

William Birch Holmes

(1892 – 1981)

William Birch Holmes was the illegitimate son of the daughter of Kildwick's postmaster, and he and his mother lived at the Post Office.

When he was 18, William was employed as a weaver and he was a member of Kildwick Cricket Club. He began his war service in 1914 – with the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment.

In France, in 1916, Signaller Holmes was wounded, which probably ended his service and, in 1917, he was discharged as medically unfit to serve.

William Holmes returned to live with his mother in Kildwick and was elected to the committee of Kildwick Conservative Club and also the Kildwick Old Boys' Football Club.

He married a local woman, Alice Clough, in 1921. They made their home in Ravensville, Crosshills and had one daughter. William worked in a machine tool works.

Alice Holmes died in 1969 and William lived for a further 12 years – dying aged eighty-nine, leaving his daughter, Margaret, who never married.

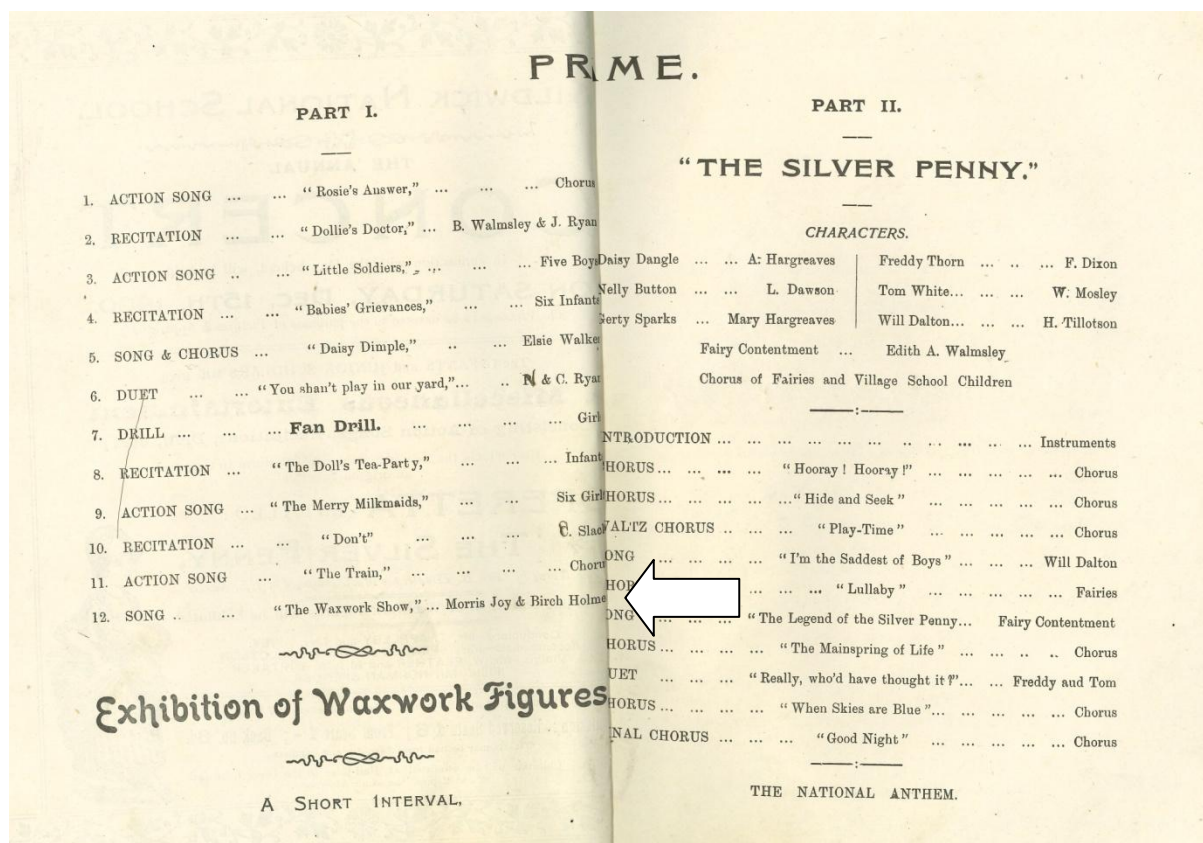
Pre-war life

William Birch Holmes was born on the 11th September 1892, and baptised at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, a month later. He was the illegitimate son of Ada Holmes, the daughter of the Kildwick postmaster, Birch Holmes.

