

REGINALD ERNEST WEBSTER



REGINALD WEBSTER was born in Oxford in 1891. At the time of the 1901 Census he was 9 and living with three siblings and his mother, Isabella Webster, in Cowley St John parish. Mrs Webster worked as a laundress, her eldest son, Leonard, was 18 and a shop assistant, as was the eldest daughter, Margaret aged 16. Reginald was still at school and the youngest member of the family was a one year-old daughter, Beatrice.

By the 1911 Census, the family were living at 26 Essex Street, off the Cowley Road and Reginald, aged 19, was working as a grocer's assistant. At the same time Matilda Payne, aged 17, was living at home with her family at 33a St Giles. Her mother, Clara Payne was a widow running a fruiterer's business at that address. In July 1914 the St Giles' Church marriage registers record that Reginald Ernest Webster and Matilda Florence Payne were married in the church.

The *Parish Magazine* records the marriage, and also the baptism in early 1915 of their first son – Leonard Reginald. Reginald gave his occupation as grocer's assistant: the family were living with Matilda's mother at 33a St Giles.

The date of Reginald's enlistment is not clear but it was probably late in 1915 or early 1916. He seems to have been first in the Ox & Bucks Light Infantry, before joining the 2nd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was reported missing on 3 September 1916, in the midst of the fighting on the Somme. He was 25. His body was never found and his name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing. He died on the same day as two other St Giles' men – Frederick Hastings and Frederick Skinner.

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It is poignant to read in the *Parish Magazine* of the baptism, in November 1916, of Reginald and Matilda's second son named Jack Ronald. The baby had been born on 6 October 1916, a month after his father's death. Both sons grew up and married in Oxford in the 1940's. It is believed that Jack Ronald was a boy chorister in St Giles' Choir.