorial



*Thiepval Memorial,
France*



Pte. L. Rossell
[Graphic 22/7/1916]



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

LEONARD VINCENT ROSSELL was born in 1891 in Loughborough to William Rossell and Kate (formerly Shadbolt). William was born in Shepshed, Leicestershire, and Kate came from Stevenage in Hertfordshire; they married in 1885 in Luton. In 1901 the family was living in Castle Gresley, Derbyshire, and William was working as a sub-inspector for Midland Railways. By 1911 they had moved to Ashchurch, presumably because of William's job, and were living at 19 Newtown Cottages, Ashchurch Road. Leonard attended the British Day School, Barton Road, and then followed in his father's footsteps to work as a labourer on the Midland Railway; he was also a member of the YMCA. According to the newspapers, Leonard's father had died before 1916 but this was wrong; William died in Tewkesbury in 1922 at the age of 58.

Leonard Rossell (Vincent does not appear on any military records) volunteered at the famous recruiting rally at the Watson Hall in September 1914: he was *'one of the first to mount the platform to enlist'*. He enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment at the same time as **Harold Ernest Rowley** [†] whose army service number preceded Leonard's by two and who was killed in the same action and on the same day. Leonard's surviving military records link him to the 8th (Service) Battalion which was formed at Bristol in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Army and which was part of the 19th (Western) Division. It landed in France on 18 July 1915, whereas Leonard's medal records indicate that he arrived in France earlier on 18 April 1915, suggesting that he may have been posted

originally to another battalion before the 8th.

The first campaign in which the 8th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, took part was the joint Anglo-French Somme offensive, which became known collectively as the *Battles of the Somme 1916* (1 July-18 November). The battalion was not involved in the disastrous first day but was one of the units in the 19th (Western) Division which assaulted the village of La Boisselle on 3 July as part of the wider *Battle of Albert* (1-13 July 1916), the first phase of the Somme offensive. The War Diary reported that: *'Attacked La Boisselle and consolidated position – remained there all day and night'*. The capture of the village was completed the following day, the Diary commenting: *'5pm – Moved up to La Boisselle, occupying dug outs in village'*. It reported casualties of 302 killed, wounded and missing.

Private Leonard Rossell was killed on 3 July 1916 during the assault on La Boisselle, *'working a machine gun'*. His body was never recovered; he is commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial* to the Missing of the Somme. Leonard was awarded the *'1914-1915 Star'* medal.

Both of his brothers served in the war and survived. His older brother, Percy Edward, was in the Worcestershire Regiment before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps, whilst his younger brother, Herbert Harold, was a Colour Sergeant in the 9th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. Leonard's sister, Mary Elizabeth, was a nurse who married Corporal Walter L. Turner, Bedfordshire Regiment, who was also killed on the Somme on 15 July 1916.