William attended Kildwick school and, in 1900, took part in the school's Christmas concert, where he performed alongside Maurice Joy who would also subsequently become one of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers.



No Photo
Available



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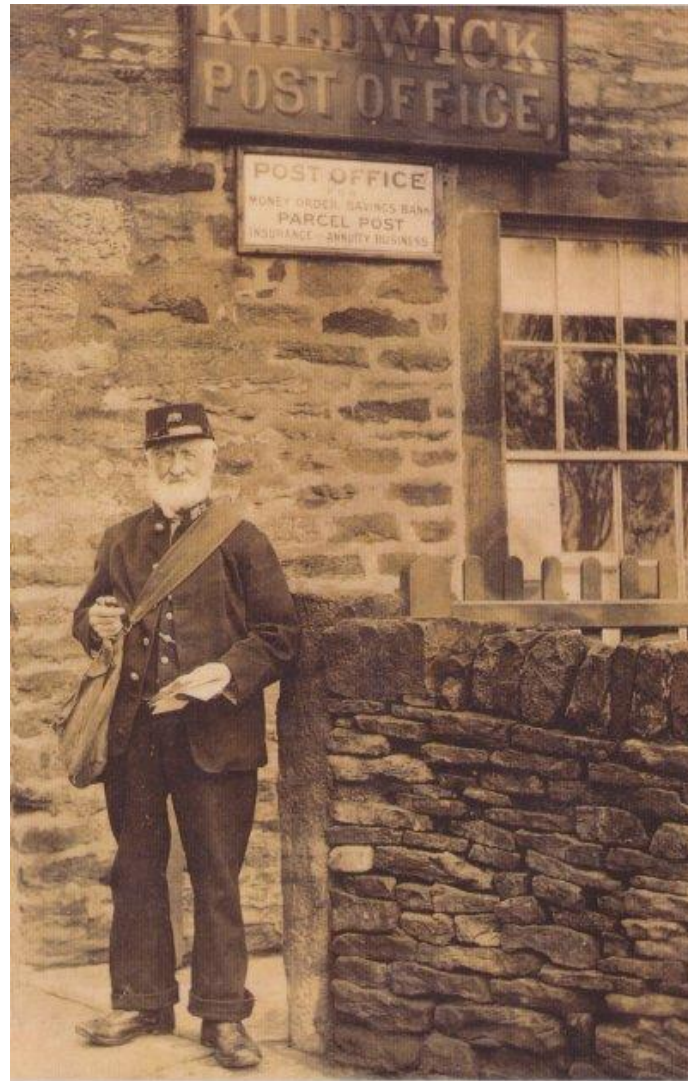
The 1901 census recorded Ada and William, who was eight years old, living with her father and sister at the Post Office. Ada was recorded as being the Assistant Postmistress.

Civil Parish	Ecclesiastical Parish	County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District	Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District	Rural District	Parliamentary Borough or Division	Town								
of <i>Kildwick</i>	of <i>Kildwick</i>	of	of	of <i>Skipton</i>	of <i>Skipton</i>	of								
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
ROAD, STREET &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	In Inhabited	Uninhabited	In or on vacant lots	Not in or on vacant lots	Building	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition as to Marriage	Age last Birthday of	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN	
									Males - Females					
<i>Post Office</i>	<i>1</i>					<i>William B. Holmes</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>73</i>		<i>Postmaster</i>	<i>Co. York</i>		<i>York</i>	
						<i>Ada</i>	<i>Do.</i>	<i>31</i>		<i>Assistant Postmistress</i>	<i>Do.</i>		<i>Kildwick</i>	
						<i>Mary A.</i>	<i>Do.</i>	<i>28</i>					<i>Do.</i>	
						<i>William B.</i>	<i>Do.</i>	<i>8</i>					<i>Do.</i>	

Extract from the 1901 census return for Kildwick

Used under licence from the National Archive

Birch Holmes retired in 1909, at which time he had been presented with a purse of gold coins by the villages. It was estimated that, during his 20 years as postmaster, he had walked over 60,000 miles making deliveries: 11 miles on each weekday and five on Sundays.



