

# PREMIER'S ANZAC SPIRIT SCHOOL PRIZE

*Captain Oliver Holmes Woodward*

*1st Tunneling Company*



By Sophie Howe

## Life before departing for the Western Front



Oliver Holmes Woodward was born on the 8th of October 1885 at Tenterfield, New South Wales, to Australian parents Sydney and Jemima. Woodward began his schooling life at a local public school before studying for two years at Newington College in Sydney. After his schooling endeavors, Woodward began to gain experience in his chosen career, mining. He spent three years studying and working at the School of Mines in Charters Towers. As he gained more experience he became mine-manager and was awarded the W.H. Medal for Mining (1909) and Metallurgy (1910). In 1913, Woodward travelled to Mt. Morgan and Papua to work in the mines and with geologist, Sir Colin Fraser, at the Laloki mine. He departed Papua and returned back to Mt. Morgan in 1914 to recover from malaria.

The Roll of Honour Board for the employees of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Ltd who enlisted for service abroad was publicly shown. The name of O.H. Woodward appears in the last column.

*Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* Tuesday December 24, 1918

## Life and Service on the Western Front

Woodward enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in August 1915 and was posted to the 1st Tunneling Company. He went to France in March 1916 and was deployed in the Armentieres sector. The company fought both above and underground.

### NEW APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments to the Australian Imperial Forces have been made:-

To be Captains:- James Arthur Pollock, Lieutenant (provisional) R.V. Morse, Senior Cadets.

To be Second Lieutenants:- Corporal James Alexander Reid, Corporal William Thomas Anderson.

To be Second Lieutenants (provisionally):- Alexander Sanderson, Vyvyan Christopher Bennett.

The provisional appointments of the following second lieutenants are confirmed:- H.E. Trousselot, V.B. West, R.Y. Langdon, W.J. McBride, A.L. Kennedy, B. Priestman, G.T. Crawshaw, J.D. Henry, H.W. Brown, D. Brigstock, P.J. Day, H.V. Seale, C.W. Whyte, P. Caro, J.MacD. Royle, L.G. Wilkins, O.H. Woodward, R.B. Hunter.

Promotions to be Lieutenants: Second Lieutenant E.N. Mulligan, L.J. Coulter, W.P. Avery, L. De J. Grut, J.F. Pattinson, H.E. Trousselot, V.P. West, W.J. McBride, J.D. Henry, P.J. Day, C.W. Whyte, and J.M. Reid.

*Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday February 19, 1916

Woodward won the Military Cross in June 1916 after blowing up a German Sniper's post in no man's land.

AUSTRALIAN HEROES  
DECORATIONS AWARDED  
MILITARY CROSSES

Military Crosses have been awarded to the following Australians for conspicuous gallantry:-

8 named

Lieutenant Oliver Woodward, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tunnellers' Battalion. He succeeded in difficult circumstances, after repeated attempts, in blowing up a house 120 yards away from our trenches, which was frequently used as a sniper's post.

*Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday July 28, 1916

In 1917, the 1st Tunneling Company took over the mining operations in Ypres, Belgium. There they dug deep tunnels, the deepest being 110ft, below German trenches which ended in two mines, containing 55 793kg of explosives between the two of them. This was in the area known as Hill 60. Woodward, who was by this time a captain, personally fired the mines at the opening battle of Messines.

*"I was highly honored by being selected by our C.O. to take charge of the supervision and of the firing of the mine under Hill 60. What an honor and to look back upon.. On the whole front of the advance we blew 19 mines with a total 937,000 lbs of high explosives. Under Hill 60 we had 140,000 lbs, so that you see I not only blew the largest mine that has been blown in the history of wars but about one sixth of the total amount blown on the front." - Oliver Woodward*

*Cairns Post*, Monday June 2, 1919

Woodward was awarded a Bar to his Military Cross on the 29th of September, 1918. This was for the outstanding courage and resourcefulness he displayed when the 1st Tunneling Company came under fire during road maintenance in Bony, France. In the last few weeks of the War, Woodward received a second Bar to his Military Cross, a very rare commendation. This was awarded to him for bravery as he and his men built a tank bridge for the crossing of the Sambre-Oise Canal, whilst under heavy enemy fire.

