

Banstead Remembers

Captain Herbert Garton

of Banstead Wood

9th Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own)

Killed in action, aged 24

15th September 1916



THURSDAY 15th SEPTEMBER

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

Herbert Garton is one of eight Banstead and Burgh Heath men commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing on the Somme. Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made 100 years ago in World War One.

*We will remember **each** one*

Captain Herbert Garton of Banstead Wood

Herbert Westlake Garton was born on 8th August 1892, the third son of Charles and Juliet Garton. Banstead Wood House, the grand family home in Banstead Woods, once a “*power-house of refreshment and recreation*”, later became a military hospital during World War Two, then the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children and finally was converted into apartments. The Gartons made their money in sugar and brewing and were effectively lords of the manor in Banstead and great local benefactors.

Herbert attended Eton, where he served in the Eton Volunteers, and then went up to Magdalen College, Oxford, to study Modern History. He had just received his degree when war broke out. Herbert had intended to become a diplomat but, for now, the time for talking was over and there was fighting to be done. He joined the Army on 26th August 1914 and was commissioned in the 9th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade.

In France, the accumulated strain of enduring shellfire for prolonged periods crept up on Herbert. Concussed during fighting at Hooze in August 1915, he had a breakdown and was admitted to hospital with neurasthenia (shell shock). Discharged after just three weeks, he was still not well and he returned to hospital in September.

Evacuated to England and treated in a hospital in Kensington, Herbert was granted a 3-month leave of absence in September, later extended to five months.

Judged unfit for general service, Herbert joined the 14th (Reserve) Battalion. He had another 6 weeks leave at Banstead Wood before being ready for light duties in mid-March, although still in a “*nervous state*”. His services were “*urgently required*” by MI-1C (later more famous as MI6) and he served with them until May. About to be posted to Egypt, both Herbert and the Rifle Brigade requested that he return to his battalion having been passed as fit for general service. He rejoined his men in May.

The 9th Rifle Brigade arrived on the Somme battlefield in mid-August 1916, where they were involved with the fighting around Delville Wood. Herbert’s battalion took part in the opening day of the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, a major phase of the Battle of the Somme notable for the first use of a new “*engine of war*”: the tank. Ironically, given the Garton family background, they started their advance from near the remains of a sugar refinery and crossed Hop Alley and Ale Alley on their way towards their objective, Gird Trench, northeast of the village of Flers. Despite the lack of an artillery barrage on the trench, and having already suffered heavy casualties, the remnants of the 9th Rifle Brigade attempted to capture it anyway. They fared very badly due to machine-gun fire from their right flank and lost all but one officer. Only 140 men came through unscathed. Herbert was among the fallen. He was 24.

Herbert is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, the Garton Memorial in All Saints’ churchyard, on the Banstead War Memorial, on the memorial panels in All Saints’, and on the Eton College and Magdalen College War Memorials.