

65: William Cyril Newcombe

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: William Cyril Newcombe

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 150th Coy. Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Service Number: 85974

Date of Death: 27 June 1917

Age at Death: 22

Buried / Commemorated at: Wancourt British Cemetery, Wancourt, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: Son of George and Agnes Newcombe, of Liverpool Rd., Neston, Birkenhead, Cheshire.

William Cyril Newcombe - he was always known as Cyril - was the eldest child of George and Agnes Newcombe and was baptised at Neston 16 August 1895.

George Newcombe (born 6 November 1866), 23, coachman married Agnes Prosser (born 24 April 1873), 21, at Neston Parish Church on November 13 1894; George's father, William, was a game keeper and Agnes's father, Frederick was a publican.

In 1901 the family was living at May Cottages on Liverpool Road, Neston:

George Newcombe	Head	M.	33	Coachman	Domestic	West-Devby Lancs.
Agnes	Wife	M.	27			Bideford, Devon.
William C.	Son		5	Scholar		Godsall, Staffs.
Evaline	Daughter		4			Neston, Cheshire
Marjorie	Daughter		3			do do

1901 census (extract) – 2, May Cottages, Liverpool Road, Neston

George Newcombe	33	coachman, domestic	born Bideford, Devon
Agnes	27		born Godsall, Staffs
William C.	5		born Neston
Evaline	4		born Neston
Marjorie	3		born Neston

In 1911 the family was still at May Cottages and the census return noted that George and Agnes had had eleven children, nine still surviving. The children were:

(William) Cyril	baptised 16 August 1895	
Evaline	born 11 September 1896	baptised 8 November 1896
Marjory Elizabeth	born 3 January 1898	baptised 4 March 1898
		(George recorded as horse-breaker)
Harold French	born 16 February 1900	baptised 20 April 1900
George Wilfrid	born 13 February 1899	baptised 27 April 1900
Harry Vernon	birth registered mid-1901	buried 4 April 1903, aged 23 months
Olive	no record of birth	buried 9 December 1902, aged 5 weeks
Kathleen Annie	birth registered late 1904	
Carrie Cecilia	born 22 June 1906	
John Cyril	born 1 January 1908	
Dorothy	born 30 September 1910	

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule, 32
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after completion)

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE Last Birthday or Date	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards				BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of —	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)			
George Newcombe	Head	41	Married 16	11	9	2	Coachman	496	Newton Tracey, Devon	150			
Agnes Newcombe	Wife	37	Married 16	11	9	2	Domestic		Godsall, Staffordshire	070			
Cyril Newcombe	Son	16	Single				Surveyor's Office Boy	109	Neston				
Evaline Newcombe	Daughter	14					Home		Neston				
Marjorie Newcombe	Daughter	13					Shop	340	Neston				
Wilfrid Newcombe	Son	12					School		Neston				
Harold Newcombe	Son	11					School		Neston				
Kathleen Newcombe	Daughter	6					School		Neston				
Carrie Newcombe	Daughter	4					School		Neston				
John Newcombe	Son	3					Home		Neston				
Dorothy Newcombe	Daughter	6 months					Home		Neston				

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that —

(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.

(2) I have entered the names and surnames in Columns 2 and 3 separately, and have compared their ages with the total number of persons.

(3) After making the necessary inquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator GGG

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.

6 room house

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature George Newcombe

Postal Address May Cottages Neston

1911 census – May Cottages, Liverpool Road, Neston

George Newcombe	41	domestic coachman	born Newton Tracey, Devon
Agnes	37		born Godsall, Staffordshire
Cyril	16	surveyor's office boy, urban council	born Neston
Evaline	14		born Neston
Marjorie	13		born Neston
Wilfrid	12		born Neston
Harold	11		born Neston
Kathleen	6		born Neston
Carrie	4		born Neston
John	3		born Neston
Dorothy	6 months		born Neston

George and Agnes had been married for 16 years and 9 of their 11 children had survived.

