

# NSW Premier William Holman and the 'inexhaustible interest of French affairs'<sup>1</sup>

Jill Donohoo

*A long admirer of the French and a keen student  
of French literature and affairs...'<sup>2</sup>*

William Arthur Holman (1871–1934) was premier of New South Wales between 1913 and 1920 (Nairn 1983). Originally a member of the Australian Labor Party, he was expelled in 1917 following his support for conscription, and for almost three years governed in coalition with his former opposition in the Nationalist Party of Australia (Nairn 1983). Holman was also a francophile through and through, with a love for France shaping both his personal life, including leisure and holidays, and his public life, including speeches and policies particularly during World War One. He was a key figure in the growing relationship between France and Australia during the war (Nettelbeck 2016).

Although his francophilia is well-acknowledged, it has not yet received any substantial scholarly attention. This paper will explore the public and private sides of Holman's French inspiration, primarily using newspaper articles of the day, to establish the significance of francophilia in his life. It will also seek to evaluate possible reasons for Holman's affection—a sense of elitism, jingoism, familial pressure, or something else? As a public figure whose love for France influenced his political life, the nature of and reasons for Holman's francophilia are interesting and worthy of consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Holman 2005, 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times* 16 September 1917, 18.

## Introducing William Holman

William Holman was born in London on 4 August 1871 to actor parents (Nairn 1983). His family ‘nourished’ his ‘delight in his skill with language’ but economic circumstances limited the possibility of further education, and he took an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker (Hogan 2006, 117). At the age of 17, he moved with his parents and brother to Australia, first to Melbourne and then to Sydney (Hogan 2006, 117).

In Sydney, Holman developed sympathies for the trade union movement and joined a range of radical political organisations, including the Labor Electoral League, the forerunner to the Labor Party (Hogan 2006, 117). Nairn argues that Holman was more attracted to the ‘theoretical socialist aspect of Labor’ than to organised unionism, with his interest driven by his philosophy (1983). He became involved in a daily newspaper for workers, the *Daily Post*, which unfortunately failed after less than three months. Rather dramatically, this saw him spend two months in Darlinghurst Gaol after being accused of conspiring to defraud creditors, a sentence which was later set aside (Hogan 2006, 120).

Holman entered Parliament in 1898 at the young age of 28, as a member of the Labor Party, first for the seat of Grenfell and later the seat of Cootamundra (Nairn 1983). Whilst in Parliament, he studied law in his spare time and was admitted to the Bar in 1903 (Hogan 2006, 122). During this time, he married journalist Ada Kidgell in 1901; his daughter Portia was born in 1903 (Radi 1983). Holman became Deputy Leader of the Labor Party in 1905 (Hogan 2006, 123). Following the election of the first Labor Government in New South Wales, Holman was appointed Attorney-General and Minister for Justice in 1910; as Deputy Leader he also had an extended stint as Acting Premier in 1911 (Hogan 2006, 124–125). On 30 June 1913, William Holman was elected Premier of New South Wales (Nairn 1983).

In Australian political history, Holman is known for his involvement in the conscription debate. He claimed to have a ‘pronounced and declared anti-militarist’ philosophy<sup>3</sup> and was involved in an anti-war league during the Boer War. Nevertheless, he set aside his ‘pacifist ideals’ and was an early advocate for conscription (NSW State Records 2015).

---

<sup>3</sup> State Records NSW, Premier’s Department; NRS 12060, Letters received [9/4736 letter B16/4153], quoted in State Records 2015.

This led him into conflict with his own party. In May 1916, the Political Labor League<sup>4</sup> Executive passed a motion opposing conscription, and shortly thereafter a censure motion against Holman, who resigned as Premier for a day, before the Labor Executive backed down (NSW State Records 2015). He supported Labor Prime Minister Billy Hughes in his plebiscite campaign for conscription in October 1916, despite strong opposition from their Party Executive (Church 2016). In September 2016, the Labor Executive expelled Hughes from the party and disendorsed Holman (Church 2016, 7).

