

Stories of the Great War

Cyril Lewis Young 1893 – 1916

This July sees the centenary of the beginning of the Battle of the Somme and the names of nine men who died in that area during the five months of the battle are given on Minchinhampton War Memorial. Cyril Young died on 30th July 1916, in action with the 8th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment.

In the early years of the C20th the family, Arthur and Minnie, with their sons Harold, Cyril and Lawrence and daughters Eva and Yvonne, lived in West End, at the Army and Navy Inn where Arthur was the innkeeper. On the 1891 Census he described himself as a master baker, when the family was living in Friday Street; Minnie's father was Paul Tuffley who ran the quarry which still bears his name just off the Common at Burleigh, as well as the Mason's Arms nearby. All the family attended Minchinhampton School and Holy Trinity Church.

Cyril and his elder brother, Harold (1890 – 1965), were photographed with the other recruits to the Gloucestershire Regiment in the High Street in September 1914. At the time both were agricultural workers on Barcelona Farm, which was run by their father, Arthur. He was probably a tenant farmer of the Gatcombe estate, although it was mentioned in sale particulars of 1910. In view of his previous occupations it is possible that he had the means to buy the farm to work with his sons. In 1911 the third brother, Lawrence, was also an agricultural labourer; he would have been too young to enlist in 1914, but joined the Gloucestershire Regiment in December 1915.

The Stroud Journal of 18th September 1914 reported: *“Between 8 and 9 o'clock on Thursday morning in last week a good part of the inhabitants of Minchinhampton assembled near the Crown Hotel to witness the departure of the new recruits. Much enthusiasm was displayed, and a great deal of gratuitous advice of a cheering nature was given to the eighteen young fellows as they prepared to depart. ... Before leaving they were instructed to call on Mr. G. Castledine, High Street, where each one was presented with a packet of tobacco and a pipe. Corporal Lines, having read the roll-call, to which all the men responded, Major Ricardo gave them a brief address. He reminded them that they were responding to the call of their King and Country in the hour of need. He exhorted them to cheerfulness and courage, and wished them, in the name of their fellow citizens, God-speed. They then left the town amidst great enthusiasm. ... The Minchinhampton Brass Band led them out of the town, playing patriotic airs.”*

Cyril and Harold, like most of those pictured, joined the 8th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment; their soldier numbers are sequential. This was part of Kitchener's New Army and joined the 1st and 2nd Battalions on the Western Front; the records show that they arrived in France on 18th July 1915. This followed their initial training, first at Horfield Barracks in Bristol and later on Salisbury Plain. By summer 1916 the Battalion was in action in the Somme Offensive as part of the 19th Division, III Corps, under Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney. The Gloucesters were fortunate to not have been in action on the first day of the battle of the Somme, on 1st July, when the British Army lost over 19,000 men killed and another 40,000 wounded, but by the end of the month 8th Gloucesters were at Pozieres, a small, straggling village on the main Albert-Bapaume road. Situated on high ground, it gives the occupier observation southwards along the road towards Albert and beyond; to the east across to High Wood, Delville Wood and beyond; and westwards to Thiepval. Possession of Pozieres was key

to making possible any further advances towards Bapaume, the capture of the Thiepval ridge and the breaking of resistance at High and Delville Woods. The battle for Pozieres and nearby Mouquet Farm dragged on until early September, with tenacious German defence keeping a determined British-Australian attack at bay for several weeks.

In Britain, the national press daily reported the weary litany of casualty lists, and local newspapers dutifully recorded in greater detail the lives and deaths of all those who had fallen at the Front. Families received the dreadful news of the deaths of their loved ones from official sources and from the brothers-in-arms of those who had died, whether they were senior officers or close friends. Cyril was first listed as “missing” on 30th July as his body was not recovered and it was several months before the official assumption that he had died on that date; he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to those with no known grave. Both Harold and Lawrence survived the years on the Western Front, although Lawrence was badly wounded in the leg, and returned to Minchinhampton in 1919.



Harold on left, Cyril on right with George Castledine behind

An enlargement from the 1914 photograph