

**Ocklynge Cemetery,
Eastbourne, East Sussex**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



LIEUTENANT

R. H. HERD

AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS

16TH JUNE, 1917 Age 25

In Memory Of The Loved

Eldest Son Of D. & K. Herd

Of North Melbourne

Rupert Holton HERD

Rupert Holton Herd was born on 28th March, 1892 at Ballarat, Victoria to parents David & Kathleen Helen (Katie) Herd (nee Holton).

Rupert Holton Herd attended Scotch College, Melbourne from 1906 to 1907. He passed Examinations held by Incorporated Institute of Accountants & also held Certificate of Bankers' Institute.

Rupert Holton Herd was a 23 year old, single, Accountant from E. S. and A. Bank, Leveson Street, North Melbourne, Victoria when he enlisted on 17th January, 1915 with the 4th Light Horse Brigade, 13th Light Horse Regiment, 7th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – David Herd of E. S. and A. Bank, Leveson Street, North Melbourne, Victoria.

Rupert Holton Herd applied for a Commission in the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) on 30th June, 1915. He stated on his Application form for a Commission in the A.I.F. that he had passed through Signalling School since joining the forces.

Rupert Holton Herd was appointed 2nd Lieutenant on 12th July, 1915.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Group portrait of Officers – Rupert Holton Herd back row 2nd from right
(Taken 1915 at Geelong, Victoria)



2nd Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Ceramic (A40)* on 23rd November, 1915.

2nd Lieutenant Herd was taken on strength from Details on 5th February, 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt.

2nd Lieutenant Herd was to be Quartermaster while at Staging Camp on 28th February, 1916.

Quartermaster R. H. Herd was transferred to Cyclist Corp, 2nd Australian Division at Canal Zone on 14th March, 1916.

Quartermaster R. H. Herd was to be Lieutenant and to remain seconded while in France from 18th March, 1916.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd proceeded to join the B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 19th March, 1916. He disembarked at Marseille, France on 30th March, 1916.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd was seconded for duty with the 2nd Australian Division Cycle Corps in France on 26th April, 1916.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd was absorbed on strength of 13th Light Horse Regiment & seconded for duty with 2nd Australian Division Cycle Corps. He was taken on strength of 1st Anzac Cyclist Battalion on 12th May, 1916.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd was appointed Acting Quartermaster (Temp) on 13th May, 1916. Another entry on the Casualty Form – Active Service states “Appointed Quartermaster” on 13th May, 1916.

Quartermaster R. H. Herd was taken on strength of reorganised 1st Anzac Cyclist Battalion in France on 9th July, 1916.

Quartermaster R. H. Herd relinquished his appointment of Quartermaster at his own request on 5th November, 1916.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd proceeded to Australian Flying Corps and was posted to Supernumerary List on 29th November, 1916. He proceeded the same day to Flying School in England.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd joined the R.F.C. School of Military Aeronautics, Reading on 5th December, 1916 & “will be borne supernumerary to the establishment of their respective units from that date until appointed to the Australian Flying Corps.”

Lieutenant R. H. Herd was attached to Central Flying School “B” Squadron.

On 16th June, 1917 Lieutenant Henry Irving Newton, R.F.C., was piloting an Avro 504A (serial no. 9774) with Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd as Observer. The plane was en route from Upavon, Wiltshire & overshot the runway at Eastbourne Aerodrome. Lieutenant Newton restarted the engine intending to make a second attempt to land but the engine did not pick up and the aircraft lost speed and nose-dived into the ground. The plane’s petrol tank burst & the plane went up in flames. Lieutenant Newton was able to scramble free, uninjured from the wreckage but Lieutenant Herd was pinned beneath the wreckage.

Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd was killed accidentally on 16th June, 1917 as a result of an aeroplane accident at Eastbourne Aerodrome, Sussex, England.

A death for Rupert H. Herd, aged 25, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Eastbourne, Sussex.

The following telegram was sent to Adastral one, London:

“C/20799. Lieut. H. J. Newton, Sherwood Foresters, C.F.S. pilot of 100 hp. Mono Avro No. A/8042. Passenger Lieut. R. G. Herd, A.F.C., C.F.S., passenger killed at Eastbourne Aerodrome yesterday 16th instant. Accident due to flat turn after failure of engine to pick up resulting in nose dive machine bursting into flames and striking ground. Wreckage removed from centre of Aerodrome in custody of R.N.A.S. Eastbourne. Next of kin, father, David Herd ES and A Bank, North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.”

A Court of Enquiry was held into the accident on 14th July, 1917. The finding of the Court was “*Accident due to engine failing at a critical moment. While attempting to adjust the engine the attention of the pilot was diverted from*

the actual flying of the machine with the result that it stalled & being low had not insufficient height to get it out of a nose-dive before it struck the ground."

Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd was buried at 11 am on 20th June, 1917 in Ocklynge Cemetery, Eastbourne, East Sussex, England – Plot number D. 345 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Lieut. Herd - *Coffin was good polished Coffin Elm. The deceased officer was buried with full Military Honours. Band, Firing Party, Bearers and Trumpeters of the Cavalry Command Depot Eastbourne under the command of an officer were in attendance. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside. The coffin was shrouded with the "Union Jack" and surmounted with several lovely floral tributes, one being sent by the Officers of the Royal Flying Corps. The service was conducted by the Rev. Jas. Reid of Eastbourne. Several Officers of the R.F.C. and the R.N.A.S. were present at the funeral. No. 32368 Driver L. J. Herd (brother) of the 32nd Battery R.B.A.A., Camp 21, Larkhill, was present at the funeral. The erection of a temporary memorial is to be left in the hands of the Commonwealth Military Authorities.*

A War Pension was granted to Katie Ellen Herd, mother of the late Rupert Holton Herd, Lieut. A.F.C & David B. Herd, 1377, A/Sgt. 2nd L.H., in the sum of £5 per fortnight (for the loss of 2 sons) commencing from 28th June, 1917.

Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Lieut. Herd's father – Mr D. Herd, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent October, 1921 & Plaque sent December, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd, aged 25, of Australian Flying Corps. He was the son of David and Katherine Herd, of Wonga Rd., Ringwood, Victoria, Australia.

Lieutenant R. H. Herd is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 187.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(63 pages of Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd'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



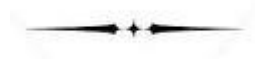
Connected to Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd:

*Younger Brother - Sergeant David Birrell Herd, 1377, 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment. Embarked from Sydney on 4th October, 1915, aged 23. Found drowned in the Nile River, Egypt on 22nd August, 1916. Buried in Cairo War Memorial Cemetery. He was entitled to the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

*Younger Brother - Driver Leonard James Herd, 32368, 21 Howitzer Brigade. Embarked from Melbourne on 14th February, 1917, aged 18.

Driver Leonard James Herd wrote a letter from Belgium in October, 1917 to Headquarters asking for help in getting removed from the front as his 2 older brothers had died & he was the last remaining son. He stated at that time he had been in the A.I.F. for a year & spent 5 weeks in France as a Driver. He also stated in the letter that "*The sorrow and despair of my Mother and Father is intolerable to me. So I decided to write to you putting the situation clearly before you, asking to be removed from the front, to a base where I could perhaps do work equally as useful as I am doing now.*" Letters were written to the Minister for Defence by Mr David Herd (father)

Gunner Leonard James Herd was returned to Australia from England on 5th April, 1918. He was entitled to the British War Medal & the Victory Medal.



Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd



Group of Australian officers taken somewhere behind the lines.

*The names from left to right are Lieutenant Dawson (Adjutant), **Lieutenant R. H. Herd (Vic.)**, Lieutenant Guy Butler (son of Sir Richard Butler), Lieutenant O S. Symon (son of Sir Josiah Symon) and (sitting) Captain J. J. Scouller (W.A.), O.C.*

(Chronicle, Adelaide, Sth Australia – 16 September, 1916)



Newspaper Notices

DEATHS

On Active Service

HERD – On the 16th June, Upavon, England (result of aeroplane accident), Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd (Royal Flying Corps), eldest son of David and Katie Herd, of English, Scottish and Australian Bank Limited, North Melbourne, aged 25 years.

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 19 June, 1917) & (The Age, Melbourne, Victoria – 19 June, 1917)

A verdict of “Accidental death” was returned at an inquest on the body of Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd, R.F.C., who was killed in an aeroplane accident on the South Coast. It was stated that the petrol tank burst and that flames shot 100 feet into the air. The pilot of the machine – Lieutenant Herd was observer – was stated to have had 20 hours’ experience of flying, which was considered sufficient to justify him in making a long journey.

(Gloucestershire Echo, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England – 20 June 1917)

DIED ON SERVICE

HERD – On the 16th June, result of aeroplane accident at Eastbourne S.E. Coast, England, Lieutenant Rupert H. Herd, beloved eldest son of David and Katie Herd, English, Scottish and Australian Bank Limited, North Melbourne.

HERD – A tribute to the memory of Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd, killed in aeroplane accident, England, June 16, 1917, and his brother Sergeant David Burrell Herd (Bing), killed in Cairo, 22nd August, 1916, sons of Mr and Mrs D. Herd, E.S.A. Bank, North Melbourne, aunt and cousins, Elsternwick.

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 23 June, 1917)

The 317th CASUALTY LIST

Appended are Victorian names:

DIED RESULT OF ACCIDENT

Lieut. R. H. HERD, North Melb.

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 4 July, 1917)

LEARNING TO FLY

BEGINNER'S FIRST "SOLO"

GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

The following vivid description of a first "solo" flight in an aeroplane, made by a beginner, was written by the late Lieutenant R. H. Herd, eldest son of Mr David Herd, manager of the E. S., and A. Bank, North Melbourne. These details of the writer's experience are contained in a letter to his friend (Sergeant J. V. McKinney), who embarked for Egypt with him on November 23, 1915, the two having gone to France together in February, 1916. Lieutenant Herd, who was selected for the Flying Corps, and went to Reading, England, for five months' training, had just completed his course when he met with his death through his machine nose-diving. The tragic occurrence took place a few weeks after the letter was written:-

"To give you some idea of what it feels like to be in the air, let me lead off by saying that flying is just the most wonderful sensation in the whole wide world –when you get used to it.

