



BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <i>Tillington</i> in the County of <i>Sussex</i> in the Year <i>1894</i>						
When Baptized	Child's Christian Name	Parent's Name		Abode	Quality, Trade, or Profession	By whom the Ceremony was performed
		Christian	Surname			
<i>1894</i> <i>Dec. 16</i>	<i>Egbert</i>	<i>George</i>	<i>Pratt</i>	<i>River</i>	<i>Market Gardener</i>	<i>R.</i>
<i>No. 111</i>	<i>Reginald</i>	<i>Elsie</i>				

Baptism entry in All Hallows' Church Records

In 1881 John and Jane Pratt were market gardeners in River, Tillington. They had six acres of land and employed two men, one of whom was their 25 year old son, George. George had married Ellen Money on February 9th 1878 at All Hallows' Church, Tillington. They moved into a house at River, probably on land owned by father John, and in 1880 welcomed their first daughter, Elsie. Over the next seventeen years their family grew with Edgar (1883), Eber (1889), Egbert Reginald (1894) and Ethel (1897). Clearly their parents decided that all their children's names should begin with the letter E. Egbert was christened at All Hallows' Church on December 16th 1894.

It appears that sometime between 1901 and 1911 the market garden was converted to a dairy farm because from the last census George Pratt is a farmer and his son Egbert is a 'Farmer's son working on farm' and his daughter is 'Farmer's daughter dairy work'.



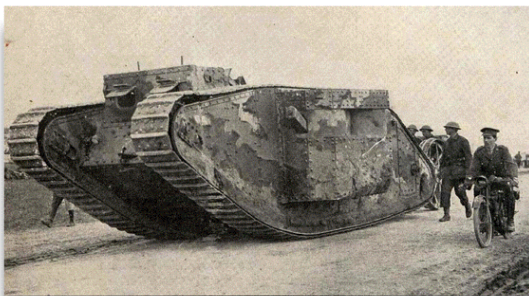
Private E R Pratt in the uniform the Royal Sussex Regiment

It is believed that sometime in late 1915 at the age of 21 years Egbert volunteered or attested under the Lord Derby scheme, designed to increase the flow of much needed army recruits. Under this scheme men could continue working, but were under an obligation to come if called up at a later date. Egbert attested at Lodsworth, most probably joining the 14th (Reserve) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, in which he trained with the service number SD/5303.

In March 1916 Egbert Pratt was either called up to, or transferred to the infantry branch of the newly formed (October 1915) Machine Gun Corps where he became Private E R Pratt 30334. A training centre had been established at Belton Park in Grantham, Lincolnshire and Private Pratt was sent there for training. On arrival he joined the newly formed 123rd Company, MGC. For each machine gun there usually was a team of four men, two to carry the gun and two for the ammunition. Private Pratt was allocated to such a team.



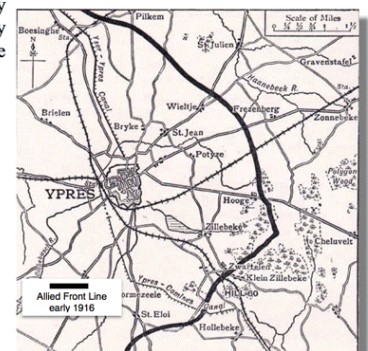
A four-man machine gun crew



A 1916 'Big Willie' tank returning from the front line

The company joined 123rd Brigade, 41st Division at the beginning of May 1916 and although most of the Division moved to France in early May, the 123rd Company did not join them until June 20th. During 1916, however, the company fought in the Battles of Flers-Courcelette and Transloy Ridge. The former battle was part of the larger Battle

Later in the year the 41st Division moved to Belgium where it spent the next eight months 'holding the line' in an area (St Eloi Sector) close to Ypres. During this period the 123rd Company was either in the front line, in reserve or resting close-by. Private Egbert Reginald Pratt was killed on January 17th 1917 whilst in the front line. There are no further details of his death, but tragically he was one of only two company soldiers killed during that month.



Map showing St Eloi sector close to Ypres

Name	George	Rank	Page No.
<i>PRATT</i>			
<i>Egbert. R.</i>			
Model	Rank	Page	Remarks
<i>m-g 123rd 2219</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	
Thames of War area served in	Date of entry service		



British War Medal

Victory Medal

Private Egbert Pratt was laid to rest in the Dickebusch New Military Cemetery some five kilometres south west of Ypres. He lies with over six hundred other soldiers of the Great War who made the ultimate sacrifice.

On his gravestone is inscribed 'Splendid he passed into the light, which nevermore shall fade' - from the hymn 'O Valiant Hearts'.



What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Anthem for Doomed Youth - Wilfred Owen