

# *Banstead Remembers*

*Sapper Reg Sturt*

*19 Shrubland Road*

*26<sup>th</sup> Field Company, Royal Engineers*

*Served in France and Belgium*

*Died, aged 27*



## WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JUNE

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

Reg Sturt, a professional soldier, was one of the first Banstead men to land in France. He took part in the retreat from Mons and the Race to the Sea.

Wounded during fighting at Ypres, he was invalided home and later died.

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

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Sapper Reg Sturt of 19 Shrubland Road*

Reginald Philip Sturt was born in Banstead on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1890 and baptised at All Saints on 27<sup>th</sup> July of that year. He was the son of Arthur, a gardener, and Mary.

The Sturts lived in a cottage in the High Street, probably one of a pair known as Gothic Villas which stood next to the Church Institute, where Victoria Chemists is today. By 1901, they had moved to Well Cottages, at the end of the High Street, where Cheyne Court stands now, and soon after that they moved again, to one of Park View Cottages, a pair of semi-detached villas, now number 19 Shrubland Road.

After starting out as a painter and decorator, Reg joined the Army and chose to serve as a sapper with the Royal Engineers. Upon mobilisation of the Armed Forces in August 1914, an expeditionary force was assembled to go to Belgium. Reg's 26<sup>th</sup> Field Company were based at Aldershot at the time and joined them.

The crossed the Channel and sailed up the River Seine to Rouen, disembarking on 17<sup>th</sup> August. Four days later, the British Expeditionary Force engaged the Germans at Mons, in Belgium, They were soon forced to retreat and Reg's field company built defensive fortifications for the rearguard to hold. As they fell back through France, 26<sup>th</sup> Field Company prepared bridges for demolition to slow the German advance. The turning point came on the outskirts of Paris, when the British and French went on the attack, driving the Germans back to the River Aisne. There the Germans made a stand and trench warfare set in. The Engineers turned their expertise to improving the trenches and the infrastructure that kept them supplied with men and munitions.

Both armies tried to turn the other's northern flank in the Race to the Sea until the trenches stretched from the Channel coast to Switzerland. In October, the British were moved to the left flank near Ypres, in Belgium, to break through to the coast. Their advance began in late October. They met a German advance coming the other way. The two armies engaged and the First Battle of Ypres began.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October, Reg's Field Company were pressed into service as infantrymen with General Bulfin's force, a ragtag mixture of fighting units hastily assembled to plug a gap in the line and stop a German attack. 26<sup>th</sup> Field Company were sent to hold a vulnerable point. They could not find room in the trenches but did their job "*in a most satisfactory manner*". The crisis was averted but the Engineers were badly mauled.

Reg was one of the wounded; he was evacuated back to England for treatment but did not fully recover and was discharged from the Army as unfit for service. Perhaps weakened by his wounds, Reg contracted pulmonary tuberculosis and died two years later. He was 27 years old. He is buried in Epsom Cemetery.