

Banstead Remembers

Private George Blunt

17 or 17a Lyme Regis Road

32nd Royal Fusiliers (East Ham)

Served in France and Belgium

Killed in Action, aged 35



THURSDAY 3rd AUGUST

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

George Blunt, a carpenter, was a stalwart of Banstead Cricket Club for many years, playing for both the 1st and 2nd XIs, and also played football for Banstead Institute. George was one of thirteen Banstead and Burgh Heath men who lost their lives in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele).

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

*We will remember **each** one*

Private George Blunt *17 or 17a Lyme Regis Road*

George Samuel Blunt was born on 18th November 1881 in Goudhurst, Kent. He was baptised at the parish church of St Mary's on 29th January of the following year.

He was the son of William, a bricklayer, and Anne and was one of the oldest of eight boys and four girls. William Blunt was one of several tradesmen who moved their families to Banstead in the late 1890s to build the new houses of Diceland, Ferndale, Shrubland and Lyme Regis Roads. The Blunts lived at either 8 or 9 Clifton Villas (now numbers 16 and 18), in Diceland Road, before moving to Darfield (now 36), Ferndale Road. George became a carpenter and decorator and probably worked with his dad.

George's first recorded appearance for Banstead Cricket Club was in a 2nd XI match against Banstead Victoria, when he batted at number 10 and was out for a duck. The records of 50 matches in which George, a bowler, played have survived and the final match in which he is known to have played was on 27th June 1914, just a month before war broke out, when he took 2 catches for the 2nd XI against Kingswood. He also played football, as a centre-back, for Banstead Institute.

George married Nellie Taylor, daughter of a hotel proprietor, at St. Paul's, Canonbury, Islington, on 24th August 1910. They made their home at a new maisonette in Lulworth Cottages, Lyme Regis Road; George may well have helped to build it. Both the upstairs and downstairs apartments shared the same number, 4, and are now numbers 17 and 17a. George and Nellie's upstairs or downstairs neighbour was Harry Harden, who George knew through the Cricket Club, and who would be mortally wounded just 2 miles away from, and 6 weeks before, George.

George joined the Army under the Derby Scheme on 7th December 1915 and was posted to the 6th (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). He had chosen to defer his service (a popular and understandable choice amongst our local men) and so remained at home until he was called up when conscription came into effect for married men in June 1916. After training in the summer, he was sent out to join the Royal Fusiliers' 32nd (East Ham) Battalion in France in October.

He was only in France for a few days before the Battalion moved up to Belgium. The winter of 1916-17 was spent holding the line at Vierstraat, in the south of the Ypres Salient. They underwent training in new formations and tactics during Spring 1917 and fought near St. Eloi on the successful first day of the Battle of Messines Ridge. July was spent in further training and on fatigues in preparation for the Big Push.

When the first day of the Third Battle of Ypres (often known as Passchendaele) came on 31st July, the 32nd Royal Fusiliers were in reserve. Rain fell in the evening and the battlefield quickly turned into a sea of mud. The Fusiliers moved into trenches near Klein Zillebeke on 3rd August. The German artillery was "*very active*" that day and the Battalion had several casualties, including George. He was 35 years old.