



1433 HOLDEN Leslie Hubert



Lieut. L. H. Holden, M.C.

Son of HW Holden Esq Wybalena Cabramatta Road Mosman born March 6 1895 Entered 1909 Left 1911 Great War 1914-18 (Captain M C) Business Manager (18 William St Sydney)

Nom Roll Capt MC AFC Div HQ Left 26/5/16 RTA 6/5/19

Service Record 25 Salesman Sgt E Coy 19 Kurringai Inf Joined 26/5/15 Tpr 12LH 4Bde Embarked MEF Gallipoli HQ 2Div 4/9/15 Transf RFC Oxford 5/12/16 2Lt 6/4/17 Lt 6Sqn 12/4/17 AFC 2Sqn 6/7/17 MC 4/2/18 Capt & Ft Cdr 27/3/18 Temp CO 27/3/18 2Sqn CO 8/4/18 Air Force Cross 11/3/19 Returned 19/6/19 Terminated 18/8/19. [Killed in aeroplane accident, 18/9/32]

BEAN [Cutlack VIII 178] records "No 2 Squadron...fought the first Australian air combat. A patrol of DH5s...when coming back from over St Quentin at 10,000 feet just before noon on October 2 [1917], saw an enemy two-seater below, and the leader immediately dived towards it. The German made for the ground, and the DH5s had to abandon the chase...A quarter of an hour later they met another two-seater, which Lieutenants LH Holden and RW Howard attacked; but this too escaped by superior speed."

BEAN [Cutlack] describes the supporting role of No 2 Australian Squadron in the Battle of Cambrai [VIII 184-197] including [184-5] "The morning of November 20...[which] was misty...Six machines in formation...took off soon after...dawn, flew over the advancing tanks and infantry across the Hindenburg Line, and dropped bombs on the best obtainable targets. Selection...was limited; the fog was so thick that low-flying in flight-formation was impossible, and machines, therefore, hunted in pairs instead. The bombs having been released, the pilots flew up and down roads and trenches and over batteries, emptying their machine-guns at every pocket of Germans. It was risky work, for the heavy fog meant that the flying had often to be done at only twenty or thirty feet off the ground; but the rewards were great. These attacks dismayed the German artillery, and...drove the gunners in panic from one battery near Cambrai...[dropped] bombs upon two heavy machine-gun emplacements, and then 'shot-up' the main Cambrai road...[They] dropped one bomb plumb upon a gun moving out of action, machine-gunned the men around it, and shot three of the horses dead...Lieutenants Holden and RL Clark made direct hits with bombs on a communication trench full of troops, and then fired into the resulting confusion, until such men as were able left the trench and fled. Holden returned to an advanced landing-ground behind Havrincourt Wood, with his machine a flying wreck. Every part of it was shot full of holes, including petrol-tank, tail-plane, both longerons, and part of the under-carriage, while the elevator control was shot clean away."

On 22 November [Cutlack 191], the day on which Lt DG Clark [qv] was "shot down and mortally wounded by ground-fire over Bourlon Wood....Holden again brought his machine in wrecked, almost every part holed or broken – clear evidence of the dangers of the work and of his own good luck."

Cutlack describes a number of dog fights north of Scarpe in February 1918 during which, on 18 February, "...Howard and Holden, looking for prey between Lens and Douai at 16,500 feet, saw beneath them six red-tailed Albatros scouts in two flights of three, pursuing an RE8. They at once dived on the nearer group, and a hot burst...sent the leader down in a vertical nose-dive with a slow spin from which he was not seen to recover. The other Germans hastily turned and made for the ground near Lille. By the time the Australians had again made height over Douai they met five more German scouts, but, just as the fight was beginning, six Bristol Fighters appeared overhead and the Germans turned tail for home." [218] On 21 February, following a number of encounters between the Germans and both 2 and 4 Squadrons, Phillips and Holden...appeared on the scene at 16,000 feet, and found six red-nosed Albatros scouts over Esquerchin....The two attacked this formation and broke it up. Two of the Germans span away into clouds; the remainder sheered off....during the rest of the day no German formation was observed in the sky by either of the Australian squadrons." [219]

Cutlack describes the increasing activity of the German airmen from March 11 onward, leading up to the Ludendorff offensive [223], during which time, ten "SE5s under RW Howard cornered some of the enemy on March 12 over Wingles, just north of Lens....Albatros scouts escorting a two-seater. Howard, being in the sun, and evidently unseen, dived on the escort. The enemy scattered in all directions, and one, turning desperately to escape...[an Australian] who was fast on its tail, suddenly gave Holden an excellent target. Holden zoomed up and fired into it a stalling burst of fifty rounds. The Albatros forthwith fell out of control and was seen to hit the earth in flames." [223-4] The Australians counter attacked beginning with 2 Squadron's fights at 18,000 feet around Cambrai and St Quentin on March 22 during which Holden shot down an Albatros. [229-30]

Holden chased away a two-seater and shot its observer dead [240] during 2 Squadron's escort duties at the end of March, as the German advance on the Somme was brought to a halt. [239-40]

MC : Awarded for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. "On 25-11-17 whilst on a special mission he dropped one bomb direct on a support trench full of troops moving west, who scattered and ran for shell holes, one bomb on a strong point which was holding up our troops, and another on large group of infantry, also using his machine gun on each target from a height of 100 feet. His machine just got home riddled with bullets. He rendered very valuable service throughout the operation. This officer has done fine and gallant work ever since Squadron came to France, and has been doing low work ever since the recent operations started." Holden's was one of 6 MCs awarded to 68 Sqn AFC that caused Sir William Birdwood to send his congratulations on their "magnificent record" on 16/12/17. "Captain LH Holden, MC, after flying from Melbourne to Sydney, gave various exhibitions in Sydney, to further the Peace Loan, and is now going from centre to centre in NSW for the same purpose." [TB Sep 1919 p. 30]

TB May 1929: p.44 "To two Old Boys, Captain L Holden and Dr LR Hamilton, fell the honour of discovering the 'Southern Cross' and her crew [on 16/4/29]."

"LH Holden has been for more than a year at Salamoia, New Guinea, where he is flying a commercial machine on his own account." TB September 1932, p. 117
School Council resolution: "The Council records with deep regret the loss of two Old Boys, Captain Leslie Holden and Dr George Redfearn Hamilton, who from their meeting as boys in the School were friends; and, after service in the Great War, were associated in enterprises of daring and of public benefit, for the advancement of the knowledge of flying, the saving of life, and improvement of air communication in their country; and who, still undivided, have yielded up their gallant and adventurous lives in the cause of humanity." TB December 1932, p. 227

A service in memory of their lives was held in the Chapel on 20/9/32, following their deaths in an aeroplane accident on 18/9/32