

THE FALLEN OF SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN



WILLIAM ROBERT SIMONS

DUKE OF WELLINGTON REGIMENT

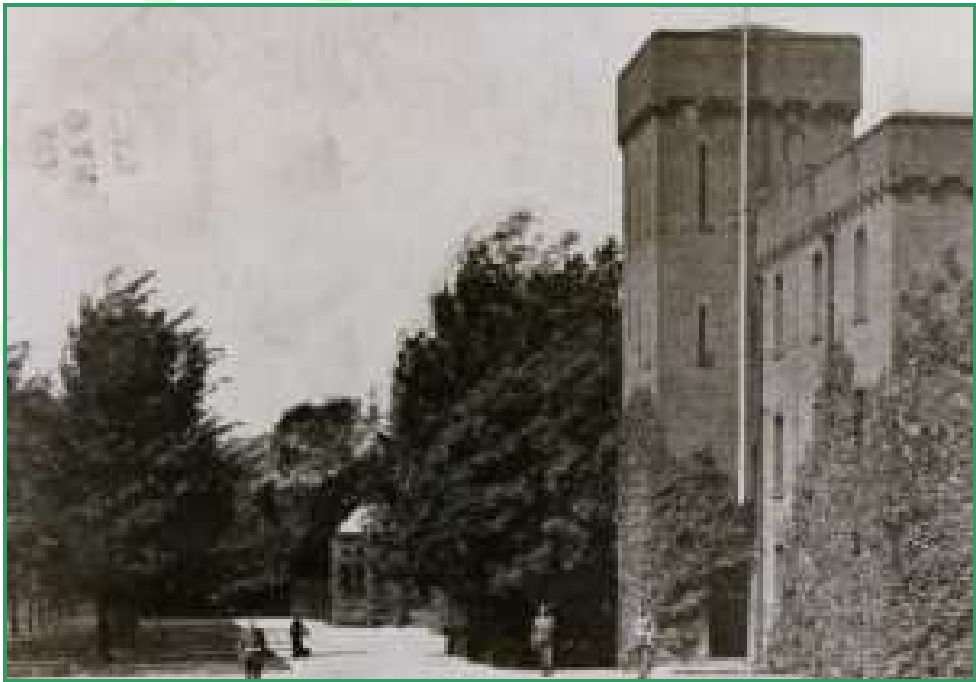
DIED A PRISONER OF WAR 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 1917

BORN IN 1892 AT SOUTH WIGSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE,  
THE SON OF LEONARD AND MARY SIMONS

# Simons Family History

- 1891 census shows Leonard, his wife Mary and their 5 children living at Her Majesty's Glen Parva Barracks at South Wigston in Leicestershire as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Leonard (Head)	35	Colour Sergeant Infantry	Belgrade, Leicestershire	1857
Mary (wife)	27		Quebec, Canada	1865 - 1905
Leonard Henry	10		Bengal, India	1881
Charles Samuel	8		Bengal, India	1883
George Samuel	6		Bengal, India	1885
Elizabeth	2		Glen Parva Barracks	1888
Millicent	baby		Glen Parva Barracks	1890



Glen Parva Barracks, South Wigston. Opened in 1881

- **1901 census** shows Mary still married as the Head of the family, living with her 9 children at 6, North Row, Sutton-in-Craven as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Mary (Head)	36		Quebec, Canada	1865 - 1905
Leonard Henry	20	Shoe/boot finisher	Nussarabad, Bengal, India	1881
Charles Samuel	18	Weigher off for twisters	Jubblepoor, India	1883
George Samuel	16	Oiler in worsted mill	Jubblepoor, India	1885
Elizabeth	13	Worsted spinner	Glen Parva Barracks	1888
Millicent	11		Glen Parva Barracks	1890
William Robert	9		South Wigston	1892 - 1917
Agnes	5		South Wigston	1896
Samuel	3		Sutton-in-Craven	1898
Sarah	baby		Sutton-in-Craven	1901



North Row, Sutton-in-Craven

- **1911 census** shows Leonard, previously widowed in 1905, now remarried to Ellen Simons (nee Whitehall). They had been married for 2 years and were living with 6 of Leonard's children and 2 of Ellen's children from her former marriage at 4, Lister Hill, Sutton-in-Craven as follows:

