



Private Christian Henry MILLER

- 1) 47 – A Squadron, NSW Mounted Rifles**
- 2) 281 – Coy QM Sergeant, C Company,
1st Australian Commonwealth Horse**

Born: 9 Apr 1880 Manildra, NSW.

Parents: Christian & Charlotte Miller, Cumnock.

Occupation: 1) Labourer

2) Constable Police Force, Wollongong.

District Connection: Cumnock, Molong

Enlistment Age: 1) 19yrs & 2) 21yrs

Embarkation: 1) 3 Nov 1899, Sydney, *SS Aberdeen*

2) 18 Feb 1902, Sydney, *SS Custodian*

Fate: 1) RTA invalided - 30 Jul 1900, *SS Karamea*

2) RTA 15 Aug 1902, *SS Drayton Grange*

Honour Boards: Molong Armed Forces

Honour Roll, Molong, NSW.

Medals: Queen's South Africa Medal & 3 clasps
(Paard, Drief & Relief of Kimberley)

Biography

Christian Henry Miller was born at Manildra, NSW, on 9 Apr 1880, the ninth child of Christian Conrad and Charlotte Miller.

Jacob Miller (Muller), his wife Anna Maria, and three sons – Christian Conrad, Henry and Charles - immigrated from Germany on the *Helvetia*, an Oldenburgh oak built barque. The ship left Bremen, Germany, on 4 August 1857 and arrived in Sydney five months later in December 1857, carrying 244 German immigrants. Christian Conrad Miller was 15 years old on arrival in Sydney and worked for Mr Dibbs at Five Dock, where part of his duty was to row his master over the Lane Cove river, morning and night. His parents and brothers travelled to Bathurst on bullock waggons where they leased land and started wheat farming. Christian Conrad Miller joined his family in Bathurst after a few months.

Christian Conrad Miller married Charlotte Vickery, of 'Glen Esk' in 1865, and they had 13 children: Louisa 1866-1945; Emma 1867-1844; Charlotte 1868-1870; Helena 1870-1870; Gertrude 1870-1953; Albert 1872-1877; Henrietta 1874-1955; Noble 1876-1948; Lillie 1878-1974; Christian Henry 1880-1960; Lucy Manildra 1882-1973; Randolph 1884-1974; and Mabel 1887-1919.

Jacob Miller and his three sons selected land in the Manildra district (Meranburn) in 1872. They all became naturalised Australian citizens during the 1880s. Charles Miller died aged 50yrs in 1895 at Manildra; Anna Maria Miller died in 1896 and Jacob Miller died in 1899, aged 86yrs. They are all buried in the Meranburn Cemetery. Henry Miller moved to 'Mani', Mount Aubrey and died in 1923, aged 76yrs.

Christian Conrad Miller became very active working for the improvement of the Manildra district, before moving with his family to 'Church Hill' farm on the Doughboy Creek at Cumnock, around the early 1890s. He soon established a dairy herd of around 100 cows and established a butter factory run by his family until the early 1900s. He owned various other properties around Cumnock and district, and was an Agent and Auctioneer. Christian Conrad Miller became a Justice of the Peace from 1890-1915, and became active in the Cumnock community, including: helped establish St Matthews Church of England in 1895; President of the Cumnock Progress Association and of the Cumnock Cricket Club; and was a member of the Cumnock Pastoral and Agricultural Society and the Cumnock Railway League. Christian Conrad and his wife Charlotte retired to Houghtonville, Fairfield, in 1914 and died aged 91 years, on 1 Mar 1933. Charlotte Miller died on 23 Aug 1934, aged 84 yrs, at Fairfield.

Christian Henry Miller was 10yrs of age when the family moved to Cumnock and he would have attended the Cumnock Public School. John McLennan was the headmaster of the school in 1890, and as the school had an enrolment number exceeding 80, they also had a pupil teacher, Ada Sherringham. Christian's sister, Lucy Manildra Miller, was appointed as a pupil teacher at the Cumnock School in 1896. The whole family were involved in running the butter factory and the males would also have been attending the farming of their wheat crops.