The conscription plebiscite was narrowly defeated but still led to major change. At the Federal level, Hughes and supporters formed a new National Labor, later Nationalist, Party coalition with the support of the Commonwealth Liberal Party (Church 2016, 6). Likewise, in NSW, Holman formed a new Nationalist coalition with his former opposition (NSW State Records 2015). Both the NSW and Federal Nationalist Party won decisive victories in elections in 1917 (Church 2016, 17). As a result, Holman is 'unique in NSW political history in that he was Premier in both a Labor government and a non-Labor administration' (Hogan 2006, 117). Holman's alliance with Hughes broke down over the second conscription plebiscite, although Holman continued to publicly support the campaign (Hogan 2006, 134).

Holman became 'caught between the Labor Party, who viewed him as a traitor, and the Nationalists, who didn't quite trust him or his background' (NSW State Records 2015). His assessment by political historians was ambiguous; while later Labor leader H. V. Evatt wrote a sympathetic biography, other Labor figures saw him as a 'class traitor and "rat" who had changed sides merely to continue in office' (Hogan 2006, 117, 134). After losing both his seat and the government in the 1920 election, he became a King's Counsel and practised law (Nairn 1983). In 1931 he was elected to the Federal Lower House, this time as a representative of the United Australia Party (*The Wingham Chronicle and Manning River Observer*, 8 June 1934, 3). He died in 1934 while in office, his final years marked by ill health and frequently being 'short of money' (Nairn 1983).

### **Francophilia in his personal life**

Holman first studied French as part of his preparation for the Intermediate Law Examination in 1900. Before studying law, he was required to complete

---

<sup>4</sup> The Political Labor League was later known as the Australian Labor Party, NSW Branch.

an 'intensive study' of 'general subjects'. His examiner, Professor Wood, reported his history and French papers as both being 'very satisfactory'. After this requirement was satisfied, Holman continued to study French 'with great enjoyment' (Evatt 1954, 112).

Henceforth, Holman's leisure time was shaped by all things French. An article in the *Sunday Times* in December 1912 when Holman was Attorney-General recounted how 'at any time of the day for some time past there might have been seen upon his desk a book, sometimes two or three, indicating his love of study. This study was French, the books ranging from primary publications to works by the greatest of French authors. The sum total of the Attorney-General's relaxation, in fact, has been French reading' (29 December 1912, 20). Papers at the National Library of Australia show Holman's efforts to learn French grammar and vocabulary, including the reflexive, adverbial clauses and prepositions.<sup>5</sup> Bede Nairn noted that he also 'honoured French wines' (1983).

Holman's holidays were influenced by his love of French language and culture. He sailed to England in December 1912, and chose to sail with the French Messageries Maritimes lines. His biographer H. V. Evatt wrote that 'it was not an accident that he had chosen a French line, for by now he was a fluent speaker of the language' (1954, 257). On this visit (to England) Holman made a detour to France and met with the new French President Raymond Poincaré (*The Argus* 5 March 1913, 13). Later praising Poincaré, Holman was reported to have described him as 'one of the two greatest men he has met', 'courtesy and humanity personified, and combined too with great strength of personality' (*The Gundagai Independent and Pastoral, Agricultural and Mining Advocate* 7 June 1913, 2).

During the 1913 Parliamentary recess, Holman travelled to New Caledonia on holidays. In his memoir, Holman sang the praises of New Caledonia. 'Nowhere save New Caledonia can Australians get so complete a change in so brief a voyage. To the European who can pass in a few hours into the jurisdiction of a new Government and the realm of a new language, it is difficult to picture the inescapable sameness of Australia, in which one can travel three thousand miles and find precisely the same conditions at each end of the journey. Going into New Caledonia is like passing into a new world.

---

<sup>5</sup> William Arthur Holman, 'French Language Notes', 1900–1934, MS 1307, National Library of Australia.

One strikes there the real charm of the tropical Pacific and the inexhaustible interest of French affairs' (Holman 2005, 67–8).

Both before, during and after the war, Holman was frequently reported as attending social events with the French community (see for example *Le Courrier Australien* 5 July 1912, 4; 21 May 1915, 4; 24 July 1931, 3). Holman also became a member of the Sydney Alliance Française in 1927 (*Le Courrier Australien* 7 October 1927, 4). After the war, he continued to promote the French, for example arguing in 1927 that 'friendship with France' was 'necessary for the peace of Europe' (*Le Courrier Australien* 21 October 1927, 3).

Interestingly, before Holman began to learn French, in 1899, he met French philosopher Albert Métin who was visiting Australia to research the implementation of worker-friendly policies such as the eight-hour day (Dwyer, 2016, 34). As a member of the Labor Party, Holman assisted Métin's research, published in 1901 as *Socialisme sans doctrine*. On Métin's death, Holman eulogised him as a 'socialist of the academic type' whose death was 'a heavy loss to the whole French nation' (Dwyer 2016, 34).

The papers of his wife Ada include paraphernalia from various French visits, including the menu from a Messageries Maritimes dinner in Strasbourg on 27 June 1926 (indicating at least one later holiday), along with the menu for Parisian venues '*Restaurant à l'escargot*' and '*La Tour d'Argent*' (both date unknown).<sup>6</sup> Holman's francophilia clearly influenced his personal life, both in studying French for leisure and enjoying French culture on holidays.

### Francophilia in his public life

Holman's love of France led him to an involvement with the French community in Sydney. While this engagement deepened significantly during World War One, it has earlier origins. For example, when he and his wife attended Bastille Day celebrations in June 1914, he was feted by the French Consul General Chayet as 'never missing an occasion, both in his participation in our celebrations and by his speeches to affirm his friendship with the French community' (*Le Courrier Australien* 24 July 1914, 2; *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 July 1914, 8).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.

<sup>7</sup> 'Je tiens d'autant plus à remercier M. Holman, qui n'a jamais manqué une occasion, tant par sa participation à nos fêtes que par ses discours, de témoigner sa sympathie envers notre colonie' (*Le Courrier Australien* 24 July 1914, 2).

The French-Australian League of Help was formed on 22 December 1914, 'for the purpose of assisting in French Red Cross Work, and further, to render such assistance as might be deemed urgently necessary to the French soldiers or their dependents or those of the Allies' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 December 1914, 11). At the initial meeting, Premier Holman supported the movement, promising 'what little they could do, they should do' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 December 1914, 11). He also praised the French soldiers' initial response to the Germans, arguing that 'had it not been for that army there would have been no Europe today' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 December 1914, 11). Holman was elected President of the organisation, along with Madame Marie-Thérèse Playoust, wife of leading Sydney wool buyer Georges Playoust (Brown and Dwyer 2014, 28).

Two of the most significant activities of the French-Australian League of Help occurred in the latter half of the war years. A public appeal held on Bastille Day, 'France's Day,' on 14 July 1917 raised £215,607, which Peter Brown and Jacqueline Dwyer calculate to be over \$7.8 million in today's currency (2014, 39). Holman was in France on the day and so did not have the opportunity to participate. He did, however, personally deliver the first instalment of these funds to the Paris Distribution Committee, whose work was mostly driven by the formidable Augustine Soubeiran (*Sunday Times* 29 July 1917, 2; Brown 2015, 333). A second 'France's Day' appeal in 1919 raised £17,709 (equivalent to \$476,000 in today's currency, Brown and Dwyer, 2014, 45). Holman gave a speech to a public meeting organising the Day, proclaiming: 'We cannot compensate France for her sufferings, but we can testify how much we appreciate and admire her spirit of self-sacrifice' (*Le Courrier Australien* 20 June 1919, 4).<sup>8</sup> His wife Ada was involved in organising one of the fundraising stalls of the day, together with Madame Playoust (*Le Courrier Australian* 25 July 1919, 4), while both are listed as attendees at the France's Day Concert (*Sydney Morning Herald* 15 July 1919, 9).

