

# *Banstead Remembers*

## *Private Jack Hillman*

*of Park Farm, Holly Lane*

*26<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)  
Served in Belgium and France  
Killed in Action, aged 19*



## **SATURDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JULY**

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 Hillman was a gardener and driver who lived at Park Farm, Holly Lane. He served as a bugler in the Royal Fusiliers and was killed in the trenches just days after his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Please come and remember the sacrifice our local community made in the Great War.

*We will remember **each** one*

## *Private Jack Hillman of Park Farm, Holly Lane*

John "Jack" Hillman was born in Walton-on-the-Hill on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1899 and was baptised at St Peter's, on 12<sup>th</sup> August. He was the son of Alfred and Helen Hillman and was one of four children.

The family moved to Chipstead when Jack was young, then to Mint Cottages, Mint Road, Banstead, before settling at Park Farm, in Holly Lane, where Jack's father worked as a carter.

Jack went to school in the village, sang in the church choir and played the trumpet in Banstead's Town Band, who were a fixture at any social occasion in the village and at many events in the local area.

After leaving school at the age of 13 or 14, Jack became a gardener, working with his older brother at Banstead Place, in Park Road. He was too young to join up when war broke out and seems to have become a driver, probably replacing a chauffeur who had gone to fight. The family tell the story that Jack was handed a white feather, a symbol of cowardice, for not going to war even though he was not yet old enough to join the Army. Sadly, this kind of shameful behaviour was all too commonplace although by no means universal and was much frowned upon by the majority.

Jack was conscripted when he turned 18, in the summer of 1917. He would have anticipated serving on the Home Front for another year but the high price Fifth Army paid during the onslaught of Germany's March 1918 offensive prompted the government to cut the age limit for overseas service from 19 years old to 18½ (provided that the soldier had received at least six months of training) in response and so Jack was sent to France in one of the first batches of 18-year-olds to go. He was posted to the 26<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers, the Bankers' Battalion, on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

The Bankers had recently returned from Italy, in time to take part in the fighting retreat at the end of March, and had sustained heavy casualties. Jack was part of a draft of 420 reinforcements that joined them at Winnizeele, Belgium, on 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> April. They were among the last troops to hold the line at Passchendaele before the ridge was abandoned and then manned trenches on the new, shorter line outside Ypres.

In July, the Bankers were south of the Ypres Salient, on the Scherpenberg, one of a pair of hills that commanded the surrounding flat landscape. The front line ran along the valley between the two hills. Although there was little all-out fighting, there were raids carried out and a lot of shelling. Jack Hillman lost his life just days after his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, probably to a shell, sometime between 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July. He was buried on the slopes of the Scherpenberg and later reinterred in La Clytte Military Cemetery.