

Banstead Remembers

2nd Lieutenant Lionel King-Stephens

of The Bank, High Street

8th Sherwood Foresters

Served in France

Died of his wounds, aged 37



TUESDAY 20th DECEMBER

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

Lionel was resident clerk at the Banstead branch of the London & Provincial Bank, on the corner of the High Street and Avenue Road. He was fatally wounded by a sniper in December 1916. Please come and remember the sacrifice made by our local men in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

2nd Lieutenant Lionel King-Stephens of The Bank, High Street

Lionel Eustace King-Stephens was born on 8th June 1879 in Teddington, Middlesex. He was the third of Robilliard and Frances King-Stephens' four children. They lived in a 10-roomed mansion, Salehurst, in Hampton Road, Teddington.

Robilliard was a solicitor and his sons became clerks. Lionel joined the London & Provincial Bank as a clerk in 1896, aged 17. He had a long and steady career with the bank and stayed at the Teddington branch for 16 years before he transferred to their Banstead branch. The Bank had opened a temporary branch in a wooden hut (where The Woolpack's car park is now) in 1905 and then built a permanent branch on the corner of Avenue Road, where Barclays Bank stands today (Barclays took over the London & Provincial in 1918). Beside the branch was a house in which Lionel lived.

Lionel, his older brothers and younger sister were all sporty and Lionel was a keen cricketer, hockey player, golfer and a "first class" tennis player. He played for Banstead Cricket Club, the Private Banks Cricket Club, Fulwell Golf Club and Teddington Hockey Club and represented Middlesex, London and the South of England at hockey and Middlesex and the South of England at football.

When war broke out, Lionel was the first Banstead man to volunteer as a special constable, and served with the Specials for just over a year. He resigned from both the Met and the Bank to enlist as a private in The Artists' Rifles in September 1915. He passed out of their Officers Training Corps in January 1916 and was commissioned in the 8th Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters) as a second-lieutenant. He joined his battalion in France in July 1916.

The Sherwood Foresters were with Third Army, just to the north of the Somme battlefield. They had taken part in the opening day of the battle, on 1st July, but were destined to avoid the rest of the fighting. Their sector was peaceful by the standards of the Western Front, their days in the line were uneventful and casualties were low.

November and early December were spent in training for open warfare, perhaps in expectation of a breakthrough on the Somme that never came. By mid-October the fighting had bogged down in a sea of mud and the Battle of the Ancre in November marked the last phase in the Battle of the Somme.

The Sherwood Foresters returned to the line near Foncquevillers in early December. The German trench mortars and artillery were busier than usual and on 16th December, Lionel led a wiring party out at night to repair the wire in front of the trenches. Fog allowed them to work on as it got light. As the fog began to clear, Lionel got his men back into the trenches and was just climbing back over the parapet when a shot rang out. Hit in the abdomen, he was evacuated but died at the 43rd Casualty Clearing Station on 20th December 1916. He was 37 years old.