

Paul HOLMAN

Born 7 February 1893, Streatham, South London Died 15 February 1915, aged 22.
Gunner, 1625 The Honourable Artillery Company

Paul Holman was the son of Herbert and Sophia Hawkes Holman.

Herbert Holman was born on 15 February 1862 in The Elms, The Strand, Topsham to Richard Holman (1835-98) and his wife Eleanor Mary (nee Haswell, 1837-1917). They had nine children of which Herbert was the third son. The family was established as ship-builders in Topsham and as marine insurers, working from offices in London.

In 1881 Herbert was an undergraduate at Christ College, Cambridge and later studied law and became a barrister. He married Sophia Hawkes Andrew (1863-1933) on 13 July 1887 in the Wesleyan Chapel, Southernhay, Exeter.

In the 1891 census they were living in Streatham with two children, Dorothy Andrew Holman (1888-1983) and Alwyn Haswell Holman (1890-1940). Eileen Joyce Holman (1891-1981) was born later in that year.

Paul was born two years later and both of the boys are listed at Banstead Hall School in 1901. They later went on to The Leys School, Cambridge.

One further daughter was born, Hester (1899-1934), and a further son, Herbert Leigh Holman (1901-1982). He later married a young actress, Vivian Mary Hartley in December 1932 and in time she adopted his name in her stage name, *Vivien Leigh*.

In about 1898, when Dorothy was ten, Herbert Holman purchased Holcombe Down as a holiday home for his growing family. He became a Devon magistrate as well as becoming the Liberal candidate for Mid-Devon. He also preached at the Wesleyan Chapel in Dawlish.

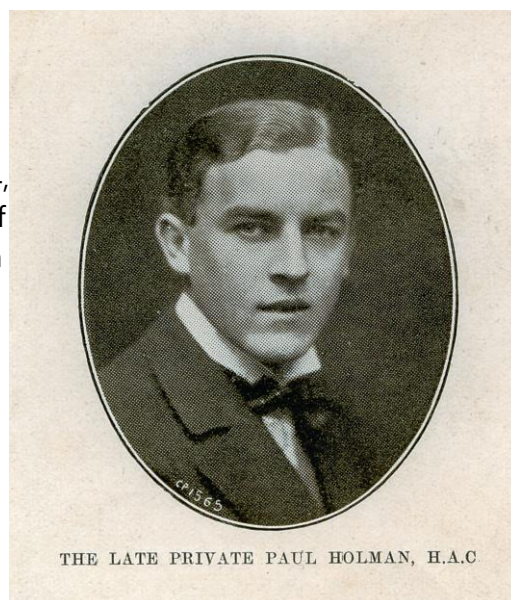


Family group with, standing, Dorothy with Hester, Sophia, Joyce with Leigh, Paul sitting in foreground, Alwyn and Herbert. Ca 1909, possibly at Holcombe Down

In 1911 Sophia and **Paul**, then an undergraduate, were staying at the Porthminster Hotel, St Ives and Herbert Holman, 49, was listed at Ashcombe Tower, near Dawlish, and as a Barrister at Law, Maritime Insurance, with a 'visitor', his younger brother Thomas J Holman (1863-1948), retired from the sea and also born at Topsham. He was known as 'Uncle Tom' and was a Captain of steamships.

When **Paul Holman** started working in London, he is shown as 'residing at 78 Lancaster Gate' (Probate record) and his parents at 4 Whitehall Court, Westminster, where his father died on 1st April, 1928.

Paul enlisted at Armoury House with the Honourable Artillery Company as a Gunner/Private, service number 1625. He served with the 1st Battalion and was sent to France in September 1914, and was involved in the 1st Battle of Ypres, Battles of Ancre and Arras. His death is shown as occurring on 15th February 1915 when hit by a "stray shot" whilst on sentry duty outside of the company billets.

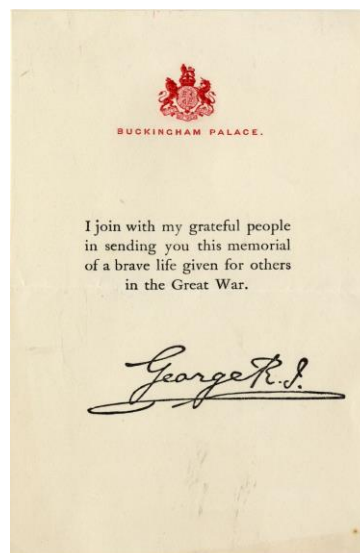
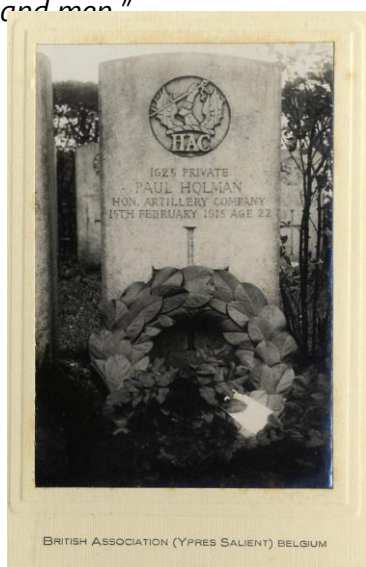


Exeter & Plymouth Gazette of the Friday 5

March, 1916, reported: "*Conservatives no less than Liberals will join in tendering sympathy to Mr Herbert Holman, Liberal candidate for Mid-Devon, and Mrs Holman in the loss of their second son, Mr Paul Holman, who has met his death at the Front.*"

A letter from the officer commanding the Honourable Artillery Company says that while Mr Holman was on sentry duty on February 17th he was killed by a stray shot. A comrade writes: "His first thought was that most evidently he must warn the guard; this he did, becoming unconscious immediately afterwards."

