

# Codford War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**5117 PRIVATE**

**H. T. STRATFORD**

**31ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**4TH MARCH, 1918**

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte H. T. Stratford is located in Main Third Row  
(Right hand side)*

*Grave Plot # 54 of Codford War Graves Cemetery (Using Map by Brian Marshall)*

*(CWGC Reference - Grave # 97 )*

Henry Thomas Stratford was born Southampton, England in 1873. He was a 43 year old, single Sailmaker from Brisbane, Queensland when he enlisted on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1917 with the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 5117 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his friend – Miss Mary Burns of Bondi, Wynnum, Queensland. Henry Stratford had spent 14 years in Royal Navy in England & had been discharged with Time expired.

Pte Henry Thomas Stratford embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Hororata* (A20) on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1917 & disembarked at Liverpool, England on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1917.

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

Pte Stratford was marched in to 8<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Hurdcott on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1917.

Pte Stratford was transferred to 14<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Codford on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1917.

Pte Stratford was admitted to New Zealand Military Hospital on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1918 with a compound fracture of skull after falling from a train. His Medical Case Sheet states he was “admitted deeply unconscious”.

Pte Henry Thomas Stratford died at 4 a.m. on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1918 at No. 3 New Zealand General Hospital of a fractured skull the result of a Railway accident. He had not regained consciousness. A Post Mortem was conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1918 & cause of death was recorded as “Laceration of Brain.”

A death for Henry T Stratford, aged 44, was registered in the March quarter, 1918 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

The Red Cross Missing & Wounded File contains one letter from The O.C. No. 3 N.Z. General Hospital, Codford, dated 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1918 which reads:

*Pte Stratford was admitted to this Hospital the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. last suffering from Compound fracture of the skull. The result of a railway accident. He died on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and was buried on March 7<sup>th</sup> in the Australian Portion of the Soldiers' Cemetery, Codford-St-Mary. Full Military Honours were accorded at the Funeral, the Rev. G. C. Cruickshank, C.F. N.Z.E.F officiating.*

A Court of Enquiry was held into the death of Pte Henry Thomas Stratford on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1918 at The New Zealand Hospital, Codford before F. A. P. Sylvester. H.M. Coroner for Wilts. The following depositions were taken at the Inquest:

John Brooks, Corpl. A.S.C. Cyclists Camp Codford.

On Saturday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> I was coming from Warminster by the 9.54 p.m. train from Warminster to Codford. It was a corridor carriage and deceased was in it, but not in my compartment. I saw deceased passing by my compartment towards the lavatory. Some few minutes after someone told me he was opening the carriage door. I looked out the window of

my carriage and saw the deceased sitting on the floor with the door open. Before I could do anything he disappeared. I saw no one else in the corridor. It was about 300 yards from Codford Station, and on arrival there I informed the Military Police. Deceased appeared sober when he passed by my compartment. I went back with the police and found the deceased face downwards on the permanent way just outside the down line, his head against the rail, he was unconscious. Gunner Ford R.F.A. 191865 was in my compartment and made a remark about deceased. I cannot say whether there were other men in the same compartment as deceased. The carriage was particularly empty.

(Sgd) J. Brooks Corpl. A.S.C.

William Aitken Mjr. N.Z.M.C. No. 3 N.Z. Gen. Hosp. Codford St. Mary

On February 24<sup>th</sup> I saw deceased in hospital. He was unconscious, he continued the same for a week. I saw him several times and thought he would not recover. He died on Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> inst from compound depressed fracture of the skull. The injury was such as he would be received by a fall from a train in motion.

(Sgd) W. Aitken Major

Jabez Charlton, Stationmaster at Codford G.W.R.

On February 28<sup>th</sup> I was at the station master's house and heard a man was on the line. I went towards Heytesbury and found deceased about 300 yards up. He was taken to hospital. I think deceased when he jumped out struck some trucks and rebounded, there was however no mark on the trucks.

