

Ralph William Marson

7th April 1891 - 21st September 1918

Ralph Marson had been home on 14 days leave in the autumn of 1918 and returned to France on September 6th. Whilst at home he was ill and his family tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to remain at home until he had recovered. Instead he went back to France and on September 13th he was admitted to the General Hospital in Rouen suffering from pneumonia. He died on September 21st and was buried in the St Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen. Rouen was a large town with several hospitals, some distance from the frontline.



Ralph was the son of George and Elizabeth Marson who lived at what is now called Greenhill Cottage on Top Green. George had worked in several businesses over the years, in 1881 he is described as a Grocer, by 1901 he was an Ironstone Quarryman and in 1911 he was a baker. In that last census Ralph is living with his aunt and uncle at Gumley Foxton (near Foxton Locks) and is working as a gardener.

By the time he enlisted for the war on February 15th 1916 he was engaged as a gardener to Dr Macallister of Derglea in Sutton Bonnington.



George and Elizabeth had five sons, the four older boys all went to fight in the war, Ralph was the only one not to return. Their only daughter Annie was always referred to as 'Sis', short for sister. Ralph's youngest brother Ellis continued to live at Greenhill Cottage and his family were there until the 1990s.

Ralph has the unusual honour of being commemorated on two war memorials: here in Upper Broughton where he was born and also in Sutton Bonnington where he was living and working prior to enlisting.

Ralph initially served with the Yorkshire Light Infantry and his Regimental Number was 27662. At some point he transferred to the Labour Corps where he was given a new number of 383511.

The Labour Corps was raised in 1917. It grew to some 389,900 men (more than 10% of the size of the army). The Corps was manned by officers and other ranks who had been medically rated below the 'A1' condition needed for front line service. Many

were returned wounded. Their duties would have been anything from helping in stores, taking equipment up to the front, repairing roads, helping at rest areas.....

There are several nephews and nieces of Ralph Marson still living in this area. One of the items they treasure is a Polyphon music box that Ralph brought back from France when he was on leave.



It is a mechanical device first manufactured by Polyphon Musikwerke in Leipzig, Germany and Ralph's machine still works.



The tune is punched out on a disc and the punched metal projects on the underside of the disc. As it turns, these raised projections engage with a star wheel which plucks a tooth on the instrument's comb and plays a note. There are several discs, each containing a different tune.

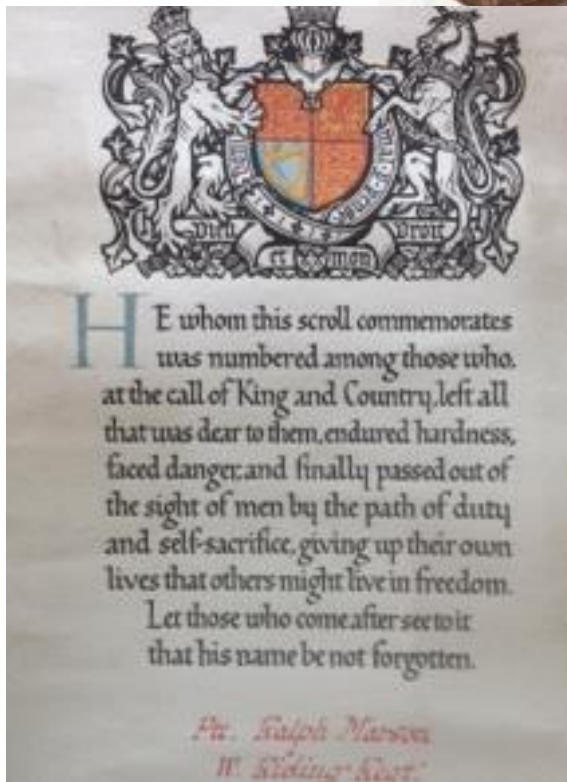


Dead Man's Penny

These Memorial Plaques were issued after the First World War to the next of kin of all British and Empire service personnel who were killed as a result of war. They were made of bronze, are 12cms across and were popularly known as 'Dead Man's Penny' because of the similarity in appearance to the somewhat smaller penny coin. 1,355,000 were issued.

Ralph's Medals

The middle medal is the 'British War Medal' and the medal on the right is 'The Victory Medal'. These two are the most commonly found heirlooms nicknamed Mutt and Jeff.



The plaques and scrolls were produced to commemorate those who gave their lives and to acknowledge their sacrifice. They were intended to give the close family a tangible memorial of their loved one.

The South Bingham and District Deanery Magazine recorded that Ralph 'had experienced many miraculous escapes in the war and his unflinching heroism, his skill in all he undertook and his genial disposition had made him greatly beloved by a wide circle of friends'.

