



CAPTAIN ANTHONY PEERE WILLIAMS FREEMAN

LINCOLNSHIRE REGIMENT

DIED BETWEEN 4TH & 5TH APRIL 1916 AGED 26

Anthony Peere Williams Freeman was born in Egypt on 5 January 1888¹, where his father, George Charles Peere Williams Freeman was a Royal Sussex Regiment officer and Provost Marshall². By 1891 the family had returned to England to live in Shrewsbury, where Anthony's father was a Captain in HM Reserve of Officers and Chief Constable of Shropshire. Captain in HM Reserve of Officers³. Also in the household were his older sister, Rose, (aged 6) and younger brothers, Frederick APW (aged 1) and George NPW (under 1 year), plus five servants. He was educated at The School, Somers Road, Upton on Severn⁴, Rossall School, Fleetwood and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst⁵.

In February 1908 Anthony was a Second Lieutenant in The Kings Shropshire Light Infantry. Four and a half years later he had become a Lieutenant in the 1st Battalion⁶. In August 1914 the Battalion were in Tipperary under the command of 16th Brigade in the 6th Division. Anthony was a Lieutenant in D Company when they moved on to St Nazaire, arriving there on 10th September⁷. A month later, during the battle of Armentieres (October 1914), Anthony received 'flesh wounds' to his left buttock and right wrist⁸.

Early in 1915 Anthony was gazetted Captain in the Lincolnshire Regiment⁹. Whilst with the Lincolnshire Regiment he was involved in the 2nd battle of Ypres. During this battle he received 'severe but not permanent' gunshot wounds¹⁰. In early 1916 he was attached to a New Army Service battalion, the 8th Royal Welsh Fusiliers, as second-in-command, with the rank of Major for this period¹¹. The date of this transfer is unknown, but the Battalion moved from Gallipoli to Egypt in January 1916 and then to Mesopotamia in February. In March, while the Commanding Officer, Lt

¹ source - www.thepeerage.com

² Research by Simon Lloyd

³ 1891 Census, Shrewsbury, Class: RG12; Piece: 2111; Folio: 9; Page: 11

⁴ 1901 Census, Class: RG13; Piece: 2785; Folio: 65A; Page: 47

⁵ Obituary in the Hants and Berks Gazette, 15 April 1916.

⁶ Anthony Peere Williams Freeman Army Service Record, The National Archives

⁷ Source – The Long, Long Trail, the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry www.thelonglongtrail.co.uk

⁸ ibid

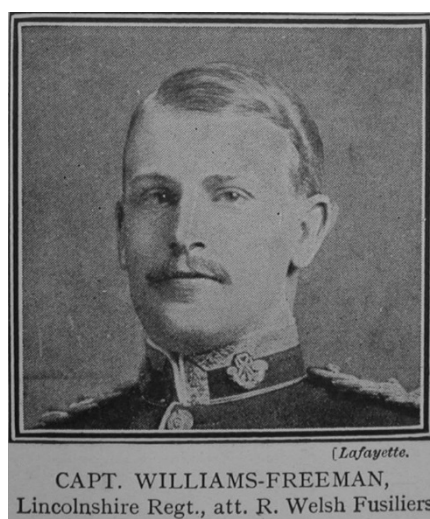
⁹ Obituary in the Hants and Berks Gazette 15 April 1916

¹⁰ Source – Anthony Peere Williams-Freeman Army Service Record, The National Archives

¹¹ Obituary in the Hants and Berks Gazette 15 April 1916

Col Hay, was on thirty days leave (until 30 March)¹², Anthony was temporarily in command, albeit without acting or temporary rank¹³. Whilst participating in the final attempt to relieve the garrison at Kut, the Battalion suffered many casualties. Having initially been held in reserve, they then passed through a Wiltshire Regiment battalion with the aim of advancing to objectives in depth in a frontal assault. However, having failed to stop at the unoccupied second line objective, in the ensuing confusion they ran into friendly fire. Although not known at the time, the Turks had withdrawn earlier because of flooding, so this advance was made in vain, but with tragic consequences. There were just under 200 8 RWF casualties in this incident. Anthony, too, was wounded and subsequently died of these wounds on 5 April 1916.¹⁴

Anthony's Commonwealth War Graves record¹⁵ indicates that he was a Captain in the Lincolnshire Regiment when he died, as does his National Probate record¹⁶. Anthony's home address on the latter was given as North Warnborough, where his mother Lavinia was living. She was a member of several war related committees including the Refugees (Belgian) Committee and the Cottage Hospital sub-committee for accommodation for wounded soldiers¹⁷. She had also sent a letter to the Army questioning whether her son should have had the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, rather than Major, as he had commanded the battalion for a period of time. This plea was unsuccessful.¹⁸



II.2 The Great War Vol. 8 – *Courtesy of WW1photos.com*

¹² Source - History of 8 RWF, Prince Consort Library, Aldershot

¹³ Source – Anthony Peere Williams-Freeman Army Service Record, The National Archives

¹⁴ *ibid* and History of 8 RWF

¹⁵ UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919, www.ancestry.com

¹⁶ England & Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1861-1941

¹⁷ Various reports in the Hants and Berks Gazette 1914 and 1915.

¹⁸ Source – Anthony Peere Williams-Freeman Army Service Record, The National Archives



However, there is conflicting evidence of his actual rank as can be seen in the two photos illustrations 2 and 3. The first appeared in *The Great War, vol. 8*, which was published in 1915 where he is described as Capt. Williams-Freeman, Lincolnshire Regt., att. R. Welsh Fusiliers and the second, published in *The Sphere 20th May 1916*. i.e. a year later also has the same Regiment information, but he now has the rank of Major. The source of this information is given as 'The Sphere 20th May 1916.'

On 4th April 1916 Anthony must have understood that his chances of surviving the next day's fighting were low for he wrote the letter below to his mother. This letter has kindly been provided by Williams Freeman family members, Amanda Goatley and Claire Phillips.

My dearest mother

We are attacking tonight so that there is a possible chance of not coming through the night and writing this beforehand in case and giving it to the padre to be posted.

Well goodbye it will be an end as you all would want and all that.

In my will (at Cox's) I left you everything except my signet ring and silver watch, these I left to Greta Thompson. I want you to have the ring and she the wrist watch.

I am not engaged to her but hoped to be some time as I do love her.

I have no complications of any sort.

Goodbye to all.

Your affectionate son

Anthony Williams Freeman

At the time of writing Greta Thompson is unknown.



Major A. P. Williams-Freeman

Lincolnshire Regt. (attd. R. Welsh Fus.). Aged 26. Obtained his first commission in 1908. Received five wounds whilst serving abroad. His two brothers are also serving in the Army and Navy

III.3. Source: The Sphere 20th Many 1916 courtesy of WW1photos.com

Anthony was awarded the British War Medal 1914-20 and the Victory Medal 1914-19. In 1917 his mother applied for her son to be awarded the 1914 Star, which was agreed and awarded posthumously.¹⁹ He is commemorated on the Basra Memorial.

¹⁹ British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920 www.ancestry.com