

Banstead Remembers

Private Eddie Sopp

of 3 Diceland Road

1/1st Hertfordshire Regiment

Served in France

Died, aged 19



WEDNESDAY 11th 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

Eddie Sopp was a guard who lived in Diceland Road. Sent out to France shortly after his 19th birthday, he arrived just as the Germans launched their devastating *Kaiserschlacht* offensive. Before he could join his battalion, he fell ill with tonsillitis and died in hospital.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Eddie Sopp of 3 Diceland Road

Eddie Sopp was born in Banstead between November 1898 and January 1899. He was baptised at All Saints on 26th February.

Eddie was the son of Jason and Fanny Sopp (nee Stockwell). Jason was a gardener and labourer from Inkpen, Berkshire, and Fanny was a Banstead girl who grew up at Perrotts Farm. They married at St James's church, in Croydon, on 15th March 1880 and made their home at one of the cottages by Mint House, off Park Road.

Following the death in infancy of their first daughter, they moved north to Derbyshire, living in Chellaston, just outside Derby. They had five more children there, two of whom died young, and then came back to Banstead to live at Mint Cottages once more. Another daughter was born but they also lost one of their elder children.

The Sopps moved a short distance to 1 Apsley Cottages, one of a row of four cottages in Park Road, where Eddie was born. His father seems to have suffered a breakdown and the family moved to 3 Diceland Road when he had recovered.

Eddie probably went to school in the village and left at the standard school-leaving age of 14. He later became a guard (presumably on the railway). Aged 18, standing 5ft 9in tall and weighing just under 9 stones, Eddie was conscripted on 8th January 1917 and called up to begin training two months later.

After three months with the 25th Training Reserve at Parkeston, near Harwich, in Suffolk, Eddie and several others were transferred to the 27th Battalion at nearby Dovercourt. On 8th August they completed their initial training and joined 252nd (Graduated) Battalion at Colchester. Eddie's class stayed on the Home Front until March 1918, when the young men in their group had all reached their 19th birthday.

They sailed from Folkestone to Boulogne on the night of 18th/19th March and were sent to an infantry depot at Etaples. Eddie was posted to the 1/1st Hertfordshire Regiment two days later. 21st March 1918 was to be a fateful day for the British Army in France. The Germans launched Operation Michael, the first attack of their spring offensive, an almost successful attempt to win the war before the Americans arrived in numbers. Eddie's battalion spent 10 days fighting as the British fell back towards Amiens. In the chaos of the retreat, he was not sent to join them.

While he waited to join his battalion, Eddie fell ill with tonsillitis. With no antibiotics yet developed, the infection spread and he developed blood poisoning (septicaemia). Eddie died in No.2 General Hospital, at Le Havre, on 11th April 1918. He was 19.