

Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 133

PERCIVAL LODGE CAMERON

1882 - 1940



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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
2017

Gunner Percival Lodge Cameron

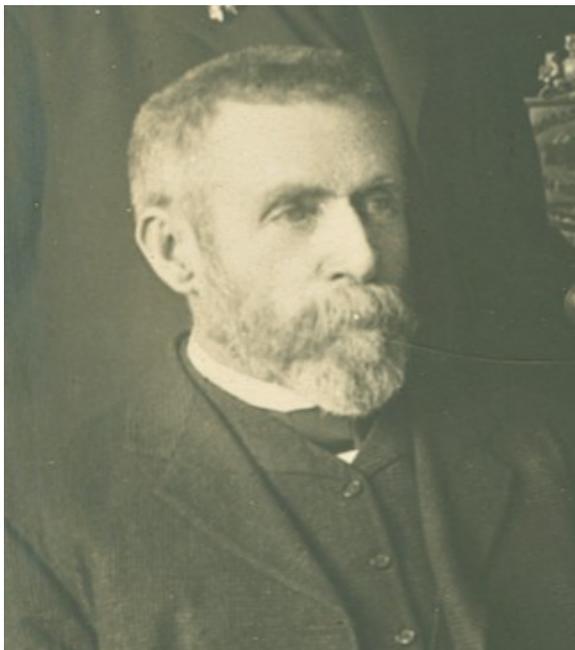
Percival Lodge Cameron – known as Percy – was a 35 years old station manager, and married with one child, when he and his wife drove over 1,200kms from the Muttaborra district down to Brisbane for Percy to enlist in March 1917.

He served in France and Belgium as a gunner in the 7th Battery, 3rd Field Artillery Brigade (FAB), was gassed and later wounded during 1918, and returned to Australia in 1919.

Percy then bought a property Glen Nevis at Dalveen, north of Stanthorpe and was ‘a keen judge of sheep and wool’, an enthusiastic local cricketer, and a devotee of Scottish literature (particularly Bobbie Burns).

Family background

Percy was born at Muttaborra (in central west Queensland) on 1 November 1882, the third and youngest son of John and Sarah Annie (nee Lodge) Cameron. Sarah was from Moruya, NSW and had married John in 1877 in Mudgee, NSW.



*John Cameron - Percy's father.
1912*

John Cameron (1847-1914) held Kensington Downs station near Muttaborra for an extended period. He was very active in business and pastoral organisations, holding various executive positions, and was a member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly 1893-96 and 1901-08. He was also an Elder 1903-11 at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church on the corner of Ann and Creek Streets in Brisbane.

Percy's eldest brother was Donald Charles Cameron who is the subject of booklet no.43. It is also worth noting that the Cameron family had business and family connections with the Crombie family, and James Crombie is the subject of booklet no.122.

Early life

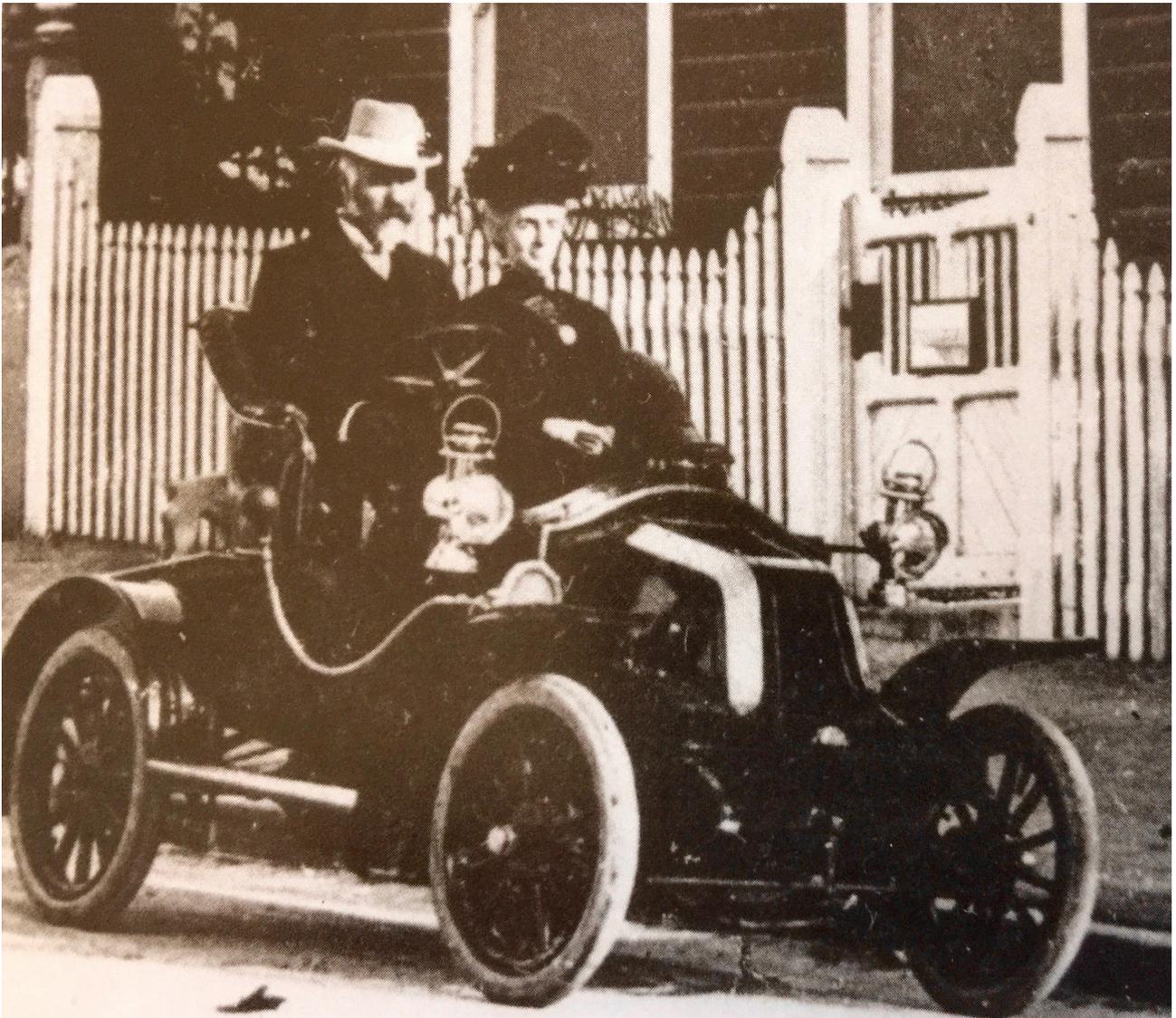
Percy attended Toowoomba Grammar School and then Brisbane Grammar School (1897), and settled into the family pastoral pursuits. In 1914 (when their father died) Percy was at Caledonia Station, Aramac while his older brothers Donald Charles and John were at Kensington Downs and Rainscourt (near Hughenden) respectively.

