

**Willesden Jewish Cemetery,  
Willesden, Brent, London  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**4965 PRIVATE**

**G. BREITMAN, MM.**

**3RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**19TH APRIL, 1919 Age 22**

## George BREITMAN

Gersh Breitman was born in Chechelnik, Pavlosh, Russia around 1896.

George Breitman was a 19 year old, single, Labourer from Y.M.C.A., Sydney, NSW when he enlisted at Holsworthy, Sydney, NSW on 27th August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 4965 & his religion was Jewish. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs U. Weksler, City of Batta, Province of Podosk, Russia.

A letter was written by the Imperial Russian Consulate, Sydney, NSW to advise that Gersh Breitman was a Russian born subject & according to his Russian Passport was 17 years of age at the date of issue on 1st July, 1913.

Private George Breitman embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Star of England* (A15) on 8th March, 1916 with the 3rd Infantry Battalion, 15th Reinforcements.

Private George Breitman was admitted to 31st General Hospital at Port Said from HMAT *Star of England* on 10th April, 1916. He was transferred to Cairo on 4th May, 1916 & discharged to Details at Abbassia on 13th June, 1916, having VD for 65 days.

Private George Breitman was admitted to Base Hospital at Tel-el-Kebir on 19th June, 1916 with VD & Dermatitis then transferred & admitted to No. 1 A.D.H. (Australian Dermatological Hospital) at Abbassia on 21st June, 1916. He was discharged to D. Q. Details at Abbassia on 22nd August, 1916. Pte Breitman was transferred to Australian Training Centre at Moascar on 23rd August, 1916.

Private George Breitman embarked for Overseas on H.T. *Megantic* from Alexandria on 27th August, 1916 with 3rd Battalion Details.

Private George Breitman was admitted to Stationary Hospital at Marseilles, France on 3rd September, 1916 from H.T. *Megantic* – cause N.Y.D. (not yet determined). He was discharged to duty on 26th October, 1916.

Private George Breitman was marched in to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France from Hospital on 3rd November, 1916. He proceeded from 1st A.D.B.D. on 21st November, 1916 & was taken on strength of 3rd Battalion in France on 24th November, 1916.

Private George Breitman was written up for a Crime on 17th January, 1917 – using improper language to his superior Officer. He was awarded 3 days Field Punishment No. 2.

Private George Breitman was awarded the Military Medal – A.I.F. Orders 13th April, 1917.

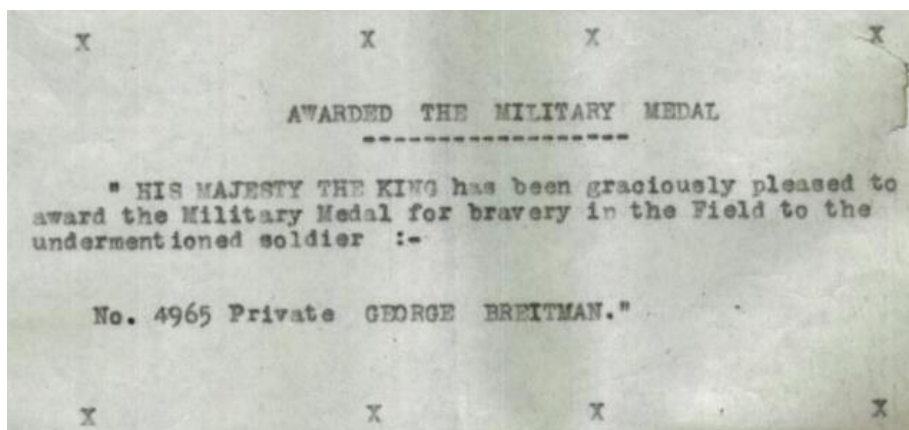
*Showed himself fearless and quick to act by rushing out from his post to assist 2nd Lieutenant Boileau who had attacked four Germans in the open. By his prompt action he no doubt saved his officer's life and materially assisted in the capture of the four enemy.*

The Military Medal was awarded to those below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land.



**Military Medal**

Advice was sent to Mrs U. Wexsler, City of Balta, Province of Podosk, Russia advising that her son – Private G. Breitman had been awarded the Military Medal which was published in the London Gazette dated 26th April, 1917 & the Australia Gazette on 21st August, 1917.