Birch Holmes photographed at Kildwick Post Office
From the Farnhill & Kildwick Local History Group archive

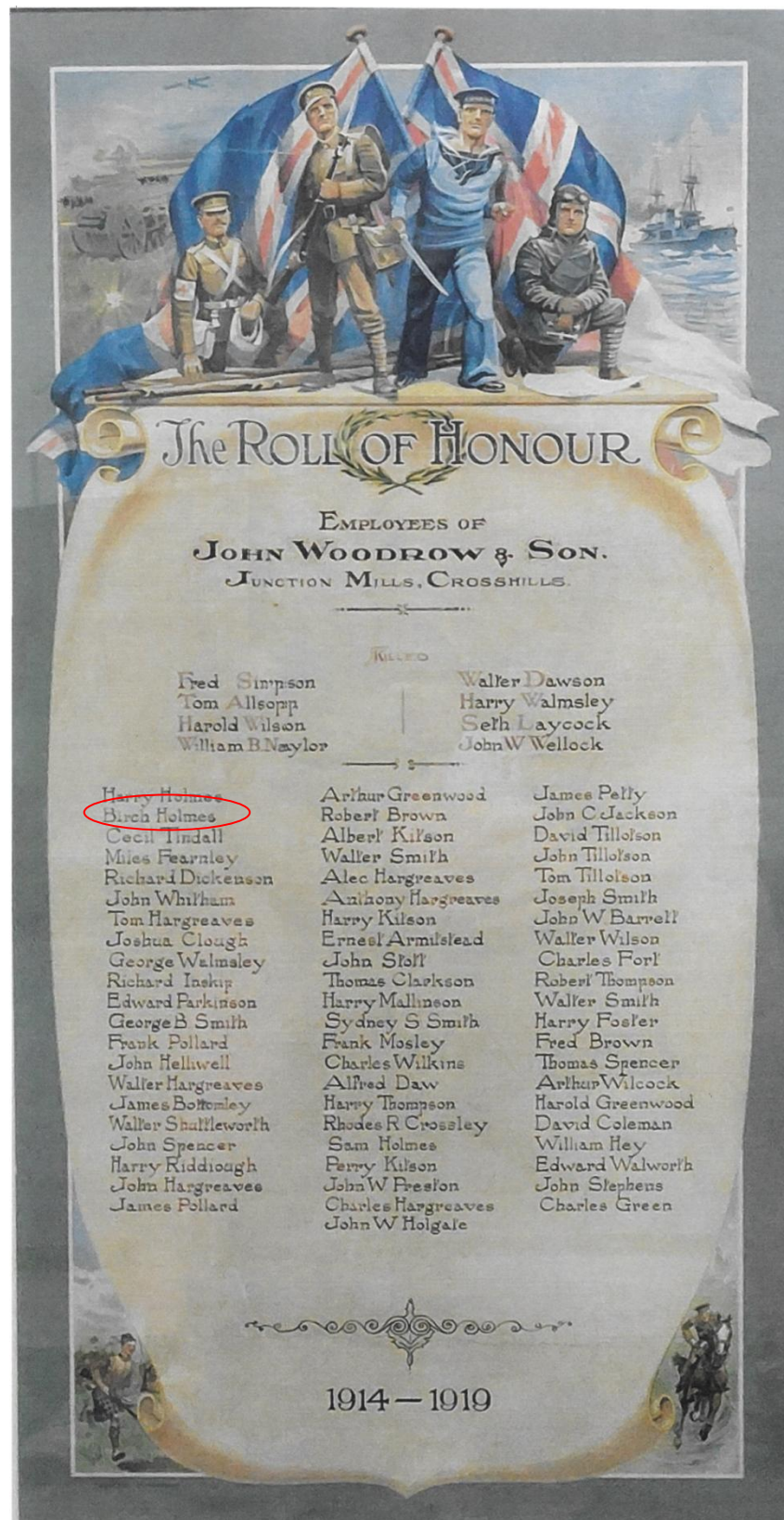
The 1911 census, recorded the Holmes family still living at what is referred to then, as now, as The Old Post Office. The location of the Post Office having been moved to Kildwick Corner when Birch Holmes retired.

