Reigate & Banstead Remembers

World War I

1914 - 1918

Commemorative Centenary programme

Reigate & Banstead
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Banstead | Horley | Redhill | Reigate

FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY

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Introduction from the Leader

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council is very proud of the part that our residents played in the First World War and determined that their bravery is remembered. Between 2014 and 2018 the Council is planning a range of activities and events across the borough so that people of all ages can come together to mark, commemorate and remember the lives of those who lived, fought and died in the conflict.

We want to give people an understanding of what the Great War meant to the soldiers fighting, those left at home and how things changed as a result of the war. We wish to document these stories for future generations, so they are remembered.

This publication would not be possible without the help of the local history societies and other local residents, and our thanks go to all those involved. We want to hear your stories too, so please get in touch and let us know so they can be included in future editions.

Cllr Victor Broad
Leader,
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

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How it started

Since 1815, the balance of power in Europe had been maintained by a series of treaties. In 1888 Wilhelm II was crowned 'German Emperor and King of Prussia' and moved from a policy of maintaining the status quo to a more aggressive position. He did not renew a treaty with Russia, aligned Germany with the declining Austro-Hungarian Empire and started to build a Navy rivalling that of Britain's. These actions greatly concerned Germany's neighbours, who quickly forged new treaties and alliances in the event of war.

On 28 June 1914 Franz Ferdinand the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne was assassinated by the Bosnian-Serb nationalist group Young Bosnia who wanted pan-Serbian independence. Franz Joseph, the Austro-Hungarian Emperor (with the backing of Germany), responded aggressively, presenting Serbia with an intentionally unacceptable ultimatum to provoke war. Although Serbia agreed to eight of the ten terms, on 28 July 1914 the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia, producing a cascade effect across Europe. Russia, bound by treaty to Serbia, declared war with Austro-Hungary, Germany declared war with Russia and France declared war with Germany.

Germany's army crossed into neutral Belgium in order to reach Paris, forcing Britain to declare war with Germany (due to the Treaty of London (1839) whereby Britain agreed to defend Belgium in the event of invasion). By 4 August 1914, Britain and much of Europe were pulled into a war which would last 1,566 days, cost an estimated 10 million lives and 28,938,073 casualties or missing on both sides.

Thousands of local troop

The day after the declaration of war, 5 August 1914, “A” company of the 5th Battalion, Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment grouped at Reigate Drill Hall. Just before 4pm the Mayor and Mayoress arrived and a lone bugle sounded as the men filed out to march to the railway station via Lesbourne Road, Bell Street, through the tunnel and up London Road. They assembled on the platform of Reigate Station and after a few choruses of popular songs a train from Guildford took them to Canterbury, the first stop that would end for some in India and others in Mesopotamia. The average age of these young men was 23.

s march through Reigate

"Soon after midday on September 9th 1914, the first bodies of troops entered Reigate and then onwards during the afternoon they were followed up by the remaining detachments of the body which made up the column" Surrey Mirror, 11 September 1914.

Many thousands of Territorials marched from Aldershot to Dover for embarkation to France and the Western Front. A few weeks before, they had been clerks, postmen and shopkeepers. As each company, battery or troop passed through the densely packed streets they were greeted with cheers of pride by the residents. Reigate High Street rang to the strains of 'Tipperary' and other patriotic songs.

The troops were billeted overnight in church premises in Nutley Lane and the Reigate Lodge Estate. Local people provided meals, blankets and mattresses for the troops.

War refugees had started arriving in the borough by September and there were reports of 57 refugees from Belgium, Holland and France being given hospitality at the Moat House in Reigate.

Local recruitment

The roll of honour was introduced to increase recruitment. Stirring speeches were made outside the Market Hall in Redhill. There was also a march from Reigate through Meadvale, down the Brighton Road, up Station Road to Shaws corner. The result was deemed to be a success with 584 men recruited in 10 days.

The local recruiting office was located in Ladbroke Road, Redhill where the station car park is now. Within three weeks of the declaration of war, over 100,000 men in the United Kingdom had enlisted.

During the war The East Surrey Regiment raised 24 battalions, with 1,000 men in each, 21 of which saw active service. The casualties were horrendous, with 6,223 officers, rank and file killed.

Hospitals

Due to the high number of casualties, many large houses and buildings were turned into hospitals during the war. The picture above shows Hillfield Red Cross Hospital at 30 Raglan Road, Reigate. The hospital was staffed by Reigate and Betchworth Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). It had 50 beds in three wards named after military figures of the day: Kitchener, French and Jellicoe. Miss Hemming was the matron. Patients were accepted from 10 November 1914 and 500 were treated in the first year.

Netherne Hospital had to handle large numbers of patients from neighbouring hospitals, which had been taken over by the military. Food from the market garden contributed to national supplies and convalescent soldiers, and German PoW were brought in to assist.