During the years between 1896-1899 the Molong papers were reporting Christian being a member of the Molong Mounted Rifles Half Company (established June 1895) and competing well in various NSW competitions. Christian's brother Noble was also a member, as was a Miss Miller (no Christian name given). The Molong Argus -19 Jul 1898, p2 commented on Christian's "Good Horsemanship":

"A good exhibition of horsemanship was displayed by Mr Christy Miller (not the genial J.P., but his son) the other day at Cumnock. A Burrawong van, to which a horse was attached, was standing opposite Mr Joe Barter's shop, when all of a sudden the animal bolted for home. Mr Miller immediately started in pursuit, mounting a horse bare backed. With the aid of his hat he managed to beat the horse into keeping to the main road, thus escaping fences and culverts. After going three quarters of a mile the frightened animal came to a standstill without doing the slightest damage to anything. Very good, young Miller!"

Christian Henry Miller was elected president, and his brother Noble, treasurer, of the Cumnock Amusement and Benefit Society in August 1899. In September 1899, Christian became well known throughout New South Wales when he came across a calf's head with two mouths and this curiosity was reported widely in many city and country newspapers.

When the Second Boer War in South Africa started on 11 Oct 1899 between Great Britain and the two Boer nations of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, the Molong Mounted Rifles had already declared their intent of volunteering to go to South Africa. They were already well known as being "some of the finest shots in the colony" according to a number of news reports.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 28 Oct 1899, p7, published several articles about the send off of the volunteers for the Boer War which included:

- Molong farewelled the soldiers on Saturday 21st October at the School of Arts with a musical social.
- A social was held at Cumnock on Monday 23rd October to say farewell to Corporal Owens, and Privates C Miller and J Denny, and that *"Several speeches were made, and about forty couples indulged in the dance."*
- *"At about eight o'clock, Wednesday night, Bank Street [Molong] was practically blocked by people, who had come from all parts of the district to see the 'brave boys' off, and the railway station was thronged. Headed by the band, playing 'Soldiers of the Queen', they marched from the School of Arts, and at 8.30pm the train moved off amidst the hearty cheers of their friends and comrades... The names of our 'Little Heroes' are – Corporal EP Owens [FP Owens], Corporal S Weeks, Bugler V Daly [Daley], Lance-Corporal MG Moss, Privates C Miller, C Gosper [FW Gosper], G Murray, J Denny, H Garlick, EV Silk; WC Quinn and LJ West (late Victorian Ranges), supernumeraries."*

All the Molong contingent of volunteers were medically examined at Sydney on Friday 27 Oct 1899 and pronounced fit to serve. They were quartered at the Royal Agricultural Grounds, Sydney. Christian Miller took two horses with him, one of which belonged to his brother Noble.

The Australian Town and Country Journal – 2 Dec 1899, p30, published a photo of eleven members of the Molong Half-Squadron of Mounted Rifles for service in the Transvaal, which included Private C Miller, back row, 3rd from the left.

The first contingent of NSW Mounted rifles sailed from Sydney on 3rd November 1899 on SS *Aberdeen*, stopped briefly at Albany, WA, on 14th November, and arrived at Port Elizabeth on 3rd December. They sailed onto Capetown, where they arrived on



6 Dec 1900.

During the voyage the soldiers were encouraged to undergo a two dose course of vaccination for typhoid fever (or enteric fever). Typhoid vaccination was still in the experimental stage during the late 1890s and the early 1900s, but with the potential typhoid hazard waiting in South Africa, Sir Almoth Wright, a British bacteriologist and immunologist, sought permission from the British War Office to inoculate soldiers going to South Africa. For a number of reasons the typhoid vaccination was not effective protection for the soldiers serving in South Africa. More soldiers died as a result of disease, including enteric fever, than those being fatally wounded. (1)

Christian Miller was one of the soldiers who had a severe reaction to the typhoid vaccination and was mentioned in a number of letters written by the Molong soldiers to family members and subsequently published in local papers. In a letter to his mother published in the *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser* – 10 Feb 1900, p9, South Africa – News from our boys, Christian wrote from Capetown on 16 Dec 1899:

