

GEORGE SHIELDS YOUNG



29th November 1916

1893-1916 Age 23

Corporal 1st-6th Battalion (Territorial Force) West Yorkshire Regiment.

George Shields was a talented linguist and mathematician. His parents Thomas Halliday Young and Margaret Jane Thompson both came from the north-east of England. Thomas began work as a clerk to a worsted cloth manufacturer in Bradford in the later 1870s. In 1889 he married Margaret in Newcastle, and over the next decade they had three children, of whom George was the second and their only son. The family attended the Methodist New Connexion Chapel on Horton Road, where George was baptised in 1893. They lived in Horton until the early 1900s, when Thomas was promoted to cashier and they moved to Manningham. By 1916, the family lived on St Paul's Road.

George went to Bradford Grammar School in 1904 aged eleven, where he enjoyed great academic achievements over the next seven years. He started in Form IV Modern Upper and was already accomplished in French, German and English. At the end of his second year he won the prize for Modern Languages, and the following year in Remove Modern he was awarded the Form and Maths prizes. In September 1907, in his fifteenth year, he went into VI Mathematical, a form he was to be in for four years. He won the Sixth Form Prizes for Maths and for Problems, and he gained Higher Certificates in Additional Maths (with a distinction), Elementary Maths, Mechanics and Physics. In December 1910 he was awarded a Hastings Mathematical Exhibition at the Queen's College, Oxford.

Young went up to Oxford in October 1911. Notes in the college archives indicate that at school he played 2nd XV rugby but no cricket, and he had joined the (Bradford) Territorials; he was willing to row for the college; he played 'a little' but did not sing; he was a 'Congregationalist' in religion; he probably intended to specialize in Physics and Modern Languages, and he was thinking of a career in the Indian Civil Service. Over the coming years his achievements were noted by his old school: in 1912, Second Class Maths, Honours, Division I; in 1913, First Class Honours Mods; and in 1914, Second Class Honours Final Maths. He graduated B.A. on 21st June 1915, and within weeks he enlisted in the reserve battalion of the 6th West Yorkshire Territorials at Bellevue barracks. Since he had pre-war military training with



the Territorials and was in the O.T.C. at Oxford University, it is surprising that he did not receive an officer's commission. Perhaps he did not wish to apply for one, or he was judged not to possess other qualities the Army looked for.

Young was sent to France to join the 1st-6th Battalion during 1916, possibly to replace their losses of July. He was a Corporal with responsibility for a section of twelve men. When they finally bade farewell to the Thiepval front in late September, instead of the hoped for prolonged period of rest, after three weeks they were back in the line at Gommecourt. They expected to attack there in the near future in support of the fighting on the River Ancre. On 29th November George Young died of wounds and was buried in Warlincourt Halte British Cemetery at Saulty, site of two Casualty Clearing Stations. How he received the wounds is unknown. It is possible they occurred on 23rd November, when at 5.5 a.m. 'an avalanche' of trench mortar and high explosive shells fell on the advanced British sap at Kendal Street Trench, near Hannescamps. This was the prelude to a German raid. The trenches were obliterated and no-one survived to report what had happened. There were forty-two British casualties; nine dead were buried in Hannescamps cemetery, and one whose body was never found is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. Three days later the battalion were relieved and went into billets.

Young is also remembered on the Greenfield Congregational Church War Memorial.



Acknowledgements:

George Young's photo is taken with thanks from the Roll of Honour presented to B.G.S. by the Old Boys Association. Ancestry.com was used to research his family, although it is difficult to trace his grand-parents in the north-east. His school record came from the B.G.S. Annual Reports for 1905-1914 and The Bradfordian for July and December 1908, November 1911 and July 1914. For his under-graduate years I acknowledge my use of <<https://starryblackness.wordpress.com/2014/09/27/george-s-young/>> accessed 16-11-2016. The Bradfordian for October 1916 records that Young had enlisted in the 2nd-6th Battalion West Yorks. His Medal Index Card has no date for his entry into a theatre of war, which generally indicates it was after 1915. The Bradford Daily Telegraph reported his death on 8th December. The Battalion War Diary account of the German raid of 23rd November (available on Ancestry) was repeated by Captain E.V. Tempest, *History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Vol. 1 1/6th Battalion* (Percy Lund, Humphries, Bradford 1921), 132-3. No casualties are recorded for the days following the raid, although German trench mortars continued to be fired.

The Mannville New Connexion Chapel is now the Grove Library of Bradford College (<<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/2463/littlehortonlanecaa.pdf>> accessed 28-11-2016). It merged with Greenfield Congregational Church. On its war memorial, which is now in St. Andrews United Reform Church, Little Lane, Heaton, are the names of no fewer than seven Old Bradfordians (out of total of 15 men of the congregation who died). I owe this reference to the monumental survey of Bradford War Memorials by P.D. Lodge, which has now been lodged with the Mechanics Institute Library, Kirkgate, Bradford.

This biography was researched and composed by Nick Hooper (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com) in November 2016.