Cyril Newcombe attested, for the North Wales Brigade ASC, at Birkenhead on 28 October 1915 and was given the Service Number 2125. The North Wales Brigade Company ASC was part of the Welsh Divisional Transport and Supply Column, headquartered at Ruthin but also operating at Cerrig-y-Druidion, Caerwys and St Asaph.

The Army Service Corps - The unsung heroes of the British army in the Great War - the ASC, Ally Sloper's Cavalry (so-named after a popular newspaper cartoon character). Soldiers cannot fight without food, equipment and ammunition. In the Great War, the vast majority of this tonnage, supplying a vast army on many

fronts, was supplied from Britain. Using horsed and motor vehicles, railways and waterways, the ASC performed prodigious feats of logistics and were one of the great strengths of organisation by which the war was won. [The Long, Long Trail]

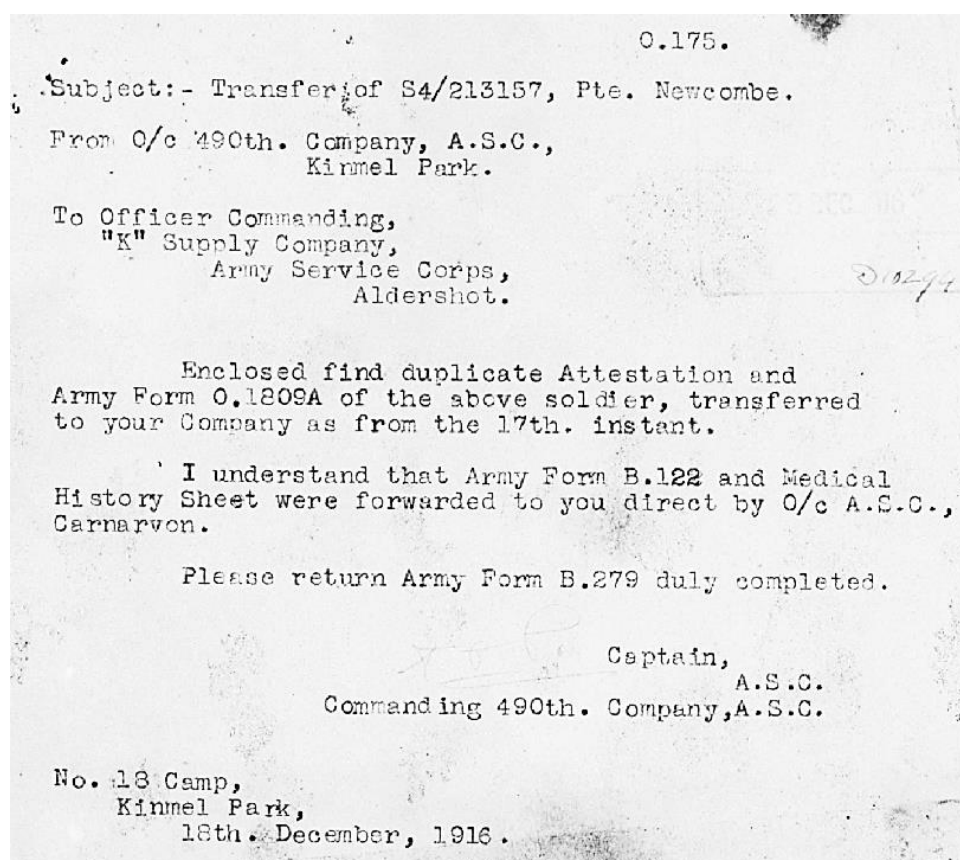
At attestation Cyril was described as being aged 20 years 183 days, 5ft 6ins tall, of 'fair physical development' (with a 32-inch expanded chest measurement) and with good vision. He gave his occupation as clerk, a role he very likely took in the ASC. By late 1916 Cyril was at Kinnel Park Camp at Bodelwyddan (now with Service Number S4/213157), part of the 490th Company ASC. Kinnel Park Camp was built as a training establishment early in 1914 and the 490th Company was one of the Horsed Transport Reserve Park Companies, filling a variety of administrative and back-up roles. Formed in January 1916, the 490th Coy. served as 53 Reserve Park and, although the base remained in the UK, troops moved from there to the Western Front.