Name	Age	Work	Birth place	Birth year
Leonard (Head)	57	Postman & shoe maker	Belgrade, Leicestershire	1854
Ellen (2 <sup>nd</sup> wife)	52	Employed at home	Dublin, Ireland	1859
Thomas Whitehall (step son)	26	Weaver	Bradford, Yorkshire	1885
Millicent	21	Burler & mender	Glen Parva Barracks	1890
William Robert	18	Apprentice spinning overlooker	Glen Parva Barracks	1893 - 1917
Agnes	16	Spinner	Glen Parva Barracks	1895
Effie Whitehall (step daughter)	15	Spinner	Worsthorne, near Burnley	1896
Samuel	14	Doffer	Sutton-in-Craven	1897
Sarah	11	School	Sutton-in-Craven	1900
Edmond	9	School	Sutton-in-Craven	1902

**NOTE:** William's mother Mary Simons is listed as deceased in the Oct/Nov/Dec quarter of 1905 in the Keighley district aged 40 yrs.

During the Great War, the Simons (and Whitehall) family were now living at Wighill Street, Holme Bridge, Sutton-in-Craven.

# World War 1

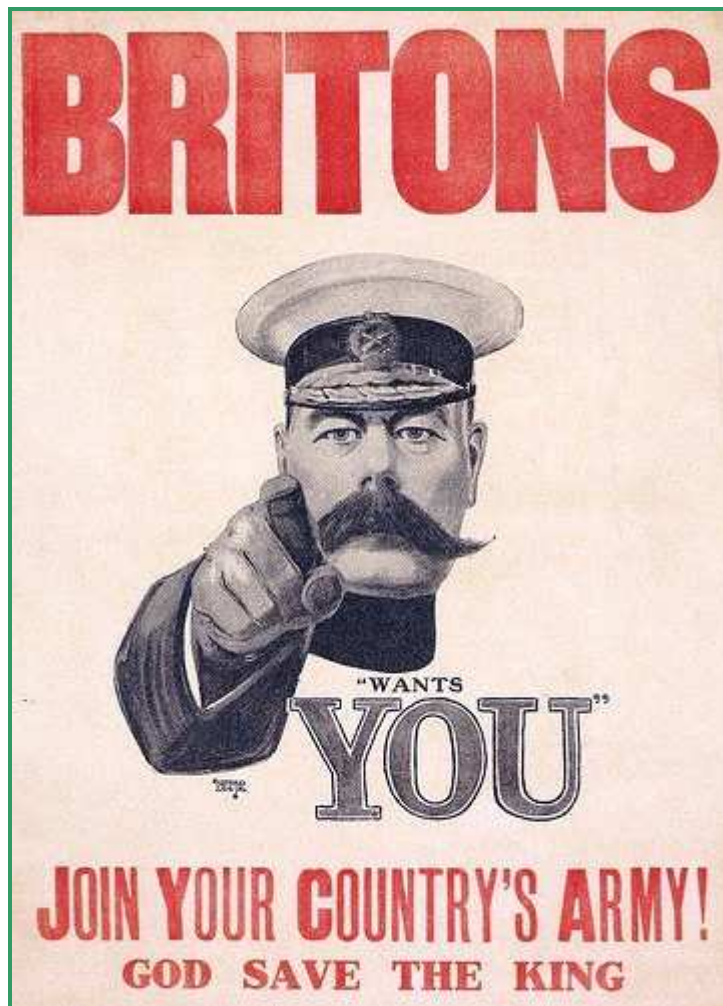


It had been **99 years** since Britain was last involved in a major European conflict following the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815

## **August 4<sup>th</sup> 1914** **Britain declares war on Germany**

In the autumn of 1914, the young men of the nation came from town and village to take the King's shilling and to offer him their dedicated services in defence of their homeland. From mills and mines, from shops and farms, from office chairs and civic departments, from loom, lathe, bench, plough and counter they flooded into the recruiting centres in answer to their nation's call for young manhood. These new recruits came to be known as **'Kitchener's Volunteers'**

