



**Private Frederick William PEASLEY**  
**6812 — 3rd Infantry Battalion, 22nd Reinforcements**  
**& 1st Machine Gun Battalion**

**Born:** 28 Nov 1897 Sunny Corner, near Bathurst, NSW.

**Next of Kin:** Mother Mrs Rachael Peasley, Molong.

**Occupation:** Labourer

**District Connection:** Cumnock, Molong

**Enlistment Date:** 10 July 1916, Dubbo, NSW.

**Enlistment Age:** 19yrs 7mths

**Embarkation:** 8 Nov 1916 - Sydney. *HMAT Port Nicholson*

**Served:** Western front.

**Fate:** RTA 12 Jun 1919.

**Honour Boards:** Cumnock Public School WW1 board; Molong Armed Forces Personnel, Roll of Service.

**Biography:**

Frederick William Peasley parents were Robert Frederick and Rachael Isabella (nee Thompson) Peasley. They had eight children: Florence B1888 Bourke; Bridget B1890 Forbes; Lilibert/Lilian B1892 Dubbo; Mabel B1984 Forbes; Frederick B1897 Rockley, near Bathurst; William B1899 Orange; Walter B1904 Orange; and Ernest B1908 Cumnock/Molong. The couple moved around the Central West from the 1880s to 1911s, but were reported to have been living in Cumnock during the early 1900s.

Frederick must have attended Cumnock Public School as his name is listed on the School's WW1 Honour board. On the 1903-04 Electoral Roll for Orange, his father was listed as living at Meadow Creek (near Lake Canobolas) and whose occupation was that of a miner.

Robert Frederick Peasley died, aged 65 years on 13 Dec 1911. According to the *Leader*, Orange - 14 Dec 1911, p2, Robert and his two sons, Frederick aged 15yrs and William aged 13yrs, had taken a bees' nest to a paddock about three miles from their home in Borenore on 2 Dec 1911 when Robert fell from a tree and sustained multiple injuries. Robert was taken to the Orange Hospital where he subsequently died.

Lilian Peasley married Francis Evers at Molong in December 1912, and her mother Rachael was said to be from Borenore. However, by the 1913 Electoral Roll for Orange/Molong, Rachael was listed as living in Molong.

Frederick enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 10 Jul 1916 at Dubbo. He stated on his enlistment form that he was single, a labourer, and had spent 2 years in the Molong Citizen Forces. His next of kin was his mother, Rachael, of Betts Street, Molong. His height was six feet 1½ inches, He had blue eyes, black hair and a dark complexion. He was of the Roman Catholic religious denomination.

Pte Frederick Peasley embarked from Sydney on the *SS Port Nicholson* from Sydney on 8 Nov 1916, as part of the 3rd Btn, 22nd reinforcements. *SS Port Nicholson* was a British refrigerated cargo ship which travelled via South Africa to disembark her passengers at Devonport on 10 Jan 1917.

*The Forbes Advocate* - 20 Apr 1917, p4, printed this letter from Pte CF McGeorge - 6858 3rd Btn, to his father in Forbes from Salisbury Plain on 3 Feb:

*"We had a good voyage over, calling at Durban, Capetown, and Free Town. The latter place we had to take our own water ashore, as the local stuff is supposed to be unfit for white men... It was cold and wet when we struck England.*



**Photo: Troops aboard *SS Port Nicholson* watch some of their mates competing in a sack race. 7 Dec 1916.**

*"I met a big Australian in London. He stood 7 feet 1 inches high. [Actually, 6 feet 1 inch] His name is Peasley, and comes from Molong, but is related to the Peasleys of Bedgerabong [near Forbes]. We are always asking him how he manages to dodge the irons."*

Pte Fred Peasley spent the next four months training at the 1st Training Btn at Larkhill and embarked for France on 9 May 1917, disembarking at Etaples the following day. He joined up with the 3rd Btn at Buire, a village in the Department of the Somme, east of Ribemont, on 28 May. The battalion were then attending to ordinary training - consisting of close order drill, route marching, musketry, bayonet, bombing, rifles, grenades and the Lewis gun - and recreational training - consisting of football, cross country running, boxing, tugs of war and organised games. The 3rd Btn stayed at Buire until 28 June when they marched to Englebelmer and a few days later to Mailley Mallet where they trained in night trench attacks. They returned to Buire from 6 - 13 July, when they next moved to the Bray area.

On 5 Aug 1917, Pte Peasley was admitted to hospital in Etaples with Trench Fever and didn't return to the 3rd Btn until 25 Sep 1917, when the battalion was in the Steenvorde area. The 3rd Btn took part in battle operations near Ypres from 2 - 8 October as part of the 1st Australian Infantry Brigade. At 2am on 4 Oct, the 3rd Btn moved from Anzac Ridge to the assembly line and went forward to attack the enemy at 6am.

