

CORPORAL JOHN ARTHUR SIMMS

13676, 10th (Service) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

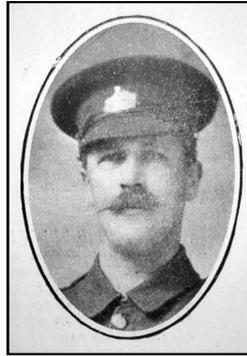
Died aged 39 on 25 September 1915

Remembered with honour at *Loos Memorial*; Panel 60-64

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Loos Memorial,
France*



Cpl. J.A. Simms
[Graphic 23/10/1915]



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

JOHN ARTHUR SIMMS was born in Pembrokeshire in 1876 to Henry Simms of Hampshire and Eleanor Lucy (formerly Bray) of London. Henry was a valet and from at least 1891 until 1901 the family lived at 30 Oldbury Road. In 1891 John worked as a printer's apprentice but by 1901 he was living in Alfretton, Derbyshire, working as a railway porter. In 1901 he returned to marry Lucy Wakefield on 20 April at Holy Trinity Church. Henry died in 1907 at the age of 68 and Eleanor went to live with John's younger brother, James Walter, and his wife in Upton-on-Severn. In 1910 John became the licensee of the Black Bear Inn in Tewkesbury where he was still living in 1911 with his wife and young son.

Although 38 years old at the outbreak of war, John volunteered for military service and enlisted at Gloucester, probably in September 1914 judging by his army service number. (Despite his age he was still claimed by the Abbey School as an 'old boy'.) John was posted to the new 10th Battalion, formed at Bristol in September as part of Kitchener's New Army, rising to the rank of Corporal by the time of his death. The battalion landed in France on 8 August 1915 when it was attached to the 1st Division, replacing a regular Guards battalion. The Battalion was soon involved in the *Battle of Loos* (25 September-18 October 1915), which was the largest British offensive mounted in 1915, undertaken in support of larger French offensives. The *Register* reported that *'the battle took place on ground in an area utterly unsuited to an attack ... before stocks of ammunition and heavy artillery were sufficient; the battle was*

noteworthy for the first use of poison gas by the British Army. Despite heavy casualties, there was considerable success on the first day ... but the opportunities could not be exploited, resulting in a costly stalemate.'

The 10th Battalion was one of the lead battalions in the assault and achieved all its objectives despite incurring heavy casualties. The Battalion War Diary noted that: *'The attack was delivered at 6.30 am with the accompaniment of gas and smoke ... The wind proved more favourable to the enemy than ourselves ... Nevertheless the assault was pushed home with the utmost resolution.'* During the battle, the Battalion suffered a total of 459 casualties.

Corporal John Arthur Simms was one of those killed in action on 25 September 1915, the opening day of the battle. His body was never recovered or identified and he is commemorated instead on the *Loos Memorial*. He was awarded the *'1914-15 Star'* medal.

John's elder brother, **William Henry Simms** ('Billy'), had served in the *Boer War*, becoming Company Sergeant Major (CSM) of the Tewkesbury Territorial Force Company. During the *'Great Patriotic Demonstration (when the Platform was stormed by recruits'* and 80 responded, the oaths *'were administered by Ex-Sgt. Simms'* amongst others.

After John's death, his wife Lucy remained licensee of the Black Bear Inn until 1921. She then sold the cottage that she owned in Lock Court and applied for one of the council houses on Gloucester Road that were reserved for ex-Servicemen, perhaps 'Homes fit for Heroes'?