

Banstead Remembers

Private William Gudgion

16 Canons Lane, Burgh Heath

906th Mechanical Transport Company

Served in France

Lost at Sea, aged 39



THURSDAY 4th MAY

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

William Gudgion, a chauffeur who lived and worked in Burgh Heath, drove lorries for the Army Service Corps, the organisation that kept the troops on the front line supplied. His unit was sailing through the Mediterranean, bound for Egypt, when their ship was torpedoed by the submarine *U63*.

Please come and remember the sacrifice made in the Great War.

We will remember each one

Private William Gudgion *16 Canons Lane*

William Henry Gudgion was born in Islington in mid-1878. He was the son of William, a scaffolder, and Emma Gudgion, a laundress. They lived at 20 Charlotte Terrace.

By 1899, when he was 20, William had moved to Chipstead. He boarded at Elmore Cottages, by Elmore Pond on the High Road, which are still standing today. He was one of two gardeners boarding at the house and they both probably worked at Elmore, Thomas Cheesman's mansion on the opposite side of the road.

Also working for the Cheesmans at Elmore was Charlotte Parsons, a housemaid. William and Charlotte, both 26 years old, were married at St Margaret's, Chipstead, on 24th April 1905, and a son, George William, arrived shortly afterwards.

William's landlord at Elmore Cottages was George Best, an electrical engineer from Somerset, who was about the same age as William. He must have taken William on as a business partner or employee as he William became an electrician.

By 1909, William and Charlotte had moved to Burgh Heath and lived at Can Hatch Cottage, in the grounds of Can Hatch, a large house at the junction of Canons Lane and the Brighton Road. Canons Lane and Canons Farm got their names from the mediaeval rectory that was situated approximately where Canons Farm is today. Can Hatch and the modern road which was built on the site of the old house were named so because they were at the gate (hatch) to the lane used by the Augustinian Canons.

William had changed careers and was by now working as a chauffeur/mechanic. He later worked at Cold Blow, a large house that used to stand on the opposite side of the Brighton Road. The change of employer also brought a change of lodgings and they moved to 8 (now 16) Canons Lane.

William and Charlotte had another son, Percy, in Spring 1914. William joined the Army Service Corps in December 1915 and was called up to serve in June 1916. He joined 906th Mechanical Transport Company, where he probably drove a lorry.

He went to France with 906th M.T. Company but they were not to remain long on the Western Front and were destined for Salonica (Thessaloniki, Greece). On 3rd May, they sailed from Marseilles aboard *HT Transylvania* bound for Alexandria, Egypt, their first port of call. The ship was carrying 2,860 British soldiers, 200 officers and 60 Red Cross nurses and was escorted by the Japanese destroyers *Matsu* and *Sakaki*.

At 10am on the following day, the *Transylvania* was 2½ miles off the fishing village of Savona, Italy, when she was struck by a torpedo. She began to take on water and the *Matsu* came alongside to take the troops off. A second torpedo was fired, at the *Matsu* this time, which took evasive action; the torpedo instead struck the *Transylvania*. She sunk immediately with the loss of 10 crew and 402 soldiers, William among them.