Private George Breitman was on leave to UK from 17th September, 1917 & was granted an Extension of leave until 29th September, 1917. He returned from leave on 30th September, 1917.

Private George Breitman was wounded in action on 4th October, 1917. He was admitted to 64th Field Ambulance then transferred & admitted to 11th Casualty Clearing Station on 4th October, 1917 with shrapnel wounds to hand. Pte Breitman was transferred to No. 24 Ambulance Train on 4th October, 1917 & admitted to 57th General Hospital at Boulogne, France on 5th October, 1917. He was transferred to No. 7 Convalescent Depot at Boulogne on 14th October, 1917.

#### War Diary – 3rd Battalion

*2nd October, 1917 to 8th October, 1917 – Near YPRES*

*Operations of 3rd Battalion 2.10.17 to 8.10.17:*

*Other Ranks – Killed in action 51; Died of wounds 8; Wounded 170; Missing 10; Wounded at Duty 4.*

*(Extract of War Diary information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private George Breitman was marched in to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 27th October, 1917 from Hospital. He was marched out to his Unit on 1st November, 1917 & rejoined his Battalion from wounded in Belgium on 14th November, 1917.

Private George Breitman was written up for a Crime while at Boulogne on 16th January, 1918 – “When on active service (1) When a patient in Hospital not complying with an order given by a Nursing Sister (2) Disrespectful conduct to a Nursing Sister. He was awarded 14 days C.C. (Confined to Camp) by Major B. Hickson on 27th January, 1918. (As per Statement of Service form).

Private George Breitman was sent to Hospital in France sick on 10th February, 1918. He was discharged on 9th February, 1918 (date as per Statement of Service form.) Pte Breitman was admitted to 2nd Casualty Clearing Station on 11th February, 1918 with Scabies. He was transferred to Ambulance Train No. 35 on 25th February, 1918 & admitted to 39th General Hospital at Havre, France on 27th February, 1918. Pte Breitman was discharged to Base Details on 13th March, 1918 & was marched out to his Unit on 24th March, 1918. He rejoined his Battalion from Hospital on 29th March, 1918.

Private George Breitman was posted to Coal Dump Divisional Train on 30th March, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion in the field on 4th April, 1918.

Private George Breitman was on leave to Paris from 22nd July, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion in the field on 8th August, 1918.

Private George Breitman was wounded (gas) in action in France (2nd occasion) on 24th August, 1918. He was admitted to 2nd Australian Field Ambulance on 24th August, 1918 then transferred to 4th Casualty Clearing Station the same day. He was transferred to No. 36 Ambulance Train on 25th August, 1918 & admitted to 1st Australian General Hospital at Rouen, France on 25th August, 1918. Pte Breitman was invalided to England on Hospital Ship Maragansseff on 29th August, 1918.

Private George Breitman was admitted to St. John's Hospital, Cheltenham (affiliated with 2nd Southern General Hospital) on 30th August, 1918 after being Gassed (shell). He was discharged on 6th September, 1918 for furlough & was then to report to No. 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny.

Private George Breitman was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 21st September, 1918 & medically classified as B1 A3 (fit for overseas training camp in 2 to 3 weeks). He was classified as B1 A4 (medically fit – awaiting dental check) on 30th September, 1918 & classified as A3 (Medically & dentally fit) on 7th October, 1918.

Private George Breitman was marched in to Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire on 9th October, 1918. He proceeded overseas to France via Southampton on 30th October, 1918.

Private George Breitman was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Havre, France from England on 31st October, 1918. He was marched out to his Unit on 2nd November, 1918 & rejoined his Unit in the field on 3rd November, 1918.

Private George Breitman was sent to Hospital on 26th January, 1919. He was admitted to 1st Australian Field Ambulance on 26th January, 1919 with Scabies then transferred to 15th Casualty Clearing Station the same day. Pte Breitman was admitted to 7th General Hospital with VD on 29th January, 1919. He was transferred to England on 25th February, 1919.

Private George Breitman was admitted to the Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, Wiltshire on 25th February, 1919 with Syphilis & discharged on 26th February, 1919, having had treatment at Le Havre. He was marched in to Convalescent Training Depot on 26th February, 1919.

Private George Breitman was admitted to the Military Hospital, Tidworth, Wiltshire on 12th April, 1919 with "Vincent's Angina".

### **3rd Battalion**

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the battalion returned to Egypt. In March 1916, it sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in operations against the German Army, principally in the Somme Valley in France and around Ypres in Belgium. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916. Later the battalion fought at Ypres, in Flanders, before returning to the Somme for winter.

The battalion participated in a short period of mobile operations following the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in early 1917, but spent much of that year fighting in increasingly difficult conditions around Ypres. In 1918 the battalion returned to the Somme valley and helped to stop the German spring offensive in March and April. The battalion subsequently participated in the Allies' great offensive of that year, launched east of Amiens on 8 August 1918. The advance on this day by British and empire troops was the greatest success in a single day on the Western Front, one that German General Erich Ludendorff described as "the black day of the German Army in this war".

The battalion continued operations to late September 1918. At 11 am on 11 November 1918, the guns fell silent. The November armistice was followed by the peace treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919.

Between November 1918 and May 1919 the men of the 3rd Battalion returned to Australia for demobilisation and discharge.

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private George Breitman died at 8.50 am on 19th April, 1919 at Tidworth Military Hospital, Wiltshire, England from Tonsillitis, Septicaemia & Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for George Breatman, aged 22, was registered in the June quarter, 1919 in the district of Andover, Hampshire, England.

Private George Breitman was buried on 23rd April, 1919 in Willesden Jewish Cemetery, Willesden, Brent, London, England – Plot number KK. 2 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte G. Breitman - *Coffin was Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag, and conveyed to the graveside, where the "Last Post" was sounded and the burial service conducted by Chap. Lipson and Chap. Danglow. The grave will be turfed and the "sign of David" erected by the A.I.F. London. A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Names of Relatives present at the Funeral – Cousin – Hyman Goorovitz. 78 Exmouth Street, Stepney.

Newspaper item – Jewish Herald, Victoria – 13 June, 1919:

## **OBITUARY**

### **PTE G. BREITMAN**

*It has again been the painful duty of the Australian Jewish Chaplain to perform yet another burial in the United Kingdom of an Australian Jewish lad who had paid the full price for the great cause. No. 4965, Private G. Breitman, of the 3rd Battalion, unfortunately succumbed to pneumonia supervening influenza at the Tidworth Military Hospital on the 18th of this month, and was buried on the 24th April, with full military honours, at the Willesden Jewish Cemetery. The service was conducted by Captain the Rev. J. Danglow, Australian Jewish Chaplain, assisted by Major the Rev. S. Upson, Jewish Chaplain, Southern Command. There was also present Lieut. Harold Boas, and the following Australian Jewish men acted as pall-bearers:—Corporal A. R. Solomon, Sydney; Corporal B. P. Salom, Adelaide; Driver W. Zeeng, Melbourne; Gunner W. Friedlander, Brisbane; Private H. Cooper, Sydney, besides a full military firing party.*

*A very impressive service was concluded by the sounding of the "Last. Post" by Corporal J. Walters, of Western Australia. The military arrangements were in the hands of Staff-Sgt. Rosenthal (of Adelaide), of the Graves Registration Department, assisted by Sgt. Laurie Isaacs (of Melbourne), in charge of A.I.F. Jewish records. Mr. Hyman Gorowitz, a friend of the deceased, was present to represent the family. This makes the fourth of Australia's Jewish soldier-sons who are buried in this particular cemetery.*

Private George Breitman requested in his Will dated 18th May, 1917 that all of his property & effects be given to his mother - Mrs Udi Wexler, City of Balta, Province Polskaja, Russia.

Communications between Base Records, 2nd District Finance Officer & Official Secretary, Australia House, Strand, London advised that no settlement had been made with regards to the Military Estate of the late Private G. Breitman "in consequence of the conditions existing in Russia it has not been possible to effect communications with the beneficiary."

Base Records contacted Mr Hyman Goorovitz, of 78 Exmouth Street, Stepney, England in July, 1924 asking if he could provide the present address of the late Private Breitman's mother as communications forwarded to Mrs Udi Wexler, City of Balta, Province Polskja, Russia had been returned unclaimed or if his parents were deceased, if there were any other relatives living.

Mrs B. Goorovitz replied stating that her husband was deceased & she did not know of any other relatives.

