

Banstead Remembers

Sergeant Jack Bailey, MM

of 10 Ferndale Road

1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers

Died of his wounds, aged 26



TUESDAY 9th JANUARY

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

Jack was one of 25 local men who died as a result of the Battle of the Somme. He was awarded the Military Medal, probably for his actions on the first day of the Somme. Wounded in July 1916, he died in hospital in January 1918. Please come and remember the sacrifice Banstead made.

*We will remember **each** one*

Sergeant Jack Bailey, MM of 10 Ferndale Road

John Edmund Bailey was born in Thornton Heath on 13th February 1891, the first of two sons born to John and Emmeline Bailey. Young John was known as Jack.

His father was a police constable at Thornton Heath police station but transferred to Banstead, in 'W' Division of the Metropolitan Police, in the mid-1890s. The young family lived in a cottage next to the police station, which in those days was on the opposite side of the High Street to the current station. When the new station was built in 1906-7, the Baileys moved to 2 Elm Cottages (number 10), Ferndale Road.

After leaving school, Jack became a gardener working at the Colman family's Nork Park. He lived with the senior gardener in Concertina Lodge, which was on the Reigate Road, west of the main house. In April 1914, Jack changed jobs and became an attendant at the London County Asylum on Banstead Downs, living on site in one of the accommodation blocks for unmarried attendants.

When war broke out, the men of the asylum were encouraged to join the Armed Forces by their employer, with their salaries being paid to their dependents. Jack (5ft 10¼in tall, grey eyes and brown hair) attested with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Wrexham in May 1915. On top of his shilling-and-sixpence daily Army pay, his £35 county council salary was paid to his mother. He was posted to the 3rd (Depot) Battalion for training and appointed unpaid lance corporal. Arriving in France on 1st October 1915, he joined the 1st Battalion and was soon promoted to sergeant.

Injured in the forearm by a grenade during a raid on a German trench in May 1916, Jack was evacuated to hospital but rejoined his battalion on 30th June, the eve of the Battle of the Somme. The next morning, the Welsh were to attack the trench system between Mametz and Fricourt. Their attack was delayed and they did not go into action until 4:20pm, hours after most troops went over the top. Jack was probably with a grenade squad that were sent to seize and block two trenches at 7:45pm; he was later awarded the Military Medal, probably for his actions on 1st July. Entering the fray late in the day, the Welsh casualties were light. The attacks in the south were a success and the next two weeks saw hard fighting for small gains.

On 14th July, a renewed general attack began on the German lines on Bazentin Ridge. A breakthrough was made early on but the Germans counterattacked from High Wood. The Welsh were sent forward to help resist the attack. They advanced from Mametz Wood in artillery formation, over high ground and through heavy shellfire. Jack was hit by shrapnel in the left leg and evacuated once more. His wounds were serious enough that he never left hospital in Cheshire. Bits of metal remained lodged in his leg and, on 9th January 1918, he died from complications following surgery.

Jack is buried at All Saints and is commemorated on the Banstead War Memorial, the Garton Memorial in the churchyard, on the panels in the Lady Chapel and on the Banstead Mental Hospital memorial plaque in HMP Highdown. He was 26 years old.