

Banstead Remembers

*Private George Nash
of 17 Shrubland Road*

*1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers
Served in France
Killed in action, aged 35*



THURSDAY 13th APRIL

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

The Battle of Arras is often forgotten, overshadowed by the fighting that took place before it on the Somme and afterwards at Passchendaele. Eight men from Banstead and Burgh Heath were killed in the battle. George was one of three Banstead men to lose their lives on 13th April 1917.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private George Nash of 17 Shrubland Road

George Nash was born on 27th December 1882 in Welwyn, Hertfordshire, and baptised at his local church on 13th May 1883. He was the eldest son of George and Elizabeth Nash (nee Cole).

When George was an infant, his family moved to Hackney, where his dad worked as a boot finisher. They returned to Hertfordshire, to New Street, Codicote, when George was between 10 and 18 years old.

Following the deaths of his parents in 1905-06, George came to live with his Uncle William and his young family in Banstead. They lived at one of a pair of semi-detached villas known as Park View Cottages in Shrubland Road; their house is now number 17. George worked as a labourer on the roads for the Epsom Rural Council, who employed several men who lived nearby in Pound Road, including Alfred Skelton, who died on the same day as George. George later moved round the corner to Diceland Road (the house number is unknown) and became a groom and gardener.

On 19th October 1914, George attested with the East Surrey Regiment at Wimbledon. He was 32 years and 10 months old but took three years off his age and claimed to be 29. His medical records show that he was 5ft 7½in tall with good physical development, good vision and a chest expansion of 3½ inches. He signed up for four years service as a Territorial, agreed to serve overseas if called upon to do so (it wasn't compulsory to take that option and many men signed up for home service only) and was posted to the 2/5th (Territorial) Battalion as a private soldier.

The 2/5th Battalion began training at Windsor in November 1914 and then moved to Tunbridge Wells in Spring 1915. They worked on the North Downs above the village of Wrotham, Kent, where the London Defence Positions (which included the mobilisation centres at Reigate Fort and Box Hill) were being activated. After being billeted in Reigate during the winter of 1915-16 and guarding the Kent coast on the Isle of Thanet in the summer of 1916, George spent two months in hospital in Tonbridge in the winter of 1916-17. He was finally sent to France in mid-March 1917 to join the 1st East Surrey Regiment but found himself attached to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers on 1st April.

He joined his new battalion as they were completing their training for the Battle of Arras, practising advancing behind a creeping barrage. The battle started on 9th April and impressive gains were made at Vimy Ridge and along the River Scarpe. The Inniskillings were in reserve for the first few days and remained in camp. They then came up into support near the village of Monchy-le-Preux on 13th April. George is reported to have been killed in action that day but no casualties were recorded in the Battalion's war diary and it is possible that the date of death is incorrect. Three days later, the Inniskillings were holding the firing line, a series of outposts near Monchy which they were trying to connect into a continuous trench, when 6 men were reported to have been killed. One of those men is unaccounted for and it may well be that George was the missing man who lost his life on 16th April. He was 35 years old.