

Banstead Remembers

Nearly 20 local men died during the Battle of the Somme. Cuthbert and Thomas were killed in separate attempts to capture the village of Ovillers.

A short service of remembrance will be held on the 100th anniversary of each man's death, during which a church bell will be tolled 100 times.

SUNDAY 3rd JULY at 10.50am

at All Saints Church, Banstead



*2nd Lt. Cuthbert Buckle
of Agrapatana, Sri Lanka*

*6th Queen's Own Regiment
Killed at Ovillers, France
Aged 24*

THURSDAY 7th JULY at 11.50am

at All Saints Church, Banstead



*Private Thomas Gurney
of 26 Diceland Road*

*8th Royal Fusiliers
Killed at Ovillers, France
Aged 21*

Please come and remember the sacrifice that our
local community made in World War One.

*We will remember **each** one*

2nd Lieutenant Cuthbert Buckle *Agrapataana, Sri Lanka*

Cuthbert Buckle was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, on 5th April 1892. He was the eldest son of Cuthbert and Muriel Buckle. The Buckle family were major landowners in Banstead from the 17th Century onwards (Buckles Way is named after them) and Cuthbert senior lived in Banstead before emigrating to America in 1885, where he established a dog breeding business.

Cuthbert attended the Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia, between 1906 and 1910. He was a "rather backward student" but made up for it by being "persistent and steadfast... not brilliant but thoroughly good and honourable." After leaving school, he emigrated to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and ran a tea and rubber plantation with his uncle Archibald.

When war broke out, Cuthbert joined the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps, a volunteer defence force. They sailed to London to do their bit for the Empire. Upon arrival in December 1914, Cuthbert attested with the Rifle Brigade but he didn't serve with his new unit for long as he was granted a commission as a 2nd lieutenant in the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment in February 1915. He was posted to the 6th Battalion and arrived in France in October.

The 6th Royal West Kents missed the first day of the Battle of the Somme and spent the second day clearing trenches of wounded men and the dead. At 3:15am on the third day, 3rd July 1916, the leading two companies of the Royal West Kents, including the platoon led by Cuthbert, assaulted the German front line in front of the fortified village of Ovillers. They took the trench with little loss. The two supporting companies charged past them and into a "perfect hail of bullets" and the attack shuddered to a halt. The Kentish men held on to the old German front line but were cut off from reinforcement by machine-gun fire. Cuthbert remained cheerful and kept on smiling. He displayed "conspicuous courage and disregard of safety" and disobeying orders to get down, he walked up and down the parapet directing his men's rifle fire and grenade throwing. He was shot in the head and died.

Cuthbert was reported as missing and was later confirmed as killed in action. The 6th Royal West Kents lost 394 men killed, wounded or missing on that day. Only one officer from Cuthbert's company returned.

Cuthbert is buried in Serre Road Cemetery No.2 and he is commemorated on the Episcopal High School memorial, the Banstead war memorial and on the wooden panels in the Lady Chapel in All Saints. He was 24.

Private Thomas Gurney *26 Diceland Road*

Thomas Gurney was born in Banstead in the summer of 1894 and was baptised at All Saints on 26th August. His parents were Henry, a chimney sweep and carpenter, and Mary Anne. The Gurneys had eight children and Thomas was one of the youngest.

The family were living at Mint Cottages, near The Mint public house, at the time of Thomas's birth. They moved to Pound Road at the turn of the century and then to 26 Diceland Road sometime between 1911 and 1914.

Nothing is known of Thomas's schooldays but after completing his education, he worked as a gardener's boy, perhaps at nearby Garratts Hall.

When war broke out, Thomas joined the newly-formed 8th Royal Fusiliers (City of London) Regiment. He went to France with them in May 1915 and served alongside another local man, Fred Billing of Burgh Heath.

On 7th July 1916, the 36th Brigade were tasked with taking the village fortress of Ovillers. They were not the first and would not be the last to try. The Brigade on their right failed to capture German gun emplacements and so the 8th Royal Fusiliers were exposed to fire from machine-guns on their flank as well as enduring a barrage of shrapnel shellfire for the 500 yards of No Man's Land that they had to cross. The first wave of men was brought to a halt by the machine-guns, the second and third waves caught them up and they staggered on, losing men all the way. The fourth wave arrived and their momentum carried them into the German positions. They captured two strongly fortified lines of trenches and even got a foothold on the edge of the village. All of their officers were casualties and approximately 640 men were killed, wounded or missing.

Thomas was reported as missing on 7th July and it was later confirmed that he had been killed. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, on the Banstead war memorial, on the Garton memorial in the All Saints churchyard and on the panels in the Lady Chapel in All Saints. He was 21.