Mr E. S. Watkins, Solicitor, of 28 Commercial Street, London wrote to Base Records on behalf of Mrs B. Goorovitz stating her husband was a son of the deceased soldier's mother's sister – thereby being cousins. Mrs B. Goorovitz believes that her husband had been the sole living relative of the late Pte Breitman, all other relatives believed to be



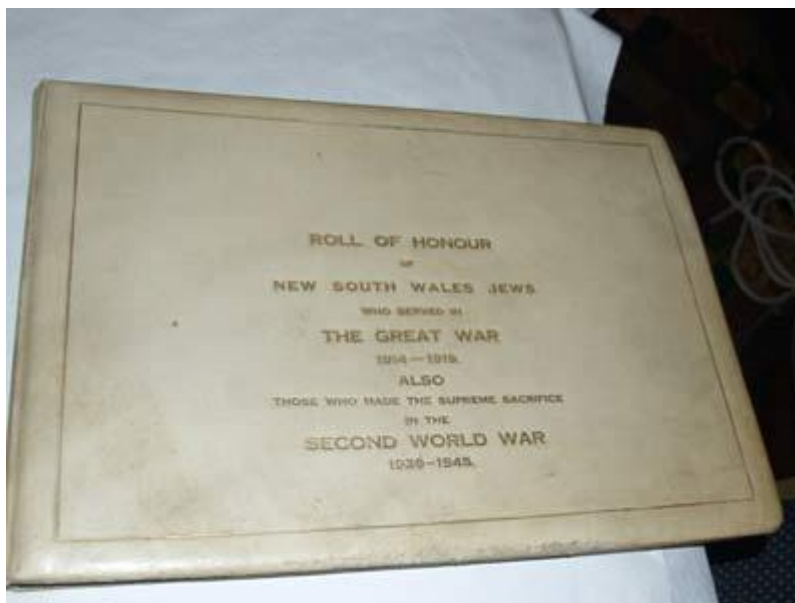
deceased or missing after the Revolution in Russia. Mr Goorovitz has died leaving behind a wife and children & had paid the funeral expenses of the deceased soldier on his death in England in April, 1919. Mr Watkins enquired if his client had any claim as the surviving next of kin on her own behalf or on the behalf of her children.

In 1925 Base Records advised the Finance Secretary that *“a small package of personal effects is held at this Office, and War Medals, Plaque and Scroll at Australia House, London, but as we are unable to get into touch with the next of kin, mother, Mrs Udi Wexler, City of Balta, Province of Polskaja, Russia, of any other blood relations, no action is being taken to dispose of same.”*

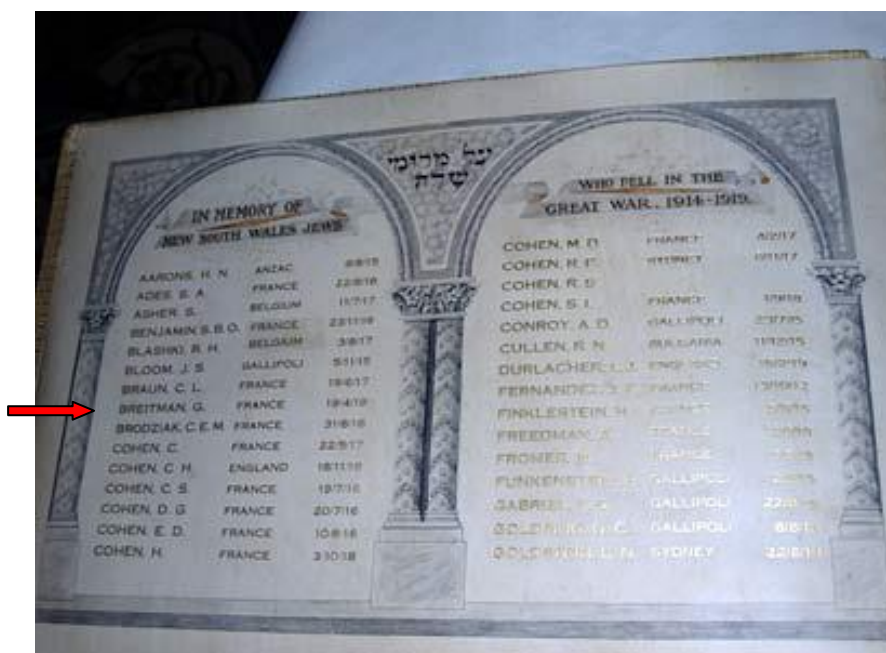
Private George Breitman was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Breitman’s next-of-kin – his mother but all communications to her had been returned unclaimed. His Medals, Scroll & Plaque were returned by the London Office to “Untraceables” on June, 1925.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private G. Breitman – service number 4965, aged 22, of 3rd Battalion, Australian Infantry. Awarded MM.

