



Driver Thomas Henry HOLMAN
5006 — 19th Battalion, 13th Reinforcements
7th Australian Field Artillery Brigade

Born: 5 Feb 1876, Cornwall, England.

Parents: Thomas and Elizabeth Holman

NOK: Mrs Alice Holman, wife, Sydney.

Occupation: Farmer

District Connection: Gumble, Manildra, Cumnock

Enlistment Date: 26 Feb 1916, Molong, NSW.

Enlistment Age: 40 yrs

Embarkation: 5 Jul 1916, Sydney. *HMAT A31 Ajana*

Served: Western front – France, Belgium.

Fate: RTA 25 Mar 1919

Honour Board: Cumnock Memorial Gates; Manildra War Memorial Hall; Gumble Hall.

Brief Biography:

Thomas Henry Holman was born in Cornwall on 5 Feb 1876, the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Holman

Thomas describes his early years in a news report by Tom Fitzpatrick in *The Biz*, Fairfield, - 19 Feb 1958. p26, Tom Holman of Cabramatta, An Interesting Personality. Extracts from the article:

“Thomas Henry Holman, of 32 Broad Street, Cabramatta, 82 years of age on Wednesday, February 5, and doesn't look within cooe of it...

Tom was born in Wales, but knew little about that part of the world (Thomas also stated in his WW1 enlistment application that he was born in Wales, but English Birth and Baptism records state that he was from Cornwall), for when he was but nine months old his parents were off to South Africa and the Kimberley mines, where his father held one of the original leases...

When he was nine years of age the family moved to Melbourne (Immigration records show that the Holman family arrived on the SS Australasian in December 1884 and were listed as Thomas Holman, engineer, 30yrs, Jane 30yrs, Thomas 8yrs, William 6yrs, Joseph 4yrs and Jane 2½yrs), and Tom completed his schooling there. But he had a restless spirit ... So, without even bidding farewell to Mum, off he skedaddled to Western Australia, aged 13 years. He obtained a job as a 'nipper' or 'Billy boy' on a railway construction works... Thomas was found by a policeman and returned home from Fremantle to Melbourne and his parents.

In 1894 – he'd be 18 then- he found himself as a shearer out on the Lower Darling, below Menindee, at Tolarno Station, 33 miles from the new railway town. This was at the height of the shearers' strike, when things were pretty tough in the country. Tolarno Station was not far from where irate shearers saw to it that the river paddle wheeler 'Rodney' found its way to the bottom of the Darling. It was laden with 'black' wool.

Tom married a Fitzroy girl (Alice Boswell on 17 Feb 1898. Richmond, Victoria). Tom was then a gripman (aged 22yrs) on the old-fashioned Melbourne cable trams...

And then came the Boer War, and Tom again developed 'itchy feet,' to proceed with the 1st Bushmen's Contingent in 1899 to South Africa.

He saw a lot of service, was in the Siege of Eland's River, and joined up with Baden-Powell just after the relief of Mafeking.

He spent seven years in Africa altogether, remaining there after the cessation of war in charge of Army Remounts, and seeing much territory, including not only Orange Free State and Transvaal, but Portuguese East Africa, Rhodesia, Tanganyika and Kenya for good measure. Mrs Holman joined him in South Africa for four of those years...

With his good wife, Cabramatta has known them as great citizens for 21 years and has been retired for the past six years..."

Thomas Henry Holman enlisted with the 3rd Victorian Bushmen's Contingent [3VBC] on 5 Feb 1900. He left Melbourne on the *Euryalus*, 10 Mar 1900; disembarked at Beira on 3 Apr 1900 to join the Rhodesian Field Force. He served with the 3VBC from 12 Apr 1900 to 8 May 1901. He was invalided to Australia on the *Tongariro* and arrived back in Melbourne on 2 May 1901. He was discharged on 9 May 1901. He enlisted as a supernumerary with the 5th Victoria Mounted Rifles as Corporal [482], 21 Sep 1901 to 28 Mar 1902.

