

Banstead Remembers

*Private Stanley Skelton
of 44 Diceland Road*

*1st East Surrey Regiment
Served in France and Belgium
Died, aged 24*



SUNDAY 9th DECEMBER

at All Saints Church, Banstead

10:50am: a short service of remembrance will be held

11:00am: 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

Stanley Skelton was a carman and Special Reservist who was called up when war broke out. He fought on Hill 60 in 1915 and was wounded at Arras in 1916. Invalided out of the Army with a pension and a Silver War Badge, Stanley died at home of Spanish Flu in December 1918.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Stanley Skelton of 44 Diceland Road

Stanley Skelton was born on 18th November 1894 in Walton on the Hill and was baptised at St Andrew's, Kingswood, the following year. He was one of the youngest of Charles and Rosa Skelton's ten children.

The Skeltons were always on the move. They were probably living at 2 Withybed Corner, near The Bell, when Stanley was born but moved to Norrington's Cottages, in Tadworth, soon afterwards. They then moved to Sutton, where Stanley attended school in Crown Road, before coming to Banstead in 1906. They first lived in Ferndale Road and then put down roots at 10 Firtree Cottages, Pound Road, one of ten cottages that used to stand where the modern numbers 9-29 are today.

Stanley attended Banstead Village School. After leaving at the usual age of 14, he became a carman, driving a horse-drawn cart or van for Jeffrey Shove, a cowkeeper who ran a small farm on the northern side of Banstead High Street.

Stanley (5ft 2¾in, 8½ stones, blue eyes, fair hair and a scar on the right of his forehead) joined the Special Reserve in 1912. They were part-time soldiers, a bit like the Territorials except that they could be mobilised for service overseas. The other chief difference was that they received six months full-time training, a good way for young men to experience military life and decide whether they wanted to sign on for 12 years with the Army. Stanley was content to return to civilian life after his training period with the 4th East Surrey Regiment but was called up when war broke out in August 1914. It wasn't until April 1915, however, that he went out to Belgium to join the 1st East Surrey Regiment at Ypres.

He had only been with his battalion for a matter of days when they fought a successful but bloody defence of Hill 60, a strategically important height southeast of Ypres. The Battalion lost nearly 300 men killed or wounded in three days of fighting. They were sent down to the quieter country on the Somme soon afterwards and then moved up to Arras in early 1916. It was there, probably while on a working party, that Stanley was shot in the abdomen. He was evacuated for treatment and came home to England, being treated at a hospital in Birmingham for four months.

Stanley was discharged from the Army later that year with a pension and a Silver War Badge. He became a gas stoker, probably at Banstead Asylum, which had its own gas plant. He married Alice Daniels, a war widow, on 3rd August 1918 and moved into her home at 44 Diceland Road. Sadly, theirs was not to be a long marriage. Just four months later, on 9th December, Stanley was struck down by Spanish Flu. He was 24. Alice buried her second husband at All Saints just two years after she lost her first. She was already bringing up one daughter who had lost her father to the war and then 8 months after Stanley's death, she gave birth to his child, Kathleen. Happily, Alice married for a third time and she went on to have several more children.