

Banstead Remembers

*Private Edward "Jasper" Cross
of Well House Cottage*

*341st Mechanical Transport Company R.A.S.C.
Died in hospital at Weymouth, aged 42
8th March 1916*



TUESDAY 8th MARCH at All Saints Church, Banstead

7:30am: the churchyard flag will be raised to half-mast
11:55am: a short service of remembrance will be held
Noon: a church bell will be tolled 100 times

All are welcome to attend to help commemorate the 100th anniversary of Jasper's death. Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made 100 years ago in World War One.

We will remember them.

World War One 100

Private Edward "Jasper" Cross of Well House Cottage

Edward James Seal, known as "Jasper", was born in Carshalton in 1873. His mother, Harriet Seal, was a local girl. His father, Edward Cross, was from Suffolk and was lodging with Harriet's family. Jasper took his father's surname when his parents married on Christmas Day 1875.

Jasper started working at The Oaks in 1899, living at the Lower Lodge, on Woodmansterne Road. The Oaks was owned by Lucy James, widow of Harry James, who had made his fortune in South America. By 1901, Jasper was working as the "odd man domestic" or odd job man and probably living in the house. There was an E Cross playing cricket for Woodmansterne at about this time and perhaps it was Jasper.

In 1903, Jasper was living in Woodmansterne and working as a carpenter when he married Edith Eliza Bruce in Essex. They were both 30 years old.

A couple of years later they were living in a cottage at Oaks Farm, The Oaks estate's "model farmery", and in 1909 their first and only child, Evelyn, was born there. New-fangled motorcars were starting to replace horse-drawn carriages and Jasper became the chauffeur at The Oaks.

In 1911, the family moved closer to the house, living in the loft above the carriage-house, part of the stable block, which still survives today. Presumably the car was parked in the carriage-house but, by 1912, another building had been converted into a "capital" triple garage (with a petrol store, an inspection pit, heated by hot water and lit by acetylene gas) and the lodge by the gate on Croydon Lane had been turned into a chauffeur's cottage, where Jasper would have lived and acted as gatekeeper.

Following Mrs James' retirement to London and the impending sale of The Oaks to the Surrey Joint Poor Law Commission, Jasper and his family moved to the cottage at Well House, in Banstead (where Well House Flats stand today), where he probably worked as a chauffeur for Mrs Aileen Arthur.

In early 1915, the Army was desperately short of drivers and adverts were taken out to persuade motor drivers to sign up, pointing out the generous pay and benefits. The R.A.C. and A.A. wrote to their members urging them to let their chauffeurs go to the front and to hold their jobs open for them for when they had finished serving their country.

Jasper answered the call. He joined the 341st Mechanical Transport Company of the Royal Army Service Corps, where he most likely trained to drive a lorry. They were to sail to France and run the Fourth Army's ammunition dump.

Shortly before his unit left for France, Jasper fell ill with pneumonia and on 8th March 1916 he died in the Military Hospital at Sidney Hall, Weymouth, in Dorset. His wife, Edith, was at his bedside. He was 42.

Jasper is buried in All Saints churchyard in Banstead. He is commemorated on the Banstead war memorial and on the wooden memorial panels inside the church.