Thomas stated his Boer War Record on his WW1 enlistment dossier as:

3rd Bushman's Contingent – 1 year 110 days; 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles – 190 days
Victorian Field Artillery – 190 days; Remount Depot (South Africa) – 1 yr 3 mths
Cape Garrison Artillery – 1 yr 8 mths.

Elizabeth Jane and her husband Thomas Holman (snr) separated early 1900. Elizabeth received treatment for mental illness and took her own life on 4 Oct 1900. She was living with her two younger children, Joseph (aged 20yrs) and Elizabeth Jane (18yrs) at Richmond, Vic, at the time. A report was published in the *Geelong Advertiser* – 4 Oct 1900, p1.

Thomas Holman (snr) married a second time in 1905 to Adeline Elizabeth Holman, nee Stanley, a divorcee with four children. Adeline had been married to Thomas' nephew, William Holman, whom she divorced in 1902 on the grounds of desertion. Thomas, aged 56yrs, was working as an engineer at Richmond in 1905.

By 1912, Thomas Holman was living at Gumble, near Cumnock, NSW. According to local newspaper reports over many years, he played cricket and billiards and was a member of the Cumnock Debating Club.

The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 8 May 1915, p13, stated:

"The lease of the residential area of 10 acres, parish and gold field of Dilga, has been extended. The Lessee is T.H. Holman, of Gumble; at the annual rent of £1 10s."

Thomas's wife, Alice, did not appear to be living with him in Gumble during these years as she is not mentioned in news reports, and when Thomas enlisted in the AIF during WW1 in Molong on 26 Feb 1916, he stated his next of kin as his wife Alice, who was residing at Liverpool, Sydney. Thomas' occupation was a farmer, he was 40 years old, 5 feet 11 inches tall, had hazel eyes, brown hair and a medium complexion. He was of the Methodist religious denomination.

The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 13 May 1916, p7, Manildra Matters stated:

"Sergt. Tom Holman, well known around here and Gumble, was home on final leave last week."

Acting Corporal (A/Cpl) Thomas Holman embarked on *HMAT Ajana A31*, from Sydney, on 5 July 1916, as a member of the 19th Btn. The *Ajana* arrived at Plymouth on 31 Aug 1916. A/Cpl Holman attended a School of Instruction at Tidworth, Salisbury Plains, before proceeding to France and disembarking at Etaples on 3 Nov 1916. He joined the 19th Btn on 19 Nov 1916 at Mametz near Amiens, in the Somme region of France. The 19th Btn were resting after taking part in an attack near Flers, 14-16 November, under conditions the War Historian Charles Bean described as the worst ever encountered by the AIF.

Thomas was promoted to Lance Corporal (L/Cpl) on 15 Dec 1916. The 19th Btn spent until 16 Dec 1917 training, before moving onto Montauban on 20 December and taking over an intermediate line at Gueudecourt and then relieved various battalions on the front line until January 1917.



On 11 Jan 1917, L/Cpl Holman reported sick with Trench Feet. He was hospitalised at the 5th General Hospital at Rouen before being transferred to the 3rd Australian General Hospital at Brighton on 19 Jan 1917. Trench feet was a condition caused by being drenched in water for long hours/days in the trenches, causing soldiers to develop a fungus. The affected feet would become numb, swell up, become red or blue due to poor circulation, and in advance condition, would develop necrosis which often led to amputation of affected areas. During WW1, over 74,000 soldiers suffered from the condition. (Biomedical Scientist 2018).

After taking months to recover, L/Cpl Holman was transferred to Larkhill for Artillery Details on 12 July 1917. On the 13 Aug 1917 he returned to France and on 19 Aug was mustered as a Driver with the 26th Artillery Battery, 7th Australian Field Artillery Brigade (7th FAB).

The 26th Battery moved to Dickebusch, Belgium, by 11 Sep 1917. The Unit diary for that day reads:

“Dickebusch. A day never to be forgotten by the men of the 26th Battery. Owing to the long march on the previous day, reveille was blown an hour later than usual. Breakfast had just been drawn and the men were seated in a group in the vicinity of the cookhouse. Then it was that the unexpected happened. A high velocity shell burst in our midst. This was the first shell fortunately; the remainder fell some distance away. For a moment the whole camp was paralysed – then came the cry for stretches. In a wonderfully short space of time the wounded were carried to the dressing stations.

