

Banstead Remembers

Private Albert Bowler

of 24 Oatlands Road, Burgh Heath

2nd East Surrey Regiment

Served in Belgium, France and Salonika

Killed in action, aged 24



MONDAY 27th FEBRUARY

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

Albert Bowler was a professional soldier who served on the Home Front and in Burma before war broke out. He fought in the Ypres Salient in 1915 before the 2nd East Surreys were redeployed to Salonika (Thessaloniki) in Greece. Albert was killed in a German air raid on a camp at Salonika.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Albert Bowler of 24 Oatlands Road

Albert Bowler was born on 24th March 1892, the fourth of Thomas and Alice Bowler's nine children, and baptised at All Saints, Banstead, on 29th May of that year. He was known as "Bertie" when young and "Bert" when he grew up.

The Bowlers lived in a cottage, probably on The Green, before moving into 12 (now 24) Oatlands Road, Burgh Heath, in the mid-1900s.

After leaving the Burgh Heath Wesleyan School aged 14, Albert worked as a grocer's assistant and part-time postman at Percy Roberts' sub-post office and stores, which used to stand where Travis Perkins is today. He joined the Army in 1911.

Albert served in Burma and India with the East Surreys and then, when war broke out, they went to Belgium. They fought in the 2nd Battle of Ypres in April 1915 and then moved south to fight on the Hohenzollern Redoubt during the Battle of Loos in September 1915.

At the end of the year, they were sent to Egypt and then onto Salonika (Thessaloniki), a port city in the north of officially neutral Greece, to support the Anglo-French Allied Expeditionary Force who were fighting alongside the Serbians on the Macedonian Front and were retreating southwards. They spent months digging defences and awaiting the arrival of the invading Bulgarians and suffered terribly due to malaria contracted whilst manning the line near Lake Butkovo, in the Struma Valley.

Albert was invalided to France, and perhaps home to England, probably suffering from malaria, in the summer or autumn of 1916.

He returned to Salonika on 16th February 1917 but did not rejoin his battalion immediately as they were once more suffering badly from malaria. Instead, he was sent to Summerhill Camp, one of several camps near the port of Salonika.

On the morning of 27th February, the Camp was bombed in a German air raid. 115 men were killed and 261 wounded. Albert was among the dead. He was 24 years old.

Albert is buried in the Salonika Anglo-French Military Cemetery, Lembet Road, with 85 other men who died that day. He is commemorated on the memorial panels in St Mary's, Burgh Heath, on the Roll of Honour in the Burgh Heath War Memorial Hall and in the All Saints Book of Men Who Served Overseas.