



ALBERT VICTOR YOUNG

25 October 1916

Albert Victor Young was born in Thame in 1883 to John Young and Caroline (née Newman) of the Four Horseshoes public house in Park Street. The youngest son of six children, Albert worked at the pub and was well known in the town. The family later moved to 5 Upper High Street, Thame.

In February 1902 Albert enlisted with the Royal Irish Rifles at Hounslow, Middlesex. According to his enlistment papers, he was at the time a serving member of the 7th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, a local militia in London. He was posted to India with the Royal Irish Rifles in November 1903, not returning until March 1910 when he was transferred to the Army Reserve.



As a National Reservist he re-enlisted, on the outbreak of hostilities, with the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry (Regt No 10097). After a brief period of training, he joined A Company, 2nd Battalion as part of a reinforcing draft at Dhuizel in northern France on 22nd September 1914. This was just in time to take part in the "Race to the Sea", followed by the First Battle of Ypres. On 27th November Albert was wounded in trenches near Bailleul and evacuated to a hospital in Lincoln.

After his recovery, just before Easter 1916, he was posted to the newly formed Machine Gun Corps (Infantry) and as part of a reinforcing draft, joined the 27th Machine Gun Company in France, serving with the 27th Brigade of the 9th (Scottish) Division.



In a letter home on 8th August, Albert describes the Company's involvement from 1st July on the Somme. Fighting in the southern sector with their Vickers machine guns, they were in regular engagement throughout the month, suffering heavy losses, but the Division steadily advanced as far as Delville Wood.

During October, the Battalion took part in the last major offensive on the Somme, the Battle of Le Transloy and on the morning of 25th October Albert, age 43, was killed by shellfire. It was reported at the time that he was buried with "*one of our own men who had fallen a few days before and with full respect and dignity*", however, after the war his grave could not be identified.

30304 Lance Corporal Albert Victor Young, Machine Gun Corps, has no known grave and is commemorated on Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. He is remembered in Thame on the War Memorial and on the Memorial Boards of St Mary's Church and All Saints' Church.

*The Thame Remembers Cross was placed at Thiepval Memorial on 31st October 2015
by Thame residents, Linda Emery and Helena Fickling.*



LETTER FROM THE FRONT

We have received the following letter from Lance Corporal A V Young, of Thame, who is serving with a machine gun section in France: -

"Just a line to say I am all right and back once more from the ding-dong battle. We went into action on the 1st of July, and after seven days stiff fighting came back to the large guns for three days rest, went back again for another week, and then three days more rest and at it again for another week: so we had three weeks stiff fighting. We suffered heavily, but the Germans suffered double and more than us. Picked divisions were selected for this affair and our division was on the right and on the left of the French, so we had our hands full; and our division, which is composed of Scotch Regiments and South Africans, had a debt to pay for the battle of Loos last September, and well the Germans knew it when we got amongst them. This was the first experience for some of the South Africans in trench warfare, but they did themselves justice: they and the Gordon Highlanders at times fought themselves to a standstill. First you would see them chasing the Germans, and then the Germans chasing them; it was a ding-dong battle. I see fighting is going on at the same woods and village now, but we are gradually getting the upper hand of the Germans. There were times when the Colonels asked for relief, but the General said the position would have to be held at all costs, and bravely the division did it and repelled all counter-attacks until finally relieved by another division. I am not allowed to mention the names of regiments but I saw them all, and do not think any other Thameite would be in the advance in which I was in from July 1st to 27th. After two days march down we passed the Royal Fusiliers, in which Alf Howland is a Corporal; I did not see him, but I enquired and found his battalion was on the way up to the fighting. I also saw Arthur Rush "Brummy", in the 2nd Oxfordees on their way in that direction; we passed them in a large town and just had five minutes chat with him. He was the only Thame man I have seen near the fighting. The Germans had some tremendous dug-outs built in the bank of a trench about 20 feet below ground and quite safe from shell-fire; they came in very handy for us as we advanced. We are out for a good rest and to get reinforced; we do not know for how long, or where we are for (perhaps the best). We had several machine-guns knocked out by shell-fire, so I had plenty of work keeping the teams going as I am armourer and artificer to this machine-gun company. The enemy are nearly all Bavarians and good fighters, and the ground is chalky, so you can tell how the trenches were when it rained, and the wood-work used for dug-outs were fir trees just cut down through the centre (no paring), so you see the strength; no wonder our shell fire would not pierce the dug-outs. I saw some great air fights, and to see the different artillery no wonder the poor Germans surrendered when they got our field artillery, horse artillery, garrison artillery, 9.2 siege artillery and 15in, in which I had great interest, being used by the Royal Marines Artillery; one could actually watch the shell travelling through the air. It was the first time I have seen a 15in gun in action, and they were shelling the German headquarters 12 miles away; goodness knows what the Germans thought - probably they thought they were dropping from the skies. We are having some grand weather now, and I hope it is improving the crops at home. The crops out here are looking well; I passed some bearded wheat in a field yesterday, and I measured it, some of it being six feet long, which I thought a good length. The women work hard on the land out here, and cows are milked by women. I think I must now close, wishing all your readers the best of luck."