Ten soldiers were killed, 28 wounded and 4 cases of shell shock, making a total of 42 casualties.

The 26th Artillery Battery took part in the following Battles: Menin Road 20-25 Sep 1917; Broodseinde, Ypres, 4 Oct 1917; Passchendaele 12 Oct 1917; Hamel 4 Jul 1918; Amiens 8-11 Aug 1918, Mont St. Quentin 31 Aug -2 Sep 1918; and the Hindenburg Line 18-29 Sep 1918.

Driver Holman was hospitalised in France from 24 May to 27 May 1918 with a hernia, but then returned to his unit.



Driver Thomas Holman left England on 25 Mar 1919 on the *SS Port Denison*, via Cape Town, disembarking at Sydney on 13 May 1919. He was discharged from the AIF on 27 June 1919 and received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The *Molong Argus* – 27 Jun 1919, p5, Manildra, reported:

“Driver Edward Jones and Private Tom Holman were welcomed home at a social evening in Fleeting’s Hall on Friday night. There was a large attendance which include visitors from Molong and Cudal...”

They were thanked for their service and presented with medals.

The *Molong Argus* – 21 Nov 1919, p4, Cumnock, reported on a welcome home and presentation of gold medals for a number of local soldiers, including Driver T.H. Holman

Thomas made an application to the Lands Office in June 1919 for a special lease of 200 acres, Parish of Dilga, northern part of reserve 10091.

The *Smith’s Weekly*, Sydney – 24 Feb 1923, p27, Sailors’ and Soldiers Parliament, reported on a letter written by Thomas Holman: *“Gumble. Feb 12, 1923.*

My wife and self would like to adopt a boy or girl – boy preferred – of a dead soldier either of the 19th Battalion or 26th Battery. If you cannot get one from either of the above, one from the Brigade from either will do. I served in the 19th and the 26th Battery myself during the late war; and 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles in the South African War, so you can see why I want a soldier’s child.

I am a farmer in this district, three miles from a school, to which the child will be sent, and am well known about Manildra and Cumnock if reference is wanted.

We have been married for 25 years and have no children of our own and would like a child of from six to twelve years of age.”

The reply under this letter stated:

“The Department [Repatriation] takes scant thought of putting such children into homes. But it has elaborate and costly machinery for turning other children with their mothers and fathers out of homes.”

Thomas Henry Holman is listed in the Australian Electoral Rolls (AER) for Calare/Cumnock, as residing at Delaney’s Dyke, Gumble, occupation farmer, in 1930, 1932 and 1937. No listing is made for his wife, Alice.

The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 18 Sep 1937, p12, reported:

“Mr Tom Holman, who recently disposed of his Gumble property, left last week to reside in the city.”

Both Thomas and Alice Holman are listed in the AER for Werriwa/Cabramatta for 1943, 1954 & 1958 as living at (32) Broad Street, Cabramatta.

The Biz, Fairfield – 19 Feb 1958, p12, reported on Tom and Alice celebrating their Diamond Wedding Anniversary at Cabramatta.

Alice Holman died in hospital on 3 May 1961, Sydney, aged 81yrs.
 Thomas Henry Holman died on 7 May 1961, aged 85yrs, at his nephew's residence, 67 Seymour Parade, Belfield, Sydney. Both Alice and Thomas had services at the Chapel, the Rookwood Crematorium.

Tom Holman is featured in the books:

- “Echoes of Anzac – Manildra and District WW1 story 1914-1918,” by Heather Nicholls, 2006.
- “That Ragged Mob - The Story of the 3rd Victorian (Bushman's) Contingent” by Robin Drooglever, 2009.

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Above: Tom Holman
 The Biz, Fairfield, - 19 Feb 1958. p26,



Right: Manildra WW1 Honour Roll

Below: Cumnock WW1 Honour Roll



The photo of Thomas Holman on page 1 is from his Boer War records, provided by Robin Drooglever.