

COLLINGHAM IN THE GREAT WAR

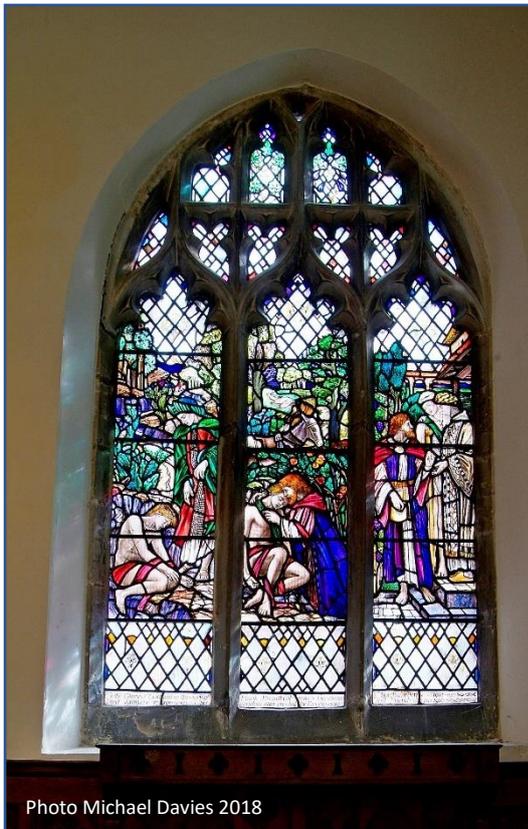
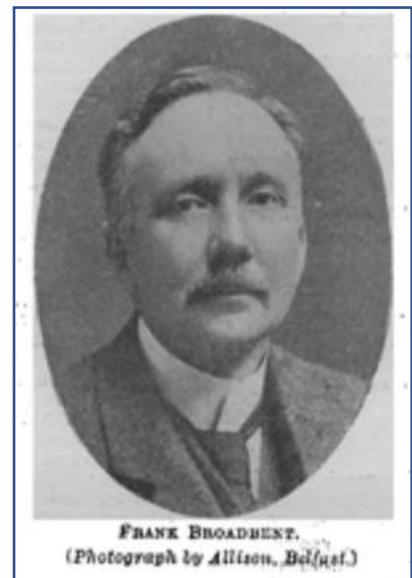
Key Figures

There are certain names that crop up time and time again during the war time period in Collingham. This is an attempt to put a few of them into context.

Dr Frank Broadbent (1860-1915)

Frank Broadbent was the son of the previous Collingham surgeon John Broadbent. Broadbent graduated in 1883 and went into practice with his father the same year, taking over altogether in 1894. He was medical officer for the Newark Union and had several articles published. Married with two daughters, the doctor still found time to participate fully in village life. He served as chairman of the North Collingham Parish Council, was a churchwarden at All Saints 1905-1915, a member of the cricket club as well as being toastmaster of the Collingham Farmers' Club. A forward-thinking man, he used his position to fight for the right of Newark people to

be provided with clean water. His sudden death in 1915, aged 54, had a huge impact on the village; his steadying influence was a great loss to the community in this testing time. A stained glass window dedicated to his memory (pictured left) can be seen in All Saints Church.



Edith Brooks (1874-1958)

Daughter of John and Gertrude Wigram of 'The Manor', Edith was privately educated and raised in a privileged setting. However, with that privilege came a sense of Christian duty and serving others (her maternal grandfather was Bishop Henry MacKenzie, her paternal grandfather, Joseph Wigram was the Bishop of Rochester). Edith married William Nathaniel Brooks, a land agent, in St John the Baptist Church on 29th May 1900. The couple lived in 'Brooklands' on Low Street, which was then a large house with extensive gardens where the 'Brooklands Close' estate now sits. The Brooks had a son, John. Like many middle-class women, Edith Brooks was involved in organising village and church activities & was noted as a supporter of women's suffrage. She donated the gift of the Roll of Honour to North Collingham Church in 1917 and helped on the Working Party¹ committee.

