Today, on the anniversary of his death, I would like to pause and pay our respects to:

85 & 4/85A Sgt Alexander William (Walter) **Abbey DCM MC MID**

Alexander was a man of exceptional courage, intellect, and dedication. Born on May 18, 1891, in St. Petersburg, Russia, he showed early promise, completing his education in his homeland before embarking on a career that spanned continents and left a legacy of service and sacrifice.

In 1909, Alexander began his mining studies at the prestigious Royal School of Mines, South Kensington, where he laid the foundation for his career.*(The Royal School of Mines was established in 1851, as the Government School of Mines and Science Applied to the Arts.)*

By 1912, he had gained hands-on experience at the South Crofty Mine in Cornwall and secured a role as an assistant engineer at the renowned Rio Tinto mines in Spain. His early years were marked by a relentless pursuit of excellence, a quality that would define his life.

*(****South Crofty****Mine is a metalliferous tin and copper mine located in the village of Pool, Cornwall, England. An ancient mine, it has seen production for over 400 years and extends almost two and a half miles across and 3,000 feet (910 m) down and has mined over 40 lodes. Evidence of mining activity in South Crofty has been dated back to 1592, with full-scale mining beginning in the mid-17th century.)*

When the First World War erupted, Alexander’s sense of duty propelled him to join the British Section of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in September 1914. He embarked for Gallipoli in April 1915, where his leadership and bravery were soon recognized. Rising quickly through the ranks, he was promoted to Corporal and then Sergeant within weeks. His gallantry earned him the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) and a Mention in Despatches (MID), though the grueling conditions of war took a toll on his health.

***M.I.D. 2nd Corporal, New Zealand Engineers L.G. 5 August 1915, p7668 Mentioned in General Ian Hamilton’s despatch of 20th May 1915. (Commander Mediterranean Expeditionary Force)***

After recovering from illness, Alexander transferred to the Imperial Army in 1916, where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. By the war’s end, he held the rank of First Lieutenant and was honoured with the Military Cross (MC) for his exemplary service. His wartime contributions exemplify courage under fire and a commitment to protecting others.

***ABBEY, Alexander William 4/85A (formerly E/85) D.C.M. Sergeant, 1st Field Company, New Zealand Engineers L.G. 6 September 1915, p8844 for conspicuous gallantry, ability, and resource on the 2nd May, 1915, near Gaba Tepe (Dardanelles). During the operations on this date, and subsequently, Sergeant Abbey especially distinguished himself by his zeal and bravery in command of a party engaged in entrenching under a very heavy fire. He showed a fine power of command, and by his coolness and courage set a splendid example to all under him.***

At the time of posting this tribute the citation for his MC has not been digitised and cannot be downloaded.

Returning to Rio Tinto after the war, Alexander faced the challenge of ill health but persisted in his chosen field. In 1920, he was appointed mining engineer to the Luchana Mining Company, where his expertise and leadership made a significant impact. Despite his professional success, it was his warmth and compassion that endeared him to colleagues and workers alike.

On December 31, 1924, Alexander’s life was tragically cut short. Responding to unrest among mine workers, he rode out to mediate and negotiate in good faith. In a senseless act of violence attributed to insanity, he was shot and killed by a mine employee. The devastation of his death was compounded by the shock and sorrow it brought to his family, friends, and community.

Alexander Abbey’s life, though brief, was marked by valour, service, and a commitment to both his profession and humanity. He was deeply admired by all who knew him, leaving behind a legacy of courage and kindness. His contributions to mining and his sacrifices in war and peace remain a testament to a life lived with purpose and honor.

His contributions to mining and his exemplary military service were well recognized, and he was admitted to the Studentship of the Institution in 1920, later transferring to the Associateship in 1922.

His assassination remains a sombre chapter in the history of mining and military service.

Alexander has been laid to rest at the British Cemetery Bilbao Vizcaya Spain, plot-GPR grave number 66428.

RIP Alexander

Thank you for your service

E kore e warewaretia.

Will never forget



In posting this tribute to Alexander I wish to acknowledge the contribution made by [**David Begley**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/224610903132608/user/591033865/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWSRGPUjzVsQp0bSA2_fGi-JpKY7XNoKufPO3iBT7Kko-cX5Ysb9-24iBhhpi-XgPG9xmIW1WUfknmzsA7NvgxLyKJ3ocMlWFJ2NHWP215A5bbCcCY5pTZqIFbqVh2c6oI2LTw8z8j-ZyglclkrIWRea7ww3fdsYJU0ja9HU8hC41Pfx-Fh4NmDMvZADXQsvmg&__tn__=-%5dK-R) and [**Owen Phillips**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/224610903132608/user/100039188491806/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZWSRGPUjzVsQp0bSA2_fGi-JpKY7XNoKufPO3iBT7Kko-cX5Ysb9-24iBhhpi-XgPG9xmIW1WUfknmzsA7NvgxLyKJ3ocMlWFJ2NHWP215A5bbCcCY5pTZqIFbqVh2c6oI2LTw8z8j-ZyglclkrIWRea7ww3fdsYJU0ja9HU8hC41Pfx-Fh4NmDMvZADXQsvmg&__tn__=-%5dK-R). We have also reached out to the family of Alexander and invited them to be part of our group. We will keep you informed of developments if they arise.