By 1916, many of the staff at Royal Earlswood Asylum had left to enrol in the armed forces. It had been hoped to employ women to make up the shortfall, but the munitions factory proved to be more attractive. The institution applied for exemption from conscription for its remaining male staff. In 1917 the institution contained 478 patients (318 males and 160 females) - the highest recorded in its history.

Billeting

Considerable numbers of soldiers were billeted in Redhill. Due to its importance as a railway junction, Redhill was made the headquarters of the troops on track and bridge guard duties in Surrey and Sussex. Many other soldiers were billeted whilst en route, some procuring horses and some training.

In Redhill, troops not billeted in houses camped on Redhill Common and other local open spaces. The Annual Report of 1914 from the Medical Officer of Health for Reigate reported that by the middle of August there were 12,432 men and 1,467 horses along the railway line into Redhill. There were remount depots at Marketfield, Batts Hill and Cavendish Hill.

Conditions for the young troops were difficult with many falling ill with disease before leaving the country. In September, 2,480 military blankets were disinfected from verminous conditions.

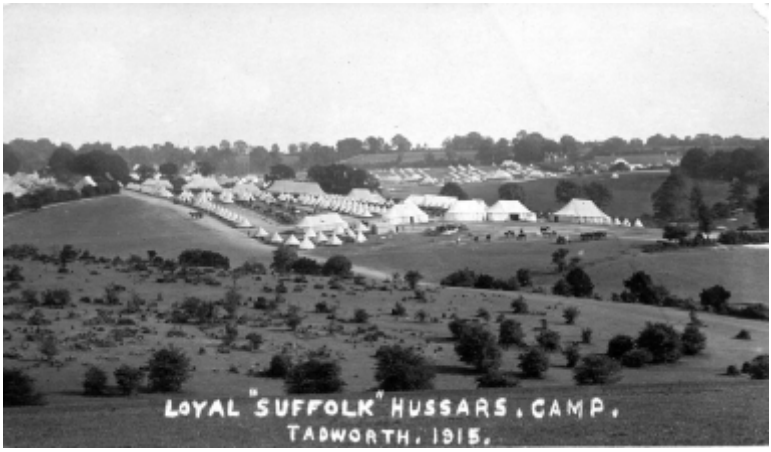
The railway also brought troops to Tadworth and Tattenham Corner, where the goods sidings were much used. Bunks were put in the box wagons stationed in the platforms originally built for race meetings.

# of Troops

Tadworth: In 1914, just a few large houses and cottages became a vast tented camp with thousands of troops from battalions of the London Regiments being stationed on open farmland there for training. During the winter these troops were moved to quarters in private homes, many of them in the Banstead area.

Billeting officers knocked on every door and allocated troops depending on size of the house and number of residents. Some were not happy with their allocations, including parents with young daughters, although there was no question of refusing. Payment for board and lodging was two shillings and 6 pence (12.5p) a day.

Key dates for 1914



28 June	Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to Austria-Hungary's throne, and his wife, Sophie, are assassinated by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip while the couple were visiting Sarajevo, Bosnia.
28 July	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
1 August	Germany declares war on Russia.
3 August	Germany declares war on France.
4 August	The UK declares war on Germany, after Germany invades Belgium.
6 August	Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia and Serbia declares war on Germany.
19 August	US President Woodrow Wilson announces US neutrality.
23 August	Battle of Mons – East and West Surreys in action.
26 – 27 August	Battle of Le Cateau – East and West Surreys in action.
5 – 12 September	The First Battle of the Marne begins. Germans halted at the Marne. The 'Race to the Sea' causes the British army to swing north to protect the channel ports from German attack.
19 October	First Battle of Ypres begins in Belgium. Trench warfare begins as soldiers on both sides dig in. East Surrey (Queens regiment) took huge casualties. Stalemate develops on Western Front.
3 November	The UK announces that the North Sea is a military area, effectively creating a blockade of goods into Germany.
24 December	The unofficial Christmas truce is declared.

Events in the borough to mark, commemorate and remember

10 August 2014	Royal British Legion Banstead Community fun day and Charity Cricket Match, Banstead Cricket Club
3 August – November 2014	Belfry Centre, Redhill with Royal British Legion Merstham: commemorating and remembering with information, education, events and displays
4 August – 15 November 2014	Books of Remembrance open in Banstead, Reigate, Redhill and Horley
	Book of Remembrance for the 122 Horley war dead will be on display in Horley Library. (Horley Town Council)
September 2014	Opening of Memorial Park, Redhill
11 – 14 September 2014	Heritage Open Days: The Town Hall, Reigate will be open on Saturday 13 September. For a full list please visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk
8 October 2014	TALK 'Over by Christmas': Andrew Thompson, former head of Oakwood School in Horley and WWI expert delivers an illustrated lecture. Covering events from August to December 1914, no one could have foreseen the catastrophe that would unfold; the only thought was to get to the front before it was all over. Harlequin Theatre 7pm. Tickets £5 in advance from the Harlequin Box Office.
11 October 2014	WWI Roadshow: Ian Chatfield, Curator of Surrey Infantry Museum, and other experts will be on hand to provide information about artefacts brought in. You will be able to research your own family war dead; other military items on display as well as information on local history. From 1pm at The Harlequin Theatre. Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
12 October 2014	FILM 'War Requiem' – 4pm The Harlequin, Redhill. Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
27 October 2014	Belfry Shopping Centre, Redhill, Royal British Legion (Merstham) selling poppies and collecting for Legion Charities
3 – 11 November 2014	Exhibition including WWII Memorabilia, also joined by Three Belles, singing war time songs on 6 and 7 November. Belfry Shopping Centre, Redhill.
5 November 2014	'Remembered' The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Talk by author Julie Summers at Redhill Library, 7.30pm, charges apply, tickets from www.surreycc.gov.uk

