

Banstead Remembers

SATURDAY 26th MAY

A memorial service will be held at **11:50am** at All Saints Church for



*Private Mark Farrow
of Banstead Asylum*

*2nd Devonshire Regiment
Served in France and Belgium
Killed in Action, aged 38*

Mark Farrow was an attendant at Banstead Asylum. A Boer War veteran, he rejoined his old regiment when war broke out. He fought on the Somme and at Passchendaele. Mark was reported missing, later declared killed in action, between 26th and 31st May 1918, during the 3rd Battle of the Aisne.

SUNDAY 27th MAY

A memorial service will be held at **10:50am** at All Saints Church for

*Private Willie Nash
of 17 Shrubland Road*

*12th/13th Nortumberland Fusiliers
Served in France and Belgium
Killed in Action, aged 20*



Willie Nash worked at Pushman's shop in Shrubland Road. He lied about his age to join the Army and drove wagons for the Army Service Corps before transferring to the infantry. He was wounded at Passchendaele but returned to duty and was with his battalion at Berry-au-Bac when the Germans launched their Aisne offensive on 27th May 1918.

*We will remember **each** one*

Banstead and the Third Battle of the Aisne

Mark Farrow was born in Swaffham Prior, near Newmarket, Cambridgeshire, on 13th May 1880. He was one of at least eight children born to William and Ann Farrow.

When he was 19, Mark joined the Army. The Boer War had broken out in South Africa a few months earlier and Mark soon found himself in South Africa with the Devonshire Regiment. After the war, he served in the East Indies (Burma/Myanmar) for several years. Returning to England, he worked as an attendant at Banstead Asylum, where he met a nurse, Edith Hibling; they married in 1913.

Mark rejoined the Army in September 1914 and once more served with the Devonshires. He remained on the Home Front as a lance-corporal, perhaps helping to train new recruits, but lost his stripe and went out to France to join the 2nd Devons in early 1916. The Devons fought on the Somme and in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), played their part in the fighting withdrawal during the German offensive of March 1918 and were in the line when the Aisne offensive began in May.

Willie Nash was born in Banstead in 1897. His father ran a coal merchant business from the family home at Park View Cottages (17-19), in Shrubland Road. The Nashes lived at 17. Willie worked as a grocer's assistant at Pushman's shop next door.

He lied about his age, claiming to be 19 when he was only 17, to become a wagon driver in the Army Service Corps in August 1914 and was in France a month later. In August 1916, Willie transferred to the infantry and joined the Northumberland Fusiliers. He was wounded in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) but soon returned to duty.

On 27th May 1918, the Germans attacked the Chemin des Dames ridge between Soissons and Reims, where a breach of the defences might open the way for a march on Paris. The line on the ridge was manned by four British divisions recuperating from fighting in Flanders. The bombardment began at 1am, catching large numbers of troops as they had been ordered by their French commander to hold the front line in strength rather than defend in depth. The infantry assault began at 3:30am.

Willie Nash was in the front line at Berry-au-Bac. The Division on his left broke but the 12th/13th Northumberland Fusiliers held their line until ordered to withdraw to new positions, the first of many retreats they would make over the next few days.

Mark Farrow's Devonshires were behind the front line with orders to hold the key position of the Bois des Buttes at all costs. The 2nd Devons fought bravely and were practically wiped out. The Regiment was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French in recognition of their courage, the men wearing the ribbon on their sleeves.

Casualties in the two battalions totalled nearly 1,000 men between 27th and 31st May 1918. Both Willie Nash, aged 20, and Mark Farrow, aged 38, were killed in action.