## **The New Armies: "Kitchener's Volunteers"**

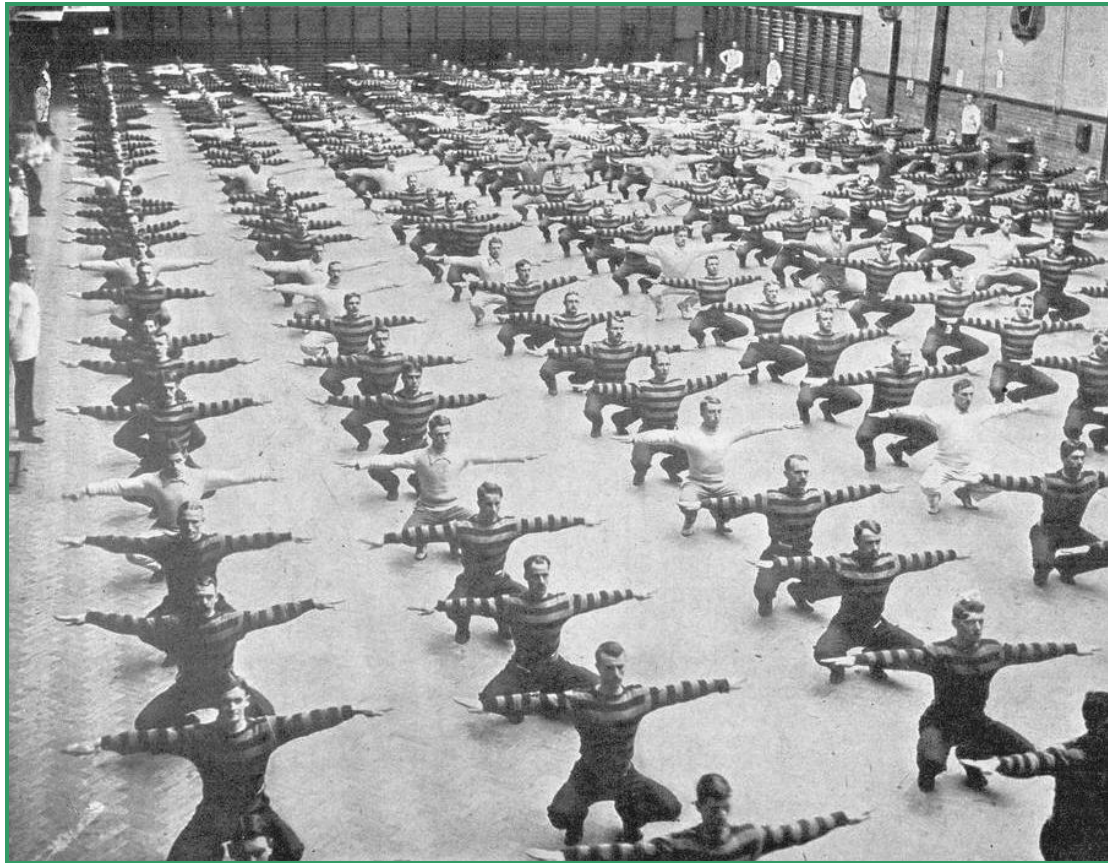


Earl Kitchener recruitment poster 1914



Parliamentary Recruiting Committee  
London, 1915





British recruits undergoing physical training in a gymnasium  
(source: *New York Times* 5th July 1916)

Prior to enlistment, William Simons was employed as a spinning overlooker at Greenroyd Mills, Sutton-in-Craven. He was also a member of the West Riding Territorial's and a member of the regimental band as well as a member of the Cowling brass band.

William's father Leonard Simons was himself an old soldier. He served for 17 years in the British army as a Colour-Sergeant and Instructor in the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, including 11 years service in India. Throughout the Great War until 1918, Leonard Simons served as a Company Sergeant Major and drill master to the local platoon of the West Riding volunteers.

As a serving member of the West Riding Territorial's, William Simons was immediately mobilised at the outbreak of war in 1914. He enlisted into the 2/6th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) which was formed at Skipton in September 1914. His regimental number was 267904 and his rank was Private.

The West Riding Regiment raised 24 battalions during WW1 including the 2/6th (Territorial Force) battalion which was formed as a home service (second line) unit.