On 17 December 1916 Cyril was transferred from Kinnel Park to 'K' Supply Company, ASC, Aldershot, but on 24 December moved to the 10th Training Battalion. On 13 February 1917 Cyril again moved, this time to the Machine Gun Corps. where he was given the Service Number 85974.

The Machine Gun Corps was one of the war-raised units, having no history prior to the war. It was a vast organisation containing well over

100,000 serving soldiers, plus officers, although not without contention since *it starved the line regiments of recruits, taking the fittest and the best to try and satisfy the demand for more, and yet more, intelligent young men to man the guns. However it succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of its conception, becoming in two short years a model of ruthless efficiency and operational supremacy.* [<http://www.machine-gun-corps-database.co.uk/>]

It is recorded that Cyril embarked at Folkestone on 21 April 1917 and disembarked at Boulogne the same day, then joining the 'B' Depot at Camiers the following day. The small village of Camiers stands just inland from the dunes on the south-west and west-facing coast just north of Étaples, around 12 miles south of Boulogne.



During the First World War the flat coastal lands were the site of the huge base depôt of the British army in France, now known as the Étaples camp. Through most of the war, close to it and part of the same complex, Camiers camp was the base depôt, in France, of the Machine Gun Corps. Its home base depôt was at Belton Park, near Grantham.

On 11 May Cyril joined the 151st Company but, just four days later, he was transferred to the 150th Machine Gun Corps., the unit he was serving with when he was killed on 27 June 1917. He had served for 1 year 174 days at home and for just 69 days in France.

The 150th Machine Gun Company had been formed in the 50th (Northumberland) Division on 1 February 1916 within the 150th (York & Durham) Brigade.

The War Diary of the 150th Company records the action on 27 June 1917 and Cyril is named as a casualty:

150 th MACHINE GUN COY.			MACHINE GUN CORPS.	
JUNE 1917.			WAR DIARY	VOLUME No 114.
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.			or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.	Sheet 2.
			Army Form C. 2118.	
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	
			Remarks and references to Appendices	
In the field Fontaine - Croisilles.	27/6/17	-	Very heavy shelling all night and all morning a concentration of all enemy Artillery from all directions a great part of front line and support & even back areas were blown in. at 5.0 P.M. a heavy counter attack was launched but was driven back by M.G. fire and Artillery. The bombardment continued and the enemy again attacked about midnight. They were again repulsed. Pte Reeve A. 85967 wounded. Pte Garret 67023 wounded - R.S. Malthers 83289 wounded - Pte Hill 85139 - Pte Johnson 87240 - Pte Lee 90653 - Pte Newcombe 85974 - Killed in Action.	
"	28/6/17		Pte Masby 88875 Missing - Pte Blackman 71356, Pte Read 85512, Pte Bean 53132, wounded shell shock. Heavy shelling by enemy through day although considerably lighter than yesterday. received orders to support attack by 22nd Div on Hindenburg support line. Enemy Artillery quiet towards night.	
"	29/6/17		Zero 8.50 AM. 6 M Guns laid on Fontaine Croisilles to prevent the enemy bringing up reserves.	
"	30/6/17		Quiet along our front only intermittent shelling. Raining heavily.	

W.A. Tyler
O.C. 150 M.G. Coy

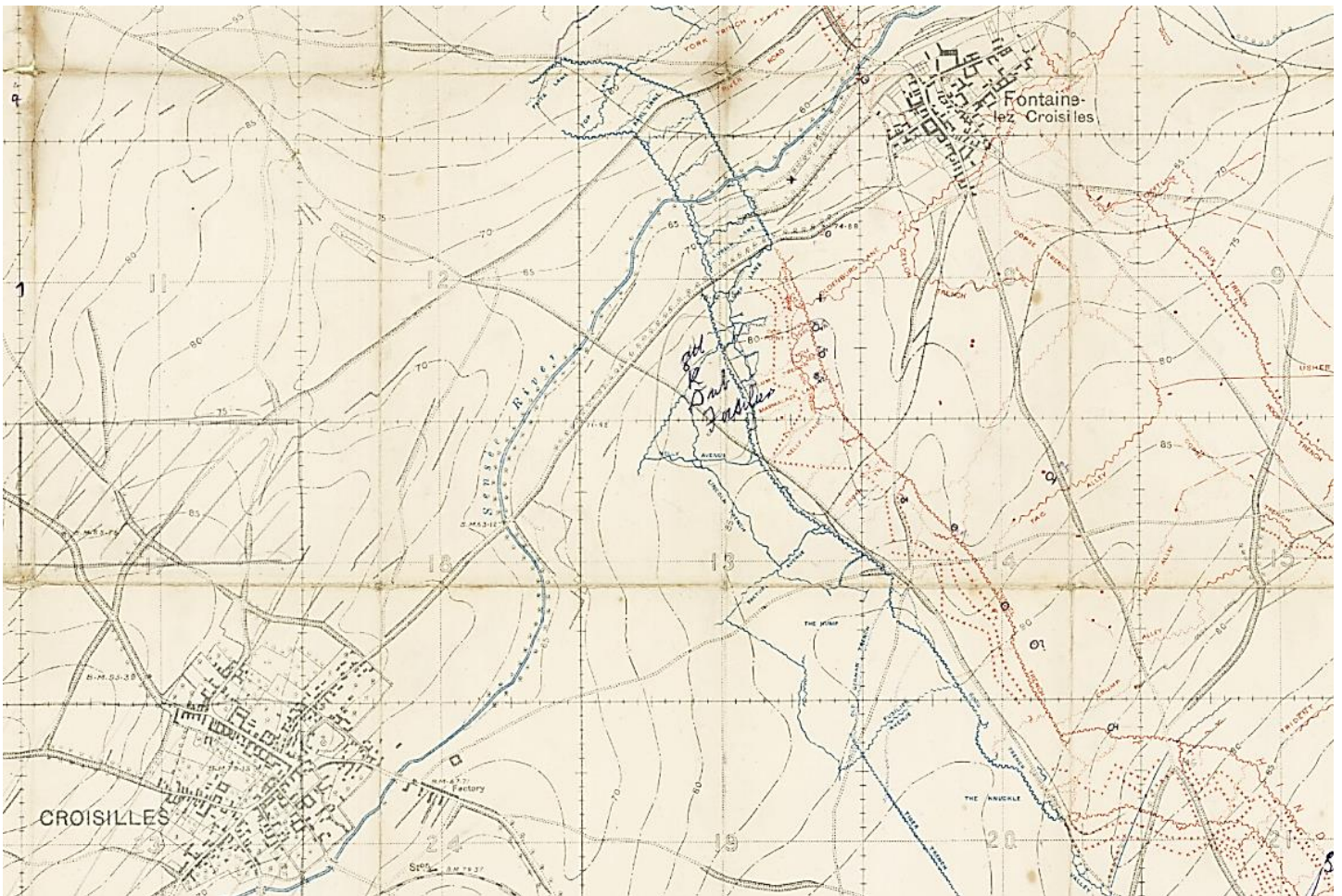
150th MACHINE GUN COY.
MACHINE GUN CORPS.