9 November 2014	FILM ‘My Boy Jack’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
9 November 2014	Remembrance Sunday annual events held at: - Horley War Memorial - Banstead War Memorial - Shaws Corner War Memorial
11 November 2014	Armistice Day Names of war dead read out by local schools at four sites in the borough: - Reigate War Memorial, Shaws Corner - Banstead War Memorial, High Street - Horley War Memorial - Memorial Park, Redhill 11am Remembrance Service, Belfry Shopping Centre, Redhill, with The Royal British Legion (Merstham) supported by local cadets and dignitaries, including short commemorative service reading and buglers playing the Last Post and Reveille. Two minutes silence accompanied by a drop of 60,000 poppy petals.
7 December 2014	FILM ‘Merry Christmas – Joyeux Noel’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
10 January 2015	FILM ‘The Life & Death of Colonel Blimp’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
2 February 2015	RSC Love’s Labour’s Lost
8 February 2015	FILM ‘A Very Long Engagement’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
4 March 2015	RSC Love’s Labour’s Won
15 March 2015	FILM ‘Lawrence of Arabia’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
12 April 2015	FILM ‘Paths of Glory’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.
10 May 2015	FILM ‘War Horse’ 4pm Harlequin, Redhill Free tickets available from the Harlequin Box Office.

Dates and details of events correct at time of going to press.
Please check on the website for more events: www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk.

Banstead War Memorial

Banstead War Memorial lies at the eastern end of the High Street at the junction with Park Road.

The building of the Memorial was initiated by the Banstead Parish Council, on whose behalf, Mr Ralph Neville of Banstead Place, wrote to the Epsom Rural District Council in March 1919. He stated that 'it was desired to erect a Celtic Cross as a memorial to the villagers who had fallen in the 1914/18 War'.

It took some considerable time to make the necessary arrangements, including the raising of a fund by public subscription. Mr Neville died in 1923 and left the sum of £250 to the vicar and church wardens upon trust which included a condition that they keep the memorial in repair "with the names clearly legible". It was unveiled by General Sir Charles Carmichael Monro on Sunday 5 June 1921.

After the Second World War, the names of the villagers who died in that war were also inscribed on the memorial. There are now 118 names on it.

In 2010, the Banstead History Research Group published a book about the stories behind the names. 'These Men of Banstead', was written by local resident Lewis Wood and it details the stories of 34 of the men. The stories introduce the reader into the rich and fascinating history of these men who fought for their country. Each account is complemented by personal and service photographs, images of mementoes and keepsakes, diary entries, and postcards and letters sent home, all the result of painstaking research over a period of four years by Lewis and other members of the Group.

More information is available on their website **www.bansteadhistory.com**

200 war graves

We have surveyed cemeteries and churchyards up and down the borough and have so far identified around 200 War Graves, mostly belonging to servicemen and women who fought in the First or Second World Wars.

A number of graves have headstones supplied and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Others are privately erected memorials, some of which no longer appear to be tended and are in a poor state of repair, with a few needing professional restoration. These repairs have been completed and we are now looking for volunteers to help maintain them.

Involving the local community

We want to involve the local community in this important project and are looking for volunteers to help with ongoing maintenance of these war graves.

We are keen to hear from schools, youth groups, local organisations, businesses or residents who would like to be involved in helping to keep them in a good state of repair over the years to come and create a legacy for future generations.

'Adopt a grave' project

The 'adopt a grave' project will involve keeping the grass neatly trimmed, the plot weeded, headstone and surrounds clean and generally maintaining the grave in good order.

If you are interested in volunteering to help maintain war graves, want to let us know about your own commemorative events, or have any interesting stories about World War I or those buried here, please get in touch.

leisure.services@reigate-banstead.gov.uk

01737 276 700

Our grateful thanks to everyone for their time, knowledge, old postcards and input in collating this brochure, especially:

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In the next issue:

Find out about Rupert Price Hallowes from Redhill, who was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Learn about conditions on the home front and the opportunities this provided for women.

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