G. Breitman is remembered in the Great Synagogue Roll of Honour Books, located at The Great Synagogue, Sydney, 166 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, NSW.



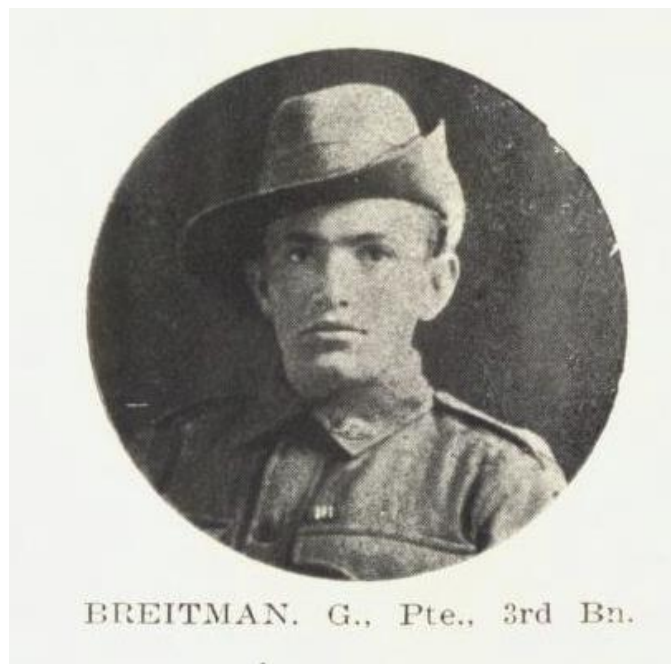
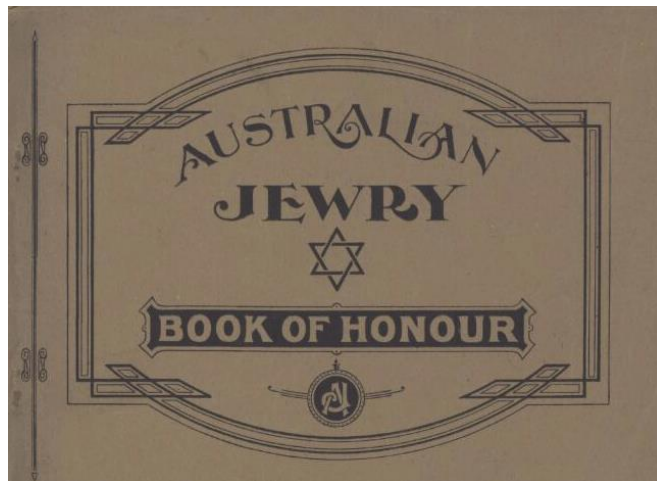
Great Synagogue Roll of Honour Books (Photos by Peter Levarre-Waters)



#BOCK, E.	S. SM	230.	NZ MC	
ROCK, C.E.	CMS		54 <sup>th</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
BULGRAFF, J.N.	P <sup>ty</sup>	75008	A. S. C.	
BOOCK, L.H.	P <sup>ty</sup>	1140	A. H. C.	
BORTZELL, S.	P <sup>ty</sup>	1887	17 <sup>th</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
BOURNE, A.		5	55 <sup>th</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
BOWMAN, J.	P <sup>ty</sup>	7372	3 <sup>rd</sup> H.G. B <sup>n</sup>	
BOWSON, A.	P <sup>ty</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
# BRAUN, C.L.	CAPT		ESSEX REGT	M.M.
# BREITMAN, G.	P <sup>ty</sup>	4965	3 <sup>rd</sup> B <sup>n</sup>	D.S.O.
# BRODZIAN, C.E.H.	M <sup>ty</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup> M.G. B <sup>n</sup>	
BRODZIAN, N.L.				
BROOM, H.	P <sup>ty</sup>		A.M.C.	
BROWNE, C.S.	C <sup>ty</sup>	10034	A.F.A.	
BROWNE, L.H.	D <sup>ty</sup>	370	M.T.	
BROWNE, R.G.	S <sup>ty</sup>	56	1 <sup>st</sup> L.H.	
BROWNE, S.H.				
BUCHNER, R.G.	D <sup>ty</sup>	7356	A.F.A.	
BUCKINGHAM, T.W.	P <sup>ty</sup>	6151	19 <sup>th</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
BURNS, R.R.	P <sup>ty</sup>	1030	13 <sup>th</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
BUTTEL, M.A.	P <sup>ty</sup>	544	10 <sup>th</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
CAHN, F.	P <sup>ty</sup>	6043	3 <sup>rd</sup> B <sup>ty</sup>	
CAPLAN, J.	C <sup>ty</sup>	6058	PAY CORPS	
CARO, M.S.				

