

**Hollybrook Memorial,
Southampton, Hampshire, England
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



6977 PRIVATE

B. COMBO

3RD BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

29TH DECEMBER, 1916

Benjamin COMBO

Benjamin Combo was born at Burndowns Station, near Dalby, Queensland in 1889.

[***Bertie Combo was listed by the Australian Imperial Force in 1923 as the brother of Benjamin Combo. At the time of researching – no birth could be found registered for Benjamin Combo on the Queensland Births, Deaths & Marriages website. A birth was found for Bertie Combo – born 4th October, 1900 to parents Jack Combo & Annie Bright.*]

Benjamin Combo was a 26 year old, single, Horse Breaker when he enlisted on 13th December, 1915 at Bendigo, Victoria with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his Aunt – Mrs M. Combo, Gibb Street, South Brisbane, Queensland. His Uncle – Frederick Morgan, Logan Rd, South Brisbane was listed on the Attestation Papers as the next-of-kin. The Attestation Papers had a section for “Distinctive Marks” - the following were listed for Benjamin Combo “*Scars over shins & knees. Half caste Aboriginal.*”

Benjamin Combo was posted to 16th Depot Training Battalion (“Z” Company) at Bendigo, Victoria from 16th December, 1915. He was written up on 3rd January, 1915 for being Absent without Leave for 1 day. He forfeited 1 day’s pay & his excuse (not recorded) was accepted.

Paperwork was signed & approved on 30th December, 1915 for the discharge of Benjamin Combo “*Not being of direct European descent.*”

Benjamin Combo was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force on 4th January, 1916 at Bendigo, Victoria.

Benjamin Combo was a 26 year old, single, Driver when he re-enlisted on 13th October, 1916 at Albury, New South Wales with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 6977 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed on Embarkation Roll as his Aunt – Mrs M. Combo, Gibb Street, South Brisbane, Queensland. His Uncle – Frederick Morgan, Logan Rd, South Brisbane was listed on the Attestation Papers as the next-of-kin. The section for “Distinctive Marks” on the 1916 Attestation Papers was left blank. Benjamin Combo answered yes to the question – have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? “*Drunk & disorderly 1 month gaol.*” To the question – “Have you ever served in His Majesty’s Army....If so... and if not serving, state cause of discharge.” Benjamin Combo stated “*Yes – 19 days.*” He was rejected as unfit for His Majesty’s Service due to “*not being direct European descent.*”

Private Benjamin Combo was posted to Depot Battalion at Albury, NSW on 13th October, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 23rd Reinforcements of 3rd Battalion (no date recorded).

Private Benjamin Combo embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Benalla* (A24) on 9th November, 1916 with the 3rd Infantry Battalion, 23rd Reinforcements.

3rd Battalion

The 3rd Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Like the 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions it was recruited from New South Wales and, together with these battalions, formed the 1st Brigade....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Benjamin Combo died on 29th December, 1916 at Sea on board HMAT *Benalla* (A24) from Pneumonia.

Private Benjamin Combo was buried at Sea from HMAT *Benalla* (A24) on 29th December, 1916. He is commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England as he has no grave. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

PB0246

HMAT *Benalla* (A24)

Base Records contacted M. Combo, Gibb Street, South Brisbane, Queensland on 4th May, 1921 stating she was noted on the records of the late No. 6977 Private B. Combo as the registered next-of-kin but desired to know if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself due to the “Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918” which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased (single) soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc.

The letter was not delivered & marked “*not known*”.

Base Records advised Headquarters, 1st District Base, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland on 25th November, 1921 that a letter had been sent to M/s M. Combo but was returned unclaimed. “*No reply has so far been received... and I shall be glad if you will regard this matter as urgent, as I am unable to dispose of the War Medal etc., due on account of deceased’s service, until this information is to hand.*”

A second letter was sent to Headquarters, 1st District Base, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland on 18th April, 1923 regarding the communication to M/s M. Gibb that had been returned to Base Records unclaimed which had then been sent to Headquarters on 10th June, 1921 for investigation.

Headquarters, 1st District Base, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane replied to Base Records on 14th May, 1923 to advise that information had been received regarding the next-of-kin of the late No. 6977 Private B. Combo, 3rd Battalion “*to the effect that the parents of the abovenamed deceased soldier are deceased, the next-of-kin being Bertie Combo, Brother, an inmate of the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement, Murgon, Queensland.*”

Private Benjamin Combo was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Combo’s brother – Mr Bertie Combo, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque both sent June, 1923).

