

# *Banstead Remembers*

*Private Jack Taylor*

*32 Lyme Regis Road*

*884 Mechanical Transport Company*

*Served in France and Belgium*

*Killed in Action, aged 20*



## SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

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

Jack Taylor, a gardener from Lyme Regis Road, was one of thirteen men from Banstead and Burgh Heath who lost their lives in the Third Battle of Ypres, often known as "Passchendaele". Please come and remember the sacrifice that our local community made in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Private Jack Taylor of 32 Lyme Regis Road*

John "Jack" William Taylor was born in Banstead in January or February 1897 and was baptised at All Saints on 28<sup>th</sup> February of that year.

His family had settled in Banstead three years earlier when Jack's father, Walter, took a job as a coachman at Banstead Place, Park Road, which is now the Queen Elizabeth Foundation Neuro Rehabilitation Centre. They first lived in a lodge by the house, then at Apsley Cottages before moving into 17 (now 13) Mint Cottages, Mint Road.

In 1910, when Jack was 13 years old and just about to finish school, the family moved to Corbridge (now number 32), a semi-detached villa in Lyme Regis Road. Jack's father and his older brothers became gardeners and Jack followed in their footsteps.

Jack turned 19 in 1916, just as conscription was about to come in. His father had become an invalid and at least three of his four older brothers were already away serving overseas so Jack would have had important responsibilities at home. The family probably could not afford to lose him so he appealed against his call-up. He was twice granted temporary exemptions before joining the Army in December 1916.

He went to France with 884 Mechanical Transport Company, Army Service Corps. His company was a siege park, responsible for maintaining the lorries that kept the heavy artillery supplied with shells and for the caterpillar-tracked tractors that pulled the guns. They were a small crew of mechanics, artificers and drivers for mobile workshops and tractors but their numbers would swell with hundreds of temporarily attached personnel from the ammunition columns, the men that delivered shells to the guns of the batteries that were in the front line in the Siege Park's sector.

Jack served on the Somme in early 1917 before his company moved to Poperinghe, west of Ypres, in June. The Royal Garrison Artillery's heavy guns were arriving in Ypres ready for the Big Push. Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig wanted to fight his way out of the Ypres Salient, the bulge in the line around the low-lying market town, and northeast to the Channel coast ports. The battle began at dawn on 31<sup>st</sup> July but torrential rain that started later that day turned the battlefield into a sea of mud and the fighting came to a halt until mid-August when the ground had dried out a little.

It was a dangerous business delivering shells to the batteries. The Germans held the high ground and had observation over the Salient, there was little cover and the lorries were a tempting and obvious target by day and so they usually drove at night. There were few roads and they were all routinely shelled at night so the Siege Park's lorries were often damaged or destroyed and there were one or two casualties per day in July and August. The M.T. Company's mobile workshops would accompany the columns of lorries in case they broke down and it was probably while escorting one of those convoys to Ypres on the night of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> August that Jack Taylor was killed. He was 20 years old. Jack is buried in White House Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium.