

Banstead Remembers

*Gunner Edwin Weller
of Firtree Cottages, Pound Road*

*73rd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery
Died of his wounds, aged 24*



MONDAY 31st OCTOBER

at All Saints Church, Banstead

11:50am: a short service of remembrance will be held

Noon: 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

Edwin married into the Skelton family, who lived in Pound Road. Charles and Elizabeth Skelton lost three of their sons and their son-in-law. Please come and remember the sacrifice that was made by our local families.

*We will remember **each** one*

Gunner Edwin Weller of Firtree Cottages, Pound Road

Edwin Albert Weller was born in Willesden, Middlesex, in mid-1891. He was the son of Edwin and Elizabeth and had ten brothers and sisters. The family moved to Carshalton when he was a baby and then to Belmont when he was five years old; the family lived at 25 Queens Road. His father worked as a foreman for Sutton Water and Edwin became a plumber's labourer and fitter for the water company.

In October 1912, Edwin married Jessie Minnie Skelton, the eldest daughter of Charles and Rosa Skelton. The Skeltons were originally from Walton-on-the-Hill but moved to 10 Firtree Cottages in Pound Road, Banstead, in the early 1900s. Jessie worked as a general servant in a house called The Gables, which used to stand just off the Brighton Road between Ferndale Road and Lyme Regis Road. She found a new employer and moved to Benhill Road, Sutton, and it was there that she must have met Edwin. They setup home together at Wyborn Cottage, Grennell Road, Sutton.

On 18th January 1915, Edwin volunteered to serve with the Royal Field Artillery. He probably initially joined 'D' Battery of 70th Brigade. The 70th were equipped with Howitzers and provided heavy artillery support to the 15th (Scottish) Division. They sailed to France in July 1915 and fought in the Battle of Loos in September.

'D' Battery transferred to 73rd Brigade in June 1916, becoming their 'B' Battery, later renamed to 'A'. They arrived on the Somme in August and took over guns that were worn out through the constant use that they had seen in the fighting; Edwin's battery had only one working gun out of four when they first arrived. They took part in the struggles for High Wood and Delville Wood and the Battle of Flers-Courcellette.

At dusk on 12th October, one of 'A' Battery's two sections of two guns was moved up to Prue Copse, near Bazentin-le-Petit, and while they were settling into their new positions next day they "*received slight attention from a fixed pipsqueak battery*"; it was probably at this point that Edwin was seriously wounded. Evacuated for treatment, he died of his wounds at a casualty clearing station on 31st October.

Edwin is buried in Dernancourt Communal Cemetery Extension. His headstone inscription was chosen by Jessie: "*Gone but not forgotten.*" He is commemorated on the Banstead War Memorial, on the Garton Memorial in All Saints' Churchyard and on Sutton War Memorial in Manor Park. He was 24 years old.

Jessie moved back to Banstead, living next door to her parents at 9 Firtree Cottages. Three of her brothers are being commemorated as part of Banstead's World War One remembrance project: Thomas was commemorated in 2015, Alfred will be commemorated in April 2017 and Stanley in 2018.