

Banstead Remembers

SATURDAY 21st OCTOBER

A memorial service will be held at **11:50am** at All Saints Church for



*Captain Theo Tapp M.C.
of Copt Hill, Burgh Heath*

*Guards Machine Gun Corps
Fatally wounded at Houthulst Forest
Aged 34*

Theo Tapp was a Cambridge graduate and a Member of the London Stock Exchange. He fought in France and Belgium and was twice decorated for bravery. He was mortally wounded near the Houthulst Forest on the eve of the First Battle of Passchendaele and died in hospital ten days later.

SUNDAY 22nd OCTOBER

A memorial service will be held at **10:50am** at All Saints Church for

*Private George Butler
of 7 Firtree Cottages, Pound Road*

*18th Lancashire Fusiliers
Killed at Houthulst Forest, Belgium
Aged 34*



George Butler was a labourer and platelayer who was born in Lincolnshire but grew up in Diceland Road and later lived in Pound Road. He served with the Royal Engineers and then in the infantry, with the Lancashire Fusiliers. He was killed at Houthulst Forest during a preliminary attack for the Second Battle of Passchendaele.

*We will remember **each** one*

Captain Theo Tapp M.C. of Copthill, Burgh Heath

Theodore "Theo" Arthur Tapp was born at home in Shortlands, Kent, on 5th April 1883. He was the oldest son of Charles and Olga Tapp (nee Andraee). Charles was a member of the Stock Exchange and the family lived in a mansion in Beckenham Lane. Theo went to Rugby School and Caius College, Cambridge, and played cricket for both and once played alongside W.G. Grace for London County. Theo wanted to become a diplomat but suffered from ill health and so instead became a partner in his uncle's firm. He married an American, Margaret Flagg, in Kensington in 1905 and they had a son, Teddy. Theo's uncle moved from Tadworth to Copthill, Burgh Heath, during the war and the *All Saints Book of Men Who Served Oversea* records Theo as living at that address.

Theo was commissioned in August 1914 with the Coldstream Guards and went to France three months later in charge of a machine-gun section. He was wounded in the head during fighting at Cuinchy in January 1915, but was bandaged up and returned to his gun. After the fighting was over, he was invalided to England for surgery. He returned to France too soon afterwards and then had to spend months in London being nursed back to health. When he had recovered, Theo was attached to the Guards Machine Gun Corps and took 110th M.G. Company out to France as a temporary major before spending several months as an instructor at Machine Gun School. When his posting there was completed, he took over 3rd Guards Brigade Machine Gun Company.

The Guards attacked on the first day of Third Ypres, 31st July, when Theo won his Military Cross. The next actions that the Guards would take part in were attacks on the Houthulst Forest, on the northern flank of the battlefield, on 9th and 12th October. For four nights before the First Battle of Passchendaele (12th), Theo personally inspected and set all of his guns in the face of heavy shelling and sniping, for which he was posthumously awarded a bar to his M.C. On 11th October, the eve of battle, he was with his guns when he was wounded by a shell. He was evacuated to 61 Casualty Clearing Station but died ten days later. He was 34. He is buried in Dozinghem Military Cemetery.

Private George Butler of 7 Firtree Cottages, Pound Road

George was born in Holland Fen, Lincolnshire, in early 1883. He was the son of Marshall and Sophia Butler (nee Day). The family came to Banstead when he was a toddler and lived at a cottage (now no.7) in Diceland Road. George worked as a carter, a bricklayer and then as a labourer and platelayer for the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway. He married Sarah Parsons in the summer of 1905 and they made their home at 7 Firtree Cottages (since demolished), in Pound Road. They had three children, Aubrey, Clarence and Lena. Sadly, Aubrey died whilst still a baby.

George enlisted as a sapper in the Royal Engineers in May 1916 and was soon in France. It is not known where he was for several months but on 30th September 1917, a draft of 213 other ranks from the Army Service Corps and Royal Engineers joined 18th (Service) Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers, at Doingt, France. They prepared a training ground at a quiet village a few miles from Arras and rehearsed the attack before leaving for Belgium in mid-October.

They bivouacked between the Broombeek and Steenbeek streams on the night of 20th October and were shelled throughout the night. The 21st was spent in preparation for the attack. Their brigade was on the northern flank of the battlefield and was to advance northwards into the Houthulst Forest to secure the left flank before the renewal of the Passchendaele attack a few days later. Zero Hour was 5:35am on the 22nd. George's battalion were in the centre of their brigade, whose advance expanded out into a fan shape. A gap was always present between them and the battalion on the right, and unfortunately machine-gun nests in the gap were not dealt with by either battalion, driving a wedge between them and causing heavy casualties. The ground had been drying out but rain began to fall once more, making progress difficult. They fought from shell-hole to shell-hole, advancing into machine-gun and rifle fire from the Wood with little protection provided by a "ragged" barrage. The left company reached their objective but the right company got caught up in fighting amongst the thick and entangled fallen boughs in the Wood. They dug in where they could, in water-filled shell-holes and made sandbag parapets ready to hold off counterattacks, which were not long in coming. George was killed. He was 34. He is commemorated at Tyne Cot.