"Just at present I am flying a type of machine called 'Avros.' They are not used on active service, but are built in England merely for instructional purposes.

"I don't suppose I shall ever forget my first solo. It was a nightmare. I was terrified. I wonder if you can realise what it is like. With the excitement of getting off and the number of things to be attended to for a start you don't have time to think until you are about 500ft. up. Then comes the awful thought, 'I am alone!' The roar of the engine seems to fill the whole world. Every movement of air rocks the machine, just as waves do a dinghy. I felt as if I were in a walnut shell on a rough sea. Without a doubt, it is all a matter of keeping your head for a start. If I clutched the joy-stick in terror the movement would be transmitted throughout the whole plane-perhaps I would nose-dive or side-slip.

"I talked to myself. I tried to sing. Anything to keep calm. 'Lad,' I told myself, 'it's these two hands that are holding you from an inquest. For God's sake, get hold of them, and be steady.'

"When at last I calmed down a bit I begun to look around. I had been too busy watching my instruments to notice where I was going. My altimeter said I was 3,000ft. up. My watch said I had been up 15 minutes. I found I was well up behind the clouds. Lord only knew where the earth was. I didn't. I at once got panicky again. I only had one wish in life-it was to be able to place my foot on a bit of good, hard earth again.

"I had come to the conclusion shortly after I had got 100ft. up that I did not want to be in the Flying Corps at all. It was only a fad. I was cut for an infantry-man. If only I could get down again I'd resign at once,' I told myself.

"After spending what seemed to be about three days amongst the clouds, and what was, in reality, only about four minutes, I suddenly emerged to see the beautiful green earth coming up to hit me. There seemed to be a sea of houses underneath me. I discovered later that it was Bulford camp.

"A bit of open ground was all I wanted. Anything to land on without crashing. About two miles ahead I saw the very thing I wanted - a beautiful, open, flat green. I altered my gliding angle, and steered for it. As I got nearer the place seemed to be covered with other machines, tacking about. Anyhow, I had to get down. My only prayer was that in doing so I would not kill too many people. I throttled the engine right back, so that she was just ticking over. Practically the only sound I could hear was the whistling of the air through the bracing wires. I ascertained from what direction the wind was blowing by the smoke rising from some buildings ahead, and turned into it.

"It was all over in a second. I flattened out very gently, as I had been taught to do. For a portion of an instant the ground showed very green. Then I could distinguish the length of the grass. It was about 2in. long. 'Feel for it! Feel for it,' I could almost hear my instructor saying over my shoulder, as he used to do when he went up with me. I felt with the joy-stick very, very gently; and presently a slight bump, almost imperceptible - then another. I held her off, and gradually she settled down, with the wheels of her under-carriage running silently over the ground. What a sigh of relief when at length she stopped!

"I switched off, and looked round to see where I was, and found I was back in the aerodrome, almost in front of my own flight. My instructor was half-way out to meet me.

"Well done, old man. Splendid! Top-hole landing. Congratulations. Could not have done better myself. Come down to the mess and have some hot milk!"

"I could not speak. I undid my belt mechanically. I got out, all groggy, my eyes bulged out like organ stops. I tripped over some of the lower control wires, and nearly fell down.

"Proud of you, my boy. Good show. Fully expected you to crash. Am greatly relieved, I assure you."

"I strolled off with him as best I could. I seemed to be all leather coat, and high boots, and goggles, and helmet.

"Mechanics were already wheeling my machine back into the hanger.

"Goodness only knows how I got down safely. I hardly slept a wink that night, thinking of what I had to go through again on the morrow. I had some horrible thoughts. I could picture myself nose-diving from 5,000ft., and being rammed so far into the earth by the weight of the engine that it would take a waterwitch to find me.

"At present, though I am not a good flier, I have enough confidence in myself to enjoy being up. It is exquisite, without a doubt. But I have some bad times in front of me yet. I've yet to do night flying, and stunts such as looping and stalling, and zooming. But I suppose I shall get over it "

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 21 November, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(*Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921*)

Lieutenant R. H. Herd does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

In Memory Of The Loved Eldest Son Of D. & K. Herd Of North Melbourne

Ocklynge Cemetery, Eastbourne, Sussex

Ocklynge Cemetery, Eastbourne, Sussex contains 175 War Graves. There are 129 War Graves from World War 1 & 44 War Graves from World War 2. There are also 1 Belgian & 1 Brazilian Foreign National burials from World War 1. A Cross of Sacrifice stands near the Chapel, facing the main entrance.

During World War 1, Eastbourne contained a very large Military Convalescent Hospital, originally called Eastbourne Military Hospital, which opened in April, 1915. From January, 1917 to October, 1919 it became No. 14 Canadian General Hospital.



Cross of Sacrifice at Ocklynge Cemetery, Eastbourne, Sussex (Photos from CWGC)



Photo of Lieutenant Rupert Holton Herd's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Ocklynge Cemetery, Eastbourne, Sussex, England.



(Photo courtesy of Roberto Lagnado)