Lieutenant Colonel Cass, 1st District Base, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland wrote to Base Records on 4th July, 1923 with regards to the late No. 6977 Private B. Combo, 3rd Battalion. *“With reference to your memo dated 18.4.23 and this office memo dated 14.5.23, will you please inform me whether any decision has been arrived at with regard to the late soldier’s War Medals. etc. The Chief Protector of Aboriginals is asking for information in regard thereto.*

Base Records replied to Headquarters 1st District Base, Brisbane on 13th July, 1923 with the following *“...the British War Medal, Memorial Plaque and Scroll issuable on account of the service of the late No. 6977 Private B. Combo, 3rd Battalion were forwarded, in the early part of June, to his brother, Bertie Combo, at the address furnished by you in your communication, 3/56/23, of the 14th May last, the receipt for the Scroll – the only receipt to hand to date – being witnessed by the Superintendent of the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement.”*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Benjamin Combo – service number 6977, of 3rd Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.

Private B. Combo 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.

The Roll of Honour listed on the Australian War Memorial was sent to the next-of-kin to be completed with information on the deceased Soldier. Bertie Combo, brother, of Barambah Aboriginal Settlement, Murgon, Queensland was listed for the late Private Benjamin Combo. The information was not completed by any family members but was instead minimally compiled by Official Historian Staff.



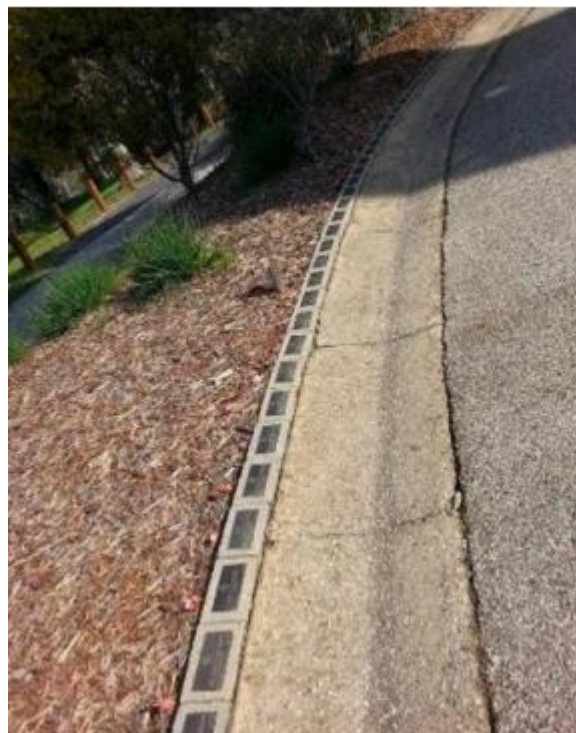
Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia



Benjamin Combo is remembered at the Albury War Memorial. The Albury Memorial was opened on Anzac Day 1925. The tower was originally lit by ground lights however electric lighting was not supplied to the torch until 1995. In the same year a number of individual plaques were set in the gardens around the monument to recall those who had died in both World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The monument is located at the end of Dean Street. Albury War Memorial



Albury War Memorial (Photo from Monument Australia)



Individual plaques



(Photo from Billion Graves)

Private Benjamin Combo is listed by the Australian War Memorial as part of the Indigenous Service list. This list has been created to provide information about people of Indigenous descent who enlisted for service in conflicts including the Boer war, The First World War, the Second World War, the Korea War, and the Vietnam War. This acknowledgement of service is part of the ongoing process of recognition and reconciliation.

(58 pages of Private Benjamin Combo'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

RECRUITING

BENDIGO VOLUNTEERS

FOUR PASSED YESTERDAY

A QUEENSLAND HALF-BLOOD

Four men presented themselves yesterday in Bendigo, and were accepted. They were: — George Clark, laborer, Sternberg Street; John Humphries Thomas, boiler-maker, Vinton Street, California Gully; Lancelot William Dann, miner, Bannerman Street; and Benjamin Combo, groom, Queensland. Combo is 26 years of age, a half-caste Queensland aboriginal. He has been in Bendigo for eight weeks. He is the first man with aboriginal blood in him to enlist in Bendigo. He easily passed the doctor. Speaking after the examination he said: "No dinkum I'm glad that's over. I do want to go. There are many Australian blacks in Queensland where I come from. I know many of them and we can fight."