## My understanding of the ANZAC Spirit

*“ANZAC stood, and still stands, for reckless valor in good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat.”*

- Charles Bean

When I think of the ANZAC Spirit, the first things that come to mind are camaraderie and mate-ship, bravery and courage, and pride for our nation. The ANZACs, Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, were an incredible group of people whose immortal legend and pride have defined their nations. The pride that was felt by these people, and the country that they served, has lived and will continue to live on for generations. To define the spirit of the ANZACs, I would say that good humour, mate-ship, courage and pride are what really lies at its heart. When it comes to good humour, the ANZACs are well known for being somewhat larrikins, ever optimistic and looking forwards. They were open, independent and acted seemingly without fear. This enabled them to keep high spirits, even in the face of such terrible times. In the terms of mate-ship, the ANZACs were highly regarded as friendly and caring. They were unselfish and put others and their country before themselves. A prime example of this is Simpson and his donkey, a man who risked his live to save as many people as he could.



In regard to courage, the ANZACs will forever be remembered as being brave in the face of overwhelming odds and displaying high amounts of valor. This was mentioned by a British War Correspondent, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, who said

*“General Birdwood told the writer that he couldn’t sufficiently praise the courage, endurance and the soldierly qualities of the Colonials (Australians) were happy because they had been tried for the first time and not found wanting.”*

Finally, when it comes to the true meaning of the ANZAC Spirit, I believe that it comes from the pride shown not only by the soldiers for themselves and the country that they serve, but the pride that the people of that country have of these brave soldiers. Every single one of those men was a hero.

*Simpson and his donkey - Peter Corlett.  
Australian War Memorial, Canberra*



## To what extent did his service reflect the ANZAC Spirit?

In regard to his service on the Western Front, Oliver Holmes Woodward's reflected the ANZAC Spirit to a large extent. This was shown through his numerous displays of valor and courage, whilst at the same time being friendly and able to work together with the rest of the Tunneling Companies. One example of his outstanding courage and bravery was when he and a few other members of the 1st Tunneling Company ventured into no-man's-land in France, June 1916. Woodward was not a soldier, he was never trained as one. He was only in the War as part of one of the Tunneling Companies. As he had previous experience with explosives, he used this knowledge for the benefit of the others in his company and the Allied Armies. He branched out of his routine, laid down a lead in no-man's-land, returned safely to the trenches and succeeded in blowing up and destroying an enemy sniper post. For this, he was awarded the Military Cross, a distinction that embodies the core values of the ANZAC Spirit. Another example in which his service reflects the ANZAC Spirit was when Woodward implemented a technique to prevent the deeper mine shafts and tunnels from filling up with water and wet clay. Displaying a good old sense of ANZAC ingenuity, Woodward dismissed the use of a pail to bail the water out and instead drew up a plan for an underground pump system that would transport the water out of the mines and over the trenches, effectively keeping the explosive charges dry. He had some difficulties getting his plan approved by the English Generals, but with some ANZAC humour and the collaboration of the others in the 1st Tunneling Company, he managed to get the plan approved, implement it and successfully reroute the water. A third example of how his service reflected the ANZAC Spirit was when he was further awarded two additional Bars to his Military Cross. The Bars were awarded for his selflessness and valor whilst in the face of danger. On both occasions, he came under threat from enemy fire, and in both situations, his courage and resourcefulness managed to earn him the merit for such a high commendation. It is for these reasons, that Oliver Holmes Woodward's service largely reflects the ANZAC Spirit.



*The Australian 1st Tunneling Company*

*O.H. Woodward - Far Left, Front Row*

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