

Banstead Remembers

*Private Edward Lawrence
of 4 Wheeler's Cottages, Burgh Heath*

*7th The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)
Served in France and Belgium
Killed in Action, aged 21*



WEDNESDAY 11th OCTOBER

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

Edward was a gardener from Esher who moved to Burgh Heath shortly before the war. He served with both the East and West Surrey Regiments and was killed in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made in the war.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Edward Lawrence of 4 Wheeler's Cottages, Burgh Heath

Edward was born in Esher on 18th October 1895, two months before his parents' Christmas Day wedding. He was the only child of farm labourer Charles and Sarah Lawrence (nee Richardson). The Lawrences lived in West End, Esher. Edward grew up to become a gardener, working at one of the big houses nearby. He and his father left Esher in 1911-1912 following the death of Edward's mother and they soon came to Burgh Heath, moving in with widow Phoebe Muggeridge, of 4 Wheeler's Cottages, which used to stand on the Green where the back gardens of nos.11 and 12 are now.

Edward (5ft 9½in tall, black hair, brown eyes, dark complexion and weighing just over 10 stones) volunteered for the Army on 2nd September 1914, one of the busiest recruiting days of the war. He joined the East Surrey Regiment. Despite being one of the early volunteers and adding two years to his age, he remained serving in the barracks at Kingston with 3rd (probably) and then 7th Battalion. He was still there on 31st January 1916, when he married Phoebe Muggeridge at Epsom Register Office.

The 7th East Surreys sent drafts of men to reinforce 8th The Queen's (Royal West Surreys) after they suffered bad casualties in the gas attack at Wulverghem that claimed the life of another Burgh Heath man, George Mitchell, at the end of April 1916 and again following the 8th's losses on the Somme in August. Edward probably joined them at the end of September 1916 before transferring to the 7th Queen's, possibly as late as September 1917, when large numbers of men joined them.

7th Queen's were to be brigade reserve for 55th Brigade (18th Division, XVIII Corps) for the first attack on the village of Passchendaele, on 12th October. XVIII Corps were northwest of Passchendaele and were to advance up the Poelcappelle Spur which led up to the ridge on which Passchendaele stood while the Australians and New Zealanders attacked the village from the west and southwest.

Zero Hour was 5:25am. One hour later, the 7th Queen's moved up to Poelcappelle and waited south of the St Julien road to be deployed if the attack was held up, to shore up the flanks or to counterattack if the brigade was forced backwards. 18th Division was on the left flank of the main attack and was to advance from Poelcappelle, following the Lekkerboterbeek stream towards the *Flanders I* line. Many of the guns that were supposed to be supporting XVIII Corps could not be got into position owing to ground conditions and machine-guns clogged with mud, leaving the advancing infantry little protection from the German machine-gunners as they waded slowly through the awful mud in the Lekkerboterbeek valley. At 4:50pm, the 7th Queen's were ordered forward in close support of the right and centre battalions. It was no use. 18th Division lost nearly 1,300 men for a gain of 100 yards. Edward was killed, probably on the 12th. He was 21. He is commemorated on Tyne Cot Memorial.

There is some uncertainty over Edward's death date. He was probably killed on the 12th but his official date of death is on the 11th and so he will be commemorated on that day.