

# *Banstead Remembers*

*Private Archie Tonge  
of the Post Office, High Street*

*2<sup>nd</sup> London Scottish  
Killed in action near Arras, aged 30*



## THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

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

Two other men, whose connection to Banstead has only recently been established, will also be commemorated on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>. Please come and remember the sacrifice that was made in World War One.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Private Archie Tonge of the Post Office, High Street*

Archibald Gervase Tonge was born in late 1885 or very early 1886 and he was baptised at All Saints' on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1886. His parents, James and Betsy Ann, ran the grocers and post office in the High Street between the Woolpack and Ivy Cottage. Archie lived in the village his whole life before the War and played cricket at Banstead Cricket Club.

The children all went into the grocery or postal business in one way or another and Archie worked on the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway as a transfer clerk, responsible for overseeing the transfer of mail between trains.

The peak of voluntary enlistment came early on in the war, in August and September 1914, and the number of volunteers fell dramatically after that. The Derby Scheme was introduced in 1915 in order to increase the number of recruits. Men who were eligible for service were visited by canvassers and asked whether or not they were willing to join the Army. If the canvasser managed to persuade the man to attest then he visited a recruiting office and could choose whether to join immediately or defer his service until it was deemed absolutely necessary. If he chose deferred service then he was given a day's pay and an armband to wear showing that he had pledged to serve his country if called. These men were promised that they would only be mobilised if their whole age group was called up. Conscriptioin was looming and it was a last chance to volunteer. Archie attested under the Derby Scheme in November 1915, choosing to defer his service, and was posted to the Army Reserve. He was called up on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1916 along with the rest of his age group.

Archie joined the 14<sup>th</sup> (County of London) Battalion (London Scottish) of the London Regiment and trained at Winchester for a fortnight before joining the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, who were completing their pre-deployment training on Salisbury Plain. After inspection by His Majesty the King, they took embarkation leave, a last chance to see their families. They sailed from Southampton aboard a paddle steamer "*of modest dimensions and incredible dirtiness*", arriving at Le Havre on 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> London Scottish were stationed north of Arras, a relatively quiet sector. They did not fight in the Battle of the Somme although they could hear the constant rumble of guns far to the south. The fighting on the Somme had left few troops to hold the line elsewhere and neither side was strong enough to make any meaningful attack. Sniping and bombardment by trench mortars or rifle-grenades were everyday dangers with the occasional raid or mine explosion to liven things up.

After spending the summer and early autumn in France, the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Scottish were to be sent to the Balkans. On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1916, the first day of their last tour in the trenches on the Western Front, Archie was killed in action. He was 30 years old.

Archie is buried in Maroeuil British Cemetery. His headstone inscription, chosen by his mother, reads: "*Jesus said Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.*" He is commemorated on the Banstead War Memorial, on the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway War Memorial at Victoria Station, on the Banstead Cricket Club Roll of Honour, on the London Scottish War Memorial in their Regimental Headquarters in Horseferry Road and in several places at All Saints': on the Tonge family grave, on the Garton Memorial in the churchyard, on the memorial panels in the Lady Chapel at All Saints' and in the Book of Men Who Served Overseas.