In their study of the French Australian League of Help, Brown and Dwyer argue that Holman provided 'consistent support and guidance to this cause' (2014, 31). In particular, along with businessmen Henry Braddon, Holman provided 'experience and skill in managing charitable funds,'

---

<sup>8</sup> 'Nous ne pouvons pas ... la dédommager de ses souffrances, mais nous pouvons témoigner combien nous apprécions et admirons son esprit d'abnégation.'

such that 'the participation of these two men in the League's affair underpinned the whole enterprise' (Brown and Dwyer 2014, 31). As Premier, Holman also extended his personal support into state financial assistance. At the turn of 1915, Holman announced the pledge of £5,000 to the French-Australian League of Help formed only days before, as well as financial assistance for a similar Belgian fund (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1 January 1915, 7; *Le Courrier Australien* 8 January 1915, 4). He also ensured state support for the second 'France's Day' appeal in 1919, with a subsidy of five shillings in the pound promised: approximately £4,427 of the £17,709 raised was government funded (*Le Courrier Australien* 1 August 1919, 4).

In a remarkable turn of events, Holman visited the front line in France in 1917 and was quite seriously injured. Holman and Major-General William Holmes were visiting the Messines battlefield on 2 July, when an exploding shell killed Major-General Holmes and severely concussed Holman (*Sydney Morning Herald* 9 July 1917, 7; Travers 1983). His biographer H. V. Evatt, wrote that 'two days later, when Holman returned to London, his wife was shocked to find him so badly bruised and shaken, and above all so distressed' (1954, 333). And yet, despite the trauma of this visit, Evatt argued that 'Holman's francophile feeling had been intensified by his experiences during his visit to the Front in 1917' (1954, 389). As an example, shortly after his return to Australia, Holman wrote an article in the *Empire Review*, published in the *Sunday Times*, singing the praise of the French and in particular the French sense of independence and equality (16 September 1917, 18).

Indeed, Premier Holman consistently provided public support for the French. This was most eloquently demonstrated when speaking to the Sydney University Union on Friday 24 September 1915 on 'our debt to France'. During this speech, he argued that 'the debt which the world, and which we as the intellectual heirs of the world, owe to France, is mainly this: that France, which has been the liberatress in so many other directions, has also liberated us from the superstition of German superiority' (Holman 1915, 7–8). His speech then expanded this topic, focusing particularly on the resurgence of scientific study in France in the late 1800s:

When France, recovering from the staggering blow of the disaster of 1870, pulling herself together, reviewed the situation, she went quietly, methodically, inveterately to work, and by sheer dependence on her own resources, by refusing to be an imitator in any single direction, by absolute originality, forced her way to the very front of the intellectual

campaign that was raging in Europe. You do not find a French soldier dressed in a cheap imitation of a German soldier; you do not find French scientists becoming the pupils of any outside school. France is a world apart, a world alone (Holman 1915, 12–13).

Holman then explored the French commitment to democracy:

In France, democracy is better understood, and has been more fully analysed—has been more frequently contrasted with other forms of government than in any other part of the world. Whatever political disabilities the French have laboured under during the nineteenth century, they have not laboured under the disability of having no experience of any other kind of government... Democracy, therefore, means rather more in France than it does in England or Australia (Holman 1915, 13).

Holman's praise of France in this speech was based on intellectual concerns, arguing for French scientific and political supremacy. Although he gave this speech in the context of WWI, and elements of patriotism did filter in, it is not a warmonger's speech, but rather one of intellectual admiration. *Le Courier Australien* described this speech as 'a warm and eloquent' defence of France<sup>9</sup> (14 January 1916, 4).

Such widespread and thorough support of France and the French war effort was duly recognised. Holman was appointed to the French Legion of Honour in 1916 'in recognition of his valued and eminent services to the French cause in this part of the world' (*Le Courier Australien* 30 June 1916, 4).<sup>10</sup>

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on King George V's approval for Holman to wear the French Legion of Honour, writing that:

the honour had doubtless been conferred on Mr Holman because of his untiring solicitation since the war broke out for the welfare of the French people ... apart from this, however, Mr Holman is well known as an enthusiast in the cause of France (26 June 1916, 8).

Earlier in the year, Holman had received a letter from the French President Raymond Poincaré dated 6 January 1916, writing 'I have learned what

---

<sup>9</sup> 'Cette conférence constitue, en vérité, un chaleureux et éloquent plaidoyer en faveur de notre pays.'

