

Banstead Remembers

Two local men died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Over 72,000 names are engraved on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme; Harry and Maurice are among eight Banstead and Burgh Heath men to be commemorated there.



Private Harry Bates

of 60 Diceland Road

2nd The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

Killed at Mametz

Aged 22

L/Cpl Maurice Furse

of The School House,

The Green, Burgh Heath

1st Queen Victoria's Rifles

Killed at Gommecourt

Aged 27



FRIDAY 1st JULY

at All Saints Church, Banstead

11:50am: a short service of remembrance will be held

Noon: a church bell will be tolled 100 times

The churchyard flag will be raised to half mast at 7:30am and lowered at 5:30pm

Please come and remember the sacrifice that our
local community made in World War One.

We will remember each one

Private Harry Bates

60 Diceland Road

Harry Bates was born in Walpole Road, Teddington, on 8th July 1893. He was the youngest son of John and Mary Bates. Harry lived in Teddington for most of his life and grew up to become a fishmonger's assistant.

Harry's sister, Kit, and her husband, Will Tree, moved to Banstead in 1913. They lived at "Edith Villa", number 60, Diceland Road, where the Tree family continued to live for many years afterwards. Harry moved in with them, renting a bedroom for 12 shillings a week, and was apprenticed as a carpenter and joiner.

He joined the Army at Kingston on 22nd March 1915. At 5ft 1¾in, he was shorter than the minimum height (5ft 3in), but he was accepted anyway. Harry chose to serve with The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) and after completing his training, he was posted to the 2nd Battalion. He sailed to France on 13th July.

Harry fought at the Battle of Loos in September 1915, where a quarter of the 2nd Queen's men were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. They moved down to Picardy in December and in July 1916 they fought in the Battle of the Somme, an attack across a 16-mile front that aimed to relieve pressure on the French at Verdun.

Harry's brigade, the 91st Infantry Brigade, were ordered to take the village of Mametz. The first wave went over the top at 7:30am and captured the German trenches protecting the village. The 2nd Queen's were in support and held the British trenches. At 9:50am, Harry's company advanced across No Man's Land, coming under heavy machine-gun fire and suffering "a good many" casualties. They cleared the trenches of the remaining defenders and watched as Mametz was captured, one of the few successes of the day.

Between 1st and 4th July, the 2nd Queen's lost 46 men killed, 233 wounded and 41 missing. Harry was posted as missing and was presumed to have died on 1st July.

Harry is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, on the Banstead War Memorial, on the Hampton Wick War Memorial and on the wooden panels in the Lady Chapel in All Saints, Banstead. He was 22.

Lance Corporal Maurice Furse

The School House, The Green, Burgh Heath

Maurice Furse was born in Burgh Heath on 17th October 1888. He was the only child of William and Elizabeth Furse. The Furses had recently moved to Burgh Heath from Devon and William was the schoolmaster at the Wesleyan school that used to stand on The Green. The family lived in the School House.

Maurice attended the Wesleyan school before going to Whitgift when he was eleven and, later, to the Croydon Borough Secondary School in Selhurst. He left school aged 18 and became a clerk for the Sutton District Water Board, renting a room in the School House from his parents for 5 shillings a week.

Maurice joined the 1/9th Battalion of the London Regiment, the 1st Queen Victoria's Rifles, in the autumn of 1914. The Q.V.R. were a Territorial battalion and drew their recruits mostly from middle class London men. Many of the lower ranks, such as Maurice, would have been officers in the Army's other regiments.

Maurice arrived at Ypres on 9th May 1915. It wasn't long before he got his first taste of life on the Western Front: Maurice's company were gassed and shelled within a few days of his arrival as they were marching off to a digging fatigue on Hill 60. They left the Flanders mud behind them in the summer of 1915 and moved south to the relative peace and quiet of the chalk downland along the Somme.

On 1st July 1916, the Q.V.R. took part in 56th (London) Division's diversionary attack on the village of Gommecourt, at the northern tip of the Somme battlefield. At 7:30am, they began to advance through a smokescreen and within half an hour they had captured the German trenches that were their first objective but they could not capture Gommecourt itself. They were cut off from resupply and reinforcement by a fierce artillery barrage and were eventually driven back to the British trenches in the evening. They suffered heavy losses. There were 6,769 British casualties at Gommecourt, a high price to pay for a diversion.

Maurice was reported as wounded and missing. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, in St Mary's, Burgh Heath, and on the wooden panels in the Lady Chapel in All Saints. He was 27.