

Lest we Forget – Reginald Young

We continue with our occasional articles on those who lost their lives in military service during World War 1 and are remembered on our War Memorial in the grounds of St Mary's.

Reginald Young was born in Wick in 1890 and was a member of a large family, as records show that in 1901 he was living for a period in Pershore with his Mum, Dad and 8 siblings.

By the time the 1911 census came around, Reginald was back in Wick and staying with his widowed mother, older brother and a younger sister. He was described as an "Under Carter on Farm" whereas his brother is the "stationary engine driver on Farm" – so mechanisation has started to appear in the fields around.

At some stage in WW1 Reginald is enlisted into the Army Service Corp. (It is later in 1918 that they are given the prefix Royal.) The ASC are often referred to as the unsung heroes of the war as it was their role to move food, equipment, ammunition and many other supplies that the British military machine needed to enable it to fight on many fronts. At its peak, the Corp consisted of over 320,000 men. Although vehicles were being increasingly used, and indeed at the start of the Great War the British Army was the most mechanised in the world, the Horse Transport Section was still the largest element of the ASC.



Driver Young was given the serial number T4/040345 and the T4 indicated that he would have been part of Horse Transport – perhaps his earlier life as a carter played a part in deciding his role in the Army.

Parts of the ARC were attached to different divisions of the Army and went with these wherever they were required and no doubt saw action to some degree or another. Unfortunately, the records readily available now for Reginald's service in the Army are meagre and give very little detail about his service – more on this later.

What we do know is that Reginald died on 22nd February 1919 in Germany and was buried in a War Grave in Cologne Southern cemetery. The cause of his death is not recorded and it could have resulted from injuries sustained in the Great War. However, records show that a number of those buried alongside him had died from pneumonia. The 1918-19 pandemic called "Spanish Flu" claimed many millions of lives at this time and we could speculate that perhaps Reginald fell victim to this.

Going back to why so little is known of Reginald's time in the Army, following an air raid in September 1940 when War Office buildings were hit, many millions of files were destroyed. In fact, only about 40% of service records from this time were saved and a large proportion of these were badly damaged.

It is perhaps ironic that Reginald's service records did not survive despite his sacrifice when at least one other Wick resident, who will remain nameless in this article, might have wanted their time in the Army forgotten! A villager who is listed on the plaque inside our church as having served his Country, along with his comrades, in fact only lasted four months. His service records have remained intact for more than 100 years and include the following from his commanding officer:

"He is a weakling; suffers from anaemia, from vague pains in the back & in addition is under-developed and not too bright mentally. He is quite unfit to be in the army and is never likely to make an efficient soldier...."

Compared to the above, it seems even more of a pity that we now know so little about what Reginald endured before his death at the age of 29, having served his country.