Mary Browne (1850-1932)

Widow Mary Browne moved to Collingham sometime after the death of her husband, the vicar of St Mary the Virgin's Church in Plumtree, Nottingham, in 1906. She was a tenant of South Collingham House, vacated by landowner Charles Constable Curtis when he moved to Langford Hall c 1909. Mrs Browne was a generous benefactor (she descended from landed gentry - the Armitage of Farnley Hall, Leeds), permitting Dale Field to be used for sports events and Sunday School picnics and giving financial support to fundraising events for St John the Baptist Church's upkeep. She donated a hefty £50 (equivalent to about £5,000 today) towards the War Memorial Fund. South Collingham House was the meeting place for the Working Party during the war where she and her daughter **Dorothy Browne** (1881-1954) worked tirelessly to collect and send items of clothing etc to the Nottingham HQ. In 1922 she and Dorothy moved to Rutland House where she lived until her death in 1932. Both her sons were killed in the war. After Dorothy Browne's death, Rutland House was passed to Major Edward F P Armitage (1909-1995) and his wife Florence (1910-1997).



Charles Constable Curtis JP (1852-1936)

Landowner Charles Constable Curtis and his wife Edith (1857 – 1944) moved to Collingham around 1885. Their son, Thomas Lancelot Constable Curtis, was born in South Collingham House in 1888 and their daughter, Marjorie Elspeth, in 1893. Charles Curtis continued Thomas Smith Woolley Jr's

¹ For more on the Working Party see separate section on the website

tradition of allowing Collingham Cricket Club to use Dale Field for matches (although Curtis charged a small rent for this).



Charles Constable Curtis 1907 with
the 4th Volunteers 'F' Coy

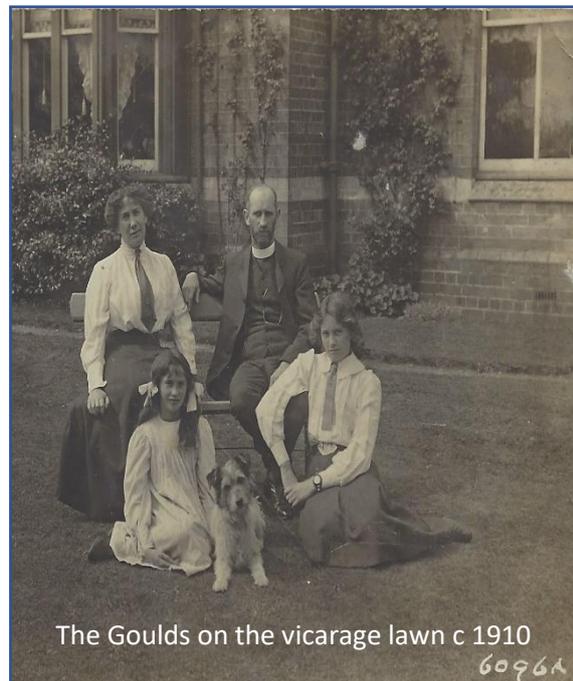
Around 1909/1910 he moved in to Langford Hall and lived there the rest of his life. Curtis had been an active member of the 4th Notts Volunteer Battalion based in Collingham and during the war he '*kindly put at their disposal the grounds of Langford Hall for drill practice.*'² He also served as the military representative on the Newark Rural Tribunals, showing little leniency to those who pleaded for exemption. Perhaps the fact that his only son was a professional soldier with the Coldstream Guards and his son-in-law, Oliver Sutton Nettlethorpe, was a lieutenant with the Rifle Brigade meant he didn't see why others should miss active service.

Canon Reginald Freestone Gould (1861-1939)

Canon Gould came from Peterborough to Collingham in 1906 with his wife, Isabella Agnes (1857-1951), two daughters Margaret (1897-1975) and Isabel AKA 'Tommy' (1903-1998) and a cook, Lizzie Sumner³. He was a proactive minister, establishing groups such as the Choral Society and Debating and Mutual Improvement Society as well as tending to his ministry. Many of his parishioners recalled attending garden parties and Sunday School treats in the grounds of the Vicarage.

Gould served on many committees and was chair of the War Memorial Committee for North Collingham, overseeing the fundraising and choosing of the memorials. Unfortunately, we do not have any parish newsletters for North Collingham during the war years as we do from South to detail his various roles. We do know his parish often joined up with South Collingham to

help with the Belgian Refugees and fundraising for the various good causes. How hard it was for him to baptise infants whose fathers would never return from active service or conduct the funerals of



The Goulds on the vicarage lawn c 1910

² Se 'The Newark Volunteers 1914-18' by E Ringrose 'Contribution by Mr Merry' Newark Library

³ Lizzie married George Clayton who was killed in 1918 and then his cousin, Alfred, who survived the war.

those who gave their lives, such as Nurse Elisabeth Hunt (June 1916) Pte. Harold Millns (December 1916) we'll never know. Even as late as June 1919 he was required to officiate over Driver Arthur Brompton, a professional soldier since the 1890s, who served all through the war only to die of exhaustion after it finished.