War Diary, 150th Machine Gun Coy. Transcription of entry for 27 June (some punctuation added)

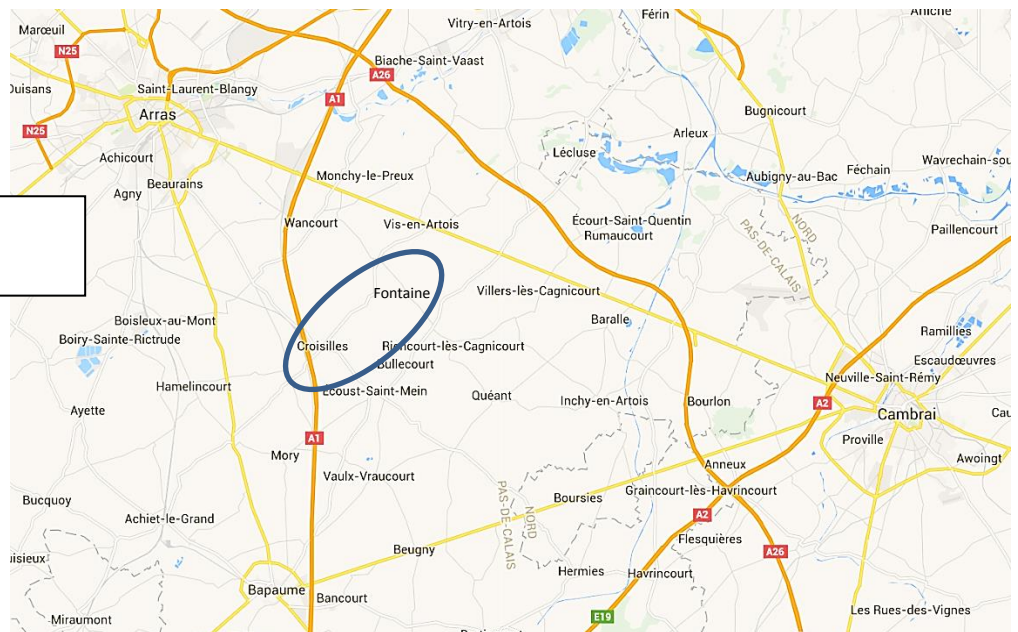
In the field – Fontaine-Croisilles Very heavy shelling all night and all morning; a concentration of all enemy artillery from all directions. A great part of front line support & even back areas were blown in. At 5.0pm a heavy counter attack was launched but was driven back by M.G. fire and artillery. The bombardment continued and the enemy again attacked about midnight. They were again repulsed.

Pte Reeve, A. 85967 wounded. Pte Garret 67023 wounded. R.S. Malthers 83289 wounded. – Pte Hill 85139 – Pte Johnson 87240 – Pte Lee 90653 – Pte Newcombe 85974 – Killed in Action

At the time of Cyril's death his troop was to the west of Fontaine les Croisilles, south of Arras and west of Cambrai:

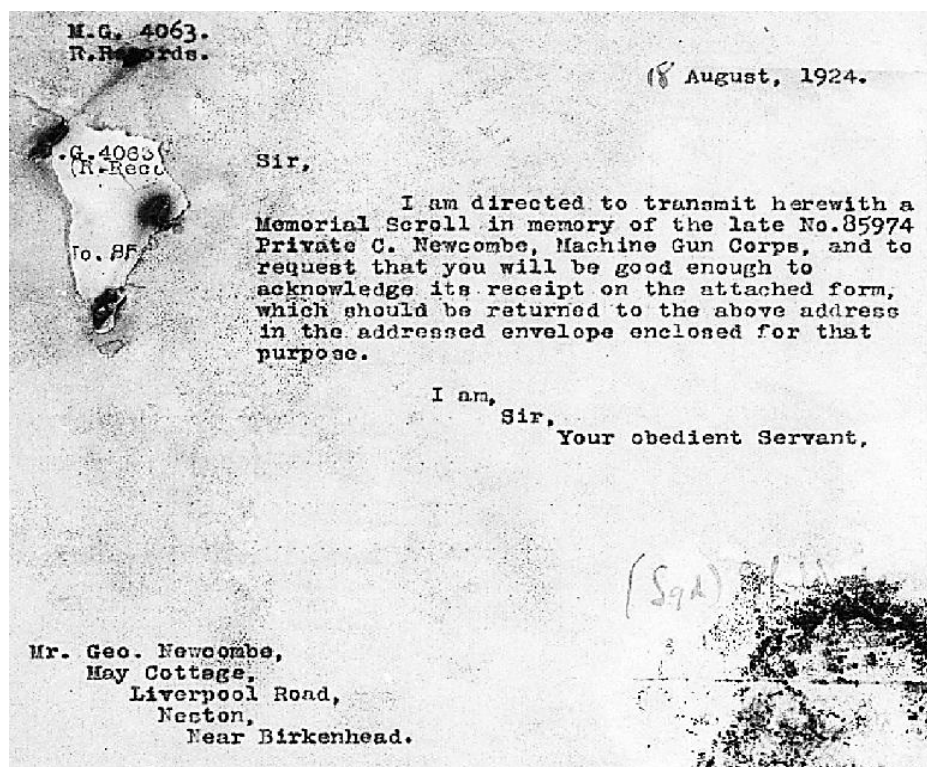


The area of Fontaine-les-Croisilles / Croisilles – this military map shows the British trenches (blue) and German trenches (red) in about July 1917.



The location of Fontaine and Croisilles (Google Maps)

A few days after Cyril's death the 150th Company was relieved by the 62nd Machine Gun Company and the troops returned to camp at Boyelles, about 2km west of Croisilles, where they underwent several days of training before going into action at The Battle of Passchendaele (The Third Battle of Ypres).



Although William Cyril Newcombe is commemorated on the Special Memorial at Wancourt British Cemetery there is no certainty that he is buried there; 829 of the burials at the cemetery are unidentified but the Special Memorials record 76 casualties known or believed to be buried among them.

Neston Youth Reported Killed!

We regret to announce that Mr. and Mrs. Newcombe have been notified of the death of their eldest son, Cyril, whilst on active service. He was bright and intelligent, and a very promising youth, and his early death is deeply deplored by all who knew him. Much sympathy is felt for his parents, brothers and sisters in their great sorrow.


Birkenhead News – Saturday 14 July 1917

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
NEWCOMBE	MGC	Pte	85974
Cyril			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	MGC/1 35	4703	
BRITISH	do	do	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

NESTON. ROLL OF HONOUR.

As reported in last week's "Chronicle," the parents of Pte. Cyril Newcombe received a letter last week announcing the death in action of their son. The sergeant-major of the company wrote saying that he died, like a good soldier he was, in action. He felt the loss very much, as he was a great favourite with the section he belonged to. Pte. Cyril Newcombe was connected with the 150th Co., M.G.C., and left for France on April 20th. He was only 22 years of age, and was killed on the 27th June. The news of his death caused widespread regret, as he was so well-known and respected. It only seems but yesterday when he was a boy chorister at the parish church, his conduct was most exemplary. Poor Cyril has been cut off in the flower of manhood, but like others of his colleagues here, he has given his life for a noble, righteous, and a just cause, and the greatest sympathy will go out to the bereaved parents and family. In connection with this case, another well-known Nestonian (James Mellor's) death in action, reference was made at the parish church on Sunday last, and the Dead March in "Saul" was beautifully rendered by Mr. R. G. Howick (organist).



Chester Chronicle - Saturday 28 July 1917

557510	47576	Newcombe Cyril	17 G.C. 150 R.C. Inv Ple Action 85974 France or Belgium	27.6.17 London 8/77	7	3	15	4	19	1	2	96 10 17 m.d. 3-18	17-10-17 T.S. Smith 4-2-18 J. George. 27.10.17 J. George	4	19	1	2	4	1	PD	
AFN 5040 sent 11/6/19			WAR GRATUITY. Transfer 1890 4/4/19 Paid. Paper 6251 3/10/35 Serial No. 20554 2/10			7	-	-													

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In mid-1919 the army paid Cyril's outstanding credit (mainly wages) of £7 3s 1d and a War Gratuity of £7. Whilst Cyril's father, George, received the £7 Gratuity, and £2 4s from the credit, the record indicates that the balance of £4 19s 1d was paid to another recipient whose identity is not clear.

The total sum paid, £14 3s 1d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of around £2150 in 2016.