WW1 Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) Cap Badge

### Officers of 2/6th West Riding Regiment group photo

2/6th DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S WEST RIDING REGIMENT.



LEFT TO RIGHT. Back Row, standing.—Capt. G. H. Ermen (deceased), 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) N. Geldard, D.S.O., M.C., 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) L. Jaques, 2nd Lieut. W. Woodhead, Lieut. N. Clapham, 2nd Lieut. W. K. Law, 2nd Lieut. G. L. Lupton, Lieut. (now Capt.) G. Broughton, 2nd Lieut. G. R. Armstrong, Lieut. (A/Capt.) C. D. Bennett (K.), Capt. C. P. Charlesworth.  
Sitting.—Capt. N. C. Prince (K.), Capt. (A/Lt.-Col.) N. A. England, D.S.O., Major W. Claughton (deceased), Major (A/Lt.-Col.) J. Mackillop, Col. R. E. Williamson, V.D. (C.O.), Major E. Dewhurst, Capt. Birbeck (Adj.), Capt. J. Groves.  
Front row.—2nd Lieut. J. R. Walker, 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) R. C. Barrett, 2nd Lieut. C. G. C. Kilner, Lieut. and Quarter-Master M. J. McDermott, 2nd Lieut. (now Capt.) G. C. Foulds.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* original 1919 copy owned by Andrew Monkhouse)



Pte William Robert Simons entered the Theatre of War in France in January 1917 with the 2/6th Territorial Force battalion West Riding Regiment, as part of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
SIMONS	W. Rid	Pte	267904
William R			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	x 0/2/10/223	4155	Died
BRITISH	Do - 26		
STAR			
T. F. W. M.	W. R. P. R. / T. F. M.	9	
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K. 1390

**MEDAL INDEX CARD** for William Simons (source: *The National Archives*)

William's father Leonard Simons and his 2nd wife Ellen Simons (nee Whitehall) had between them eight sons who enlisted into the forces during the Great War.

Leonard's four serving sons were Leonard (Jnr), William, Charles and Samuel Simons.

Ellen's four serving sons were Tom, Richard, James and Joseph Whitehall.

Therefore the noble band of brothers within the Simons household who served their King and Country during the Great War totalled eight. Two of who, Robert Simons and his step-brother Richard Whitehall, would pay the ultimate sacrifice and are both commemorated on the Sutton-in-Craven war memorial.

# The Western Front

The Western Front was the name applied to the fighting zone in France & Flanders, where the British, French, Belgian and later American armies faced that of Germany.

It was marked by a system of trenches and fortifications separated by an area known as No Man's land. These fortifications stretched 475 miles and precipitated a style of fighting known as trench warfare.

From the moment the German army moved into Luxemburg on the 2nd August 1914 to the Armistice on the 11th November 1918, the fighting on the Western Front in France & Flanders never stopped.

Just as there were quiet periods, there were also the most intense, savage, huge-scale battles the world has ever known.