William Holmes, aged 18, was employed as a worsted weaver in 1911; his mother was described as housekeeper and his aunt as assisting her sister with housework.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.						
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.						
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions than the preparation of Statistical Tables.						
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (last Birthday) and Sex.	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.		
1 Ada Holmes	Head	41	Single	House-keeper		Kildwick Yorks
2 William Birch Holmes	Father	83	Widower	Old Age Pensioner 350	Lab Post-man 100	Yorks Farnhill
3 Mary Ann Holmes	Sister	38	Single	Assist's Sister House-keeper		Yorks Kildwick
4 William Birch Holmes	Son	18	Single	Worsted Weaver 844	Worsted	Yorks Kildwick
5						

Extract from the 1911 census return for The Old Post Office, Kildwick
Used under licence from the National Archive

It is likely that William was working for Woodrow's at the mill in Junction. Many men from Farnhill worked there and the name Birch Holmes was subsequently included on the mill's recently found WW1 Roll of Honour.



With thanks to Burberry Group, PLC

Around this time, William may have joined Kildwick Albion Cricket Club. There is a scorecard, from a match in September 1913, that records him as last man in for the Kildwick team.

Kildwick Albion v. Cowling Second.—Played at Kildwick.	
KILDWICK ALBION. —G. Sunderland, b Dale, 7 ; J. Kitson, b Dale, 1 ; H. Foster, b Dale, 5 ; T. Hargreaves, c and b Barker, 5 ; A. Hargreaves, c Hardy, b Laycock, 2 ; L. Roberts, b Dale, 0 ; T. B. Spence, c Laycock, b Kitson, 5 ; H. Pollard, b Dale, 11 ; F. Pollard, run out, 5 ; A. Kitson, not out, 8 ; B. Holmes, c Barker, b Laycock, 1 ; extras, 3 ; total, 53.	←
COWLING SECOND. —P. Smith, b J. Kitson, 0 ; R. Boocock, c Roberts, b J. Kitson, 11 ; L. Hardy, b w, b J. Kitson, 10 ; M. Laycock, st Hargreaves, b A. Kitson, 5 ; A. Barker, b A. Kitson, 1 ; F. Laycock, b A. Kitson, 0 ; A. Dale, c Foster, b J. Kitson, 1 ; A. Shackleton, c and b J. Kitson, 0 ; G. Barker, b J. Kitson, 5 ; E. Kitson, not out, 0 ; extras, 0 ; total, 32 (only batted ten men).	

Score card for Kildwick Albion vs. Cowling Seconds –September 1913
(By kind permission of Craven Herald)

The team won the local league Second Division cup that year.



The Kildwick Albion Cricket Club Second Division cup-winning team, 1913.

No key to this photograph is known to exist and so it is not possible to say which of the players is William Birch Holmes.

