



Richmond Metropolitan Fire Brigade, c. 1920s

Friend Holness

Metropolitan Fire Brigade firefighter

27

In July 1925, a horse-drawn carriage brought the body of Friend Holness from the Eastern Hill Fire Station (East Melbourne) to Coburg Cemetery accompanied by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade brass band and a procession of two hundred fire fighters. The fire fighters marched with the coffin through Carlton and were then driven to Coburg. They stood in two rows along the road in the cemetery as the coffin was carried to this spot where the grave-side service was held.

Friend Holness arrived in Australia in 1911 as a young, unskilled nineteen year old from Kent in England. He worked in rural Victoria as a labourer until enlisting in the 1st AIF in 1915. He was sent to Egypt and to the battlefields of France, fighting until the Armistice in 1918 'without receiving a scratch'.

Holness joined the fire brigade in 1921 and he and his wife Mary (nee Little) lived at the Eastern Hill Fire Station. On Monday 20 July 1925, a fire was spotted from the station's watch tower and fire engines with several crews arrived to find a building in Knox Place ablaze. The premises (a boot factory) burnt quickly and part of a brick wall collapsed into the laneway. Bricks fell onto fire fighters as they battled the fire, hitting Holness and killing him instantly.

Newspaper reports the next day described Holness as a hardworking, popular man and quoted the Fire Chief Officer who paid tribute to a trustworthy, energetic and valued fire fighter. Holness was 31 years old, had been married only two years and had no children. His widow received £600 in compensation for her husband's death.

Working together to preserve our history



**The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust**
Guardian of Enduring Memorials

The above information is based on research conducted in 2011-2012 and is presented in good faith by the Friends of Coburg Cemetery. Should family members wish to upgrade existing monuments within this cemetery please email enquiries@gmct.com.au