3rd Btn Unit diaries, 4 Oct 1917: *"At 6am our barrage opened and the battalion moved forward in correct order of attack. The first serious opposition was met with at the line of concrete pill boxes ... Here the enemy lined the reverse side of the dugouts... On reaching the line of pill boxes the enemy held out and inflicted a number of casualties by stick bombs. The resistance was quickly overcome. During this fight, the extreme right and left of my line continued the advance. On the strong point falling, the enemy retreated through our barrage in great haste, our men following inflicting casualties. A great number of men advanced beyond the Red Line in pursuit of the retreating enemy, but were brought back and reorganised before the barrage moved on at 8.10am. The Red Line was reached and consolidation started at 7am. Throughout the day and night 4/5th inst. the enemy heavily shelled the Red Line and vicinity of battalion headquarters."*

During the battle of 4 Oct 1917, Pte Fred Peasley received a gun shot wound to his right arm and was admitted to the 64 Field Ambulance Station, before being transferred to 26 General Hospital at Étaples. He was transported back to England where he was admitted for treatment at the Norfolk War Hospital.

*The Molong Argus - 2 Nov 1917 - p4:*

*"On Saturday last Mrs Peasley, of Betts Street, received word from the military authorities stating that her son, Pte Fred Peasley is in Norfolk War Hospital, Norwich, suffering from gunshot wounds. This week she received a letter from France from the same son, in which he says, 'I have been eighteen days in hospital and three weeks in convalescent camp, and I assure you I am none too good, but will soon be alright.'"*

It wasn't until the 31 Jan 1918 when Pte Peasley re-joined the 3rd Btn in Meteren, who had just finished a period of time on the front line near the Hollebeke sector. At Meteren the battalion rested and trained.

On 24 February, Pte Peasley reported sick with Trench Fever and was eventually transferred to England on 3rd March and admitted to the East Suffolk Ipswich Hospital.

Pte Peasley recovered and transferred to the Machine Gun Training Dept. at Grantham, Lincolnshire on 7 Jun 1918. He returned to France as part of the 1st Machine Gun Battalion (1st MG Btn) on 15 Sep 1918, which was stationed near Morcourt, in Northern France.



MG Companies and Battalions were equipped with the legendary Vickers Medium Machine Gun. This weapon was served by a crew of three and mounted on a tripod. It was not easily portable and was generally sited in a prepared fixed position. In attack they would be sited to provide indirect 'plunging fire' into enemy positions in depth at long range to prevent enemy reinforcements reaching the objective of the attack, or to disrupt attempts to withdraw, in a manner not dissimilar to artillery.

Pte Peasley joined the 1st MG Btn in time for the 100 day Offensive - 10 Aug - 11 Nov 1918.

*"Beginning with the Battle of Amiens (8–12 August) on the Western Front, the Allies pushed the Central Powers back undoing their gains from the German spring offensive. The Germans retreated to the Hindenburg Line, but the Allies broke through the line with a series of victories, starting with the Battle of St Quentin Canal on 29 September. The offensive, together with a revolution breaking out in Germany, led to the Armistice of 11 November 1918 which ended the war with an Allied victory."*

(Hundred Days Offensive - Wikipedia)

Pte Fred Peasley had leave from his unit in Paris from 3 - 13 Mar 1919. He returned to England from Havre, France on 18 Apr 1919. He returned to Australia on *HMAT Port Darwin*, disembarking on 27 July 1919.

*The Molong Argus* - 28 Mar 1919 - p4:

*Mrs Peasley, of East Molong, is in receipt of letters from her two soldier sons, William and Fred. William writes from France, and expresses the hope 'to see them all again by 1920.' Fred writes from Le Roux, Belgium (18th Jan). He forwarded to his mother two letters of appreciation addressed to the Australian officers and men by General Birdwood and the Archbishop of Amiens, which will be published in the 'Argus' next week. Fred states in another letter, dated 13th Jan, that he expected to be home soon after three years hard chips on the field of battle; thought of going home 'brings joy to my heart' he says, 'after being so long away from home.' Fred also says— 'I don't think I will get married here, as I think I will give the good old Aussie girls a chance to get married, and if they turn me down after fighting for the freedom of Australia through this great War, then I will see where the love is. I don't like marrying over here, as I would rather a good old Aussie girl.'*

Fred's younger brother, William Peasley - Private, 3364, 33rd Btn, enlisted in the AIF on 2 Aug 1917, aged 19yrs. He suffered from gas poisoning in June 1918. He returned to Australia on *HMAT Ulysses A39* on 5 Sep 1919. Both soldiers received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Fred Peasley, aged 30 years, married Hilda Martha Stephen on 3 Sep 1927 at Holy Trinity Church, Orange. Hilda was a nurse and the second eldest daughter of Mr & Mrs AC Stephen, of "Carl Ruhe," Forest Road. (*Leader*, Orange - 9 Sep 1927, p1)

Fred worked as a fettler and he and Hilda lived in Orange. They had a son, Stephen.

Fred died 17 Mar 1973, aged 76 years, in Orange. He was cremated on 20 Mar 1973. Hilda died 11 Apr 1982, aged 77yrs.

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