

Banstead Remembers

Gunner Arthur Culver

of 3 Memory Cottages, Burgh Heath

354th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

Served in France

Died of Wounds, aged 36



THURSDAY 29th MARCH

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

Arthur Culver was a grocer from Burgh Heath. He served with the Royal Garrison Artillery in France. His battery was in the sector attacked by the Germans on 21st March and they fell back to new positions each day to cover the British retreat. The Germans caught up with them a week later.

*We will remember **each** one*

Gunner Arthur Culver of 3 Memory Cottages, Burgh Heath

Arthur Culver was born in Burgh Heath in July 1881 and baptised at All Saints, Banstead, on 25th September. He was the son of Elisha and Emma Culver.

He attended the Church of England School on the Brighton Road (now *Chips Folly*) and then became an assistant at Russell & Son's grocer's shop, on the Green.

Arthur was working as an insurance agent when he married Harriet Cordwell at All Saints on 28th September 1905. They made their home at 4 Fern Terrace (now 53 Ferndale Road), in Banstead, and their first two children, Bert and Mary, were born there. They returned to Burgh Heath following the death of Arthur's father and moved into 3 Memory Cottages, next door to Arthur's mother, where their final two children, Perce and Olive, were born. Arthur got his old job back at the grocer's and after Holland & Barrett took over the shop, he transferred to their Epsom branch and the family moved to 112 East Street.

With a young family to support, Arthur did not enlist when war broke out and was still working and living in Epsom when conscription came into effect. Married men were eligible to be conscripted into the armed forces from May 1916, although a large number of exemptions and delays occurred. Arthur (35 years old, 5ft 6in tall and weighing 11 stones) was attested at Epsom on 10th December 1916 and called up the following year.

He served with the Royal Garrison Artillery and was sent out to join 354th Siege Battery in January 1918. The Battery had been overrun in the German counterattack during the Battle of Cambrai and were in need of reinforcements.

After an uneventful winter on the Western Front, the Germans launched an offensive on a 70-mile front in northern France in an attempt to win the war before the Americans could arrive in numbers. On 21st March 1918, their elite troops attacked under cover of fog following a huge artillery bombardment. They broke through the line held by the thinly stretched British Fifth Army and the British fell back in a fighting retreat. The guns of Arthur's battery retreated with them, moving to new positions each day to cover the infantry's withdrawal.

They had retreated 20 miles in a week when the Germans caught up with them near Chipilly on 28th March. The battery were close to the infantry fight and the gunners came under fire from machine guns as well as being shelled. Arthur was hit in the head. It was not thought to be serious but he was put on an ambulance train for evacuation to hospital. Sadly, his condition worsened and he died on the train. He was 36 years old and left a widow and four young children.