From the Farnhill & Kildwick Local History Group archive

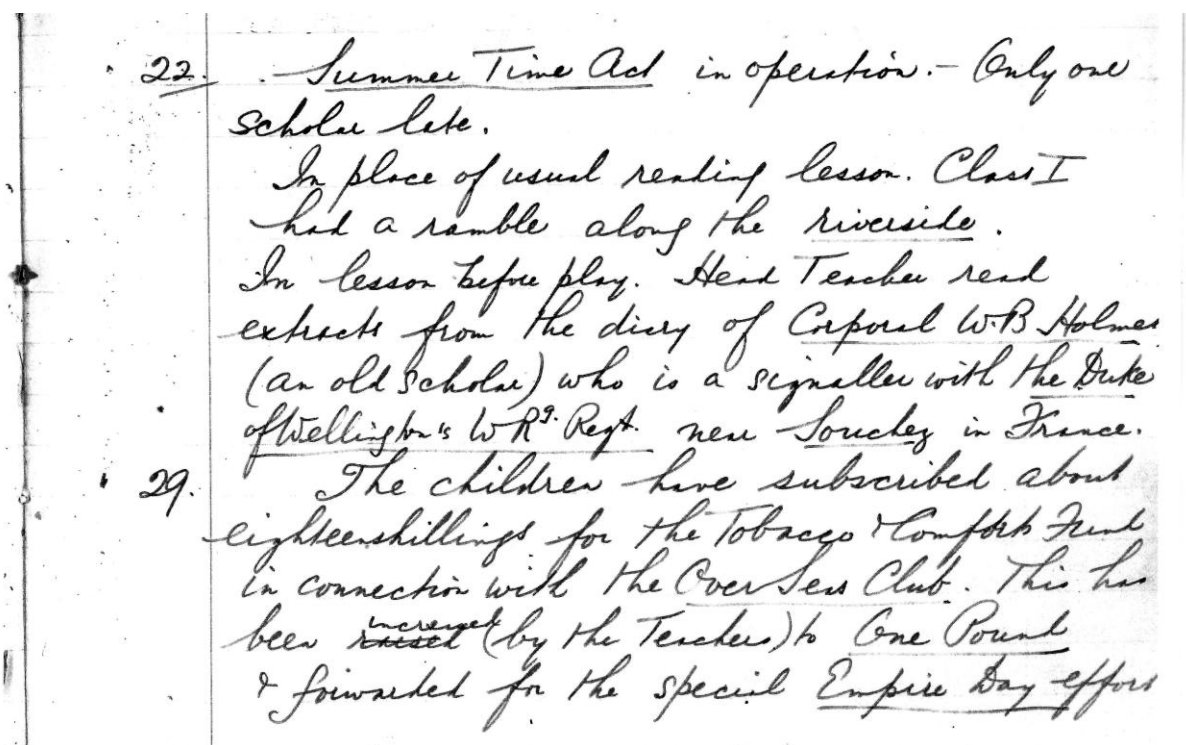
WW1 service

William Birch Holmes' WW1 service records have not survived (70% of the records were destroyed during WW2, in the London blitz of 1940) but it has been possible to put together a partial account of his WW1 service from newspaper reports and other sources.

It is clear that William began his service on 7th September 1914, just five weeks after the outbreak of war, and served with the 10th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment.

The regimental war diary for the 10th battalion recorded that the men were sent over to France in August 1915, in two groups: from Folkestone to Boulogne and Southampton to Le Havre.

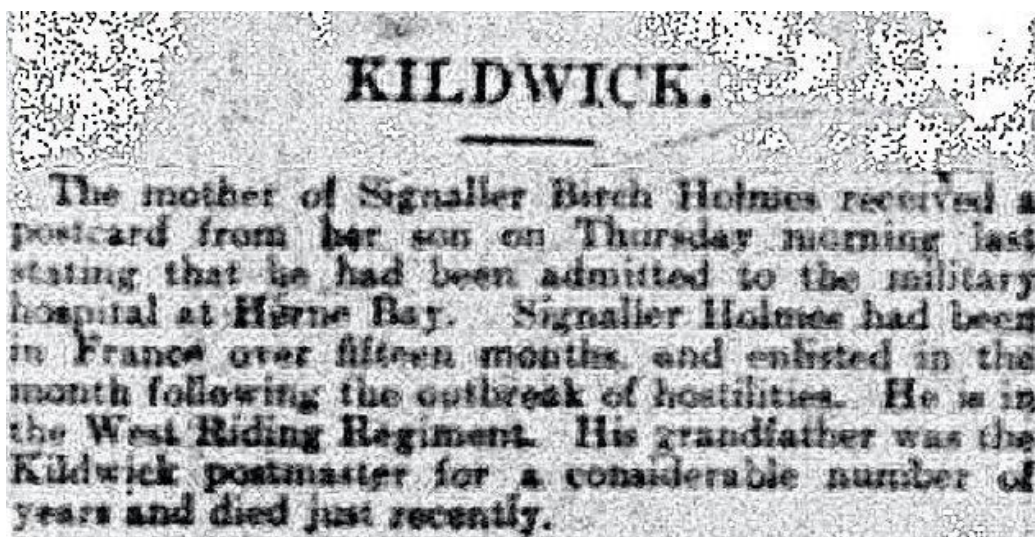
William must have kept a diary, which he sent home. Twice during 1916, extracts were read to pupils of Kildwick school by the headmaster, William Appleby. These occasions were recorded in the school log book on 27th January and 22nd May.



