

SIGNAL BOY ERNEST WILLIAM SIMONS

J/28483, Royal Navy

Died aged 17 on 1 February 1916

Buried with honour at *Tewkesbury Cemetery*; (5701) C-11

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Tewkesbury Cemetery
[D. Benson]



HMS Tiger
[Wikipedia]



HMS Vivid I
[www.candoo.com/]

ERNEST WILLIAM SIMONS was born in Tewkesbury on 15 August 1898, the son of Ann, a daughter of William and Priscilla Simons. Ann was also born in Tewkesbury and, according to the 1901 Census, was working as a domestic servant for the Wallis family in Bredon Road. At that time, Ernest was living with his maternal grandparents in Walton Cardiff. In 1907 Ann (Annie) married Thomas Fletcher, a widower, in Tewkesbury and they lived in Post Office Alley. Ernest was a pupil of Holy Trinity and the Council (Chance Street) Schools. In 1911 Thomas and Ann were living at Hammerton Court, High Street, with five children (two of their own and three from Thomas's first marriage), whilst Ernest was still living at Walton Cardiff.

Ernest enlisted in the Royal Navy in Devonport as a 'Boy 2nd Class' aged 15 in 1913. The condition was that, when aged 18, he would sign a 12-year professional engagement. He was 5'1" tall when he joined the Training Ship *HMS Ganges*, a floating establishment moored off Falmouth. He remained there until July 1914 when he served briefly on *HMS Crescent* before being posted to *HMS Vivid I*, one of a range of shore establishments at Devonport, including a signals centre.

On 3 October 1914 Ernest was posted to the Dreadnought battle cruiser *HMS Tiger* and was appointed Signal Boy on 5 September 1915. He remained on *HMS Tiger* until 24 November of that year. It appears likely that he went sick

from 25 November 1915 as he then returned to *HMS Vivid I* at Devonport.

Signal Boy Ernest William Simons died on 1 February 1916 at Devonport Royal Naval Hospital, Plymouth. His service record identified the cause of death as '*measles, bronchitis and pneumonia*' and his death was reported as such in the *Register*. The *Tewkesbury Record*, however, reported on 5 February 1916 that he had been wounded during the Dardanelles campaign when Naval warships were used to bombard land-based Turkish gun emplacements, that he returned home and then caught a '*chill in the wound*', followed by pneumonia and an attack of measles. He could, therefore, not fulfil his contract of engagement.

The *Record's* account may be mistaken as *HMS Tiger* did not participate in that campaign, which took place in February and March 1915. *HMS Tiger* was, however, involved in the *Battle of Dogger Bank* (23 January 1915), a clash between squadrons of the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet at a point in the North Sea midway between Britain and Germany. If Ernest was wounded in this battle, any injury was apparently not serious enough for admission to hospital, although it was certainly a chilling time of year in the North Sea.

Ernest Simons was buried in *Tewkesbury Cemetery* on 4 February 1916 and his family was paid a '*War Gratuity*'. He was the nephew of **Private Charles Simons** [†] of 1st/4th Gloucesters, who was killed in 1917.