On 28 February 1912 Percy married Margaret Helena Isabella Hardie in St Paul's Presbyterian Church (in St Paul's Terrace, Spring Hill, Brisbane). His brother Donald was best man.

Helena (as she was generally called) had been born in Forres, Scotland, the elder daughter of Marianne (nee Jeans) and David Hardie.

Dr David Hardie (1856-1945) was prominent in the medical field, being knighted in 1913, and a staunch Presbyterian.

Details of Dr Hardie's life and achievements are set out in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

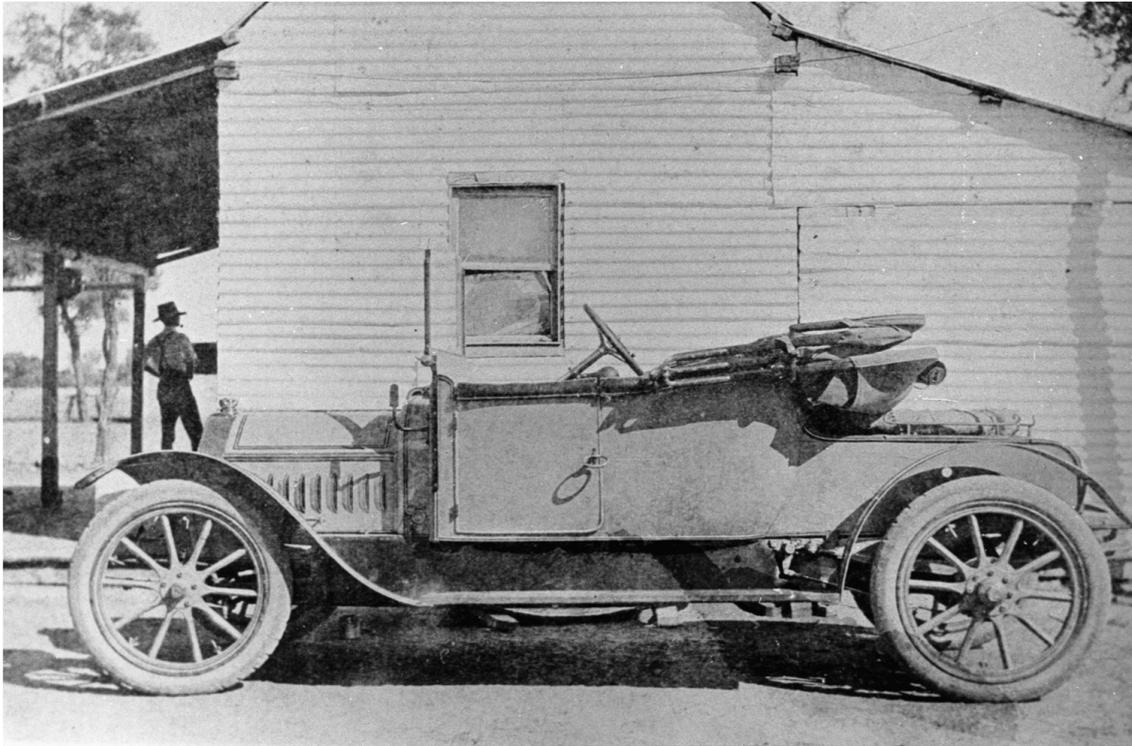


Dr and Mrs Hardie in their Renault car outside Firhall on Wickham Terrace c 1907. The Renault was the first of that model in Queensland.

