

Banstead Remembers

*Acting Corporal John Bateman
of Banstead Asylum*

*Royal Army Medical Corps
Served in Salonica, Greece
Died, aged 43*



FRIDAY 16th MARCH

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

John Bateman was an attendant at Banstead Asylum. He was an old soldier who re-enlisted in 1915 and served in a casualty clearing station on the Salonica (Thessaloniki) Front in northern Greece, where sickness, particularly malaria, was more of a danger than the enemy.

*We will remember **each** one*

Acting Corporal John Bateman of Banstead Asylum

Charles John Bateman, known as John, was born in Goswell Road, Clerkenwell, probably on 16th January 1875. He was the son of Charles and Annie Bateman (nee Daley) and was one of three children.

John's musician father died when John was just 5 years old and the children suffered a second blow soon afterwards when their mother went to prison for assaulting their landlady. John and his older brother were taken into care and ended up in a workhouse school.

They were both members of the school's brass band, which offered a way into the Army for boys at 14 years old as drummers and trumpeters. John and his brother both joined the West Riding Regiment as boy soldiers and became bandsmen. John served in the Army for twelve years and was stationed in West Indies, South Africa and the East Indies (Burma/Myanmar).

After leaving the Army in 1902, John worked as a musician and moved in with Alice Downs at 33 Collierston Road, Greenwich. They married in Greenwich in 1906 and made their home in Warlingham, where a son, Charles, was born. With a young family to support, John soon settled for the steady wages of a job as a daytime attendant (male nurse) at Banstead Asylum and they came to Belmont, living at 3 Laboratory Cottages, Downs Road, where a second son, Bernard, was born and then at 13 Clifton Avenue.

John (5ft 5½in tall and weighing a little under 9 stones) re-enlisted in the Army in May 1915, shortly after the birth of his daughter, Maisie. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and went to Greece with 31st Casualty Clearing Station in the autumn.

As the Serbians retreated south under the onslaught of the German and Bulgarian armies, the British, French and Russians dug in around the port city of Salonica (Thessaloniki) in neutral Greece. They arrived too late to help the Serbs but established a bridgehead from which Serbia might be liberated in future.

The extremes of climate and poor living conditions on the Macedonian Front took a heavy toll on the thousands of troops there. Diseases including malaria, dysentery and blackwater fever were rife and casualty clearing stations, like John's, were kept busy even when there was no fighting. Their job was to collect the sick and wounded several miles behind the front line, evacuate them by rail (after stabilising the serious cases enough for travel) and treating the lightly wounded and mildly sick themselves.

On 16th March 1918, John suffered a haemorrhage, as a complication of bronchitis, and died. He was 43 and left a widow and three young children.