Trench warfare, WW1

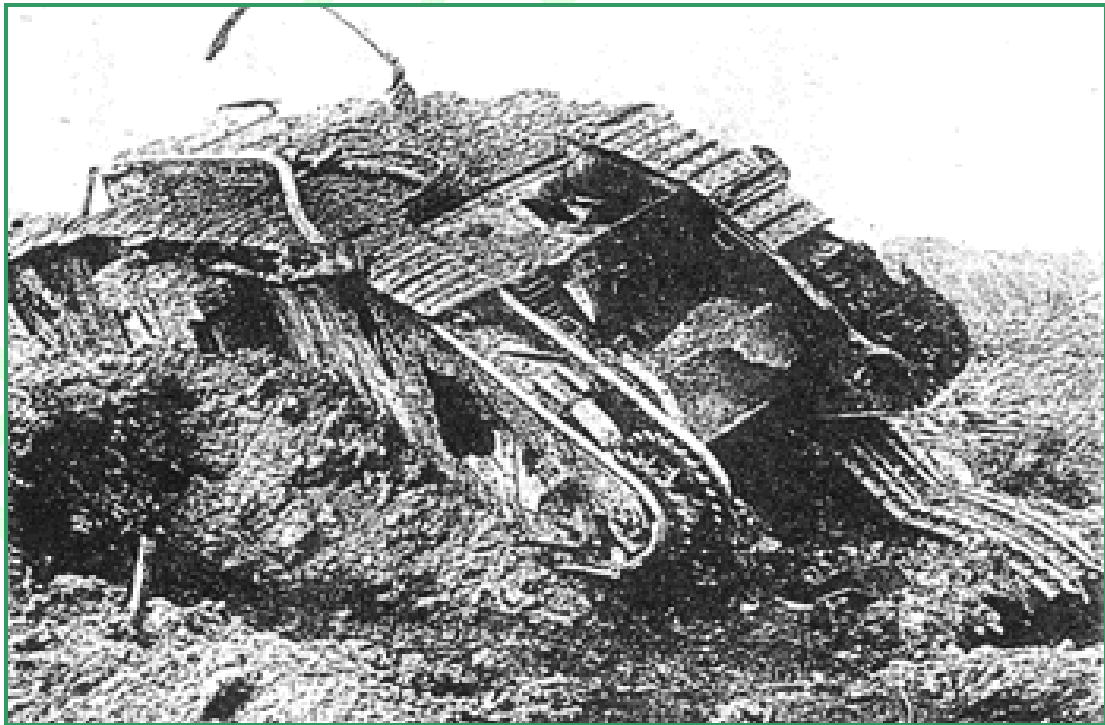
# The First Battle of Bullecourt

## 11th April 1917

The village of Bullecourt is situated on the flat landscapes of Picardy, north-eastern France. There a combined force of British and Australian soldiers, for the most part conscripts, were faced with a force of professional Prussian troops entrenched within the Hindenburg line.

The first Battle of Bullecourt took place on the 11th April 1917 and involved the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division and the 4th Division of the 1st Anzac Corps. The plan was to attack either side of the village of Bullecourt and push the German's out of their fortified positions and into the reserve trenches.

Tanks intended for the assault were delayed by bad weather and the attack was postponed for 24 hours. However the order to delay did not reach all units in time and two battalions of the West Yorkshire regiment attacked and were driven back with significant losses. This aborted attack alerted the German's in the area to the impending assault and they were better prepared for the attack to follow.



WW1 British Mark 1 tank destroyed by shell fire at the Battle of Bullecourt



Badly planned and hastily mounted, the German's quickly overcame the attack. This was largely due to the failure of tanks to support them, due to their breaking down and vulnerability to attack. Also a limited artillery barrage left much of the barbed wire in front of the German trenches uncut.

## **The Second Battle of Bullecourt**

### **3rd – 17th May 1917**

After the initial assault to take the village of Bullecourt failed to penetrate the German lines, British commanders made preparations for a second attempt. British artillery began an intense bombardment of the village of Bullecourt which by the 20th April had been virtually destroyed.

The second offensive began in the early hours of the 3rd May 1917 with the British attacking the village itself and the Australians attacking the German lines to its east. The fighting was fierce and slow moving. On the east of the village the Australian advance was halted by accurate machine gun fire.

In the village the British troops advanced to the far side but strenuous resistance combined with confusion between the movements of the different units led to the British being thrown back and out of the village. Both the British and Australians then established defensive positions.



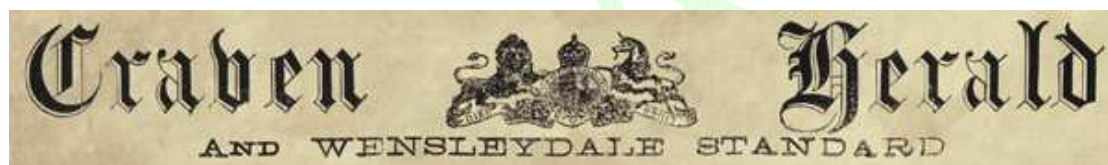
Sentries during the fighting for Bullecourt, spring 1917

When additional Allied troops were sent in several days later to reinforce the attack, the British & Australian troops were able to link up. This enabled British troops to eventually push the Germans out of Bullecourt on the 15th May.

