

Banstead Remembers

Private Laurence Mansfield

4 Green's Cottages, Burgh Heath

1st East Surrey Regiment

Served in France

Killed in Action, aged 28



MONDAY 8th MAY

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

Laurence Mansfield, a gardener from Burgh Heath, served on the Home Front as a Territorial soldier before being sent to France in 1916. He was killed at Fresnoy during the Battle of Arras and has no known grave.

Please come and remember the sacrifice made in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Laurence Mansfield 4 Green's Cottages, Burgh Heath

Laurence Wilfred Mansfield was born on 12th November 1888 in Burgh Heath. He was the son of Alfred and Ann Mansfield, who had moved to Burgh Heath from Impington, Cambridgeshire, just a couple of years earlier. They lived at 4 Green's Cottages, which still stands today. Once the right-hand cottage in of a row of seven facing the pond, the left-hand cottage (no.10) stood where 38 The Green is now.

Alfred was a jam boiler and the Mansfields had come to Burgh Heath to work in Mr Hodson's jam factory at North Tadworth Farm, which made fruit preserves for sale in London. When the jam factory closed in the mid-1900s following a legal dispute with the Colmans of Nork Park, Alfred became a gardener at one of the nearby big houses, as did Laurence, who probably worked alongside his father.

Laurence was still living with his widowed father when war broke out. He joined the Territorials on 25th October 1914 and served with the 2/5th East Surrey Regiment.

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, digging trenches that formed part of the London Defence Positions (which included the mobilisation centres at Reigate Fort and Box Hill), a pre-war defensive scheme conceived in the days when a French invasion seemed a possibility and which was now implemented to protect London from a new enemy. After being billeted in Reigate during the winter of 1915-16, they guarded the Kent coast on the Isle of Thanet. In the summer of 1916, drafts of men began to be sent to France.

The 1st Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment was in Picardy, fighting on the Somme, during the summer and autumn of 1916 and needed reinforcement following heavy fighting in Delville Wood and at Longueval in July and in the Battles of Guillemont and Morval in September; they lost nearly half their men in the latter. They were sent north, to a quieter sector near Bethune, and drafts of men, including Laurence, arrived in November and December.

After holding the line at Cuinchy through the winter, new tactics and formations were practised in March 1917. The 1st East Surreys were an unused reserve for the attacks on Vimy Ridge on 9th April, the first day of the Battle of Arras, and took over trenches from the victorious Canadians a few days later. The Canadians advanced into Fresnoy on 3rd May and the East Surreys went into trenches there the following day. It was a vulnerable position and a German counterattack was launched at 3am on 8th May. The rifles of the East Surreys held them back at first but then one after the other became jammed with mud. They used grenades to drive the attackers back. The line was breached on the left, a second attack flooded through the gap and the East Surreys were attacked from the front, flank and rear. Despite fighting valiantly, the 1st East Surreys were practically wiped out and Laurence was killed. He was 28.