

Cyril Richard PROUT

Private 108164, 220th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Died December 20th 1917, aged 19

Memorial in Ribecourt Road Cemetery, Trescault, France

Cyril Richard Prout was born in 1898 to Richard and Cybella Prout in Port Isaac. In 1911 Richard (43) was a Posting Carrier (*he ran horse drawn coaches to Wadebridge Station*) and Cybella (44) were living with their son Cyril Richard (12) and his two 8 year old sisters Astley and Ora, presumably twins. Cyril is a cousin to *Ernest Prout*.

Conscription was introduced on March 2nd 1916, when the minimum age was 19. This was reduced to 18 a few months later on May 25th 1916, although soldiers could not be sent abroad until they were 19. Cyril's birth was registered in the third quarter of 1898, so he would have become 18 in summer 1916. Men subject to conscription could not choose to go in their local regiment, and Cyril was originally put in one of the reserve battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment for his basic training. With the influx of large numbers of conscripts, a new route to basic training was implemented from September 1st 1916, when new conscripts were put in one of the Training Reserve Battalions, and trainees already in a reserve battalion were absorbed in the new TR Brigades. The 8th and 22nd TR Brigades absorbed those from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Cyril later transferred to 220th Company, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry), perhaps after finishing basic training and showing an aptitude for weaponry. 220th Company was placed in the British 7th Division from March 25th 1917, although Cyril could not go abroad technically until he was 19 in summer 1917.

In the second half of 1917, 7th Division fought in the Battle of Polygon Wood September 26th to October 3rd, the Battle of Broodseinde on October 4th, the Battle of Poelcappelle on October 9th, and in the Second Battle of Passchendaele from October 26th to November 10th. After Passchendaele, the 7th Division was selected to be moved to the Italian front, and the transfer was complete by late January 1918. Cyril was killed on December 20th 1917 after what must have been just a few months at the front and before the move to Italy took place. His grave is in the Ribecourt Road Cemetery, Trescault, five miles south west of Cambrai. This is 50 miles south from Passchendaele, and suggests he was in the line near Cambrai at the time he was killed.

The Imperial War Graves Commission introduced a source of uniform simplicity in the design of the gravestone, whatever your rank or station in life, with just a regimental badge, name and details of the casualty, and a cross. Relatives were allowed to put a short message of personalisation below the cross. Originally there was a charge for this, although if no money was offered the relatives' instructions were still to be carried out. However, as even a small fee impacted disproportionately on the poor (*who would not even ask for something they could not afford*), and after pressure from the Canadians who wished to cover the cost of all inscriptions for their graves, it was eventually changed to a purely voluntary payment. There is such a personalisation on Private Cyril Richard Prout's grave, as the words 'At Rest' can be seen below the cross. This would have been put there by his parents Richard and Cybella.

Sources

Machine Gun Corps: <http://www.1914-1918.net/mgc.htm> and http://www.1914-1918.net/mg_units.htm

7th Division: <http://www.1914-1918.net/7div.htm>

Imperial War Graves Commission: Phillip Longworth *The Unending Vigil* 1985. Leo Cooper, Secker and Warburg. London. (*Payment for personalisation p44*)



*The grave of Private Cyril Richard Prout at Ribecourt Road Cemetery
Below the cross are the words 'At Rest'
put there by his parents*

In Memory of
Private

Cyril Richard Prout

108164, 220th Coy., Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) who died on 20 December 1917 Age 19

Son of Richard and Sybela S. Prout, of Fernlez, Port Isaac, Cornwall.

Remembered with Honour
Ribecourt Road Cemetery, Trescault



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission