

Banstead Remembers

SUNDAY 23rd APRIL

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

Private Thomas Riches
of 18 Oatlands Road, Burgh Heath

7th Border Regiment
Killed in action, aged 19

Lance Corporal Edward Beadle
Born in Canons Lane, Burgh Heath

South Wales Borderers
Killed in action, aged 32

MONDAY 24th APRIL

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

Private Arthur Curtis
of The Coffee House, High Street

2nd Royal Fusiliers
Killed in action, aged 28

FRIDAY 28th APRIL

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

Sapper Reginald Moyse
Patient at Banstead Mental Hospital

Royal Engineers
Died, aged 37

*We will remember **each** one*

Banstead and the Second Battle of the Scarpe

The Battle of Arras was fought to divert German reserves north so that the French could try and break through on a wide front along the River Aisne, far to the south. The battle began on Easter Monday, 9th April 1917, and that day saw the largest gains made from a standing start in the war so far. The Canadians captured Vimy Ridge and the British Third Army smashed through the first two lines of German defences east of Arras. After two days of fighting for control of the *Monchyriegel* switch line, which ran between Feuchy and Wancourt, the British advanced into the village of Monchy-le-Preux, on top of a ridge of high ground that ran between the Scarpe and Cojeul rivers. There the advance halted and the First Battle of the Scarpe came to an end.

The French attack on the Aisne began on 16th April. It was a failure, the Germans knew they were coming and were ready for them. The British pressed on with their offensive and as dawn was breaking at 4:45am on 23rd April, they renewed their attack on a 9-mile front which centred on Monchy-le-Preux.

Thomas Riches, a part-time worker at Boots who lived with his parents at 18 Oatlands Road, had joined the East Surrey Regiment aged 18 but found himself shipped out to join the 7th Border Regiment when he turned 19. He had only been in France for four months and now he was going into battle for the first time. His battalion was north of Monchy-le-Preux and its objectives were Bayonet and Rifle Trench. The 7th Borders gained Bayonet Trench but came under intense fire from Rifle Trench (a switch line that connected Bayonet to Halberd Trench) and from the far bank of the River Scarpe. Machine-guns mowed the men down and they were forced to retire or to shelter in shellholes until dark. Thomas was one of the fallen.

East of Monchy, Edward Beadle, born in Canons Lane and now living in Croydon with his young family, advanced with the 2nd South Wales Borderers. British shells dropped short and hit the Borderers but they kept going and took Shrapnel Trench and then shot their way through Arrow Head Copse and the Twin Copses. The failure of the attack to the north meant that their left flank was dangerously exposed and reinforcements were hurried to fill the gap and deal with the snipers and machine-guns there. Edward was killed during the attack. He was 32 years old.

That night, Arthur Curtis, a Dorset-born cowman who worked at Longcroft and lived at the Coffee House in the High Street, and his 2nd Royal Fusiliers took over trenches to the right (south) of the South Wales Borderers. They continued the attack at 4pm the next day, Advancing towards a copse on a spur that led down to the River Cojeul, they came under heavy machine-gun fire and took cover in shellholes. One company then charged through the wood whilst two more flanked it and took up positions in pits on its northeast edge. Here they were sniped at and came under heavy shelling and machine-gun fire. They were not in contact with the battalions on either side of them and patrols were sent out to the left and right. The patrol that went right never returned and the one that went left could find no sign of other British troops. With their numbers rapidly dwindling, no support on either flank and the Germans working their way around the edges of the Fusiliers' position, they were ordered to fall back to their old line at 6:50pm. Arthur was among the dead. He was 28 years old.