

## The First World War and Goldington, 100 years on - The missing soldiers

*The series of articles in this magazine covering the war memorial has concluded, but this article is an extra piece on two soldiers from the First World War with very different stories but who are not included on the church war memorial and would not otherwise have been covered.*

The first soldier appears only on the Goldington Green war memorial as C R Manning. This seems to relate to **Private Reginald Charles Manning**, who was known as Charles which probably explains the reversed initials on the memorial.

Charles was not a volunteer soldier but was one of the first to be conscripted in early 1916 when he was living in Ely, having been born in Hertfordshire and was never a Goldington resident.

On 21 April 1916 Charles came before his local urban tribunal in Ely applying for exemption from conscription on the grounds of his trade as a 'marine store dealer' (effectively a scrap merchant). His application was unsuccessful.

Charles duly joined the 10<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Sherwood Foresters in November 1916 and reached France in April 1917. He was killed in action near Ypres on **14 July 1917** aged around 24.

His next of kin was given as his wife Florence of Park Row, Goldington and this is presumably the link that leads to the war memorial inclusion. Charles and Florence had three children.

By contrast, **Captain Francis John Newton Dunne** was most definitely a soldier by choice. But he is not included on either of the Goldington Green memorials. Instead he has the distinction of being our only WWI grave in St Mary's churchyard.

Francis was born in Chichester around 1888 as the son of Rev Francis William Bradney Dunne and his wife Henrietta. The Rev Dunne later served as vicar at St Mary's 1896-1922 and the young Francis would have moved to Goldington at that time. It was the Rev Dunne who presided at the dedication of the original memorial board.

Francis (jnr) joined the army young, a bit of a family tradition, and the London Gazette records that 'Francis John Newton Dunne, Gentleman' became a Second Lieutenant of the Durham Militia / Durham Light Infantry on 28 January 1905 when he would have been only 15 years old.

From the scant war records we know he landed in France on 2 October 1915 so certainly saw service during the war.

Francis married Constance Eda Stroud in 1915 and hers is a tragic tale. Originally Constance Eda Simpson, she had previously married an American named Edward Stroud in 1907 and made regular crossings of the Atlantic but the couple divorced in America in 1914.

On 7 May 1915 Constance was on board the Lusitania when it was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sank. Constance was rescued after being in the water for 36 hours but her three year old daughter Helen was lost and Constance was left deeply troubled.

When Francis fell ill in late 1918 Constance nursed him. Francis died at 11pm on Monday **9 December 1918**, aged 31, at his home in Kensington, London from influenza and pneumonia (potentially brought on by conditions in France but we have no definite links). Constance was very distressed and it seems she ingested some form of narcotic, lost consciousness and subsequently also died by 9am the next morning. The inquest states that she had not eaten for six days previously.

She is buried in St Mary's churchyard beside Francis. Their deaths left behind a one year old son, Terence.

**Andrew Dennison**