German resistance had been fierce and when the offensive was finally called off on the 17th May, the Allies had incurred massive casualties.

Pte William Simons fought in both battles of Bullecourt in the spring of 1917 with the 2/6th Territorial Force battalion West Riding Regiment, as part of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division.

In early June 1917, the parents of Pte William Simons received information from two unofficial sources that their son had been missing since the great push on the 3rd May 1917. This was the **First Day of the 2nd Battle of Bullecourt**



Article Date: 08 June 1917

### SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN - MEMBER OF A PATRIOTIC FAMILY MISSING

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Simons, of Wighill Street, Holmfield, Sutton-in-Craven, have received information from two unofficial sources that their son, Pte. Willie Simons, of the West Riding Regiment, has been missing since an engagement on the 3rd of May. No official intimation has yet been received. . . . . Mr. and Mrs. Simons will be very glad to hear from anyone concerning their son.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* [www.cpgw.org.uk](http://www.cpgw.org.uk))

Two weeks later however, Mr & Mrs Simons received information from their son informing them that he had been wounded and taken **Prisoner of War** by the Germans.



WW1 British prisoners of war in Germany assisting German soldiers search the dead



Article Date: 22 June 1917

### **SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN - PRIVATE WILLIE SIMONS A PRISONER OF WAR**

Mr. and Mrs. Simons, of Wighill Street, Holmfield, have received information from their son, Pt. Willie Simons, informing them that he is a wounded prisoner of war in Bavaria. The letter which Pte. Simon sends is as follows:-

"13th May, 1917. Reserve Lazarette I, Remise IV, Ingolstadt, Bavaria.

"Dear Father and Mother, - Still going on all right. Wounds doing fine, but shall not be up for a few weeks yet. The next news you will get will be a letter. I shall be able to tell you more. Enquire about



sending a parcel as I don't think you are allowed, as they have to come through the Red Cross."

Mr. and Mrs. Simons received this information on Sunday morning. Their son has been missing since the 3rd of May. He was in the West Riding Regiment, and was in the local Territorials when war broke out, going out with his battalion to the Front in France about three months ago. He was one of a noble band of brothers who responded magnificently to their country's call.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* [www.cpgw.org.uk](http://www.cpgw.org.uk))

In February 1918 however, it was reported that Mr and Mrs Simons had received information that their son Pte William Robert Simons was now deceased.

Whilst still in captivity he had **Died a Prisoner of War** in Germany on the 10th Dec 1917 and was buried at Niederzwehren Cemetery in Germany.



Article Date: 15 February 1918

### SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN - ANOTHER VICTIM OF HUN TREATMENT: FAMILY'S FINE RECORD

The residents of Sutton were deeply moved last weekend when it became known that another member of a well-known family had died whilst a prisoner of war in Germany. Private Willie Simons, who was in the West Riding Regiment, was called up at the outbreak of hostilities, being a member of the Territorials, and he went out to France nearly a year ago. Prior to going abroad he was a member of the Regimental Band. He was posted as missing after an engagement on the 3rd of May last, but subsequently his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Simons, of Wighill Street, Sutton Mill, learned that he was a prisoner of war in Germany.

The sad news of his death was conveyed in a letter from a French pastor as follows:- "I wish to send to the parents of their dear son

Simons the respectful and warmest words of human sympathy and Christian consolation, and to do it also in the name of the 12 English comrades who were present at the burial of their companion. We brought him yesterday afternoon (13th December) to his last resting place, and stood on the ground around with very filled hearts, giving thanks to God for his sweet departure, thinking of his father and mother, and how heavy and hard it would be having to leave their beloved son after hoping to recover him, and without giving to him the last marks of their love. Our silent prayers presented them to the Lord of all graces, whose love is the only sufficient comfort in affliction. The glorious and hopeful words of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, which were read on the grave, brought to our remembrance the blessed realities which our friend sees now and dwells in, and we willingly said Amen when the last prayer of the Book of Common Prayer was at its end. May our God and Father assist his sorrowing children in the dark hours and keep them in His love and mercy and comforting presence. HENRI WESPHAL, French Pastor, Ingolstadt."