An extract from Kildwick School log book for May 1916

By kind permission of Kildwick school

In October 1916, news reached the village that William had been wounded and brought back to a hospital in the UK.



News of William's wounding (Keighley News, 14/10/1916)
By kind permission of Keighley News

The regimental war diary for the 10th battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment recorded that the battalion were located near the village of Le Sars on the strategically important Albert to Bapaume road, in the Somme valley. The village had changed hands a number of times during the war and, in October 1916, British forces made another attempt to take it.

At the beginning of October 1916 the 10th battalion were involved in a number of operations in the area, none of these went well and they sustained a large number of casualties. William Holmes was probably one of those wounded.

This wound marked the end of William's active service.

On 14th April 1917, W.B. Whitham, a Farnhill resident who kept a diary throughout the war, recorded "*Birch Holmes discharged from Army, lame arm*".

This was probably the date on which William returned home. He was officially discharged on 3rd May 1917 under Paragraph 392, subsection XVI of King's Regulations – "No longer physically fit for war service". He was awarded a Silver War Badge, which was issued to him on 24th May.

13356	See 141	William Birch HOLMES.	182623	7-9-1914	2-5-1917	Para 392 XVI Wound
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Extract from the WW1 Silver War Badge Roll – William Birch Holmes awarded badge no. 182623
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Note: Silver War Badges (SWB), sometimes known as the "Discharge Badge", the "Wound Badge" or "Services Rendered Badge", were first issued in September 1916. They were awarded to men who were unable to continue in the services due to illness or wounds sustained. They were intended to be worn on civilian clothing and so counteract the practice of "white-feathering" men who had wounds that rendered them unfit for war service, but which were not obvious from their outward appearance.

William subsequently received the 1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal due to him for his wartime service.

Name.		Corps.	Rank	Regt. No.
HOLMES		W. Rid R	Pte 49pl	13352
William B			Pte	
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORY	8/1/01 B5	532	Dis 3-5-17	
BRITISH	do	do		
15 STAR	0/2/3 B	190		
On SWB list of 633				
Theatre of War first served in 01 France				
Date of entry therein 26-8-15				
K 1380.				

Medal card for L/Cpl William B. Holmes, showing his eligibility for Victory Medal, British War Medal, 1915 Star, and a Silver War Badge
Used under licence from the National Archive

After his discharge, William return to Kildwick, where he lived with his mother for a number of years.

As a result of his wounds William was awarded a pension of 16s (80p) per week for what was judged to be a 40% disability. In 1922 it was confirmed that payments would continue for life.

Form No. S.B. 36 2/555/H

Surname: HOLMES Christian Names: Wm Birch

Unit and Regiment or Corps: W. Riding Regt. No. 13352 Rank: Pte

Date of Discharge: 3-5-17 Year of Birth: Marital Status: S. = Single, W. = Widower, M. = Married

Address: Kildwick, Kildwick

Disabilities: State whether attributable to or aggravated by Service or non-attributable: 1, 2, 3, 4

Particulars of Awards for previous Service (if any):

AWARDS OF PENSION, GRATUITY OR WEEKLY ALLOWANCE.									
Date of Award or other Action	Degree of Disability	Nature of Award			Weekly Rate		Period of Award	REMARKS. Note.—This column is to be used for explanatory remarks where necessary, e.g., that an award is made or revised under Article 9, or as the result of an appeal to the Tribunal, or for increase of Pension.	
		Art. under which granted (and Warrant if necessary)	Whether Pension, Gratuity, or Weekly Allowance	Whether Permanent, Conditional, or Final	Man	Child			
19/2/21	40%	Art. 1119	Pte	16/			30/5/21	25/1/22	
13-22	40%	1. R. 19	Final	16/			25/1/22		

