

Banstead Remembers

Gunner Harry Harden

17 or 17a Lyme Regis Road

281st Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

Served in France and Belgium

Died of his wounds, aged 29



MONDAY 19th JUNE

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

Harry Harden, a carman who grew up in Salisbury Road and later lived at either 17 or 17a Lyme Regis Road, served with the heavy guns of the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was mortally wounded while with his battery.

Please come and remember the sacrifice made in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

Gunner Harry Harden 17 or 17a Lyme Regis Road

Harry Elbert Harden was born in Banstead in September 1888. He was the son of Amos and Matilda and was baptised at All Saints on 30th September.

Amos was an agricultural labourer from Banstead and he worked on the farm at the asylum on Banstead Downs. He married Matilda Standen, from Woodmansterne, in early 1882. They lived at 4 Salisbury Road, one of a number of cottages at the High Street end of the road which no longer exist today, and they had at least 4 children: Winnifred (b.1884), John (b.1886), Harry (b.1888) and Matilda (b.1891-d.1894).

Harry was scorer for Banstead Cricket Club's 2nd XI when he was a boy. After leaving school, he worked as a carman, driving a horse and cart for a haulage contractor. He continued to live at home until he married a Hornsey girl, Louisa Beale, in Hornsey, in 1911. They made their home at one of the two maisonettes that were then known as 4 Lulworth Cottages and which are now numbers 17 and 17a Lyme Regis Road.

Harry, 27 years old, 5ft 7¼ in tall, joined the Royal Garrison Artillery on 1st November 1915 at Whitehall, London. Unlike many men who signed up under the Derby Scheme at this time, Harry did not choose to defer his service and he found himself at No.4 R.G.A. Depot in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, the following day.

The importance of artillery - and, crucially, the right kind of artillery - became evident in Spring 1915 when the Western Front settled into trench warfare and so the numbers of men and guns in the three branches of the Royal Artillery were vastly increased from pre-war levels. The Royal Garrison Artillery evolved from manning the naval guns of the coast's static defences to become a juggernaut of hundreds of howitzer batteries crewed by tens of thousands of men which smashed strongpoints and struck at batteries, dumps and transport infrastructure behind enemy lines.

Harry was made a gunner on 5th November and spent nearly a year training on the Home Front before he received his first posting on 5th October 1916 and joined 264th Siege Battery at Ashton Gate Barracks, Bristol. They went to France in February 1917 with their four 9.2-inch howitzers and took part in the Battle of Arras (Apr-May '17). Harry was wounded in late April while his battery supported the Australians of I ANZAC Corps, who were fighting for possession of the Hindenburg Line.

When Harry returned to duty ten days later, it was with 281st Siege Battery. The Battle of Arras was soon over and a new offensive was about to be launched to liberate Belgium's Channel ports. Troops and guns were concentrated in the Ypres Salient. Harry was near Ypres with 281's No.3 gun when he was hit in the head at 10:30am on 19th June. He was evacuated to 17 Casualty Clearing Station but died later that day. He was 29 years old. Harry is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.