

**Charles Francis Simonds**  
**Major 13th Battalion Kings Royal Rifle Corps, Division 45**  
**Born 19<sup>th</sup> May 1878, Redlands, Berkshire.**  
**Died 29<sup>th</sup> June 1916, Berles-au-Bois, Arras, France**



Father: James S. Simonds J.P. (1849-1905)

Mother: Cecilia Simonds O.B.E. (née Daniel) (1854-1932)

Charles Francis Simonds was the eldest son of James and Cecilia Simonds, of Redlands House, Redlands Rd., Reading. He was from the banking branch of the family in Reading, although the bank, [Messrs. J & C Simonds & Co](#), had joined Barclay's & Co. Ltd in 1913. The original [brass nameplate](#) could still be seen on the door of the Barclay's bank which was sited opposite the 'Jacksons' corner long after Barclays vacated the building.

Charles Simonds was educated at Crowthorne's, Wellington College and Trinity College, Oxford. He served in the South African war as a member of the Berkshire Mounted Infantry and received the Queen's Medal with four clasps.

He married Evelyn Hickman, daughter of Alfred Hickman on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1907 and set up home at The Crofts, Spencer's Wood.



Here in the garden of her grandfather Sir Alfred's home, 22 Kensington Palace Gdns, London.

They had two sons who both went on to have careers in the British Army. In 1917 Evelyn remarried Bernard Fuller, moving to Stratton End, Cirencester.

Charles Simonds was well known in Reading as a sportsman, he rode to hounds with the South Berkshire Hunt and was a member of their committee. Charles had rowed at Oxford and in his twenties was a member of Reading Rowing Club, serving as Captain, a period when the club was particularly successful. Charles left his role as a businessman and partner in the bank and re-joined the Army in September 1914. He was gazetted as captain to the King's Royal Rifle Corps. and received his majority on February 1st 1915, he was sent to join the 13<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion before they landed at Boulogne-sur-Mer as part of the [111th Brigade](#) for service on the Western Front in July 1915.

Charles Simonds had been home on leave only three weeks before his death. On his return to the front near Arras, he was charged with the planning of a trench raid as a precursor to the Battle of the Somme offensive that started 2 days later on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916. This was carried out successfully due to his outstanding organisation. However, during the accompanying bombardment shells fell on the command dugout, which should have been safe from danger, and Charles Simonds and other key officers were killed instantly. A mining party was sent in immediately to dig the place out and eventually after much heavy digging found the bodies which were removed to the unit church hut.

Charles Simonds was killed on 29th June 1916 aged 38. He is buried in grave G.5, Berles-au-Bois Churchyard Extension, Pas de Calais with the personal inscription: HE PLAYED THE GAME AS A MAN SHOULD PLAY; GAY, FEARLESS, DEBONAIR. He is also commemorated on the Simonds family grave number 2297 of Reading Cemetery, Berkshire.