

Banstead Remembers

MONDAY 19th NOVEMBER

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



*L/Seaman Harry Gurney
of 26 Diceland Road*

*HMS Birmingham
Royal Navy
Died, aged 33*

Harry joined the Navy at 14 and served aboard a number of different ships in peacetime. He fought in the Aegean Sea as the British and French tried to force a passage through the Dardanelles narrows in 1915, when his ship was sunk. He died at home from Tuberculosis caught while in the Navy.

FRIDAY 23rd NOVEMBER

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

*Nurse Muriel Spiers
of Copleigh, Burgh Heath*

*124 Surrey (Purley) V.A.D.
Served on the Home Front
Died, aged 21*



Muriel was the daughter of a wealthy merchant and volunteered to serve with the Red Cross during the war. She nursed soldiers and sailors in the military wards at Croydon General Hospital. She contracted Spanish Flu while at work, pneumonia developed and she died at home.

*We will remember **each** one*

Harry Gurney *26 Diceland Road*

Harry Gurney was born in Chipstead in Spring 1885 and was baptised at St Margaret's on 7th June. He was the son of Henry and Mary Ann Gurney (nee Laine). His father was a carpenter and chimney sweep from St John's Wood, London, and his mother was a housemaid from Chipstead. The Gurney and Laine families both lived in Banstead and were next-door neighbours in Pound Cottages, Pound Road.

Henry and Mary Ann married and moved to Chipstead, where Harry was born, and then came back to Banstead in 1886 to live in Devonshire Cottages, which used to stand on the corner of Garratts Lane and Shrublands Road. They later returned to the road in which they had met, Pound Road, before moving to 26 Diceland Road.

Harry worked as a gardener's boy after leaving school and then joined the Navy, aged 14½ but pretending to be 15, during the Boer War. After completing his training, he signed up for 12 years and was still serving when war broke out.

He was aboard HMS *Irresistible* when an Anglo-French naval force tried to fight their way through the narrow entrance to the Dardanelles Straits and open up a sea route to attack the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople (Istanbul). The minefields protecting the straits could not be cleared and *Irresistible* struck a mine and sunk soon afterwards. Most of the crew, including Harry, managed to abandon ship. He served in the Aegean Sea during the unrest in Greece before returning to Britain in 1917. He was discharged in the summer suffering from Tuberculosis.

Harry married Annie James and they made their home at 16 Elm Grove, Benhilton, Sutton. Sadly, Harry died from TB on 19th November 1918. He was 33.

Muriel Spiers *Copleigh, Burgh Heath*

Muriel Eleanor Spiers was born in Streatham on 3rd November 1897 and baptised at the Church of Immanuel, Streatham Common, on 23rd March the following year. She was the youngest daughter of Sidney and Eleanor Spiers. Her father was a merchant who imported goods from South Africa for sale in Britain and export overseas. The family came to Burgh Heath in the mid-late 1900s, to Copleigh, a house which her father had built. It no longer stands today but Copleigh Drive is named after it.

In August 1917, when she was 18 years old, Muriel joined No.124 Surrey (Purley) Voluntary Aid Detachment. The Red Cross and St John's volunteers of the V.A.D. worked as nurses and domestics in civilian and military hospitals. Muriel worked in the two military wards of the Croydon General Hospital. When Spanish Flu hit, there were 79 fatalities, nearly half of all deaths in the hospital in the whole of the war.

Muriel fell ill a week after the Armistice, having caught Spanish Flu while on duty. Pneumonia developed and she died 3 days later, on 23rd November, aged just 21.