<sup>10</sup> 'En témoignage de reconnaissance pour les précieux et éminents services rendue à la cause française dans cette partie du monde.'

friendly support you have given to ... the members of the French-Australian League of Help ... I send you my deep thanks for your effective help.'<sup>11</sup>

The French community in Sydney hosted a celebratory banquet for Holman on August 17 1916 in recognition of this honour (Figure 1).

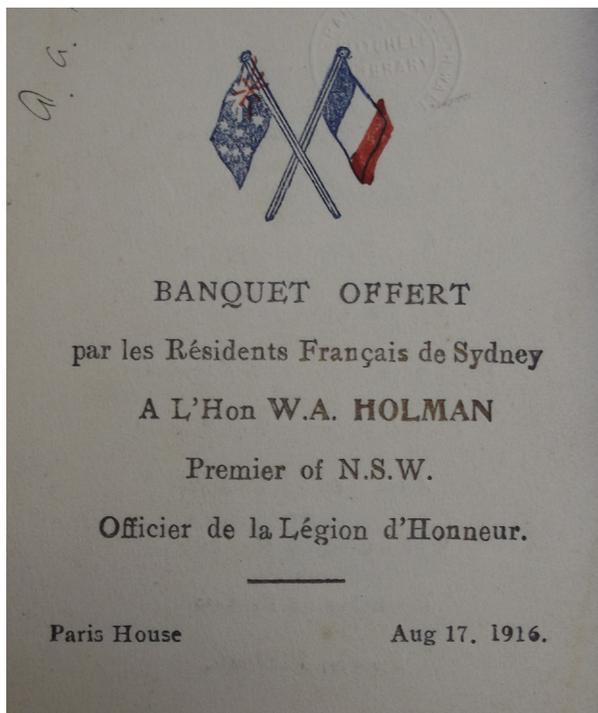


Figure 1: Banquet celebrating Holman's appointment to the Legion of Honour<sup>12,13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 'J'ai appris quel sympathique appui vous avez bien voulu donner ... aux membres de la Ligue Franco-Australienne de Sydney ... Je m'empresse de vous adresser mes bien vifs remerciements pour votre aide, si efficace, avec l'expression de mes sentiments de gratitude.' Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.

<sup>12</sup> Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.

<sup>13</sup> Paris House was a restaurant in Phillip Street, owned by Frenchman Gaston Liévan. It was often the chosen venue for business and community events. [http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/archive/discover\\_collections/society\\_art/french/community/community.html](http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/archive/discover_collections/society_art/french/community/community.html). Accessed 8 November 2016.

At this dinner, the Consul Général de France Alexandre Chayet enthused in praise of Holman, claiming that ‘obviously this distinction could only be a mark of recognition for the sympathy that the Premier has continually displayed, particularly since the start of the war, to France, its institutions and its army’<sup>14</sup> (*Le Courrier Australien* 25 August 1916, 4). It is interesting that Holman’s Legion of Honour was awarded so early during the war, before the main fundraising success of the French-Australian League of Help. Timing suggests it was probably awarded for Holman’s initial support of the founding of this group, together with other public support for France.

At the end of the war, a French economic mission led by General Paul Pau, visited New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia (Aldrich 1989). Holman hosted a dinner for the mission (see Figure 2), attended various functions held in their honour, toured the Harbour Port with the delegates, took delegate André Siegfried to a choral performance at the Conservatorium, and hosted the group’s weekend visit to Jenolan Caves, providing accommodation at the government-owned Caves Hotel (Dwyer 2016, 40).

During the French mission, General Pau declared, regarding Holman, that ‘we have found in you ... a faithful and sincere friend of France’ (quoted in Nairn 1983; *The Advertiser* 13 September 1918, 9). At a public reception for the French-Australian League of Help, General Pau presented Holman with an ‘autograph album signed by over 100 officers of about 80 organisations engaged in war work in France, which have received financial aid from New South Wales’ (*The Age* 13 September 1918, 7). The list of organisations which included *La Croix-Rouge française*, *Société de secours aux blessés-militaires*, *Les Amis des soldats aveugles*, among other charitable groups, was prefaced with the inscription ‘the undersigned wish to express their deep gratitude for the generous support of French War Work’<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 3). This autograph album recognised not just the people of NSW, but specifically Holman’s personal efforts.