“Dearest Mother, - Now as am getting all right, I am going to let you hear from me. We were all vaccinated on board, and I am only just getting over it; in fact, I am under the doctor still, and have been for the past fortnight. The doctor on the Aberdeen would not take any notice if we went to him, so when I came on shore I went to the AMC [Army Medical Corps] doctor; and he told me that it was just a fluke I did not lose my arm altogether; and that I would not be fit for active service for another week. However, our horses have not arrived yet; but by the time they are here, and are fit for work, I hope to be ready for them. This Cape Town is not a bad place at all; but it is very hot in the day time and cold at night. We are camped on what they call Green Point; but why, I can't tell, as you cannot see a blade of grass anywhere... Jimmy Denny is our farrier now, and I think Garlick will get the Shoeing-smith; so Molong is faring very well. We met an old Molong friend here, Mr. Hardwick, who has sent a report of our doings to the Express. We have a 'Soldiers' Home Tent,' which nearly all the Molong boys visit very regularly, and where each evening we have about an hour's hymns and prayers instead of going to the canteen. All the Cumnock boys here wish to be remembered to all friends at home; and if they get back from South Africa they will go as straight as possible to Cumnock. Just give all the news to the Rosses and Finches, as I promised to write to them...”

Another letter from Christian to his mother written on 15 Jan 1900 and published in the *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser* – 24 Feb 1900, p9, South Africa – News from our boys:

“Just a line or two to let you know that I am well. I received your very welcome letter, but have not had time to answer it till now, as I have been out skirmishing ever since we retired from Prieska; and it is not only a day job, but a night and day one as long as the horse lasts. Tell Noble that 'Old Sometimes' is always in the lead, with his neck arched, and as game as you like. He was carrying 18 stone the whole of the time, and has never had a day's spell since he started work, and is as sound as a bell; which is more than can be said for the others as they have either sore backs, are lame, or sick. I think if we pull through all right I will bring him back with me [Unfortunately, he had to leave him behind as he was invalided home]. We are all happy enough at the present time...”

We are waiting for some artillery to get here, and then we are going to make a march up to where there are 800 Boers camped, at whom we are going to have a slap. We had a very rough turn out the other morning at two o'clock, as there were 200 Boers advancing on our camp. Somehow, they got wind of it that we were wide awake awaiting them, so they retired. We have commandeered a lot of sheep, horses, firearms and ammunition, and taken a good few prisoners; so we have seen a little bit more than the Soudan Contingent saw and likely to see a good bit more.

The boys all wish to be kindly remembered to all friends in Cumnock and Molong, and that is all this time. The only apology for a table I could find is my helmet; and I had to cover my head with a handkerchief, as there is a fair wind with plenty of heat, and clouds of blinding dust.”

Shoeing-smith Hubert Garlick, of Molong Mounted Rifles, wrote from Howater on 19 January and the letter was published in the *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser* – 17 Mar 1900, p3, South Africa – News from our boys, and mentioned some action that Christian Miller was involved in near Prieska:

“... Some of our party were posted along the hill. A policeman named Millar, from Sydney, was on No. 1 post, and Trooper Chris Miller, from Cumnock was on No. 3. About two hours after they were posted, Millar, the policeman, heard someone talking, and looking down the hill and saw five men sneaking up it towards the man on No. 2 post. Millar fired at them, and as soon as they heard the shots they ran for dear life, occasionally turning round and shooting anywhere; but although they fired perhaps a dozen shots, not one of their bullets came near our party...”

Molong Express and Western District Advertiser – 21 Apr 1900, p3, South Africa – News from our boys:

Private C Miller, under date Osfontein, March 3, writes to friends at Cumnock:

*"... We have not received any letters for a long time, as there have been no convoys from mail stations; but we experienced a little active service, and took a longer the other day with Cronje in. We had a week's hard going to get him and his lot; but we succeeded in the end and also secured the convoy which was coming to relieve him, so we had a fine haul of from five to six thousand men, which is not too bad. Then we marched towards Bloemfontein, and had only gone one day on the journey when we struck another lot of Boers, and we are still at them. General French is on one side of them, and we are on another. Lord Roberts is on another, so they are fairly well surrounded...
Tell Mrs Ross that she could get a shilling a piece for her jam tarts here at the present time, as we are on half rations, and poor at that. Please thank her and other friends for their letters, which were very acceptable, and remember me to all Cumnock friends. Tell Noble 'Old Dun' is still in the chase, under me, and is about the only horse of our lot which has not had a sore back. The boys wish to be remembered to all at home, and so farewell for the present."*

