

The grave of a first world war soldier is set to be marked with a headstone — 94 years after his death.

Gunner Thomas Alfred Baggins is buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in Bingham Cemetery.

However, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is looking to install a headstone after the Ministry of Defence confirmed the soldier had been awarded war grave status.

55150 Gunner Baggins, who served in the Royal Garrison Artillery, died in 1917 from pulmonary tuberculosis, aged 22, as a result of his service.

The search for Gunner Baggins' grave was made more difficult because the name on his death certificate is not Baggins but Buggins.

He changed his name to Baggins when he enlisted because, apparently, he did not like Buggins.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has asked Bingham Town Council to confirm Gunner Baggins' burial plot so an application can be made for a headstone.

Its inscription is likely to read: 'Gunner Thomas Alfred Buggins — served as Baggins.'

The chairman of the council's recreation and cemetery committee, Mr John Stockwood, praised the efforts of the commission who, he said, were going to great efforts to find soldiers who were buried in unmarked graves.

"It is important to remember those who made the greatest sacrifice," he said.

"There are too many unmarked graves of soldiers who died in the Great War. The very least we owe this man is a name."

Gunner Baggins was born around 1894 in Shropshire. The 1911 census records the family as living in Bingham, in Buggins Cottage, Fosse Road, which still exists today.

His father, Thomas James Buggins, was a gamekeeper and, before he enlisted, Gunner Baggins was an asylum attendant at Nottingham County Asylum, Radcliffe.

Gunner Baggins was discharged on April 14, 1916, after being deemed no longer fit for service.

His younger sister, May, was with him when he died, and buried with him is his brother, Mr Harry Buggins, who died in 1945.

Representatives of the War Graves Commission are due to visit the plot next month.

Mr Pete Stevens, a Commonwealth War Graves Commission stonemason, said the headstone application could take between three and 18 months to process.

"Many soldiers changed their names when they enlisted, some because they lied about their age, some because they wanted to escape the law," he said.

"In this instance it was simply a matter of not liking his name.

"If the soldier had no family, or the family had no money, they were buried by the local parish."