Private Simons was one of several patriotic brothers who nobly responded to their country's call. The oldest member of the family, Private Leonard Simons (junior), and Private Charles Simons, are in the West Riding Regiment, and the youngest member of the family, Private Sam Simons, is at present on the Western Front, having gone out with his regiment at Christmas 1916. He tried to join up in the early days of the war, but was rejected on account of a weak eye. Mr. Simons has also a son-in-law, Private Joseph Godfrey, serving with the West Ridings. Mrs. Simons has also three sons and a son-in-law serving their King and Country, and has lost one son, Private Richard Whitehall, killed in action on the 1st of July 1916. Another of her sons, Sergeant Tom Whitehall, was wounded in the arm on the same day as his brother was killed, and was sent to the Military Hospital at Manchester. On recovering he rejoined this unit, and went out to Salonica. James Whitehall, another son of Mrs. Simons, who fought in the Boer War, is with the Navy, having been a sailor for 13 years. He took part in the famous Jutland battle. Joseph Whitehall is with the Royal Irish Lancers in France and Mrs. Simons has also a son-in-law, Albert Turbit, who is in a line regiment.

The children have no doubt caught the patriotic spirit from their father, for he is himself an old soldier, having served 17 years in the Army, being a Colour-Sergeant and instructor in the 2nd Leicester Regiment. He was 11 years in India. He is now a Company Sergeant

Major in the local Volunteers, and acts as drill instructor to the local platoons.

(source: *Craven's Part in the Great War* [www.cpgw.org.uk](http://www.cpgw.org.uk))

He was 25 years of age



## Casualty Details

**Name:** SIMONS

**Initials:** W R

**Nationality:** United Kingdom

**Rank:** Private

**Regiment/Service:** Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

**Unit Text:** 2nd/6th Bn.

**Date of Death:** 10/12/1917

**Service No:** 267904

**Casualty Type:** Commonwealth War Dead

**Grave/Memorial Reference:** II. C. 17.

**Cemetery:** NIEDERZWEHREN CEMETERY

(source: *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* [www.cwgc.org/](http://www.cwgc.org/))

## NIEDERZWEHREN CEMETERY

The Niederzwehren cemetery was begun by the Germans in 1915 for the burial of prisoners of war who died at the local camp. During the war almost 3,000 Allied soldiers and civilians, including French, Russian and Commonwealth, were buried there.





Niederzwehren Cemetery, Germany



Niederzwehren Cemetery, Germany

(source: *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* [www.cwgc.org/](http://www.cwgc.org/))

Pte William Simons is also remembered on the Sutton-in-Craven war memorial.



WAR MEMORIAL, SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN PARK



(source: *South Craven, the official guide*, 1950)



Sutton-in-Craven War Memorial (photo taken by Paul Wilkinson)



Pte William Simons was posthumously awarded the British War Medal, Victory Medal and the Territorial Force War Medal



Original trio of WW1 medals (source: owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

The Territorial Force War Medal (far right) was granted to all members of the Territorial Force embodied before the 30th September 1914, who had completed four years service by that date, and who had served outside the United Kingdom between the 4th August 1914 and 11th November 1918.

Those who had already qualified for the 1914 or 1914 - 15 star, however, were excluded. Only 34,000 medals were awarded, making it by far the scarcest of the First World War Medals. (Less Gallantry).





A Memorial Plaque inscribed with the soldiers name was also given to the family of those who were killed during WW1



Original WW1 Memorial Plaque (name digitally altered)  
Also referred to as a Death Plaque or Dead Man's Penny  
(source: owned by Andrew Monkhouse)

## Lest we Forget

### CRAVEN'S ROLL OF HONOUR



PRIVATE WILLIE SIMONS, Duke of Well.'s Regt., son of Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Simons, Wighill Street, Sutton, died in Germany 12th December, 1917.

source: *Craven's Part in the Great War*

(Original 1919 copy owned by Andrew Monkhouse)



# FOR THE FALLEN

*THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD, AS WE THAT ARE  
LEFT GROW OLD*

*AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM, NOR THE YEARS  
CONDEMN*

*AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE  
MORNING*

*WE WILL REMEMBER THEM*

**LAURENCE BINYON, 1869-1943**



(Information compiled by Andrew Monkhouse 2011)