

Banstead Remembers

WEDNESDAY 24th OCTOBER

A memorial service will be held at **11:50am** at All Saints Church for



*L/Corporal Willie Blaker
of 42 Oatlands Road*

*11th Royal Suffolk Regiment
Served in France and Belgium
Killed in Action, aged 19*

Willie Blaker was a packer who joined the Army in 1916. He served on the Home Front for two years before going to France in the spring of 1918. He was killed near Vendegies in the Hundred Days advance to victory. Willie was Banstead and Burgh Heath's last combat casualty in the Great War.

FRIDAY 26th OCTOBER

A memorial service will be held at **11:50am** at All Saints Church for

*Private Charlie Sharman
of 2 Salisbury Road*

*2/3rd Londons (Royal Fusiliers)
Served in France and Belgium
Died, aged 24*



Charlie worked at a local golf club. He joined the Army in 1914 and served on the Home Front with the East Surreys before being sent to France to join the London Regiment. He fought on the Somme, at Messines and in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), where he was captured. Charlie died in Germany, the first of our local soldiers to die of Spanish Flu.

*We will remember **each** one*

Banstead and the Hundred Days: Day 78 *Willie Blaker, 42 Oatlands Road, Burgh Heath*

William "Willie" Blaker was born in Reigate on 3rd January 1899 and baptised at St Mark's, Reigate. He was the son of John and Annie Blaker (nee Dudley).

The Blakers moved to Burgh Heath when Willie was 5 or 6 years old and lived first at 5 Memory Cottages before moving to 21 (now 42) Oatlands Road. Willie attended the Church of England School opposite St Mary's and then became a packer, perhaps working with his father in a local warehouse.

He joined the Army at Epsom on 10th November 1916 ahead of his 18th birthday and enlisted in the Yeomanry, the Territorial Force's cavalry. He served with the 2/1st Essex Yeomanry on the Home Front but was sent out to France in April 1918 during the manpower crisis caused by the Germans' March offensive. He was transferred to an infantry unit, the 11th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Suffolk Regiment.

The Allies began their war-winning Hundred Days offensive in August and Willie and his battalion followed up as the Germans made local withdrawals on the Franco-Belgian border. The Allies began to attack the strong fortifications of the Hindenburg Line on 26th September and breached the line in two places, triggering another German retreat. By the time Willie and the 11th Suffolks were trying to force a crossing over the River Ecaillon at Vendegies on the morning of 24th October, the Germans had already been in peace negotiations with the Americans for some time. The Suffolks crossed the river, captured the high ground beyond and held off German counterattacks. Willie Blaker was killed. He was 19 years old and was Banstead and Burgh Heath's final combat casualty. The war was over less than 3 weeks later.

Charlie Sharman, 2 Salisbury Road

Charles "Charlie" Sharman was born in Banstead on 24th November 1893 and was baptised at All Saints on 25th January of the following year. He was one of nine children born to James and Annie Sharman (nee Ewins). After Charlie left school, he worked at a golf club, probably at Banstead Downs.

He joined the Army in November 1914 and served on the Home Front with the 2/5th East Surreys before going to France on 1st September 1916, where he was transferred to the 21st Londons. He fought on the Somme that autumn and was then wounded in the shoulder at the Battle of Messines in June 1917. He returned to action with the 2/3rd London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) in September and fought at Poelcapelle in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), where he was captured.

Charlie spent the next year in captivity in Germany. When Spanish Flu hit Europe in the autumn, it spread rapidly through anywhere where people were crowded together, including prison camps such as the one in which Charlie was held. He fell ill and died on 15th October. He was 24 and was the first local serviceman to die of flu. *Owing to an error in Commonwealth War Graves records, Charlie is being commemorated on the 26th, 11 days after his actual date of death.*