

Stories of the Great War

Frank Newman 1861 – 1916

At the outbreak of war in 1914 many former soldiers were recalled to their regiments, assisting with the battalions of the Regular Army who were posted to the Western Front; many regiments were recalled from service overseas. Other former regulars assisted in the training of local volunteers to Kitchener's Army; there are records of Minchinhampton men receiving such training. One man who had overseen the Rifle Range in Lower Island in the years before the War was Frank Newman, steward of the Church Club.



Born at Downton, in south Wiltshire, Frank joined the Army about 1881. He saw service with the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment firstly for a period of nineteen years, notably in the Egyptian Campaign. In 1894 he married Alice, twelve years his junior, and they raised five children, Ernest, Douglas, Leslie, Stephanie and Iris. Ernest was one of twins but his twin, a girl, died at birth. Their third son, Leslie, died when he was two; he was run over by a horse and cart and died of his injuries. As a service wife Alice travelled with him and a sixth child, Doreen, was born in South Africa, but died there a few months later. Frank had extended his service with the regiment and rose to the rank of Sergeant, finally leaving in 1907 when he became steward of the Church Club in Minchinhampton. The family is shown as living here in the 1911 Census; Iris was born the following year.

Frank was fifty-two when the Great War broke out. After serving in the Regular Army each man was assigned a period of Reserve Duty, but this obligation had an upper age limit; Frank should have been too old. However, it seems likely that Frank re-enlisted with his old regiment and served with the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion at Maidstone and Chatham. Frank died of a stroke in 1916; he was 54 and his burial in Maidstone Cemetery is recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Alice was by this time living at Terrace Cottage, London Road, Stroud and according to her granddaughter became a District Nurse to support the family. Another member of Holy Trinity, Harry Young, had become caretaker of the Church Club; he too enlisted and died in 1916. By a strange twist of fate, Frank's name is recorded on the War Memorial, which stands on the site of his former home in the High Street.

