

ROBERT PROBERT 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 on 23 November 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.

In 1905 he came to Framlingham and lived with his grandfather, George Griffiths, a railway guard in Bridge Street. By 1911, he had relocated to Fairfield Road. On 3 April 1905 he rerolled 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 21 March 1918, subsequently spending 3 months in a German Hospital, suffering from dysentery. He was sent to Stendal Camp where 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 half his body 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 was headstone to commemorate Robert's sacrifice for his country and his 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.



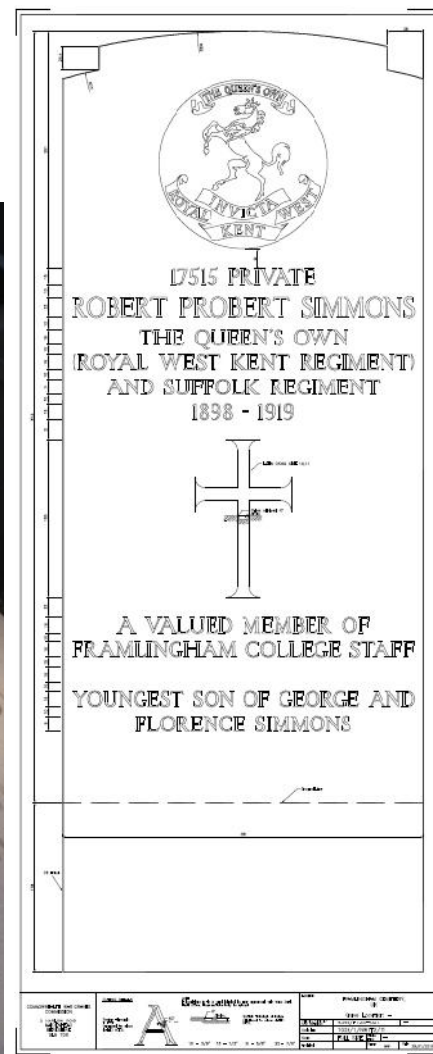
After years of research, it was Evelyn Empson of Framlingham, who found he was buried in an unmarked grave in Framlingham Cemetery (the records were so poor of the unmarked graves that a proper database had only recently been collated). Evelyn tried hard with CWGC to have his death officially recognised.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

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.



Since Remembrance Sunday 2015 Evelyn has been successful in getting CWGC to produce a headstone.

This was cut at the their premises in Beaurains near Arras, Northern France on 29 March 2016 and was witnessed by Evelyn’s son David



At the beginning of June 2016 it was erected at this previously unmarked grave in Framlingham Cemetery.



On 21 September 2016 there was a Service of Dedication organised by the College Chaplain, Rev Brynn Bayman, which was attended by the following :-

Special thanks to: Evelyn and Dave Empson - For their tireless campaign.

Other Guests: James Tanner- Chairman Town Council
Eileen Coe - Clerk Town Council
Kevin Coe - Cemetery Supervisor
Rev Canon Mark Sanders - St Michael's Church, Framlingham
Billy Doy - Royal British Legion representative
Paul Taylor - Headmaster, Framlingham College
Chris Essex - President, Society of Old Framlinghamians

Also Present : Rev Brynn Bayman - Chaplain, Framlingham College
Lieutenant Colonel Martin Myers-Allen - CCF, Framlingham College
Roy Witman - CCF, Framlingham College
Andrew Payn - Operations Director, Framlingham College
Framlingham College CCF Colour Party
Jack Gionis – Bugler

Below are a series of photos taken at the special service.













Evelyn has found the following excerpt from the Framlingham Weekly News in February 1919 :-

Robert Simmons, grandson of Guard Griffiths, entered Ipswich Hospital on February 17th 1919 for treatment of the ear, a successful operation was immediately followed by pneumonia, to which he succumbed on 26th February.

He was a prisoner of war in Germany, and since he returned home a few weeks back, he seemed to have recovered from the effects of the privations he and other prisoners had had to endure at the hands of the enemy. The news of his untimely death came as a great surprise to all ; only 21 years of age, he was over six feet tall and gave much promise of developing into a fine type of manhood.

At the funeral on Monday, the coffin was draped with a Union Jack and a number of his military colleagues were present, and also paid their parting tribute by providing between them, one of the beautiful floral tributes that covered the coffin.