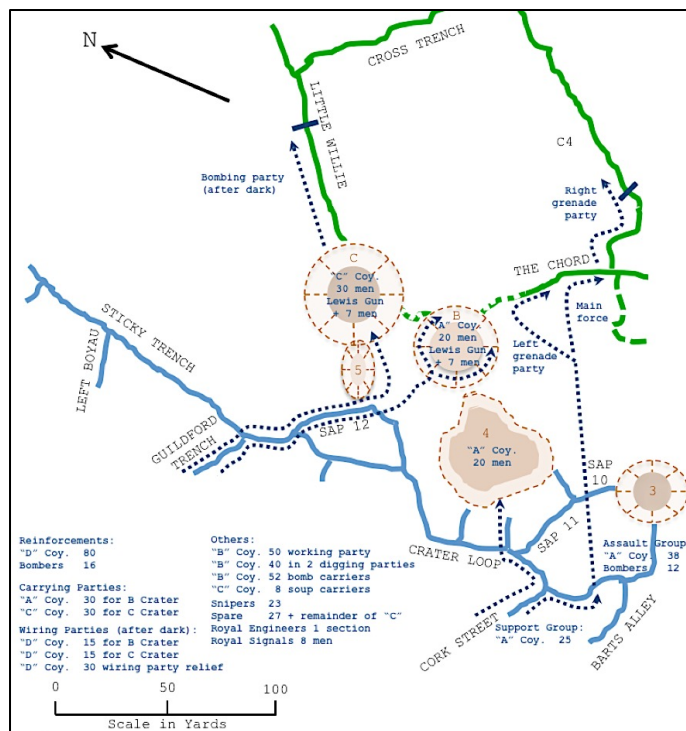


# Banstead Remembers

*Lance Corporal Fred Billing  
of 5 Wheeler's Cottages, Burgh Heath*

*8<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)  
Died in France, aged 33  
2<sup>nd</sup> March 1916*



*The attack of the 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers on the Hohenzollern Redoubt*

## WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> MARCH at All Saints Church, Banstead

- 7:30am: the churchyard flag will be raised to half-mast  
11:55am: a short service of remembrance will be held  
Noon: a church bell will be tolled 100 times

All are welcome to attend to help commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fred's death. Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made 100 years ago in World War One.

We will remember them.

# World War One 100

## *Lance Corporal Fred Billing of 5 Wheeler's Cottages*

Fred Billing was born in Buckland St Mary, Somerset, on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1882, to a family whose name can be found in the Parish registers as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. His father, John Hake Billing, was an agricultural labourer and his mother, Jane, was from nearby Combe St Nicholas. They had one other child, a daughter, Rosa Jane, in 1887. As a teenager, Fred became a grocers' porter in Swanage.

Charles Aylwin, a Sussex-born carter, labourer and railway platelayer, moved his family to Burgh Heath in the late 1880s. By 1901, one of his daughters, Amy Augusta Aylwin, had moved to Dorset and was working as a parlourmaid when she met Fred. They married at Wareham in 1903 and had 3 children in Swanage (Grace, Rosa and Frederick) before moving their young family up to Burgh Heath to be closer to Amy's family, who lived at 5 Oatlands Road.

The Billings lived at 5 Wheeler's Cottages, which used to stand on the green by the *Sheepshearer's Arms* and opposite the *Surrey Yeoman* and Fred worked as a builder's labourer. Another boy, Frank, was born in 1911 and finally another daughter, Ethel, in 1913.

Fred (32 years old, 5ft 5in, weighing 145lbs with blue eyes, light hair and a fair complexion) joined the 8th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers at Epsom on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1914, one of the busiest recruiting days of the war.

They arrived in Boulogne on May 31st 1915 and underwent a period of trench training at L'Épinette, spending time in the line alongside more experienced units so as to learn the ropes. They were in the trenches on their own by the end of June.

They were lucky enough not to take part in the Battle of Loos in September but buried the dead from the battle, "a sickening fatigue. Men not able to work at it continuously as all bodies were in advanced state of decomposition." They took part in their first real action on 18<sup>th</sup> October, capturing a German trench and then later holding off a counterattack.

They spent much of a wet and cold winter resting and training but were back in the line in February 1916. News of the death of Fred's mother would have reached him in late February, just days before his own.

The Hohenzollern Redoubt was said to be the strongest fortification on the Western Front and it was in German hands. A carefully-conceived plan, in exhaustive detail, was prepared to capture one of the trenches on its west face. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1916, 4 huge mines under No Man's Land were detonated by the Royal Engineers and the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers dashed across to capture the German trench from its dazed defenders. They seized the trench and held it but at a high cost, particularly for the 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers. The 8<sup>th</sup> suffered 254 casualties, Fred among them.

Like 37 other men of the 8<sup>th</sup> who died that day, Fred has no known grave, He is commemorated on the Loos Memorial, on the Buckland St Mary war memorial, on panels in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Buckland, in All Saints, Banstead, in St Mary's, Burgh Heath, and in the Burgh Heath War Memorial Hall. He was 33.

Fred was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914-15 Star.