

## CORPORAL THOMAS SIMMONS

242504, 'B' Company, 1st/5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 26 on 15 October 1918

Buried with honour in *Doingt Communal Cemetery Extension, France*; I F 34

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Doingt Communal Cemetery*



*1914-15 Star Medal*



*Gloucestershire Regiment*

**THOMAS SIMMONS** was born in 1892 in St. Paul's, Gloucester, the eldest son of Charles Simmons and Alice Hannah (formerly Boughton). He had four sisters and one brother and in 1918 the family was living at 4 Leonard Road, Gloucester. Little is known of Thomas's youth, except that in 1911 he was a Carpenter's Apprentice. One possible clue to a local connection is that, as an apprentice carpenter, he may have been employed by Collins & Godfrey, the main building firm in Tewkesbury.

However, Thomas did enlist in Tewkesbury in September 1914 and was included as an Abbey Volunteer. Initially he served in the 7th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, which had been formed the previous month at Bristol as part of Kitchener's New Army and came under the command of the 39th Infantry Brigade, 13th (Western) Division. The battalion embarked at Avonmouth on 19 June 1915 en route for the Balkan theatre, landing at Gallipoli in July. Thomas was awarded the '1914-15 Star' medal, and during his spell with the battalion was promoted to Lance Corporal.

The battalion fought in many of the battles in the Gallipoli campaign such as the *Battle of Sari Bair* and the *Battle of Hill 60*, and was one of the last contingents to leave the Gallipoli peninsula, being evacuated from Helles in January 1916. The 13th (Western) Division was then sent to Egypt where it served for a short time on the Suez Canal before moving to Mesopotamia to join the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force. During 1916 the division took part in many of the battles in the Mesopotamian campaign, including the recapture of Kut al Amara and

pursuit of the Turkish forces towards Baghdad. Units of the Division were the first troops to enter Baghdad when it fell in March 1917.

Sometime in late 1916 or early 1917 Thomas was transferred to the 1st/5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, a Territorial Force unit, in the 145th Infantry Brigade, 48th (South Midland) Division, and he was promoted to the rank of Corporal. In 1917 the Division occupied Peronne during the German Retreat to the Hindenburg Line and were in action in the *Third Battle of Ypres*. In November 1917 the Division moved to Italy where it was involved in the fighting on the Asiago Plateau.

In September 1918 the battalion left the 48th Division and returned to France to join the 75th Infantry Brigade in the 25th Division. The Division was part of the Fourth Army which was in the forefront of the campaign known as '*The Last Hundred Days*', in which the Allies inflicted a series of crushing defeats on the German Army, culminating in the Armistice. During the first half of October 1918 the Division was involved in three battles: the *Battle of Beurevoir* (3-5 October), the *Battle of Cambrai* (8-9 October) and the *Pursuit to the Selle* (9-12 October).

**Corporal Thomas Simmons** died of wounds on 15 October 1918, almost certainly in one of the three October battles, and was buried in *Doingt Communal Cemetery Extension*, near Peronne, France. At the time there were three Australian Casualty Clearing Stations in the village and it seems likely that he would have been treated in one of them. He had had a very wide experience in the War.