

Alfred Stanley Butchart, died 16 July 1916, aged 26



Alfred Butchart was the only son of Alfred and Kate Butchart. He was born at 9 Elm Road in Forest Gate in 1890, and had two older sisters. His mother came from Dalston, and she married Alfred senior (a clerk, born in Angus in Scotland) there in 1884. Sadly Alfred senior died in December 1890 at the age of 29, and his widow took in lodgers to make ends meet – respectable lodgers, two civil servants and a schoolmistress.

According to the 1901 census, when the family was living in Douglas Road Plaistow, Mrs Butchart had remarried and been widowed once more, and was now Mrs Macaulay with a baby daughter Gladys Macaulay. It has not been possible to find any record of this marriage or Mr Macaulay's death. Alfred, now 11, and his eldest sister Kate (15) were living with their mother and attending local schools, while 13 year old Edith was a boarder at the Royal Caledonian Asylum in Caledonian Road Islington, a 'charitable institution for the maintenance and education of soldiers, sailors and mariners'.

By the 1911 census, the family are living in Central Park Road in East Ham; Mrs Macaulay has no employment, but Kate is a commercial clerk, Edith is a shorthand typist and Alfred is a stockbroker's clerk. Gladys is only 11 so she is still at school.

When war broke out in August 1914, the 10th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers was formed in the City of London by the Lord Mayor and became known as 'the Stockbrokers'. The Battalion was sent to Boulogne in July 1915 as part of Kitchener's Second Army, and was engaged in various actions before the Battle of the Somme began in July 1916. By this time Alfred was a Lance-Corporal.

The Stockbrokers took part in the fighting around the Ancre, a small tributary of the Somme between Albert and Amiens. On 16 July 1916 Alfred Butchart was killed in action. His body was taken to the Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly, a hamlet 12 kilometres South West of Albert, and he was buried there. There are almost 3,000 soldiers buried here and the record keeping must have been excellent, as only 12 casualties are unidentified. However the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website says of Heilly Station Cemetery that '*The burials in this cemetery were carried out under extreme pressure and many of the graves are either too close together to be marked individually, or they contain multiple burials.*

Some headstones carry as many as three sets of casualty details, and in these cases, regimental badges have had to be omitted.' Alfred was buried with two other soldiers from different regiments. His mother asked for the following inscription to be added to his gravestone:

*Darling
You gave your
life for us Our
loss is terrible
But God's will be done.*

You may be wondering why Alfred Butchart's name is on the war memorial in All Saints' Church in East Finchley? There are two pieces of evidence, but the rest has to be conjecture. In July 1916 the Finchley Times lists 'Alfred Butchart of East Finchley' as a casualty of the Somme campaign, and secondly his sister Edith was living at 11 Fortis Green Avenue when she was married at St James' Church in Muswell Hill in September 1921. Whatever the reason, the congregation of All Saints' Church wanted to commemorate Alfred and his sacrifice.