Canon Gould, like his counterpart in South Collingham, was a man of huge influence during his long tenure. He died after a collision on his bicycle on his way back from a funeral.

George Hind (1853-1926)

George Hind lived all his life at 1, Woodhill Road, first with his parents and then with his wife, Caroline Liley, whom he married a year after the death of his mother, in 1901, when he was 47 and Caroline 45. George was a tailor and a popular character in the village. Renowned for his sense of mischief, his nephew, George Longland recalled *'...he sat on a stool cross-legged and did all the sewing by hand – suits, coats and trousers were his speciality. He was a very witty and mischievous man. One of his pranks was to lay down in North Churchyard and wait for a man with a bowler hat on and remove it when he went past. Many a happy hour was spent in his shop talking about the past. He was a sergeant in the volunteers and went to camp with them every year. Portsmouth, Falmouth for two such journeys.'*⁴



Colour Sergeant Hind's passion for the Collingham 'F' Coy Volunteers, for which he was awarded a long service medal, saw him making a plea in the Newark Advertiser (Dec 9th 1914) for a similar corps to be raised again. *'There are many ways in which civilians not eligible for active military duty can serve their country...'* After a slow start, Collingham did indeed become one of the centres for a civilian's volunteer battalion and Hind's experience during drills was invaluable.

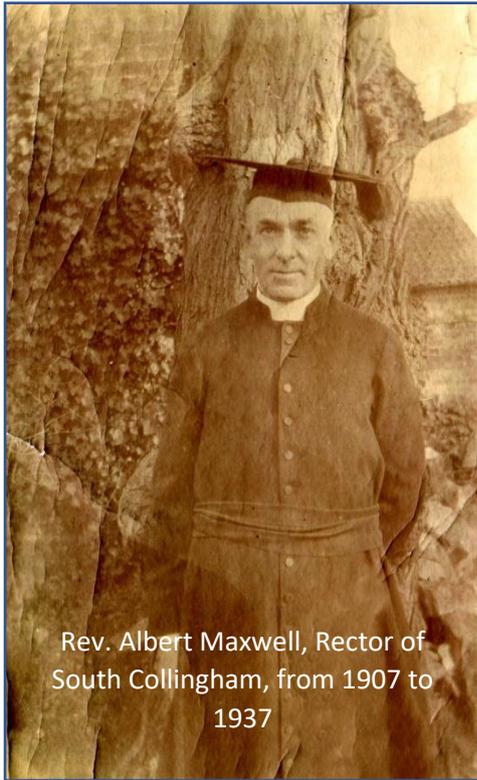
George Hind served the village well throughout the war. From 1915 – 1917 he was chairman of North Collingham Parish Council, a role that led to him labelling the Girls and Infants' School a 'death-trap' and calling for something to be done about it. He was also on the Xmas Parcel Fund and North Collingham War Memorial Committee.

Rev Albert Maxwell (1870-1937)

Rev. Albert James Maxwell was born in Brixton, South London. In 1907 he became the rector of St John the Baptist after the death of the previous incumbent, Rev. George Fosbery. Married to Edith Byass in 1896, the couple had two children – Charles Edward Leslie (always known as 'Ted' or 'Teddy') born in 1897 and Edith Agnes Mary born in 1903.

⁴ See George Longland's memoirs CDLHS EF/AA/LON

Maxwell began writing and publishing the South Collingham Parish Newsletter in 1909 and it is largely thanks to these we know so much about



Rev. Albert Maxwell, Rector of South Collingham, from 1907 to 1937

South Collingham during the war years. Maxwell was an imposing figure who spent much of his time in the run up to the war seeking to improve the fabric of St John the Baptist and the Rectory. He served on many committees including the Newark Board of Guardians (workhouse), Public Assistance Committee, Collingham Parish Council, Collingham Education Committee. He was Chair of Brough Education Committee and served on the Newark Rural District Council 'for 25 years' – (1912 -1937) as well as being a governor of the Lilley and Stone School Foundation.

During the war years he and Edith took charge of the welfare of the Belgian Refugees, using his newsletters to castigate those parishioners who showed hostility towards these 'guests'. He was also critical of conscientious objectors (a reference to Bertie Walton on Woodhill Road) who 'hid behind loopholes' to avoid doing their duty. His tributes to the fallen were

warm and full of compassion, giving insights into the characters of the soldiers from his parish that newspapers did not.