Great Synagogue Roll of Honour Books

Pte G. Breitman is remembered in the Australian Jewry Book of Honour – The Great War, 1914-1918 compiled by Harold Boas.



BREITMAN. G., Pte., 3rd Bn.

Private G. Breitman is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 35.



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



(70 pages of Pte George Breitman'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**

### **THE AUSTRALIANS**

#### **315th CASUALTY LIST**

##### **MILITARY MEDAL**

4965 Pte G. Breitman, Inf Bn.

*(The Journal, Adelaide, South Australia – 26 June, 1917)*

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### **AUSTRALIA'S WAR LOSSES**

#### **THE 434th CASUALTY LIST**

##### **WOUNDED**

##### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

G. Breitman, M.M. (Russia), 2nd gas

*(The Farmer and Settler, Sydney, NSW – 29 October, 1918)*

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AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

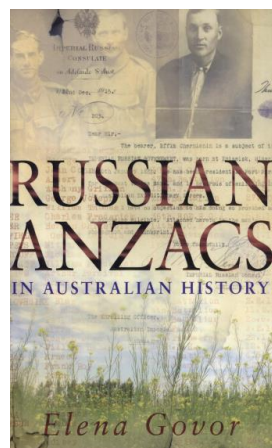
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Taking the votes of members of the 3rd Battalion on the second Conscription Referendum at Halinghen, near Samer. Identified left to right: Lieutenant (Lt) F. W. Taylor (face not visible); Lt C. S. Clifton MC, A Company; Captain S. F. P. White, Officer Commanding B Company (seated); unidentified (looking over Breitman's shoulder); **Private Breitman MM (Died of illness 19 April 1919)**; unidentified (obscured); Lt E. Hawkshaw MC, B Company, (extreme right seated); all other men are unidentified.



### Extract from Book – *Russian Anzacs in Australian History* by Elena Govor:

George (Gersh) Breitman was also from the Ukraine, although he was Jewish and came from an area (Chechelnyk in Podolia) where large Jewish communities still kept to their traditional way of life. In Australia he had worked as a labourer. Breitman 'showed himself fearless and quick to act' during the advance at Ligny on 2 March, 'by rushing out from his posts to assist 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Boileau who had attacked four Germans in the open', as his commander wrote. 'By his prompt action this man no doubt saved his officer's life and materially assisted in the capture of the four enemy.' Breitman was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery.



George Breitman, who came from the Pale of Settlement in the Ukraine, won the Military Medal in the advance of the Hindenburg Line at Ligny in 1917 and survived the war, only to succumb to pneumonia in April, 1919.



### 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. 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)*

Private G. Breitman does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

### **Willesden Jewish Cemetery, Willesden, Brent, London, England**

Willesden Jewish Cemetery contains burials of both wars. Of the 33 First World War graves, six form a small plot by the assembly hall and 22 of the 78 Second World War burials form a separate plot. The rest of the graves are scattered throughout the cemetery. In place of the more usual Cross of Sacrifice, a specially designed memorial to men and women of the Jewish faith who lost their lives in both wars stands opposite the Second World War plot. The memorial is in the form of an obelisk and was the first Jewish national war memorial to be erected in the United Kingdom. *(Information from CWGC)*



**Willesden Jewish Cemetery** *(Photo by julia&keld)*



Photo of Private G. Breitman's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Willesden Jewish Cemetery, Willesden, Brent, London, England



*(Photo courtesy of julia&keld)*



**3 Australian Headstones from left** *(Photo by julia&keld)*