

Captain Frank Young and his son, 2nd Lt Frank Young, VC

I met Richard Young briefly at a meeting of the East Kent Branch of the Western Front Association in Canterbury in 2013. Knowing of my involvement in Step Short in Folkestone, Richard told me that his grandfather, Captain Frank Young, had been Deputy Town Commandant in Folkestone during WW1.

On 9 June 2013, I was on The Leas in Folkestone supervising a living history event highlighting Folkestone's WW1 history. One of the displays was in front of Clifton Crescent, the location of No 3 Rest Camp. A number of contemporary photos of the camp were on display, including some from the album of Margaret Mitchell, QMAAC (her album is featured on the Footsteps pages of this website). I noticed Richard Young studying the photo below; he was excited at the presence of his grandfather in the picture, and I promised to send him a copy.

A little searching of the internet revealed further information about Frank Young and his son, also Frank, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in WW1. The younger Frank was the elder brother of Richard's father.

Richard tells me that his grandfather and grandmother lived in Folkestone after the war, at 139 Dolphins Road, until Frank's death in 1952.

With grateful acknowledgements to Richard Young and to the authors of the following information.



Above: Capt Frank Young, deputy Town Commandant Folkestone, back row left, poses with staff from No3 Rest Camp, The Leas, Folkestone, in 1918. Seated centre is Lt Col Sparrow, Commandant of the Rest Camp. Front row, right is Margaret Mitchell, Unit Administrator, QMAAC, No 3 Rest Camp

The following are the websites with details of Capt Young and his son, Frank, who joined up as a private in 1914, was commissioned at a 2nd Lt in the Herts Regt. He was KIA in September 1918 and was posthumously awarded the VC in December 1918. He was 22.

1. Details of the auction of Capt Young's medals in 2004:

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:02J0xHfIJAJ:www.dnw.co.uk/medals/auctionarchive/searchcataloguearchive/itemdetail.lasso%3Fitemid%3D44605+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk>

Lot Details

Lot 1021, 1 Dec 04

Category: CAMPAIGN GROUPS AND PAIRS

Estimate: £280-£320

Hammer Price: £550

Description

Five: Captain F. Young, Hertfordshire Regiment, late Bedfordshire Regiment, father of Second Lieutenant F. E. Young, V.C.

India General Service 1895-1902, 1 clasp, Relief of Chitral 1895 (3292 Sergt., 1st Bn.. Bedford. Regt.); 1914 Star, with copy 'slip-on' clasp (3292 C. Sjt., 1/1 Herts. R.); British War and Victory Medals, M.I.D. oak leaf (3292 A.W.O. Cl. 1, Herts. R.); Army L.S. & G.C., E.VII.R. (3292 C. Sjt., Bedford. Regt.) first and last with contact marks, nearly very fine and better (5) £280-320

Footnote

Frank Young was born on 27 March 1874, the son of Sarah Fensome and an unnamed father. He entered into the Bedfordshire Regiment as a Private in 1889 and being promoted Sergeant in 1893, served with them in relief of Chitral operations of 1895. Promoted Colour Sergeant in 1899, he was later Instructor to the 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Militia. In 1910 he posted as Instructor to the 1st Hertfordshire Regiment. With the outbreak of war, he went overseas with the 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment on 6 November 1914 and was appointed C.S.M. (Acting R.S.M.) in January / February 1915. Mentioned in despatches (London Gazette 1 December 1916), he was later commissioned and served in the 3rd Hertfordshire Regiment. In 1918, after the battalion was disbanded, he served on the staff of the Town Commandant, Folkestone. He retired from the Army with the rank of Captain in 1921.

Second Lieutenant Frank Edward Young, the eldest son of Captain and Mrs Young, was born in India in 1895 and educated at Kempston School. He joined the Hertfordshires as a volunteer in 1914 and was later commissioned. He was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross (London Gazette 14 December 1918) for his supreme gallantry at Havrincourt, France on 18 September 1918. Sold with a quantity of copied research.

2. Below is a photo with both father and son pictured.

<http://www.bedfordregiment.org.uk/hertsrgt/hertsphotos1.html>



This group photograph carries the caption 'Noeux-les-Mines, 6th June 1915'.

That day the battalion spent their final rest day there before moving closer to the lines at Cambrin, which seems to support the time and place in the caption as being where and when the photograph was taken. Based on the initials and surnames provided in the caption, my own files tell me who the men are:

Back row: Sergeant 1285 Frank Ernest YOUNG (later [Second Lieutenant Frank YOUNG, VC](#)), Sergeant 2550 Arthur E. SANDELL (later a Lieutenant in the 6th Signals Company, Royal Engineers).

Front row: Company Sergeant Major 1 Edward George CRAWLEY (later Captain and Quartermaster in the 4th/1st Herts and 1st/4th Northhamptons), Regimental Sergeant Major 3292 Frank YOUNG (father of Frank Young in top row), Orderly Room Sergeant C.A. Hall (Sergeant 83 Ernest Alfred HALL).

3. From the same website as 2. above

Second Lieutenant Frank Edward YOUNG, V.C.



Killed in Action 18th September 1918, aged 22



Frank Young was born on the 2nd October 1895, at Cherat in the North West Province, India. As his father, also called Frank Young, was a regular soldier, it is likely he was serving in the 1st Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment who were stationed there at the time.

When Frank's schooling in England finished, he joined the part time Territorial Force's Hertfordshire Regiment as a Boy Bugler on the 15th November 1909, aged 14. He served in the Hitchin Company which would later become D Company or No.4 Company once they adopted the Guards' Company structure.

His father attested into the Hertfordshire Regiment when war broke out and was Company Sergeant Major 3292 Frank Young of the Hertfordshire Regiment by the time the battalion were mobilised to the Western Front in November 1914.

The 19 year old Private Frank Young volunteered for service aboard but a physical disability stopped him from going to France in the autumn of 1914. However, his determination led to him going through an operation to overcome the problem and was appointed to the recently raised 2nd/1st Battalion of the Regiment to re-train and get fit enough for active service again. Frank went to France in a reinforcement draft, landing on French shores on the 21st January 1915 and soon became a Regimental Scout. Within months he was a Sergeant and had gained a reputation as a solid leader, a reliable scout and a good bomber.

After returning from a spell in the front line, Frank was in a group photograph with his father and several other veteran Sergeants, which was taken in June 1915 and can be seen here. The Royston Crowe (dated 26th March 1915) mentioned how effective at patrolling his father RSM Young was, describing how the party he was in got to within yards of the German lines and managed to glean a lot of information from listening in on their chatting. In the 27th August 1915 edition his father, Regimental Sergeant Major Young, was mentioned during an interview with Distinguished Conduct Medal winner Sergeant Major George Raven, who could not praise him enough and said "it is a pleasure for anyone to serve under such a fine soldier as he is". Comments made make it clear that RSM Young was a man to lead from the front and he frequently got 'in the thick of things'.

Father and son were both involved in the Battle of Fesubert in May as well as the Battle of Loos in September, with Frank Young senior earned a mention in despatches for bravery at Loos.

Frank received a month's leave early in 1916, as was the custom once a soldier completed his contractual term of military service.

Having earned a reputation as a bomber, he was sent to serve as a Bombing Instructor at the Rouen Central Bombing School but an accident returned him home early in the summer of 1916. After three months in the Cardiff Military Hospital, he was posted to the 3rd/1st Battalion to re-train, who were stationed at Halton Camp near Tring at the time. Some months later he was commissioned as an officer, which was gazetted on the 26th April 1917.

In the spring of 1918 Second Lieutenant Young was posted into the 3rd/5th Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment, who were stationed at Crowborough in Sussex. It appears he was fascinated by the Royal Flying Corps to such a degree that he took six weeks ground training at Reading and moved to Sleaford for practical training. However, a flying accident left him badly shaken and as a result he returned to the Bedfords.

He paid a last visit to his mother in Hitchin in September 1918 before going to the front again, having been posted back to the 1st/1st Hertfordshires as a replacement for the losses during the Battles of Albert and Bapaume in August and September. He re-joined the Hertfords on the 12th September, just as they were engaged in the Battle of Havrincourt during the Battles of the Hindenburg Line.

Frank was put in command of No.4 Company (his old Hitchin Company) who were in the line south east of Havrincourt village, near a copse called Triangle Wood. His last communication home was on a standard field postcard dated 17th September, the day before an unexpected German counter attack hit their lines.

Some Victoria Crosses are awarded for incredible leadership, rescuing many wounded soldiers, taking difficult enemy positions, and saving many comrades, or straight forward bravery in the face of overwhelming odds. Frank's incredible citation ("The London Gazette" No. 31067, dated 13th December 1918) has elements of all of them and reads:

"For most conspicuous bravery, determination and exceptional devotion to duty on 18th September, 1918, south-east of Havrincourt, when during an enemy counter-attack and throughout an extremely intense enemy barrage he visited all posts, warned the garrisons and encouraged the men. In the early stages of the attack he rescued two of his men who had been captured, and bombed and silenced an enemy machine gun. Although surrounded by the enemy, 2nd Lt. Young fought his way back to the main barricade and drove out a party of the enemy who were assembling there. By his further exertions the battalion was able to maintain a line of great tactical value, the loss of which would have meant serious delay to future operations. Throughout four hours of intense hand-to-hand fighting 2nd Lt. Young displayed the utmost valour and devotion to duty, and set an example to which the company gallantly responded. He was last seen fighting hand to hand against a considerable number of the enemy."

Second Lieutenant Young was not seen again and he was listed as missing in action.

However, on the 27th September a section from the 1st/5th Manchester's found his body on the edge of Havrincourt Wood. Given how heavily he had been engaged in the fighting, with much of it being hand to hand, it seems ironic that he had been killed by a shrapnel wound to his head. The men buried the body where they found it and marked it with a rough cross, as was the custom with battlefield burials. Some months later his grave was seen by Second Lieutenant Males from Stevenage who arranged to move the body to a more fitting resting place, amongst one of the growing official British Cemeteries.

Frank lies in the Hermies Hill British Cemetery, France 4 km south of the N30 road between Bapaume and Cambrai. He is also remembered on the Hitchin War Memorial in St Mary's Churchyard, Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

According to the British Legion, "his Victoria Cross remained with the family until 1959 when it was bequeathed to the Hertfordshire Regiment, at which time it was presented to the successors to the Regiment at Colchester and held with the Regiment Battle Honours. Later the Regiment lodged it for safekeeping with Luton Museum, which holds many exhibits relating to the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Regiments."

Frank was the son of Frank and Sarah Ellen Young, of 46, Wood Avenue, Folkestone in Kent, which would have been their temporary address whilst his father was at No.3 Rest Camp in Folkestone early in 1919. In 1919 His father's medals were sent to Pirton Cottage, Pirton, near Hitchin, Hertfordshire and Frank's were sent to his mother at Verulam Rd, Hitchin, which was where they appear to have moved to after Folkestone.

4. Frank, jnr, features in the following blog which is primarily about a friend, Douglas Chisholm. The blog is maintained by Chisholm's grandson.

<http://idiotic-hat.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/remembrance-sunday.html>

Two friends, photographed one after the other in front of an improvised sheet backdrop, somewhere in Northern France, probably Noeux-les-Mines, 1914. Both recently promoted to sergeant in the 1st/1st Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment, a territorial regiment that went over to France in the British Expeditionary Force of 1914, the so-called "Old Contemptibles" who fought at the retreat from Mons.



This is my grandfather, Douglas William Chisholm, a bookbinder, who moved from Edinburgh to the Elephant & Castle in London, and then to Letchworth in Hertfordshire to work at the Temple Press of the publishing firm J.M. Dent.



This is his friend, Frank Edward Young, also of North Hertfordshire. Eventually, as the army ran out of proper gentlemen, Douglas and Frank were both promoted to 2nd Lieutenant -- "temporary gentlemen", as such promotions were known. Amusingly, the form for admission to officer training asks, amongst other things, for "Schools or Colleges at which educated" and "Whether able to ride". Grandad's answers were "Sayer Street, Southwark" and "No".



Here they are, waiting for the train at Letchworth station at the very start of the war (the woman in the white hat is my grandmother, the amazing Daisy, also a bookbinder and an active trades unionist). It looks like a re-enactment club outing, doesn't it?

Apparently grandad (who died the year before I was born) would never talk about Frank's medal, except to say, "He earned it, boy, he earned it".

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