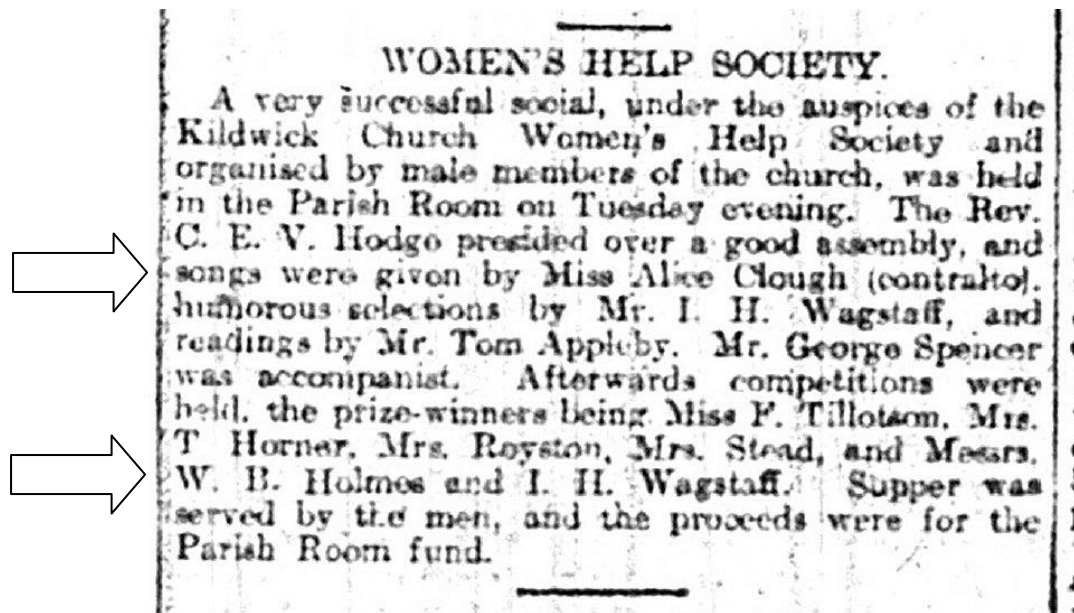
Extracts from William Birch Holmes' WW1 pension ledger (SB 36)
Used under licence from the National Archive

Post-war life

After his discharge, William return to Kildwick, where he lived with his mother for a number of years.

In January 1918, he was elected to the committee of Kildwick Conservative Club (Keighley News 26/1/1918), which had opened in 1912; and when local league football restarted in 1919, he was elected to the committee of the Kildwick Old Boys Club (Craven Herald 9/5/1919).

In January 1920, William attended a social evening arranged by the Kildwick Church Women's Self Help Society. Entertainment was provided by the singer Alice Clough.



William winning a prize – and a future wife ? (Keighley News, 10/1/1920)

By kind permission of Keighley News

Whether or not the two knew each other before this evening is not known. However William and Alice would go on to play important roles in each other's lives.

The 1921 census records William living at home, with his mother and sister, Mary Ann. He was employed as an Assistant Weaving Overlooker at Woodrow's Mill.

On the 23rd July 1921, William Holmes married Alice Clough at Ebenezer Chapel in Crosshills.

1921. Marriage solemnized at <u>Ebenezer Chapel</u> in the District of <u>Lepton</u> in the County of <u>York</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
3	<u>Twenty-third July 1921</u>	<u>William Birch Holmes</u>	<u>28</u> Years	<u>Bachelor</u>	<u>Assistant</u> <u>Workshop</u> <u>Overlooker</u>	<u>Old Post Office</u> <u>Kildwick</u>		
		<u>Alice Clough</u>	<u>25</u> Years	<u>Spinster</u>	<u>Washed</u> <u>Black</u> <u>Wearer</u>	<u>30 Ryeland Stral</u> <u>Crosshills</u>	<u>John Clough</u>	<u>Wapdrasser</u> <u>Woolton</u>

Married in the Ebenezer Chapel according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the United Methodist Church by Minister

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { William Birch Holmes } in the Presence of us, { John Clough } And in the Presence of { Francis H. J. Thornton }
{ Alice Clough } { Margaret Ann Gill } Authorized Person for { Minister of the said Chapel }

Holmes – Clough marriage certificate
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The couple moved to 2 Ravensville, Crosshills. This would be their home for the rest of their lives. They had one child, a daughter baptised Phyllis Margaret but always known as Margaret, who was born on the 18th March 1925.

