



INSPECTOR THOMAS SIMMONS ESSEX CONSTABULARY

On 20th January 1885 Inspector Thomas Simmons of the former Essex Constabulary and in charge of Romford Police was patrolling in a horse and trap with Constable 107 Alfred Marden when they became aware of three men acting suspiciously. After surveillance, they approached the men at Bretons Farm near where Rainham, Romford and Dagenham meet, an area transferred to the Metropolitan Police District in 1965. As it began to get dark they asked for an explanation from the men, who promptly ran away, pursued towards London by the Inspector and towards the east by Constable Marden. The latter was being shot at by a man he knew as David Dredge and he heard further shots behind him. Losing Dredge in the darkness Marden went back to the trap, where he found the inspector weak from a gunshot wound in the groin. Tom Simmons died four days later in his Romford home, from the effects of the bullet. Confronting his approaching death he named, and described, those responsible. He lies buried in a Romford cemetery and his grave is visited annually by the Trust. Two men were charged with murder. Dredge had been arrested on 6th February 1885 in Limehouse. The police had circulated a description and, whilst trying to pawn a pistol of the type used in the shooting, James Adams, alias Lee alias Manson was arrested at Euston Square on 10th March 1885. Both men were tried at the Old Bailey. Dredge was rightly acquitted, but subsequently jailed for his run-in with Marden. James Lee was hanged, for murdering Simmons, at Springfield in later in 1885.

A third man, described in Simmons' 'dying declaration,' was not, at that time, traced by investigating Essex and Metropolitan detectives. Nine months later a shocking series of incidents in Cumberland refreshed the file. From 21st to 23rd January 1886 John Martin and two others went on trial for their lives at Carlisle Assizes. Martin was suspected of being the third man in Simmon's murder but was then convicted of the murder of a Cumberland policeman and all three were executed.

To commemorate the 125th anniversary of Inspector Simmon's death the Essex Police Memorial Trust, a registered charity, commissioned a memorial stone, sited as close to the scene of the murder as is suitable. A ceremony was held on Monday 4th October 2010 at 2.30pm to dedicate the massive stone, in the vicinity of Bretons House on the road from Rainham to Romford. Members of the families of those concerned, the trustees of the charity and those known to have an interest were present. These included Linda Rhodes and Kathy Abnett the authors of "The Romford Outrage" and those responsible for raising the money to pay for the stone.

The Essex Police Memorial Trustees are DCC Andy Bliss (Chairman), former DCC Charles Clark DL and Jim Dickinson, ACC Sue Harrison, former ACC Geoffrey Markham, former Superintendents Brian Hindley, Bob Ward and Dennis Rensch DL, Chief Inspector Alan Cook, former Inspector Martyn Lockwood (Secretary) Sergeants Roy Scanes and Andy Hastings and former Sergeant Fred Feather (Treasurer). They meet quarterly at Headquarters. Memorials and graves of murdered Essex Officers are regularly visited and maintained.

Fred Feather