Molong Express and Western District Advertiser – 28 Apr 1900, p5, South Africa – News from our boys: Trooper W Quinn from Molong wrote from Bloemfontein, March 19th:

"We have been lately every night in the open, without tents, and I was in that fight where the British captured Cronje and his men. We have been in 13 battles and only one man of the Mounted Rifles was killed, a young fellow 19 years old from Bega who was shot dead on the spot. The names of the Molong men who were wounded are T Ball, Owens [Frank Owens from Cumnock], and Finch [Walter Finch from Cumnock], but they are getting on as well as can be expected. In the battle where Cronje was captured the British lost 1160 killed and wounded, so you can see it was no easy job to take him..."

In the same paper, it was stated that "Private C Miller had an attack of fever [Enteric], but was steadily recovering, and Private J McRae was very sick, but had not gone on the doctor's list."

Molong Express and Western District Advertiser – 19 May 1900, p5, South Africa – News from our boys. Private Moore, of Molong Mounted Rifles says: ... "Several of our men have gone sick. Chris Miller is in the Bloemfontein hospital."

Christian Miller returned home via the troopship Karamea, with 110 invalided soldiers from South Africa, arriving in Hobart on 26 Jul 1900. From Hobart the NSW contingent returned to Sydney by the steamer Oonah, which arrived in Sydney on 30 Jul 1900. (Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal – 28 Jul 1900, p2)

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser - 11 Aug 1900, p7, reported: Grand Reception to Privates C Miller J McRae at Cumnock –

"Saturday morning last, C Miller and J McRae returned to Cumnock from South Africa, invalided home from the war through sickness. After reaching Sydney, they remained a few days at Blackheath, and then came on to Molong by mail train, where they were met by a number of friends. After breakfast, they proceeded to Cumnock in a three-horse dray... A number of Cumnock people rode out to the Gap, and escorted the vehicle into Cumnock, where a large crowd had assembled to do honor to the occasion; and much good fellowship prevailed.

A welcome home function was held at Leary's Hall which was beautifully decorated with Union Jacks and many other flags, lines and chains of patriotic crinkled paper, white flowers, foliage and fairy lights. Across the full width of the stage, was a red banner, bearing the words 'Welcome Home'. The banquet table extended from end to end of the long hall, and was laden with a most sumptuous repast composed of the choicest substantial viands, and all the delicacies in season...

A number of speeches were made and songs sung.

"Private C Miller was loudly cheered, when he rose to respond. He said that when he and his comrades left home they did not expect to be back as soon; nor were they anxious to return, as they would have liked to see the end of the war. Gradually they had fought their way to the front, and then gradually they commenced to return one by one; some being sent back wounded, and others suffering from illness. In time it fell to his lot to regretfully commence the return journey, and little by little from Bloemfontein, he eventually reached Cumnock, where he was certainly most warmly received. Other receptions had been tendered the returned volunteers elsewhere, but nowhere was the welcome so spontaneous and cordial as that accorded by residents of the dear old town. He felt their kindness deeply, and would remember it as long as he live. He thanked them most heartily..."

The Sydney Morning Herald – 30 Nov 1900, p5, Medals for returned soldiers:

"Medals were last night presented by residents of Cumnock and district to the following returned

soldiers: Lance-corporal Owens, Sergeant Denny, Privates W Finch, Chris Miller, and J McRae. Great enthusiasm was manifested.”

Christian Miller, along with other members of the Molong Mounted Rifles, was presented with the Queen's South Africa Medal at a ceremony held at Government House Grounds, Sydney, on 1st June 1901, by the Duke of Cornwall and York. Soon after, Christian returned to Sydney where he became a Probationary Police Constable, No. 7730, on 12 Jun 1901. Other Cumnockites, James McRae and Frank Owen, also joined the NSW Police Force around the same time. Christian was stationed at Wollongong, James McRae at Broken Hill, and Frank Owens at Sydney. In 1901 the police examination listed him as 5 feet 10½ inches tall, with grey eyes, fair hair and complexion, and was of the Church of England religious denomination.

