

# *Banstead Remembers*

*Private Albert Sycamore  
of Gerrards Lodge, Garratts Lane*

*4<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Regiment  
Killed in Action, aged 29  
11<sup>th</sup> February 1917*



## SATURDAY 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY

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

Albert Sycamore was a gardener who lived and worked at Gerrards Lodge, on the corner of Garratts Lane and the Brighton Road. Albert went missing in fighting on the River Ancre in February 1917; his body was not found. He left a widow and four young children.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Private Albert Sycamore of Gerrards Lodge, Garratts Lane*

Albert Edward Sycamore was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1887. He was the son of William, a blacksmith, and Catherine Sycamore of West Street, Ewell. Albert was baptised at St Mary's, Ewell, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1887.

Young Albert attended Ewell Infants School and then moved up to the Boys School in West Street in 1894. He left in 1901, aged 13½, to go to work as a house boy.

Albert became a gardener and married Beatrice Richings at Maidenhead in 1909. They made their home at 14 Montague Terrace, Collingwood Road, Sutton, and had a son, George, in 1910 and a daughter, Ivy, in 1912.

In 1914, the Sycamores moved to Banstead, living in a cottage in the grounds of Gerrards Lodge on the junction of Garratts Lane and the Brighton Road, where the Ford garage is today. Albert worked there as a gardener for Arthur Brown, an auctioneer and surveyor. Another son, Edward James, arrived in April that year.

Albert joined the Army on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1915 under the Derby Scheme and chose to serve with the Bedfordshire Regiment. The married men in his age group were mobilized on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1916 and Albert would probably have reported to the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Bedfordshires for basic training.

Following the losses early on in the Somme campaign, another reserve battalion, the 4<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshires, were mobilized in July 1916 and reached France later in the month. Albert probably joined them in the autumn. The 4<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshires served with the Royal Naval Division on the Western Front and fought at Beaucourt in November in the Battle of the Ancre, the last phase of the Battle of the Somme.

February 1917 found the 4<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshires on the north bank of the River Ancre, east of Beaucourt. The line here consisted of outposts in shell-holes. Small advances by the units either side of the Bedfordshires left a dogleg in the line that necessitated the 4<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshires move by about 200 yards. At 8:55pm on 11<sup>th</sup> February, two companies formed up on a line taped out on the ground behind the British-held shell-holes. Ten minutes later, under the protection of a creeping barrage moving at 100 yards every 3 minutes, they got to their feet and advanced. Poor reconnaissance meant that they were unaware that the ground they were advancing through was strewn with wire and the left of the advance got caught up and came under heavy machine-gun fire. Another company was committed and the Bedfordshires reached their objective and had consolidated their position by 3a.m. on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Albert was killed in action on 11<sup>th</sup> February. He was 29 years old. He and Beatrice's fourth and final child, Mabel Cathleen, was born four months later.