William Coape Oates (1862-1942) JP DSO

The Great War was made for men like Oates. Oates, of Chaise House, Besthorpe, was a military man through and through and one of the first to step forward, despite being in his fifties and having taken early retirement after being badly injured when serving with the Royal Muser Fusiliers during the Boer War (1902).

The years leading up to the first world war had not been easy. He'd had an acrimonious separation from his wife, Louise Annie Mary Kerr (1868-1943), resulting in divorce on the grounds of her adultery, in 1913. Oates had been granted full custody of their two children, John Sherbrooke (1894-1978) and Thelma Ruby (1901-1975).



On September 14th 1914 he was made temporary Lieutenant-Colonel of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, one of the 'new' battalions created to support the regular army⁵. Having such a

⁵ The 2/8th were part of the 46th (North Midland) Division

well-known figure in charge of the local regiment did wonders for recruitment in the village. When Oates led a route march from Newark to Collingham on October 29th the entire village turned out to welcome them. That evening he gave a stirring speech in a full-to-capacity Public Hall. *'Collingham must not hang back,'* he told the audience. *'Any young man in this room might be proud to enlist among the men of the 8th Reserve battalion.'*

One who enlisted was farmer's son Robert Hunt. Injured during the 2/8th battalion's fated engagement in the Dublin Uprising of April 1916 he wrote to his parents: *'The street fighting has been awful. The rebels have had machine guns. We have lost lots of officers and men. When we started to fight we had no artillery so we were mown down. There were five lads with me and I am the only one with a whole skin. We should have lost more, only we had a good leader, Captain Oates.'*⁶

The 'good leader' would have his skills severely tested on the Western Front where the traditional methods of warfare soon became obsolete. Nevertheless, the 2/8th always went forward with *'a spirit and dash that showed they were fit to take their place beside the finest troops in the army.'*⁷

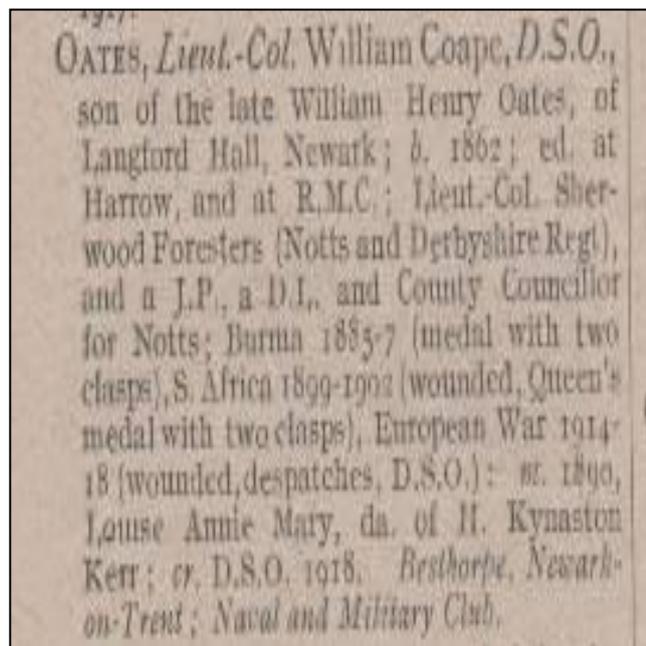
Oates was invalided home in October 1917 with PUO (Pyrexia of Unknown Origins) but not before being mentioned in dispatches for the action in Ypres for which he was awarded a DSO. The 2/8th Sherwood Foresters was disbanded at the beginning of 1918.

Of interest was that Oates' son, John, fought alongside him throughout the war and was awarded a DSO at Buckingham Palace on the same day (January 1918).

Lt Col Oates unveiled the North Collingham War Memorial Cross on November 30th 1919 and gave an address afterwards.

Post-war he lived quietly in Chaise House, keeping himself active by serving as a JP and county councillor and following his beloved cricket (he'd been a top-class cricketer and made five appearances for Nottinghamshire in the 1880s).

He died in 1942 in his eightieth year.