On the 12 Jan 1902, local newspapers reported that Christian Miller had volunteered for the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse Contingent, and had been attached to 'C' Company. James McRae also took leave from the Police Force and joined up as a sergeant of the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse.

The Molong Argus – 21 Feb 1902, p10, Cumnock News, reported:

“Chris Miller, who returned from South Africa invalided some time ago, spent a few days at home amongst his friends prior to again visiting the land of the Boers. His conduct at the war must have been highly satisfactory, for on this occasion he leaves decorated with a crown and three bars. Quarter Master Sergeant Miller is just the sort of man who may be expected to give a good account of himself in whatever sphere he is. Of course his position this time will be such that he will probably see less actual fighting than before. Chris informed me that his old pal, Jim McRae, was also returning to South Africa, and, with the rank of Sergeant, is on duty in Sydney at present with the Second Commonwealth Contingent, so that they will part company for a time. Let's hope we will see them both back hale and hearty ere long.”

“The Australian Commonwealth Horse (ACH) was a mounted infantry unit formed for service by the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia, following Federation on 1 Jan 1901. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the ACH arrived in Durban in March 1902. They travelled north by train via Ladysmith, Elandslaagte and Dundee to Newcastle. By the 22 March over 1000 Australians had moved into camp with another 1000 New Zealanders in the vicinity of Mount Majuba. The brigade subsequently took part in the great Eastern Drive which aimed to encircle de Wet and Louis Botha in Northern Natal. The Australians were subsequently sent to western Transvaal, joining Colonel Thornycroft's Field Force at Klersdorp, which included the 3rd NSW Bushmen. The aim was to drive de la Rey back against a chain of blockhouses between Klerksdorp-Ventersdorp and began on 19th April.

On 7 May the Australians further advanced, driving forward over four successive days across dry and open country over a large front. Ultimately the drive succeeded with few incidents, significantly diminished the Boer supplies in the area, and leading to the capture of large numbers of Boers, livestock, wagons and ammunition. On 31 May 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed and the war came to an end.” [2]

The bulk of the ACH, including Christian Miller and James McRae, plus other Cumnock soldiers – Charles Grimson, William Hughes, Patrick Nolan and Henry Sherringham - were all on board the *SS Drayton Grange* when it left Durban on 11 Jul 1902.

The ship was overcrowded with troopers as it had been rumoured that the *SS Drayton Grange* was the last ship returning to Australia. Due to a chain of mismanagement by both the military and civilian authorities, it was discovered once at sea that the ship was grossly overcrowded and very quickly disease broke out amongst the troops. Measles, enteric fever, influenza and pneumonia swept through the ship and totally overwhelmed the medical facilities and staff on board. Conditions were appalling and as a result five men died on board and another 12 on landing after reaching Australia. Henry Sherringham was one of the men who died of pneumonia on 12 August 1902, aged 20 years, after being transferred to Port Franklin Hospital, Melbourne.

A Royal Commission about the *Drayton Grange* voyage was conducted and some of the findings were: “There was no isolation hospital and no disinfecting apparatus, and as more men fell ill, hospital beds took up space encroaching on healthy troops' quarters, resulting in more unhealthy overcrowding. No sea kits were issued so clothing was inadequate and blankets, two per man, were soon vermin infested. The men were issued with hammocks stored in communal bins, making it impossible to retain one's own hammock throughout. Sleeping quarters doubled for living and eating with overcrowding hammocks slung over mess tables. The weather was continually wet and cold; the ship's log reporting heavy seas causing rolling and pitching. Strong gales and dangerous seas were noted on sixteen of the nineteen-day trip.