His Colonel and several friends have written to say that they had been able to give him a "soldier's funeral with simplicity and reverence, and with none of the hurry which is, unfortunately, frequently unavoidable, the Colonel himself reading the Service and the whole of his Section being present." The Colonel adds: "We have erected an oak cross over his grave....and I am sending a sketch map showing the exact position. I can not express to you how grieved I am, as he was a splendid type of young Englishman and a fine soldier. He was greatly beloved by us all, officers and men."



Deceased, while at Cambridge, not only excelled in his studies, but was an ardent lover of most forms of sport. He shot in the Public Schools' team at Bisley, gained his half-blue for lacrosse, was an excellent horseman, and an amateur operatic actor of considerable attainments. On leaving the University he studied for the Bar, and recently passed his final examinations, and had begun practice as a barrister. Shortly after the outbreak of the war he was so eager for active service that he would not wait for a commission, but joined the H.A.C. Within a few weeks he went to the Front, where he was engaged for five months. He had since been offered several commissions, and at the time of his death was awaiting an opportunity to return home to take up a commission and go back to the fighting line."

The news of his death was recorded in Dorothy Holman's diary (Devon Heritage Centre). She had been staying with friends near Brighton in a secluded part of Sussex.

Tuesday Feb 23rd

Such glorious weather, I felt it a joy to be alive again. In the afternoon Blanche motored me in to Brighton to Hilaire Belloc's lecture at the Town Hall, Hove. It was on the Strategy of the War, extremely clear and instructive. It all came out so pat & exactly right that I almost lost interest; it was so much like being at school again. He is very different lecturing on this. I last heard him on Moliere, there he seemed to be entirely a man of letters with attendant mannerisms."

Wednesday Feb 24th

Another glorious day. Blanche took me for a drive in the afternoon.

Thursday Feb 25th

Blanche and I went to Brighton to lunch, we walked along the sea front first. I have never seen such weather in England, it was just like being at the Riviera. Went in to the Metropole intending to have lunch but all the tables were taken, so we went to a humble place called Muttons close by.....When we came to the part where we had to get the pistol in the office one of the attendants leant over and put her hand on me, the hand of fate, I shall never forget the movement of that hand coming down on me, it seemed to fill the world.

She said you are wanted on the telephone by your father & I knew at once what that was. It seemed so supernatural the way she descended upon me. Mr Davidson was at the telephone and said that Joyce had sent me a telegram to tell me to come at once. Blanche came to the station with me & I caught the 5 something train. I wasn't at all agitated, my mind was simply a blank. I rushed into the house (Lancaster Gate, London) as quickly as I could and I saw Mother and Myfanwy just starting upstairs. Mother's eyes were very red and so I said "Is it Paul?" & knew. Muir Mackenzie wrote this morning also Ronald Spicer to say Paul had been killed & buried on Feb 17th.(indistinct) & Myfanwy were here to dinner & were somewhat of a comfort.

Friday Feb 26th

Life has to go on so I took Hes to the Club to go in for her life saving competition. I longed to rush up to everyone for sympathy but as a matter of fact spoke to no one."

In the *Western Times* of 7 September 1914 it was reported, "Mr Herbert Holman, J.P., of Holcombe Down, Dawlish, has a brother, son, and five nephews taking part in the defence of the country with the forces. Mrs Holman and her daughters are energetic workers for the Red Cross Society."

Dorothy and Joyce Holman both became volunteer nurses with the Red Cross, and the *Western Times* of 21 September 1915 reported that "Two daughters of Mr & Mrs Herbert Holman of Holcombe, Dawlish have been sent away as nurses by the War Office with the Red Cross Society. Miss Dorothy Holman has gone to Egypt, and Miss Joyce Holman to Malta."

On 9 June 1916, the same paper reported that "the Misses Holman, daughters of Mr and Mrs Herbert Holman, who are members of the Red Cross Society, doing duty abroad, have distinguished themselves by gallant rescues of life at Malta. Miss Joyce Holman, who holds the Bath Club's Shield for Ladies, was bathing with some of her companions, recently arrived on a transport, when she observed one of her colleagues in danger. Although only just recovering from a serious illness, and exhausted by having to make her way to the beach through a treacherous undercurrent, she at once went out again, and, after a hard struggle, the girl was brought in. Her sister (Dorothy) is also to be complimented on the performance of another plucky rescue in a sea quite unsuitable for bathing. Both have gained the Award of Merit of the Royal Life-Saving Society."

Paul Holman made a Will which left his effects of £4,099. 8s.8d to his father at 4 Whitehall Court, London.

Paul Holman is listed on the Devon Roll of Honour but without date or location of death, and his name appears on the Dawlish War memorial. He is also recorded on the Devon Heritage site. The Commonwealth War Graves entry shows that he is buried in Wytschaete Military Cemetery, Belgium. (Honourable Artillery Company web records) There were a number of casualties in the Company on 15th February, 1915 in action at Kemmel, Belgium. Wytschaete Military Cemetery is located 7 Kms south of Ieper town centre. Wytschaete (now Wijtschate) was taken by the Germans early in November 1914. The cemetery was made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from isolated positions surrounding Wytschaete.

References: CWGC. Forces War Records Census and BMD records. Probate records. Ancestry family trees Dodd214, Aston, Burden, Nolan and Black. Newspaper archives.

"Dorothy Holman – A Life" by Lily Neal, publ Topsham Museum. The personal diary of Dorothy Holman.

Further material about the Holman family, including extensive family tree data, can be found at Topsham Museum, at 25 The Strand. The Museum was started by Dorothy Holman and given to Topsham in her lifetime.