

Edward Percy PRIOR



Born: 1893, Padstow, Cornwall
Unit: Tank Corps (A Company, 8th Battalion)
Occupation: Carpenter
Enlisted: Falmouth: Probably 1916 (Conscripted)
Rank/number: Private: No.306223 (Also 512609 Royal Engineers)
Death: Died, 30th July 1918
Detail: Edward accidentally died in the final year of the war. A letter written to the family by an army padre soon after his death, said Edward had drowned whilst swimming in a “famous river,” which his parents took to be the Somme.

The family were later told their son had been ill at the time and that a sergeant had forced him to go in the river against his will.
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Age at death:

Military info:

Before dawn on 20th November 1917 the tank's influence in the Great War could rightfully have been described as insignificant. Though it had promised much, it had delivered little - breaking down on the Somme, slithering to a halt at Arras and sinking without trace in the quagmires of Passchendaele. But by the end of that November day all this had changed. The opening 24 hours of the Battle of Cambrai showed for the first time what tanks could do when properly handled on ground best suited to them. Though the massive gains made on the 20th were lost due to lack of infantry reserves ten days later, the tank had at last shown what it was capable of. But it would be another eight months before it finally came of age at Hamel following the massive German offensive in the Spring of 1918. This small but perfectly-formed combined attack by the Australians, the Tank Corps and the Royal Air Force on 4th July was the first truly modern battle of the Great War and it would become the template for the major victory at Amiens the following month. Edward Prior took part in the first two of these momentous tank encounters and was preparing for the third when he died. In the days following Hamel Edward was resting with the 8th Battalion, Tank Corps, at Blangy-Tronville near Amiens. The Somme river flows a few hundred yards from this village and this is almost certainly the spot where where Edward accidentally drowned.

Grave/memorial:

Edward was buried at Longueau British Cemetery in France, and he is also commemorated at St Petroc's Church, Padstow and Padstow War Memorial.

Family info:

Father: William Prior, born Egloshayle, Cornwall in 1858. Hairdresser and tobacconist. Mother: Florence Mary Liddicoat, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1860. They married in 1881 and had eleven children, three of whom died. The couple ran a hairdressers and tobacconists in Duke Street, Padstow.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com.