(Sgd) Jabez Charlton

Claude Ernest Thompson Pte Australian M.P.

I was on duty at Codford Station on the evening of 28<sup>th</sup> ult. And saw the passengers alight. They were all sober. I found in deceased's pockets a pass till 12 p.m. 29<sup>th</sup> by road only.

(Sgd) 694 C.E. Thompson Pte A.P.C.

The Court gave a verdict of death from Compound Depressed Fracture of the Skull, caused by injuries accidentally sustained in alighting from a train in motion near Codford Station G.W.R. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1918.

(Sgd) F.A.P. Sylvester

20<sup>th</sup> June 1918

I CERTIFY that the above is a true copy

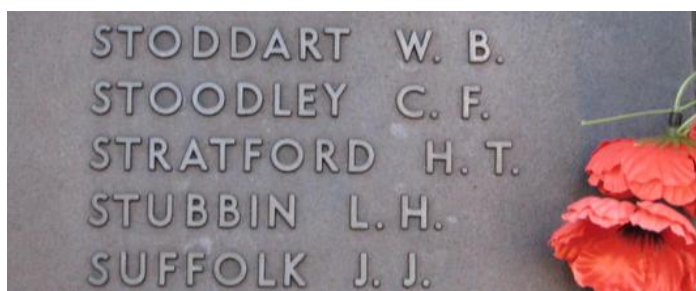
From the burial report of Pte Henry Thomas Stratford – he was buried on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1918 at Codford St. Mary Cemetery, Grave No. 97 – *The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral, the coffin being of polished oak. The cortege was followed by a representative party from 14<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion – all available being present, including his own company and his immediate mates of that company.*

Pte Henry Thomas Stratford requested in his Will, dated 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1917 that all his real and personal property be given to Mary Burns of Wynnum & the same Mary Burns to be appointed Executrix.

Private H. T. Stratford is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 119.



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



*(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)*

A Letter in Pte Stratford's Service Record File from District Finance Officer to the Officer in Charge Base Records Office, Melbourne dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 1923 reads:

*In reply to your memo of 5.5.23 relative to the abovenamed, I have to advise that no claim has been made for the War Gratuity. The file does not disclose the existence of the late soldier's blood relations.*

(Note- The Commonwealth Govt granted veterans a one-off payment – distinct from any pension entitlements – in recognition of service. These payments were known as war gratuities. Personal information in records about war gratuities is limited, but there are occasional references to next-of-kin.)

Pte Henry Thomas Stratford was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to the deceased soldier's next-of-kin. However, in the above mentioned letter regarding no claim for the War Gratuity, the letter was also stamped with "War Medal Etc to Untraceables." Pte Stratford's Memorial Scroll & Plaque are also noted to have not been sent to any next-of-kin, even though Miss Mary Burns, a friend, had been listed as next-of-kin & Executrix in the late Pte Stratford's Will. The personal effects of all deceased soldiers were also returned to the next-of-kin listed. A letter in the late Pte Stratford's Service Record file reads:

*...the personal effects of the late soldier (5117 Pte H. T. Stratford) – as per inventory attached was included in a consignment forwarded by the ill-fated "Barung" which was lost at sea, with all cargo, as the result of enemy action. These personal effects had been sent 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1918.*

Miss. M Burns was, however, sent two photographs and a description of the locality of the grave of the late Pte H. T. Stratford.

(68 pages of Pte Henry Thomas Stratford's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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

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## Newspaper Reports

### AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES – LIST No. 386

It contains the names of 119 Queenslanders as follow:-

Died of Injuries

Private H. T. Stratford (Wynnum)

*(Morning Bulletin, Rockhampton, Queensland, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1918)*

### Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone at Codford War Graves Cemetery. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Pte H. T. Stratford does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte H. T. Stratford's Headstone at Codford War Graves Cemetery (Below)



*(Photo courtesy of Romy Wyeth)*