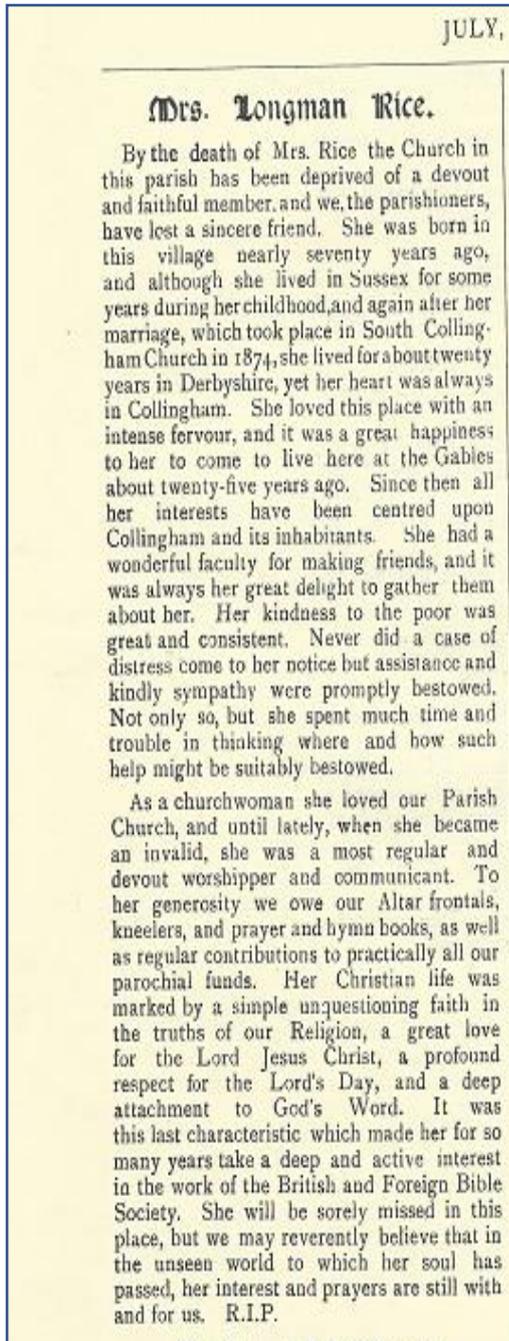
⁶ Collingham in the Great War T Frecknall p 74 Robert Hunt would be killed only a few months later, on October 25th,

⁷ Quote from Brigadier General EWSK Maconchy CO 178th Brigade (Sherwood Foresters) 1919

Jane Longman Rice (1849-1918)

Although her role during the Great War is not known, it seems only fitting to include one of the noted women of South Collingham during the period.

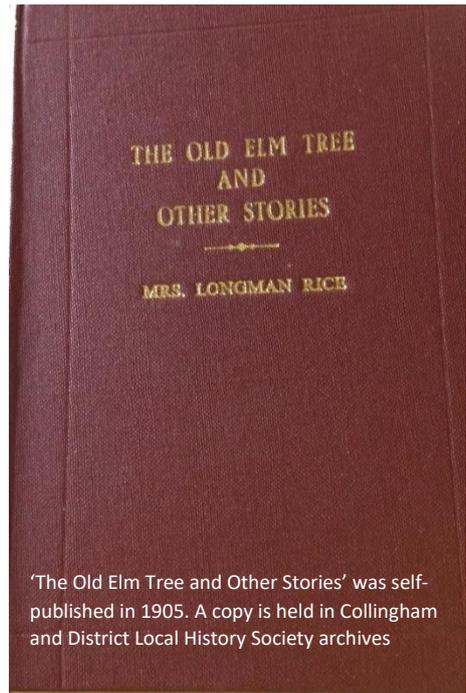
Jane Longman Rice née Johnson (1849 – 1918) was born in Collingham to farmer William and Elizabeth Ann Johnson. She married Robert Longman Rice, a district manager on the railways, in 1881, aged 32, and lived in Duffield, Derbyshire. The couple appear to have moved back to Collingham by the 1891 census where they lived at 'The Gables' on the High Street, South Collingham. Robert died in 1900.



Jane Longman Rice was a stalwart of the South Collingham Church and a great benefactor

to the village. She appears to have been an astute business woman, too, as she owned several properties in South Collingham and was listed as a 'principal landowner' in the 1912 & 1916 trade directory. It is on South Collingham Parish Newsletters her name crops up time and time again and Rev. Maxwell's tribute to her in July 1918 reveals a generous spirit.