(The Bendigo Independent, Victoria – 14 December, 1915)

THEFT OF AXE

ABORIGINE'S EXCUSE

At the Echuca Police Court yesterday an aborigine named Benjamin Combo was charged with having stolen an axe, the property of Robert Christie, from Jeffrey and Hulme's store in Anstruther street on Monday. Messrs A. J. Moore and B. R. Wilson, J's.P., occupied the Bench.

Robert Christie stated that he was in the store when he saw the accused enter and carry away an axe behind his back. Witness called out, "I want my axe," whereupon the accused muttered something about chopping witness' head off if he interfered. The accused went off with the axe. He was drunk at the time.

Constable Neville stated that in the evening he found accused in the bush near Shinbone Alley, and charged him with the theft. Combo said he did not remember anything about it. Witness went with the accused to his camp, and found the axe concealed below some bushes some yards away. The axe had been identified as the property of Christie.

Defendant, when asked by the Bench if he had anything to say, stated that he had no recollection of what had happened. He had enlisted, and had tried to do his duty, but was rejected because he was not substantially of European origin. He regretted having taken the axe, but knew nothing of it.

The Bench stated that in the circumstances, the accused would be discharged.

(The Riverine Herald, Echuca, Victoria – 22 March, 1916) & (Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers' Gazette, Victoria – 23 March 1916)

ECHUCA

Benjamin Combo, a Queensland aboriginal, arrived in Echuca on Monday, after spending nineteen days in a military camp, he having been discharged on account of not being sufficiently of European descent. Strolling along Hare Street he took a fancy to an axe which was in front of a business establishment. Shouldering his trusty blade, he marched in single file to his own camp in the bush. Owing to the interference of Constable Neville, however, Combo was later arrested on a charge of stealing the implement, but was discharged on Tuesday on promising to leave the town.

(The Bendigo Independent, Victoria – 23 March, 1916)

LATEST CASUALTIES

269th LIST

NEW SOUTH WALES

Died of Illness

Pte B. Combo, South Brisbane, Qld.

(The Land, Sydney, NSW – 2 February, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations, in 153 countries. In all 1.7 million men and women from the Commonwealth forces from WWI and WWII have been honoured and commemorated in perpetuity.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as part of its mandate, is responsible for commemorating all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally. To this end, the war dead are commemorated by name on a headstone, at an identified site of a burial, or on a memorial. War dead are commemorated uniformly and equally, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Not all service personnel have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. In some instances the relative chose to have their own memorial/headstone placed on the deceased's grave. These private headstones are not maintained by the CWGC as they have no jurisdiction to maintain them.

Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England

The Hollybrook Memorial is situated in Southampton (Hollybrook) Cemetery behind the plot of First World War graves near the main entrance.

The Hollybrook Memorial commemorates by name almost 1,900 servicemen and women of the Commonwealth land and air forces* whose graves are not known, many of whom were lost in transports or other vessels torpedoed or mined in home waters (*Officers and men of the Commonwealth's navies who have no grave but the sea are commemorated on memorials elsewhere). The memorial also bears the names of those who were lost or buried at sea, or who died at home but whose bodies could not be recovered for burial. Almost one third of the names on the memorial are those of officers and men of the South African Native Labour Corps, who died when the troop transport Mendi sank in the Channel following a collision on 21 February 1917. Other vessels sunk with significant loss of life were: HS Anglia, a hospital ship sunk by mine off Dover on 17 November 1915. SS Citta Di Palermo, an Italian transport carrying Commonwealth troops, sunk by mine off Brindisi on 8 January 1916. In rescuing survivors, two Royal Naval Otranto drifters were themselves mined and blown up. HMTs Donegal and Warilda, ambulance transports torpedoed and sunk between Le Havre and Southampton on 17 April 1917 and 3 August 1918. HS Glenart Castle, a hospital ship torpedoed and sunk off Lundy on 26 February 1918. SS Galway Castle, torpedoed and sunk in the Atlantic on 12 September 1918. RMS Leinster, the Irish mail boat, torpedoed and sunk in the Irish Sea on 10 October 1918. Among those commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial is Field Marshall Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, who died when the battle cruiser HMS Hampshire was mined and sunk off Scapa Flow on 5 June 1916.

The memorial was designed by T. Newham and unveiled by Sir William Robertson on 10 December 1930.

There are approximately 162 Australian World War 1 Service Personnel commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England.

(Information & photos from CWGC)



CWGC Graves in Hollybrook Cemetery with Cross of Sacrifice & Hollybrook Memorial

(Photo from CWGC)

Photo of Private B. Combo's name on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, Hampshire, England.



(Photo by julia&keld – Find a Grave)

