

Banstead Remembers

Private Alfred Pidgeon
of 18 Diceland Road

2/2nd London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)
Served in France and Belgium
Killed in Action, aged 29



THURSDAY 26th 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

Alfred Pidgeon was a decorator who moved from Chelsea to Diceland Road in 1913. He served on the Western Front with a Territorial battalion of the Royal Fusiliers and was killed in action near Poelcappelle as his battalion attacked on the first day of the Second Battle of Passchendaele.

*We will remember **each** one*

Private Alfred Pidgeon of 18 Diceland Road

Alfred Allen Pidgeon was born on 20th September 1888 in Chelsea and baptised on 4th November at his local church, Christ Church. He was the son of William and Sarah (nee Allen) and was the youngest of 12. The family lived at 57 Christ Church Street.

Alfred went to the local school before enrolling at Westminster City School when he was 12. He became a decorator, like his father, and lived with his parents until he married Mary Hewitt (nee Long), a widow, on 5th July 1913 at Christ Church. She already had a son by her previous marriage and together they had another, Alfred William, who was born at their new home, 18 Diceland Road, on 13th May 1914.

Alfred joined the Army under the Derby Scheme on 7th December 1915 and chose to serve with the Bedfordshire Regiment. He opted to defer his service and remained in Banstead until he was called up when conscription came into effect for married men.

He trained with the Bedfords' 5th (Reserve) Battalion from June 1916 until July 1917, when he was posted to 4th Battalion in France. He joined his new battalion near Arras on 17th July. He was only with them for a month before he was transferred to the 2/2nd London Regiment, a Territorial battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. Alfred joined them at Izel-Lez-Hameau, one of hundreds of men to do so in mid-August.

They arrived in Belgium on 24th August, nearly a month after the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) had begun. They spent a fortnight in training for the attack.

On the night of 12th/13th September, they went into the line (a series of posts rather than a trench) at Keerselaere and helped to beat off two small German attacks. One platoon brought in wounded men during the attack on the 20th and the battalion played a supporting role in the Battle of Polygon Wood on the 26th and held off a counterattack on the 27th. They were withdrawn to France for three weeks training.

At 5:40am on 26th October, the first day of the Second Battle of Passchendaele, Alfred's division attacked up the Poelcappelle Spur, with Alfred's battalion tasked with gaining 500 yards of ground east of Poelcappelle. The 2/2nd Londons attacked a collection of strongpoints and Alfred's company advanced along the Lekkerboterbeek to capture one of them, Moray House. The ground was "*impassable*" and their rifles jammed with mud. Their barrage was weak and they waded slowly into machine-gun fire and the German barrage. Despite the difficulties, they captured what they thought was their objective but was actually another strongpoint. Alfred and 4 or 5 men reached a nearby shell-hole. When the Germans countered, Alfred was hit in the side of the face. He was bound up and sent to a First Aid post and never seen again. He was 29. Alfred is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing.