

**Reading Cemetery,  
Reading, Berkshire  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**3150 PRIVATE**

**H. E. FREEMAN**

**53RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**25TH APRIL, 1918 Age 25**

## Harold Ernest FREEMAN

Harold Ernest Freeman was born at Quaama, near Bega, NSW in April, 1893 to mother Emily Freeman. Possible father – John Sirchum (?). Emily Freeman married Charles Inskip in 1894 in the district of Bega, NSW.

Harold Ernest Freeman was a 23 year old, single, Teamster from Quaama via Bega, NSW when he enlisted at Cobargo, NSW on 12th June, 1916 with the 53rd Infantry Battalion, 8th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 3150 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his friend – John Goodsell, of Quaama via Bega, NSW.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was posted to Camp at Dubbo on 15th June, 1916. He was transferred to Depot Signal Training Coy. at Kiama on 4th July, 1916. Pte Freeman was transferred to 6th Reinforcements of 35th Battalion at Rutherford on 26th October, 1916 then transferred to 8th Reinforcements of 53rd Battalion on 4th November, 1916.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Suevic* (A29) on 11th November, 1916 & disembarked at Davenport, England on 30th January, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was marched into 14th Training Battalion, Hurdcott, Wiltshire from Australia on 1st February, 1917.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was marched into 15th Training Battalion at Hurdcott for rations and accommodation only (isolation) on 21st July, 1917. He returned to 14th Training Battalion, Hurdcott on 29th July, 1917.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman proceeded overseas to France from 14th Training Battalion, Hurdcott via Southampton on 17th October, 1917.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was marched in to 5th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 18th October, 1917. He was marched out to his Unit from Havre on 21st October, 1917.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was taken on strength of 53rd Infantry Battalion, from 8th Reinforcements on 26th October, 1917.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was sent sick to Hospital on 11th January, 1918. He was admitted to 14th Australian Field Ambulance on 11th January, 1918 with Scabies. He was transferred to 20th General Hospital at Camiers on 12th January, 1918. Pte Freeman was discharged to Base Depot on 22nd January, 1918. He was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Havre on 24th January, 1918. He was marched out to his Unit on 30th January, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion on 20th February, 1918.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was wounded in action (Gassed) on 17th April, 1918. He was admitted to 55th Field Ambulance on 17th April, 1918 then transferred to 55th Casualty Clearing Station the same day. Pte Freeman was taken by Ambulance Train on 18th April, 1918 & admitted to 9th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 19th April, 1918. Pte Freeman embarked for England on Hospital Ship *Panama* on 20th April, 1918.

War Diary – 53rd Battalion – 17th April, 1918, Front Line (from Australian War Memorial):

*At 4.30 am the enemy artillery bombarded VILLERS-BRETONNEUX and vicinity with gas shells, and continued until about 9 am. Our support and reserve lines were also shelled very heavily with gas shells and in all about 8,000 gas shells including YELLOW, BLUE and GREEN + of calibre from 77mm to 8 inch were used by the enemy in this intense bombardment. The wind was very favourable to enemy. All ranks wore their respirators for five hours. The following became gas casualties:-*

*Lt. Col. W. J. Cheeseman, M.C. C.O.*

*Lt. Pettifer I.O*

*Cpt. W. A. Smith*

*Lt. Anslow*

Cpt. W. Hawthorn, R.N.O.

2/Lt. Stinson

Lt. A. E. Elliott, M.C. Adjt.

2/Lt. Barkell, Sig. Off

Lt. N. S. Geldard, M.C. Asst. Adjt

and 155 O/Rs

*By 7 pm the whole staff at B.HQrs had been evacuated and Major P. T. Roberts D.S.O. took command and Lt. Lamberton acted as Adjutant and handed over all stores to incoming unit. We were relieved by the 56th Battalion and we took up positions vacated by 56th Battalion on ridge on Northern side of VILLERS-BRETONNEUX. All men were in position and comfortable by midnight. A hot meal awaited them and was served on arrival at new position. Lt. Ridley (LGO) and Lt. Jefferys acting Asst. Adjt. reported for duty with H.Q. at 8 pm. There were four casualties by shell five during relief.*

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was admitted to War Hospital, Reading, Berkshire, England on 21st April, 1918 suffering from Gas Shell Poisoning – severe.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman died at 6.50 am on 25th April, 1918 at Section 3, Reading War Hospital, Reading, Berkshire, England from Wounds - Gas Shell Poisoning, secondary Lobar Pneumonia.

A death for Harold E. Freeman, aged 27, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Reading, Berkshire, England.

Private Harold Ernest Freeman was buried at 2 pm on 29th April, 1918 in Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire – Screen Wall. 72. 16432. Those buried in Plot 72 & buried in other parts of the cemetery that do not have headstones marking their graves are named on the Memorial Screen Wall located near the Cross of Sacrifice. Their deaths are still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. From the burial report of Pte Freeman - *Coffin was polished oak. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military Funeral. The cortege left the Reading War Hospital at 2 pm., the coffin draped with the Union Jack being mounted on a Gun Carriage. The cortege was headed by a Band supplied by O.C. Troops. A Guard of Honour of 40 patients from the Hospital followed the coffin, half the number being Australian soldiers. At the graveside the "Last Post" was sounded by two members of the band, Wreaths from Major Abram and Nursing Staff and patients of B. Ward. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Pte H. E. Freeman, 3150, Training Battalion did not wish to make a Will.

Base Records contacted Mr John Goodsell on 6th May, 1921, as he was registered on the records as the next-of-kin of the late Private Harold Ernest Freeman. Base Records were enquiring if there were any nearer blood relatives than himself due to the "Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918" which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc. Mr John Goodsell replied in a letter dated 30th May, 1921 stating that the late Private H. E. Freeman had "*no full brother or sisters ..... His mother now is Mrs Charles Inskip & is living at the Dorrigo. His mother made him over to me when he was about 9 months old & had been with me all the time before he enlisted & he was 23 years of age. I drew all of his military allotments & his deferred Pay. I left Quaama about 2 years ago. His father is dead his name was John Sirchum (?). If there is anything further you can let me know.*"

Base Records contacted Mrs C. Inskip, The Dorrigo, New South Wales on 20th June, 1921 with the following letter :- "*I understand you are the mother of the late No. 3150 Private H. E. Freeman, 53rd Battalion, who upon enlistment nominated as next-of-kin, Mr John Goodsell of Quaama, now residing at Singleton, New South Wales. Mr Goodsell informs me that he has acted in the capacity of foster-father to the late soldier from the time he was 9 months old, so, in the circumstances, it is proposed to hand over the deceased soldier's war medals, etc., as the person most entitled to receive. I shall be glad to learn whether you have any good and sufficient reasons as to why this should*

*not be done – if so, the full facts must be submitted for the consideration of the Minister. I am holding the matter open for 21 days from this date.”* No reply was received & it was decided that the War Medals should be given to the foster father (under bond).

Base Records contacted Mr J. Goodsell, c/o M.A. Bettens, Cnr Bourke & William Street, Singleton, NSW on 17th August, 1921 stating *“It is proposed to hand over to you, the war medals, etc. of the late No. 3150 Private H. E. Freeman, 53rd Battalion, but only on the distinct understanding that they will be preserved with due care as memorials of his services and produced to this Department upon demand, should his mother at any time prefer a claim which is upheld by the Minister. If you are agreeable to accept them under these conditions, kindly complete the attached Declaration before a J.P., and return to me at your earliest convenience.”*

Mr John Goodsell signed a Statutory Declaration on 23rd August, 1921 declaring *“that I will preserve with due care any war medals or other items given into my custody on account of the services rendered by the late No. 3150 Private H. E. Freeman, 53rd Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, and will produce them to the Department of Defence at any time upon receipt of its demand in writing, should they be required for the purpose of being handed to someone having prior claims.”*

Pte Harold Ernest Freeman was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Freeman's foster father - Mr John Goodsell, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent October, 1921 & Plaque sent October, 1922). On the signed slip for the Victory Medal, dated 17th August, 1923 John Goodsell wrote *“I received another medal in respect of this deceased soldier but regret to say that it had been stolen together with other things. If it is ever returned to you I would be glad if you would send it to me”.*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Harold Ernest Freeman - service number 3150, aged 25, of 53rd Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the foster son of John Goodsell, of Singleton, New South Wales. Born at Quaama, New South Wales.

Private H. E. Freeman is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 157.

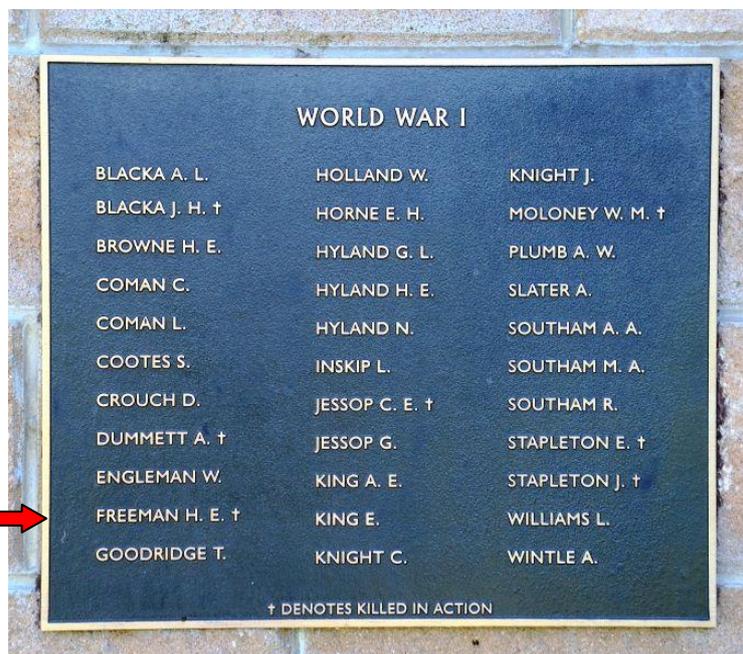


*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

H. E. Freeman is remembered on the Quaama, Verona & Upper Brogo War Memorial located in Quaama Memorial Park, Cobargo Street, Quaama, NSW. The Memorial was erected in memory of those from Quaama, Verona & Upper Brogo who served in the various conflicts in which Australia has been involved.

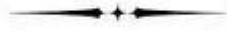


**Quaama, Verona & Upper Brogo War Memorial** (Photos from Monument Australia – Henry Moulds)



(64 pages of Pte Harold Ernest Freeman's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **DISTRICT NEWS**

#### **QUAAMA**

A farewell and presentation were tendered to Signaller H. E. Freeman on Wednesday evening in Quaama School of Arts by his friends and well wishers, he being then on final leave, returning next morning to camp. Notwithstanding the threatening aspect of the weather and the bad condition of the roads owing to the torrential downpour of the previous evening, the hall was crowded. Music for the dancing was supplied by Prof. and Mrs Oxlee. Mr Alf Jessop officiated as M.C. The secretary, Mr W. F. Kennedy, had all arrangements complete. The ladies as usual provided an excellent supper which was highly appreciated by all.

About 11 p.m. Mr C. R. Nissen occupied the chair and briefly announced the object of the gathering. Signaller Freeman was the last of our volunteers though not by any means the least—they were all equal in our eyes, as they were all of their own free will going to the front to do their duty in the service of the King. As Quaama had treated the others, so we were its people treating him. The volunteer list was still open. He had much pleasure in calling upon Mr Sicard to make the presentation.

Mr Sicard felt very pleased indeed to be called upon to perform that duty. He had known Signaller Freeman as a very hard working man who understood how to control his team and could always be relied upon to pull through, no matter what difficulties confronted him. He was going to the front with a full knowledge of what was before him, and he was certain that he would do his utmost to surmount all difficulties when he got there. He was "the last of his tribe" ; they had no more volunteers to say good-bye to at Quaama. The very large gathering was a testimony to the esteem in which the guest of the evening was held, as well as a proof of the patriotism of the people of Quaama and its surrounding district. He had great pleasure in presenting Signaller Freeman with a wristlet watch on behalf of his friends and well wishers in Quaama and the districts around. He hoped when he looked at the watch over yonder he would think of this large gathering assembled here to bid him farewell and wish him Godspeed, and that the thought would encourage him and sustain him, and that he would be spared to return.

Mr E. J. Tarlinton had very great pleasure in being present at a gathering for such a purpose. From what he knew of the guest of the evening he could heartily endorse all that had been said. He knew him to be a very hardworking, steady going, fearless man, who would do his duty thoroughly when he got to the front. He had great pleasure in presenting him on behalf of the Cobargo Recruiting Association with his war medal, a mark of appreciation presented by the Association to all who enlisted at Cobargo. He was sure the little memento would serve to remind him of the many friends he left behind. He wished him a safe passage over and a speedy return decorated with a V.C.

Signaller Freeman was very pleased to see such a large gathering. He thanked the chairman, Mr Sicard, and Mr Tarlinton for the kind remarks they had made and the donors for the wristlet watch, which was a very welcome present to a soldier. He also thanked the Cobargo Recruiting Association for the war medal which he highly appreciated. All hands then joined in singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Later in the evening all hands were linked round the hall with the guest in the centre while they sang "For Auld Lang Syne," and a very pleasant function was brought to a close about 2 a.m.

*(The Cobargo Chronicle, NSW – 11 November, 1916)*

Private H. E. Freeman, of Quaama, is amongst the latest list of killed in action

*(Southern Star, Bega, NSW – 22 May, 1918) &*

*(The Twofold Bay Magnet and South Coast and Southern Monaro Advertiser, NSW – 25 May, 1918)*

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### **Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire, England**

Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire contains 248 War Graves, 17 of those being from Australian Forces – World War 1.

The War Graves Plot is situated at the back of the cemetery, in the right hand corner from the entrance. A Screen Wall Memorial commemorates those buried in Plot 72 and those buried in other parts of the cemetery whose graves are not marked by headstones. There are 207 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and 41 of the 1939-1945 war. There is also 1 Serbian burial.

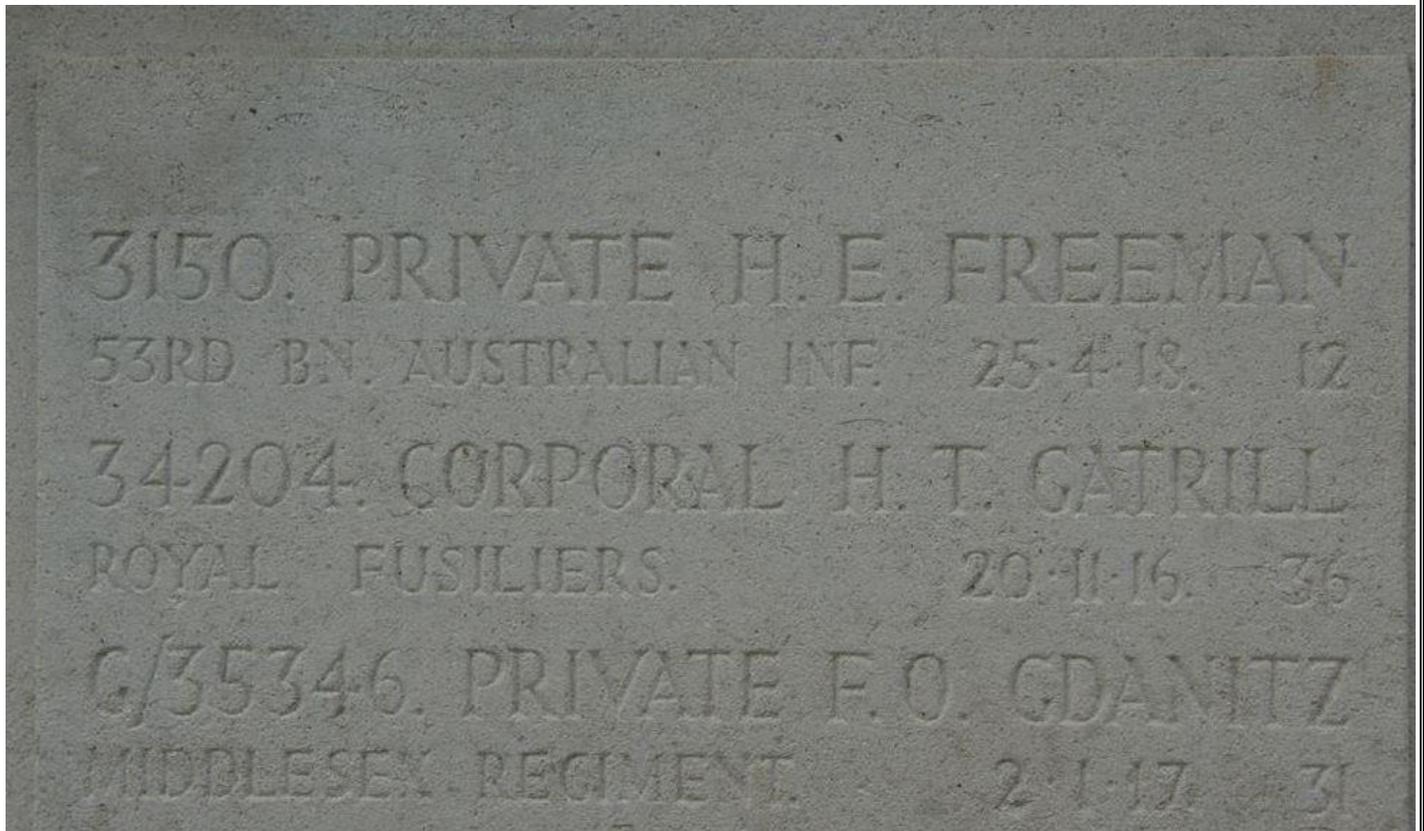
*(Information & photos from CWGC)*



**Cross of Sacrifice & Memorial Screen Wall, Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire** *(Photos from CWGC)*



Photo of Pte H. E. Freeman's name on the Screen Wall Memorial in Reading Cemetery, Reading, Berkshire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Phil Wood)*