

Banstead Remembers
Private Frank Wiscombe
of 13 Shrubland Road

2nd Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire Regiment)
Served in France and Belgium
Killed in Action, aged 37



TUESDAY 8th MAY

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

Frank Wiscombe was a farm worker at Banstead Asylum and lived in Shrubland Road with his wife and daughter. He served as a stretcher-bearer and took part in a number of actions, fighting at Ypres and on the Somme. He was killed in a German attack on 8th May 1918.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Frank Wiscombe of 13 Shrubland Road

Francis "Frank" Wiscombe was born in the Dorset village of Whitchurch Canonorum, just a few miles from Lyme Regis, on 19th August 1880. He was baptised at the parish church, St Candida and Holy Cross, on 5th September.

Frank was the son of Jane Wiscombe, the unmarried daughter of John and Anna Wiscombe, and he never knew who his father was. Frank lived with his mother and grandparents before moving up to London to be with a Whitchurch girl, Elizabeth Hodder, who was working as a housemaid. They lived in Crouch End, where there were still open fields within walking distance, and Frank worked as a cattleman.

Frank and Elizabeth married at St Saviour's, Upper Holloway, on Boxing Day 1900. They moved south, to Tooting Graveney, where they had a daughter, Bessie, and then came to Banstead, living at Merton Cottages (now no.13), Shrubland Road. Frank worked as a farm labourer at the Asylum on Banstead Downs.

London County Council encouraged their staff to join up when war broke out, promising to keep their job open and continuing to pay the salaries of their employees while they were with the Armed Forces. Frank attested at Guildford in January 1915 and joined his home county's regiment, the Dorsetshire Regiment.

He was posted to the 6th (Service) Battalion and trained at Wareham and Romsey before going to France in July. They held trenches at Ypres throughout the autumn and winter of 1915. In February 1916, Frank was wounded during an attack on The Bluff and was invalided out for treatment for several months.

He returned to action in July, while the Battle of the Somme was being fought, and was transferred to the 2nd Duke of Edinburgh's (Wiltshire Regiment), who had been badly cut up in the early fighting. He fought on the Somme in 1916 and then on the first days of the Battle of Arras and the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) in 1917. In both battles, their experience on the first day was severe enough that they were unable to take part in the rest of the fighting.

Frank was a stretcher-bearer and was lucky enough not to be in the line with his battalion when the Germans attacked in March 1918. The 2nd Wiltshires were virtually wiped out. Frank then served at Ypres in a composite battalion of Wiltshires and Bedfordshires during the Fourth Battle of Ypres and was with them when the Germans attacked south of Ypres on 8th May. Frank had done a dangerous job in difficult circumstances in some of the deadliest battles of the war and come through but now his luck ran out. He was reported wounded and missing that day. His body was later recovered and he is buried at Klein-Vierstraat British Cemetery. He was 37.