Ventilators were kept closed for warmth and with no spittoons as laid down in Regulations for His Majesty's Transport Service, men 'expectorated' onto the floor. Latrines although officially adequate, proved insufficient for gastric conditions and despite plenty of water, showers were in the open so most preferred not to wash." [3]

The Sydney Morning Herald – 12 Sep 1902, p7, Returned Soldiers:

"The soldiers recently returned from South Africa were accorded an enthusiastic public reception at Cumnock today [10 Sep]. At night they were entertained at a banquet, where they were presented with gold medals. The returning soldiers were William Hughes, S Grimson [Charles Grimson], C Miller, P Nolan. Trooper Sherringham, who was also returning by the Dayton Grange, died at Port Franklin of pneumonia. A sympathetic reference was made to the sad event at the reception of his former comrades. [Joseph George Sherringham was absent, being detained in Narrandera district]

The medal, which was nearly an ounce in weight, was in the shape of a Maltese Cross surmounted by the British Lion. On the front was the monogram of the recipient, while on the other side was the inscription "Presented to Q.M.SGT. C H MILLER by his Cumnock friends for his patriotic services in South Africa, 1899 to 1902."



Christian Miller is named in the Boer War section of the Molong Armed Forces Personnel Roll of Honour at the RSL Club, Riddell Street, Molong.

Christian rejoined the police force on 11 Sep 1902. On 2 September 1903, aged 23 years, he married Edith Maude Barter, at Windsor. Edith had been born in Eurimbla, a daughter of Edith and Thomas Barter. Thomas Barter had settled on the property, Beaminster, Eurimbla in 1877. Although Thomas and Edith Barter retired to live at Windsor around 1901, the property remained in the Barter family until late 1995.

Christian and Edith had six children: Gladys 1905-1993; Christian Eric 1907-1979; Dorothy 1910-2002; Edith 1917-1990; Norma 1919-1990; and Reginald 1922-1923.

Christian became an Ordinary Constable 7730, on 1 March 1903 as did James McRae 7734, and both were promoted to Constables 1st Class on 1 Jan 1911. James McRae died under an anaesthetic for a goitre operation at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, on 17 Jun 1914, aged 37 years. Christian was promoted to Sergeant 3rd Class on 1 Apr 1924, but he was suspended as medically unfit from 20 Feb 1918 to 1 Mar 1919. His last promotion was to Sergeant 2nd Class on 1 Oct 1930. He worked at Harboard, Five Dock and Haberfield. Christian retired medically unfit from the Police Force on 24 Nov 1937, aged 57 yrs.

Edith Miller died on 3 October 1957, aged 79yrs. Christian died on the 17 August 1960 at Croydon, aged 80 years. He was given a full police funeral with a band and procession, and was cremated at the Rookwood Crematorium, Sydney on 19 Aug 1960.

References:

1. "Straight Back to Barbarism" – Anne Hardy, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/3430/1/3430.pdf>
 2. Australian Commonwealth Horse - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Commonwealth_Horse
 3. The Drayton Grange Royal Commission - http://www.bwm.org.au/site/Drayton_Grange.php
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Compiled by Dianne Strahan and Val McKenzie, Cumnock, December 2016.

Molong Mounted Rifles prior to going to South Africa in 1899. Christian Miller is on top row, 4th from left. Photo from Peter Moore, from the book 'Molong, Forbes and Districts' involvement in the Boer War (1899-1902)' by Robert Ellis.



***Left: Back row left to right – Gladys, Eric and Dorothy
 Front row – Norma, Christian, Edith and Mavis Miller, c1930s.***

Below: Christian Henry Miller, 1947.





Above Left: A photo of Christian Miller's Queen Victoria Chocolate Tin
Above right: A photo of a well preserved Queen Victoria Chocolate Tin
Queen Victoria sent a chocolate tin to each of her soldiers in South Africa in December 1899 or early 1900. Across the bottom of the tin, in her handwriting, says, "I wish you a happy New Year, Victoria Reg". The tins had rounded corners for ease of storage in a soldier's knapsack and each contained half a pound of vanilla chocolate.



Left: Christian Miller's Queen's South Africa Medal.

Below: Miller Monument, Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney.



Cumnock War Memorial Gates, Obley Street, Cumnock. Boer War plaque was unveiled on Anzac Day 2017.

