

# *Banstead Remembers*

*Lance-Corporal John Stiles*

*of 33 Salisbury Road*

*London Irish Rifles*

*Served in France*

*Drowned, aged 36*



## SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> JANUARY

at All Saints Church, Banstead

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

11am: 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

John Stiles worked as a clerk for the Midland Bank's Cornhill branch. He lodged at 33 Salisbury Road. Whilst on attachment to the Military Landing Officer's staff at Le Havre, John drowned in a tragic accident. Please come and remember the sacrifice made by our local men in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Lance-Corporal John Stiles of 33 Salisbury Road*

John Weldon Stiles was born on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1880. He was the only son of Richard and Harriet Stiles. The Stiles family ran a grocers shop in Stoke Newington, East London.

John grew up to become a bank clerk and he joined the London Joint City & Midland Bank (later known simply as the Midland Bank, now part of HSBC) when he was 16 years old. After several years, John was moved to the Bank's branch in Cornhill, one of their most prestigious branches.

He continued to live at home for some time before taking lodgings at 4 Avenue Road, Belmont, in 1910. In 1913, John moved to Banstead, lodging with the Daniels family at St Olave's (now number 33), Salisbury Road.

The first week of September 1914 saw the peak of voluntary enlistment and John attested on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1914, aged 34, and joined the 1/18<sup>th</sup> County of London Regiment (London Irish Rifles). The London Irish Rifles were (and still are) a Territorial Army unit and were popular with middle class London men with Irish roots. John continued to draw his bank clerk's salary as well as the shilling-a-day he was paid by the Army.

He went to France in March 1915 and the London Irish Rifles fought at Givenchy in May. John was found to be too short-sighted for front line service and he was sent back to England. While he was at home awaiting his next assignment, he married Edith Betsy Ryan, a nurse at the London County Council Asylum on Banstead Downs, at St Mary's Catholic Church, in St Barnabas Road, Sutton, on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1915.

John returned to France on attachment to the Military Landing Officer's staff at Le Havre. The M.L.O. was responsible for disembarking troops and supplies from the many ships that steamed into Le Havre each day. John's administrative experience probably meant that he worked in a clerical capacity.

On the night of 8<sup>th</sup> January 1917, John went out to post a letter. He never returned. It was presumed that he had fallen over the quayside. It was over a week before John's body was recovered; he had drowned. He was 36.

John is buried in Sainte Marie Cemetery, Le Havre. His headstone inscription, chosen by Edith, is "*In the midst of life, we are death. Sweet Jesus, have mercy.*" He is not commemorated on the Banstead War Memorial but is remembered on the wooden panels in the Lady Chapel, All Saints, on the London Joint City & Midland Bank memorial (now in HSBC's office in Canada Square, Canary Wharf) and on the London Irish Rifles memorial at their headquarters, Connaught House.