

ROBERT SIMMONS

He was one of three brothers, all born at Leyton, Essex. His parents were George and Florence Simmons. George himself was born at Framlingham in 1862 and became an engine fitter. Robert, the youngest of the three boys, was born in 1898. Sadly the boys spent most of their childhood in schools attached to the Workhouse in Leyton, their father having died young and their mother appears in the West Ham Union Workhouse at Leytonstone.

By 1911, he is at Framlingham in Fairfield Road, living with his grandfather, George Griffiths, aged 71, still a railway guard. After school, Robert worked at the College as a waiter. He enlisted on 15 October 1915, aged 17 years, in the Suffolk Regiment, with a service number of 22137, at Ipswich. He was 6 ft. tall. He transferred to T/Reserve Battalion 1 September 1916 and was posted 22 September 1916 to B.E.F. and posted again 19 January 1917. On 31 July 1917 he became an unpaid Lance Corporal. However, he relinquished this rank on being transferred to The Royal West Kent Regiment as a private on 10 February 1918.

He was taken prisoner on 28 March 1918, subsequently spending 3 months in a German Hospital, suffering from dysentery. He was employed down the mines, while well enough, as a prisoner of war. He was repatriated back to this country on 8 December 1918, having lost a great deal of weight, and suffering from deafness, from his service in France. He was discharged with a Grade IV disability, and given a Silver War Badge, B65118 and pension. He returned to Framlingham to live with his uncle William and grandfather George Griffiths, but by February 1919 he was very ill with acute lobar pneumonia, from which he died on 26 February 1919. His uncle William was present at his death. His grandfather had already lost two sons in WW1 and had now also lost a grandson.

He was buried in Framlingham Cemetery on 3 March 1919 - Plot RR6. There is presently no headstone to commemorate Robert's sacrifice for his country, and a CWGC application has been unsuccessful. Robert's mother, Florence Simmons (nee Griffiths), is also in an unmarked grave, in Framlingham Cemetery, in Plot LL4, after her death 27 October 1943. He is remembered on the Framlingham Church War Memorial.



After years of research, it was Evelyn Empson of Framlingham, who found he was buried in an unmarked grave in Framlingham Cemetery (the records were so poor of the unmarked graves that a proper database had only recently been collated). Evelyn tried hard with CWGC to have his death officially recognised. They did not class his deafness as sufficiently disabling to warrant his having a CWGC headstone and dyspnoea was also not considered important. They have refused again on appeal.

As a former employee at the College, he was added the Chapel WW1 Memorial on Remembrance Sunday 2015 and you can see a picture below of the new plaque. Also pictured is Evelyn in the middle of the line up holding a poppy made at Brandeston and bearing his name.