---

<sup>14</sup> ‘De toute évidence, cette distinction ne pouvait être qu’une marque de reconnaissance pour la sympathie que le Premier n’a cessé de témoigner depuis le début de la guerre surtout, à la France, à ses institutions, et à son armée.’

<sup>15</sup> ‘Les soussignés adressent l’expression de leur profonde reconnaissance pour son généreux concours en faveur des Œuvres de Guerre françaises.’ Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.

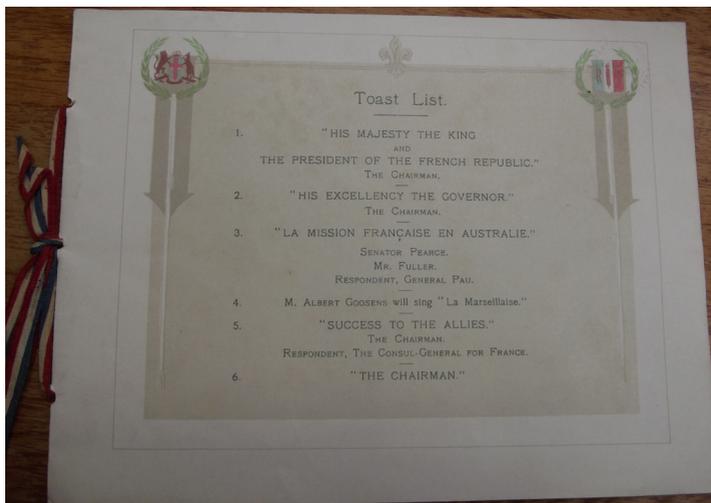


Figure 2: Dinner for the French Economic Mission hosted by Holman<sup>16</sup>

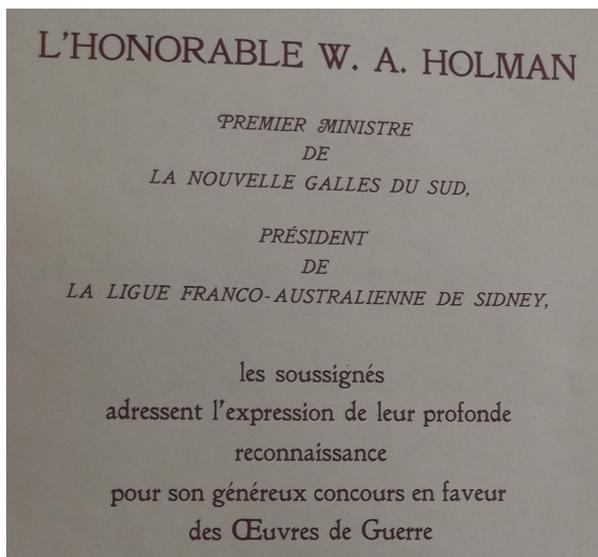


Figure 3: Cover page in autograph album presented to Holman<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.

<sup>17</sup> Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.

In a reply speech, Holman reflected that his support of the French war effort 'was something which he had performed, not merely willingly, not merely as a duty, but as the spontaneous and irresistible expression on his part of the debt of gratitude which he had owed to France and to the French influence all his life' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 13 September 1918, 7). Such was Holman's passion for all things French in his life, particularly throughout the war. Through his interest and support for the French cause, Holman played a significant role in the strengthened relationship between Australia and France which developed during World War One (Nettelbeck 2016).

### **Why francophilia?**

With admiration for all things French evidently bearing a significant influence on William Holman's personal and public life, one might ask the reasons Holman was a francophile? What drove this enduring passion which shaped much of his life?