The record notes that Cyril was killed in action in *France or Belgium*.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

Evaline Newcombe married George William Hawkins (born 1 April 1894) at Neston Parish Church in April / June 1923 and they had at least two children.

In the 1939 Register (29 September) the family was living at 75 Flatt Lane, Ellesmere Port and George was recorded as working with the security police at a newsprint mill works. The two children are listed in the Register (and another line has been redacted) are:

Kathleen Ruth (born 2 April 1924), a junior office clerk. Kathleen married Rodney Stanhope Vardon at Christ Church, Ellesmere Port, in mid-1949
Roger Cyril George (born 1 July 1930 in Eastham). Roger married Marjorie J Davies in South Liverpool in mid-1957.

Eveline Hawkins died on Wirral in late 1950 aged 55 and George died in Ellesmere Port in late 1976.

Marjorie Elizabeth Newcombe (born 3 January 1898) did not marry and she died, aged 67, in early 1965. In September 1939, recorded as a part-time shop assistant and confectioner, she was living with her parents and sister Kathleen (born 24 June 1905) at 7 Briar Drive, off Telegraph Road, Heswall. George Newcombe (born 6 November 1866) was recorded as a gardener (private services) and Kathleen, unmarried, was a shorthand typist for marine insurance. It is not known when Kathleen died - there is no record of her being married - but a George Newcombe died in West Wirral in late 1947 aged 81 and Agnes Newcombe (born 24 April 1873) died in April / June 1954 aged 81.

George Wilfred Newcombe (born 13 February 1899) was recorded in the 1939 Register as a builder's general foreman, joiner. George married Florence Martha

Davies (born 23 August 1898) at St Peter's Church, Heswall, in April / June 1926 and it is believed that they had two children:

Joan Audrey born at Neston on 12 December 1926. Joan married William Astbury at Neston Parish Church on 13 September 1950

Wilfred Geoffrey born in Neston in July / September 1934. Wilfred married Norma A Clark on Wirral in July / September 1959.

In 1939 the family was living at 'Rockleigh', Liverpool Road, Neston.

Harold F Newcombe (born 16 February 1900) married Eve Mary McDonald (born 24 January 1903) in mid-1926 at Atcham, Shropshire. In the 1939 Register they are recorded as living at 5 Durston Road, Childwall, Liverpool; Harold was a police constable with Liverpool City and with them was daughter Audrey (born 8 April 1927). Audrey, believed to be their only child, married William F Redfern in South Liverpool on 17 February 1966.

Harold died, in South Liverpool, in July / September 1959 aged 59. Eve died in the Birkenhead area in July / September 1975.

Carrie Cecilia Newcombe (born 22 June 1906) married Alan Robertson (born 1 July 1907) at St Peter's Church, Heswall, in mid-1935 and it is understood that they had one child, Barbara, in 1937. In the 1939 Register they are recorded as living at 19 Dale Drive, Ellesmere Port; Alan was an electric crane driver and one line of the entry, presumably with the details of their young daughter, has been redacted. Nothing further is known of the family.

John Cyril Newcombe (born 1 January 1908) married Maud Mary Vincent (born 15 January 1909) at Neston Parish Church in July / September 1932 and they may have had four children: Eileen (1933), Hilary (1936), Gillian (1943) and Lesley (1949). At the time of the 1939 Register (29 September) they were living at 'Claremont', Well Lane, Ness and John was recorded as a joiner in the building trade. Three lines of the entry have been redacted (as of March 2018), presumably the details of their three children.

Maud died, aged 58, in early 1967 and John married Frances M Pyke in early 1968; Frances was the widow of George Pyke, the brother of John Pyke who died in WW1 [see [71: John Pyke](#) in this work].

Dorothy Newcombe (born 30 September 1910) married Thomas Smith (born 31 March 1913) at St Peter's Church, Heswall, in mid-1938. In the 1939 Register they are recorded as living at 39 Greenbank Drive, Pensby; Thomas was a police constable (No. 472) with the Cheshire Constabulary. Nothing further is known of the family.