

# *Banstead Remembers*

*Private Alfred Langford*  
*Gerrards Lodge, Garratts Lane*

*13<sup>th</sup> Royal Sussex Regiment*  
*Served in Belgium*  
*Killed in Action, aged 19*



## TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER

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

Alfred Langford, a 19-year-old gardener, was one of thirteen local men who were killed in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). He had been serving in Belgium for less than a month. Please come and remember the sacrifice our village made in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Private Alfred Langford* *Gerrards Lodge, Garratts Lane*

Alfred Charles Langford was born in Banstead on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1898 and was baptised at All Saints five days later. He was the eldest son of Alfred and Edith Langford.

The Langfords had come to Banstead in 1897-8 when Alfred senior took a job at Gerrards Lodge, a "*pretty residence*" with stabling and a cottage, which used to stand on the corner of Garratts Lane and Brighton Road, where the Ford garage is now. Alfred senior worked as a gardener and the family lived in the stables.

When Alfred was about 5 years old, his father took a head gardener's job in Potters Bar and the family moved away. Alfred grew up to become a gardener and worked with his dad at Thamesfield Meadows, Henley-on-Thames.

Alfred was too young to join up when war broke out and was conscripted when he turned 18 in the summer of 1916. He wouldn't be eligible to serve overseas until he was 19 and so he only began his training when he was 18½ years old, joining the 33<sup>rd</sup> Training Reserve (probably at Caversham, Berkshire) on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1917.

After completing his training and turning 19 in late August, he was sent out to serve with the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium in early September, probably just a few days after his birthday, and was posted to the 13<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Royal Sussex were with 39<sup>th</sup> Division, X Corps, 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, in the Ypres Salient. They had taken part in the early fighting during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) and had been manning trenches in the southeast of the Salient throughout August. Alfred probably joined them while they were resting and training at Ridge Wood, a reserve area near Vierstraat. Alfred would have had a few short days to get to know the men in his squad before they rotated back into the line.

His first few days in the trenches were spent clearing dugouts of water, laying barbed wire and setting tripwires in front of their newly-captured trenches and carrying up rations and water on duckboard trails laid over broken and muddy ground. Aircraft duelled in the skies above and they were strafed by a fighter. The German artillery were active and a bombardment with mustard gas shells caused "*serious annoyance*".

Following heavy losses in 5<sup>th</sup> Army in August, 2<sup>nd</sup> Army were to lead the advance towards Passchendaele. First they had to capture the Gheluvelt Plateau, an area of high ground east of Ypres, where the German defences were particularly strong. The Australians would do the lion's share of the fighting, with British X Corps protecting their right flank. One of the chief obstacles for X Corps was Tower Hamlets Spur, a heavily-fortified ridge jutting south from the plateau. Banstead man Albert Waters fell there on 20<sup>th</sup> September. Six days later, Alfred Langford would lose his life there, killed in action as X Corps once more tried and failed to capture the spur. He was 19.