Francophilia as a general phenomenon does not seem to have been extensively studied in academia. Two works focus on the way the elite classes in English and American culture publicly appealed to their love of France so as to enhance their own cultural prestige: Liana Paredes' study of French-inspired architecture in the homes of the Washington elite (2007) and Robin Eagles' investigation of French elite culture among the English aristocracy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (2000). Yet this is apparently not the case for William Holman; there does not seem to be any compelling evidence to suggest social elitism was a driving factor. The French community in Sydney was small and middle-class. Sydney rallied behind the French war effort fundraisers but was not generally marked by francophilia. There is no particular evidence that Holman's love for France was driven by a desire for popularity, or to be part of a social elite.

Was Holman's support mere patriotic championing of an ally during war? Undoubtedly, the war provided a context for public expressions of his passion which may otherwise have remained a personal hobby. His biographer Evatt noted that his 'francophile feeling had been intensified by his experiences during his visit to the Front in 1917' (1954, 389). But it is obvious that Holman was not merely assuming an interest for political gain. His longstanding study of the French language and involvement in the French community before and after the war make this abundantly clear.

His interest in France seems to have nuanced his public discussions of the war, despite his fervent support for conscription. In an interview with the *Sunday Times*, chiding it for its unbalanced war reporting, Holman decried:

I think it is a matter for fervent regret that the great exploits of our French Ally are not given greater prominence by intelligent newspapers who understand that England is not fighting Germany single-handed... The debt of gratitude that civilisation owes to France in the present struggle is one that can never be fully repaid and which vast members of people in Australia seem to know nothing whatever about.<sup>18</sup>

In this instance, Holman's admiration of France seems to qualify his allegiance to the British Empire as he sought to bring a balance to the public discussion of the war. This is far from empty patriotism or belligerent jingoism.

Was Holman's francophilia inspired by loved ones? There is no record to suggest this. His family migrated to Australia in 1888 from London, and there is no evidence that any other family members spoke French. In particular, his wife Ada was far from a francophile. While her memoir does recount some of her favourite French restaurants, she is quite damning of common French food. 'Of the cafes for the people I can speak only with horror... I remember once, when staying by myself in Paris, on economy bent, sampling various cafes for "simple meals" and being nearly poisoned, certainly sickened, by the horrible service, cold plates, and the deadly monotony of *potage au printemps* and *veau*' (Holman 1948, 138). She was even more critical of French customs, writing 'I learnt in France always to get my back to the wall of a lift, the Frenchman's peculiar fondness for pinching rendering this a useful precaution' (Holman 1948, 154) and 'a Frenchman, being abominably rude, uses courteous words. It will be "Permettez-moi, madame", while pushing you aside and taking your taxi; it will be "Je vous adore" while pinching you black and blue in the lift' (Holman 1948, 138).

It seems most likely that Holman's francophilia was inspired by intellectual curiosity. Biographer H. V. Evatt paints a picture of an intelligent and widely-read student, who 'throughout his public career never quite abandoned the role of scholar and *littérateur*' (1954, 10). As a young man, his support for Labor was primarily philosophical (Nairn 1983). His highly positive interactions with Albert Métin before he started to learn French were based on a shared interest in philosophy (Dwyer 2016, 35).

---

<sup>18</sup> *Sunday Times* 7 March 1915, 9.

Holman was an intellectual who was drawn to French language, literature and philosophy. This was demonstrated in his 1915 address to the University of Sydney Union, which dwelt on French intellectual achievements. After his death, former political ally Billy Hughes eulogised that:

[Holman] stood in a class by himself... He was a brilliant orator... He was a great lover of good literature, and the range of his reading was as wide as the world ... He was a brilliant man whose great gifts would have won him a place in the public life of any country.<sup>19</sup>

Holman's intellectual interests spurred an enjoyment of French culture, through his study, his readings and his travel. Even more significantly, his position as Premier of New South Wales transformed his personal interests into public action in the context of World War One. He championed Australian public support of the French war effort, particularly through his leadership of the French-Australian League of Help. Through deed and word, Holman promoted France, demonstrating a sustained conviction that 'it was the example of France which held out hope for the future of humanity' (*The Advertiser* 13 September 1918, 9). As a key public figure and as an avowed francophile, the story of Holman deepens our understanding of the development of French-Australian relations and the particular closeness that occurred during the Great War. His is also an interesting example of the fluid and perhaps ambiguous factors underlying the broader history of francophilia in Australia (Nettelbeck 2016), a story which remains open for further study.

