

Banstead Remembers

Gunner Victor Bown

60 Ferndale Road

'C' Battery, 232 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

Served in France and Belgium

Killed in Action, aged 33



THURSDAY 10th AUGUST

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

Victor Bown, a cowman and labourer on Banstead Asylum's farm, was one of thirteen men from Banstead and Burgh Heath who lost their lives in the Third Battle of Ypres, often known as "Passchendaele". Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

Gunner Victor Bown of 60 Ferndale Road

Victor Bown was born on 27th January 1884 at Charlton-All-Saints, Wiltshire, and was baptised at the village church on 13th April of that year. He was the eldest son of Tom and Alma Bown.

Tom was a cowman and dairyman and the family frequently had to move with his work. They had come to Banstead by 1911 and lived at Lindene (now number 68), Diceland Road before moving to The Ferns (number 60), Ferndale Road.

After starting out as a gardener, Victor had a short stint in the Royal Marines and then moved back in with his parents, probably working with his dad. In 1911, Victor took a job at Banstead Asylum, working as a cowman and labourer on their farm (now Fairlawn Farm). The Asylum looked after 2,000 patients and grew much of its own food, with the patients working in the fields alongside paid employees.

Victor enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery in June 1915, volunteering with 153 (Empire) Brigade, a locally-raised brigade. He served in an 18-pounder battery which fought on the Somme in 1916 and was later transferred to 232 Brigade. They fought at Arras in April before moving north to Belgium to take part in the Battle of Messines, when the Germans were pushed off the high ground south of Ypres, and then took up their positions for the Third Battle of Ypres, often called "Passchendaele" after the village captured in the battle's final phase.

Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig wanted to fight his way out of the Ypres Salient, the bulge in the line around the low-lying market town of Ypres, and north to the Channel coast ports. With the French temporarily finished as an attacking force following their disastrous offensive in April and May, the brunt of the effort would have to be borne by British and Commonwealth troops.

After a massive preliminary bombardment in which 232 Brigade played their part, the attack began in the early morning of 31st July 1917. Encouraging progress was made at first but then the rain began to fall. Much of the battlefield turned to mud, slowing the advance to a crawl and then halting it completely. When the rain eased off and the ground had dried out, three divisions fought their way up the Westhoek Ridge and took the village of Westhoek on 10th August with the support of Victor's guns. 232 Brigade worked all day and into the night, holding off counterattacks and answering SOS calls. Ypres was a dangerous place for the gunners, under the sights of the German guns, and Victor's battery was shelled. Victor was killed that day, probably by a shell. He was 33. Victor is buried in Brandhoek New Military Cemetery.

Thirteen men from Banstead and Burgh Heath were killed in the Third Battle of Ypres. Victor will be commemorated at All Saints church at 11:50am on Thursday 10th August. Please come and remember the sacrifice our village made during the Great War.