

## ***Cyril Hearn Coombs, died 14 October 1918, aged 20***

Cyril's parents Thomas and Esther were married in their home county of Dorset in 1885, but moved to London with their eldest three children within a few years. The 1901 census shows them living at 85 Park Road, but soon after they moved to 46 Hertford Road and remained there for many years. The Coombs had 12 children in total of whom three died in infancy. Thomas was a trained butcher, so presumably was always able to find work. The family were part of the community at All Saints' Church, the younger children being baptised there and at least three of Cyril's sisters (Annie, Esther and Doris) and one brother (William) being married there.

In December 1915 William Coombs, by now 26 and living at 57 Wilton Road Muswell Hill, enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery at Mill Hill Barracks. He would survive the war, as would his sister Annie's husband, Fred Williams, who was in the Royal Fusiliers. In 1916 when he was 18 Cyril was called up into the Machine Gun Corps, and must have done well as he was promoted to Lance-Corporal. By October 1918 the German forces were retreating, running out of troops and supplies, and it was clear to the Allied leaders that the war was drawing to its close. If the Coombs family were aware of this, they must have hoped that Cyril would survive. But cruelly he was killed in action on 14 October 1918 near the village of Honnechy, eight kilometres from le Cateau. Honnechy had been captured from the Germans five days earlier and when Cyril died there was a field ambulance centre there. He was buried in Honnechy British Cemetery, and his parents later asked for the inscription *Thy Will be Done* to be added to his gravestone.

Cyril's youngest brother Stanley was 17 when the war ended, and his family must have been relieved that he would not be expected to join up and go to fight.

Cyril's mother died in 1934, and his father – still living in Hertford Road – died in 1952 at the age of 86. Apart from Stanley who died at the age of 69 all Cyril's surviving siblings lived into their eighties and nineties. His youngest sister Doris Heron lived in Hertford Road all her life until her death in 2000.