*Sydney*

---

<sup>19</sup> Mr Hughes in 'Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, resolutions and speeches relating to his death', 28 June 1938, in Holman Family Papers, 1928–1983, MLMSS 4250, State Library of NSW.

## References

- Ada A. Holman papers, together with the papers of William Arthur Holman, 1866–1936, MLMSS 112, State Library of NSW.
- Aldrich, Robert, 1989, 'La Mission Française en Australie de 1918 : L'Australie et les relations franco-australiennes au lendemain de la guerre', *Colloque d'Études Franco-Australiennes, Décembre 1987*, ed. André Dommergues and Maryvonne Nedeljkovic, Université de Paris X–Nanterre, Paris.
- Brown, Peter, 2015, 'Augustine Soubeiran (1858-1933): Innovative Educator and Dynamic Secretary of the French-Australian League of Help', *French Lives in Australia*, ed. Eric Berti and Ivan Barko, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, pp. 319–337.
- Brown, Peter, and Jacqueline Dwyer, 2014, 'The French-Australian League of Help', *The French Australian Review*, no 56, pp. 26–53.
- Church, Nathan, 2016, 'Political attitudes to conscription 1914–1918', Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library Research Paper Series 2016–17, 27 October 2016, [http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/parliamentarylibrary\\_politicalattitudestoconscription19141918\\_oct\\_2016.pdf](http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/parliamentarylibrary_politicalattitudestoconscription19141918_oct_2016.pdf). Accessed 2 November 2016.
- Dwyer, Jacqueline, 2016, 'The French Economic Mission to Australia 1918', *The French Australian Review*, no 59, pp. 30–54.
- Eagles, Robin, 2000, *Francophilia in English Society 1748–1815*, Palgrave, New York.
- Evatt, H. V., 1954, *Australian Labour Leader: The story of W. A. Holman and the Labour Movement*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Hogan, Michael, 2006, 'William Arthur Holman (30.06.1913–12.04.1920)' in *The Premiers of New South Wales: Volume 2, 1901–2005*, pp. 117–139, ed. David Clune and Ken Turner, The Federation Press, Leichhardt NSW.
- Holman, Ada, 1948, *Memoirs of a Premier's Wife*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Holman, William, 1915, *Our Debt to France*, William Applegate Gullick Government Printer, Sydney.
- Holman, William, 2005, 'My Political Life' in *The First New South Wales Labor Government 1910–1916, Two Memoirs: William Holman and John Osborne*, ed. Michael Hogan, UNSW Press, Sydney.
- Holman, William Arthur, 1900–1934, 'French Language Notes', MS 1307, National Library of Australia.

- Holman Family Papers, 1928–1983, MLMSS 4250, State Library of NSW.
- Nairn, Bede, 1983, 'Holman, William Arthur (1871–1934)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/holman-william-arthur-6713/text11589>. Accessed 2 September 2015.
- Nettelbeck, Colin, 2016, 'William Holman', personal email correspondence.
- NSW State Records, 2015, 'William Arthur Holman: 1916 Crisis Point over Conscription', <http://nswanzaccentenary.records.nsw.gov.au/on-the-homefront/history-week-2015/william-holman/>. Accessed 1 November 2016.
- Paredes, Liana, 2007, 'Private Homes, Public Lives: Francophilia amongst Government officials and the Washington Elite', in *Paris on the Potomac: The French Influence on the Architecture and Art of Washington DC*, ed. Cynthia Field, Isabelle Gourney, Thomas Somma, US Capitol History Society, Ohio University Press, Ohio.
- Radi, Heather, 1983, 'Holman, Ada Augusta (1869–1949)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/holman-ada-augusta-6710>. Accessed 6 November 2016.
- Travers, B. H., 1983, 'Holmes, William (1862–1917)' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/holmes-william-6717/text11599>. Accessed 31 March 2016.