

Banstead Remembers

TUESDAY 15th MAY

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



*Private Albert Seal
of Banstead Asylum*

*2nd Scots Guards
Served in Belgium
Died, aged 28*

Albert Seal was an attendant at Banstead Asylum. He was a reservist with the Scots Guards and was called up on the outbreak of war. He fought in the First Battle of Ypres, which he described as “*Hell upon Earth*”, and then fell ill early in 1915. He died at home on 15th May 1915, aged 28.

*Private Charles Smith
of Banstead Asylum*

*5th East Surrey Regiment
Served on the Home Front
Died, aged 46*



Charles Smith was a shoemaker at Banstead Asylum. He was a member of the National Reserve and was called up to serve in November 1914. Too old to fight overseas, he joined the 5th East Surreys, a Territorial battalion, on the Home Front. Within weeks he had fallen ill with a skin infection and he died at Croydon Hospital on 29th November 1914, aged 46.

Both men are buried at Sutton Cemetery and wreaths will be laid there.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Albert Seal of Banstead Asylum

Albert Seal, the son of William and Lucy, was born in Mitcham on 24th April 1887 and baptised at St. Peter and St. Paul's on 5th June of that year. The family moved to Collingwood Road, Sutton, when Albert was very young.

He became an errand boy after he left school aged 13 and then joined the Scots Guards when he was 18. He left the Army soon afterwards and was engaged as an attendant at Banstead Asylum in 1908, and he lived on-site even after his marriage to Harriett Birch in 1909. Harriett and Albert eventually moved in together, renting 8 Beulah Road, in Sutton, and they had a daughter, Gladys, in November 1911.

Albert was still a reservist with the Scots Guards when war broke out and soon joined up with 2nd Battalion. The 2nd Scots Guards were straight into action in October 1914, covering the withdrawal of the Belgian Army and the Royal Naval Division from Antwerp, before marching on to Ypres. The converging British and German forces met there and fought for a month, establishing the salient (a bulge in the line around the town) which would exist in various forms until nearly the end of the war. The Scots Guards had a bad time of it at Ypres and Albert described the fighting during the First Battle of Ypres as "*Hell upon Earth*".

Two months after taking part in the Christmas Truce of 1914, when he was given a cigar and a postcard by a German officer, Albert fell ill with enteric fever. He was treated in hospital in France and in Camberwell before being sent home to Sutton. After a few days, he suffered a relapse and on 15th May 1915, he died, suffering terribly from pleurisy, pneumonia and nerve damage. He was buried with full military honours in Sutton Cemetery. Albert was 28 years old.

Private Charles Smith of Banstead Asylum

Albert Charles Smith, known by his middle name, was born in Wandsworth on 25th April 1868. He grew up to become a bootmaker and later joined the staff of Banstead Asylum in the 1890s as a shoemaker. There were over 2,000 patients at the Asylum, all of whom would have needed footwear, and Charles would have been assisted in the workshop by patients, many of whom were given jobs to do as a form of therapy.

Charles must have served in the Army at one point (probably in the Special Reserve) as he was a member of the National Reserve and was called up in November 1914. Many of the National Reservists were too old to fight overseas and they were formed into protection companies (similar to the Home Guard in WW2) to guard vulnerable points such as railway bridges, waterworks, etc.

He had only been embodied for a few weeks before he developed a skin infection and died from complications in Croydon Hospital. He was 46 and is buried in Sutton.