Enlistment

Donald Cameron enlisted in the 1st AIF in September 1914, and that may have been when Percy moved back to Kensington Downs - he gave his occupation as station manager, Kensington Downs when he enlisted in Brisbane on 14 March 1917.

To enlist Percy and Helena drove all the way down from Kensington Downs in a 1910 model FN1560 Tourer that the family called 'Fanny' – with considerable drama when the brakes failed going down the Toowoomba Toll Bar Road.



"Fanny" at Caledonia Station near Aramac, 1912.

This 1910 FN roadster was given by Sir David Hardie to his daughter Helena as a wedding present. "Fanny" is in the collection of the Queensland Museum with its original registration plates.

State Library of Queensland

On enlistment Percy was 178cms tall, weighed 74kg, with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and brown hair, and his religion was Presbyterian. Initially he was placed with the reinforcements for the 49th Infantry Battalion, embarking in Sydney on the HMAT A7 *Medic* on 1 August 1917, transferring at Halifax in Canada to the SS *Orissa*, and disembarking at Liverpool in the UK on 3 October 1917.

During Percy's absence Helena and their little daughter Vera Blyth lived in the Hardie family home Firhall in Wickham Terrace, Brisbane. Among other things Helena helped Mrs Lockhart Gibson - whose husband is the subject of booklet no.14, and her twin sons booklets 132 and 155 - make jam in the basement of the nearby boarding house Bona Vista to help raise money for the Soldiers' Comforts Fund. Jean Hardie remembered her sister Helena returning to Firhall on one occasion with the news that 'Jean, your bees have swarmed in the jam kitchen!'



An Australian Comforts Fund's Coffee Stall at the front, ca 1917

John Oxley Library Postcard Collection 4831

War service

In December 1917 in the UK, Percy transferred to the artillery. He arrived in France on 16 January 1918, when the Australian artillery was undergoing a major re-organisation, and was taken on strength with the 7th Battery, part of the 3rd FAB.

The 3rd FAB was one of the brigades not attached to a specific Division – thus being able to be readily deployed to points of greatest need. It was not long before Percy was in action – by 22 January 1918 he was in the line at Messines.



*The colour patch of the
3rd FAB*

The German army began a determined, large scale Spring offensive with intense bombardments beginning on 21 March 1918. Percy was a casualty from gassing on 24 March.

It was 28 June 1918 before Percy could return to his unit, which by then was at Franvillers on the Somme. Again he was almost straight into action, as the 3rd FAB provided support to preparatory night raids and during the Battle of Hamel on 4 July 1918 – a battle in which the precision of the artillery proved an important element of Monash's well engineered and successful plan.

The Allies commenced their own major offensive on 8 August 1918 known as the Battle of Amiens, and Percy's involvement included action at Cerisy, Harbonnières and Rosières. The successful attack rolled on - with Percy's unit being engaged at Mont St Quentin, Peronne, and Tincourt east of Péronne – reaching Roisel at the Hindenberg outpost-line in early September 1918.

At Roisel Percy was a casualty from a 'short-shooter' or 'premature' – where the shell explodes in or shortly after leaving the gun muzzle. To lessen the chances of this, gun crews would wind rope around the muzzle and keep it doused with water.

However, this didn't always prevent a short-shooter or premature, and when one did occur, the crew would be scalded as well as otherwise injured. This is what happened to Percy on 18 September 1918 and he suffered burns to his face, hands and neck. He was invalided to the UK on 20 September.

Percy embarked for Australia on 21 December 1918 on the HT *Mamari* - but arrival in Freemantle on 26 January 1919 didn't mean home would soon be reached. Next came travel by sea to Melbourne and then to Sydney, where a quarantine period of a week at the Sydney Cricket Ground was caused by an outbreak of influenza, and followed by a further quarantine period at Coolangatta up to 26 February 1919. Percy finally made it home and was formally discharged on 23 March 1919.

Post war

On his return to civilian life Percy took up a property named Glen Nevis at Dalveen, north of Stanthorpe, where he and Helena expanded their family with another three children (Margaret, David and Somerled).

In 1940 newspapers reported that ‘There were many expressions of regret in Brisbane’ when it became known that Percy had died. A local tribute said:

Deceased was keen judge of sheep and wool, and an even more discerning judge of character, and that man was happy who enjoyed his friendship and confidence, for these were given in no stinted manner. Of Scottish forebears he loved the lyric outpourings of Bobbie Burns and others of his ilk.

In his young days he was particularly fond of the game of cricket, and was by no means a bad bowler, and some 16 or 17 years ago represented Stanthorpe in inter-town matches. That was about the year he secured 55 wickets at a cost of 7.50 runs per wicket in club cricket at Dalveen.

His grandchildren remember him as having a very dry sense of humour, and often spoke of the very funny and touching things he did and said.



*The grave of Percy Cameron.
Toowoomba and Drayton Cemetery*

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Compiled by Ian Carnell AM

Buderim.

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Lest we forget