Left: Rev. Maxwell's tribute to Jane Longman Rice July 1918 c/o Collingham and District Local History Society



'The Old Elm Tree and Other Stories' was self-published in 1905. A copy is held in Collingham and District Local History Society archives

John Wigram (1846-1943)

John Wigram was born in Winchester. His grandfather was Sir Robert Wigram, a shipbuilder from Walthamstow and his father (one of 23 children) was Joseph Wigram, Bishop of Rochester. A surveyor, John Wigram came to Collingham to work for Smith Woolleys Land Agency around 1870. The 1871 census sees him as a lodger in the Manor House (then occupied by John Milnes). By 1881 Wigram has gone from lodger to owner and was very much the archetypal 'Lord of the Manor' from then on. Around 1877 he became a senior partner at Smith Woolleys and the firm was known as Smith Woolley & Wigram until his retirement in 1916.



Above: John Wigram at his desk in The Manor on Low St c 1930. Photo c/o CDLHS Archives

Unsurprisingly, given his background, John Wigram was heavily involved with St John the Baptist Church, serving as churchwarden for many years and funding much of the restoration work between 1907 and 1913. During the war, he and his wife Gertrude Eliza MacKenzie (1850-1929) supported many good causes and hosted garden parties for school children on several occasions. John Wigram's skills as an accountant proved useful as he was auditor of the Working Party funds, treasurer of the War Savings Committee and in 1919 treasurer of the South Collingham War Memorials Committee; his meticulous recording of the memorial donations can be seen in Nottinghamshire Archives (ref: PR 16 440). Like Mrs Browne he also donated generously to the war memorial fund, matching her £50 in two deposits of £25.00.

Henry Wigram (1873-1926)

John and Gertrude's son, Henry Wigram, also a land agent and surveyor at Smith Woolley & Wigram, lived at The Lodge on Newark Road with his second wife, Beatrice, and two of his children, Daphne (1899-1979) and Lorne (1904-1987) from his first marriage. He was sworn in as a Chief Special Constable, tasked with patrolling the streets of Collingham at night to keep a watch out for enemy activity.

Constance Woolley (1850-1938) OBE

The fourth child of at least 12 children of Thomas Smith Woolley Jr (1819-1888) and Maria Lamb (1823-1904). Although Wigram was the most influential man in South Collingham by 1919, the Smith Woolleys had been the most influential family since the 1820s when Thomas Smith Woolley Snr established his land agency firm. However, in the period between 1913 to 1920 the family had been dealt a series of blows, starting with the sudden death of Constance's brother and leading light Thomas Cecil Woolley (1853-1913) in a cycling accident. Shortly after his death, their sister, Francis Woolley also died (1848-1914). Then came the war and the first Collingham casualty was Ronald Aitchison, Constance's youngest sister Rose's 19-year old son (killed 14th December 1914) and then

another nephew, her brother Reginald's son, Hugh (Thomas Hugh Corbett Woolley, who died of wounds 27th April 1917.

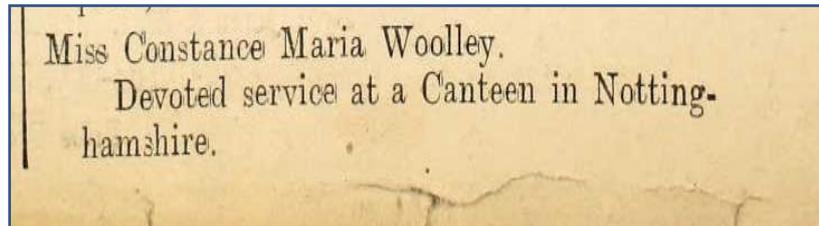
A spinster, Constance had lived for a while in London in the 1890s with her sister, Alice, a talented artist (died 1905 aged 58). Her occupation was given as 'medical assistant' and 'medical secretary' in 1891 and 1901 – something that must surely

have been of practical use during World War One.

Upon her return to Collingham around 1900, she lived first in the Burnt House and then, after 1913, in The Small House on the corner of The Green/Church Street left vacant following Cecil's death. She lived there with her sister Emily (1846-1923) until her own death in 1938.

Constance had a busy war, throwing herself into the British Red Cross Working Party, raising funds for the War Effort and sending parcels to the Central Depot in Nottingham, for which she received an OBE in March 1920.

Constance Woolley also served as a governor on the Girls' and Infants' School Board. A note in the Collingham Archives (Smith Woolley Collection EF/MM) quotes her being remembered riding round Collingham on a tricycle.



Above: Listing of Constance M Woolley's OBE p. 3869 Supplement to the London Gazette March 30th 1920