The 1939 register, compiled at the start of WW2 to enable ration cards to be issued, recorded the family living at 2 Ravensville, Crosshills. William gave his occupation as a labourer in a machine tool works.

Alice Holmes died in 1969. She was aged 73.

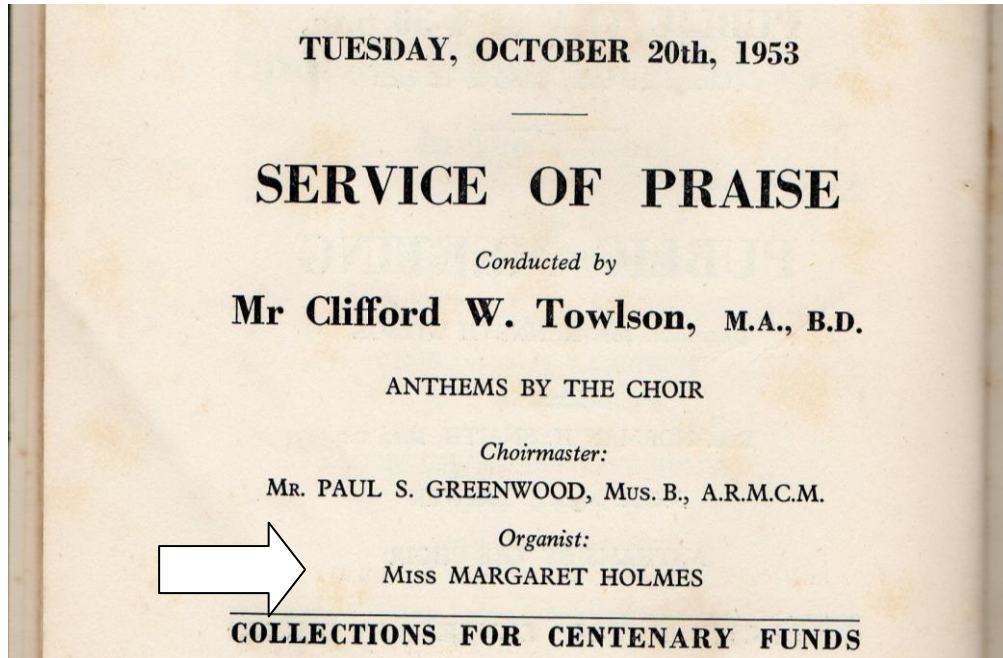


Alice Holmes in her later years – with young members of the Laycock family
Photograph courtesy of Dr. John Laycock

William Birch Holmes died, of pneumonia at Airedale Hospital, on 23rd November 1981. He was aged 89.

Postscript

William and Alice's daughter, Margaret, was, for a number of years, the organist at the Ebenezer Methodist Chapel, Crosshills (later St. Peter's Church). She never married and worked at Skipton Telephone Exchange.



Margaret Holmes, organist at Crosshills Methodist Church
Courtesy of Helen Moran



Margaret Holmes at her home in Jessamine Place, Crosshills, c. 1967
Photograph courtesy of Dr. John Laycock

She died in 1996.

William Birch Holmes – a life in summary

Born: 11/9/1892, Kildwick
Baptised: 8/10/1892, Kildwick
Died: 23/11/1981, Airedale Hospital **Aged:** 89
Home address: 2 Ravensville, Crosshills

Parents

Father: Not known
Mother: Ada Holmes; b. 23/7/1869, Kildwick; bapt. 31/10/1869, Kildwick;
d. December 1940, Kildwick; buried 1/1/1941, Kildwick St. Andrew's
Married: Unmarried

WW1 service

Service period: 7/9/1914 to 3/5/1917
Regt.: Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment. (Private, later L/Cpl.; no. 13352)
Medals: 1915 Star, Victory Medal, British War Medal, Silver War Badge
Home address: The Old Post Office, Kildwick

Relationship to other volunteers

None known.

Marriage

Wife: Alice (nee Clough) b. 6/2/1896, Crosshills; d. 1969, Staincliff (Registration district))
Date: 23/7/1921; Ebenezer Chapel, Crosshills

Children

Phyllis Margaret (known as Margaret); b. 18/3/1925, Skipton (Registration district);
d. 1996, Keighley (Registration district)

