History of World War I takes teacher Lee to act of family remembrance

AN EDUCATIONAL journey to the First World War battlefields has turned into an emotional act of family remembrance for one Leeds teacher.

Having been brought up hearing the tales of his great uncle’s bravery and valour, Leeds East Academy teacher Lee Buccilli was able to finally mark the memorial site that pays tribute to Private Carmine Risi on Sunday.

The late Leeds soldier of Italian descent, who served in the Highland Light Infantry, was known by his anglicised name of Galla Rice and was among over 9,000 men killed during the advance to victory in Picardy and Artois, France, in 1918. Pte Rice, who was just 28 when he died, has no known grave.

Mr Buccilli, who lives in Wortley, became the first member of his family to lay a wreath near the site of his great uncle’s death – an act that brought up raw emotions having served five years with the Royal Corps of Signals himself before becoming a teacher.

The 44-year-old was among around 25 Yorkshire teachers travelling with two students each on a Government-funded Centenary Battlefield Tour (CBT) of France and Belgium when he realised his relative’s memorial was in reach.

He told the YEP: “I knew I had two family members that had been killed in the First World War and this was the guy I had always heard about, so I delved deeper.

“I’m quite surprised about how emotional it is because when I was in the army myself I lost mates.”

SACRIFICE MARKED: Lee Buccilli at the foot of a memorial that includes the name of his great uncle.

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It brings it home, even though this is me and not them...

Leeds East Academy teacher Lee Buccilli

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