

Alexander William Rob Bryce

Family

The newly-wed (and God-fearing) Alexander & Isabella Bruce were inspired by the colonial visionary John Dunmore Lang to move from Scotland to New South Wales in 1851. They could not have foreseen the contribution they, their children and future generations would make to their new country. After three years at Jamberoo, they moved onto 10,844 acres at the Tomerong end of the St Georges River basin where they were to have twelve children. The property name was chosen as "Errowel"

Alexander Bryce, aged 76 years, died at "Errowel" in November 1898. His widow moved to the Maleny district in 1906 following her sons Charles and Alexander. The sale of the "Errowel" property was reported in the "Sydney Morning Herald" on 19 November 1907. Eventually five sons would move to the Maleny area and others to the Northern Rivers district and to the Darling Downs. They were stalwarts of their church and community more broadly. When Isabella died on 5 June 1922, she was survived by seven sons and two daughters. Her abiding love of the early years remained and, after transfer of her leaden casket over three days, she was buried beside her husband in the Nowra cemetery.

Alexander William Rob Bryce was one of Isabella's many grandchildren. He was one of five children born to William and Isabella (King) Bryce and he was born in Tomerong in April 1893. Only two years later in September 1895, his mother died in childbirth. Owing to the very poor eyesight of their father, Alexander and his older brother John were raised through childhood by their grandmother.

Military Context

The 26th Battalion was raised at Enoggera, Brisbane, in April 1915 from recruits enlisted in Queensland & Tasmania. It formed part of the Australian 7th Brigade within the Australian 2nd Division. The battalion staged very briefly in Egypt before landing at Gallipoli in September.

Enlistment

Alexander William Rob Bruce enlisted at the Rifle Range, Enoggera, Brisbane on 2 June 1916. His age was declared at 23 years, 1 month and his occupation "bullock driver". His birthplace was recorded at Shoalhaven River, NSW. He was 6 feet 2 inches in height which was very tall for men of that time, weighed 168 pounds, of dark complexion, with grey eyes and light brown hair. His religion was Presbyterian. He recorded his father William Bryce of Teutoberg as his next of kin. For most recruits, distinguishing marks were usually restricted to minor scars and vaccination marks, but Alexander Bryce's body

already bore the marks of plenty of previous lacerations, including the loss of the end of his thumb on the left hand. His service number was 6032.

Just one month after his enlistment, the address of his next of kin in Base Records was altered from "Teutoberg" to "Witta" when Teutoberg was officially swept aside in a concerted effort to "de-Germanise" place names across the nation. Old habits die hard, however, and the name persisted in Electoral Rolls for at least another decade.

Military Service

Private Bryce was assigned to the 17th Reinforcements, 26th Battalion. He trained in Australia and eventually embarked from Brisbane aboard the HMAT A74 "Marathon" on 27 October 1916. He disembarked at Plymouth, England on 9 January 1917 and promptly marched out to the 7th Training Battalion within the 2nd Division Training Group at Rolleston (It was subsequently moved to Codford in April that year).

On 17 June 1917, Private Bryce proceeded to Southampton for embarkation to France where he presented next day at the 2nd Division Base at Le Havre. The reinforcements were taken onto the operational strength of 26th Battalion in the field on 9 July 1917.

ON 20 September 1917 he was wounded in action in Belgium. He suffered a gunshot wound to the thigh/buttock. He was taken to the 17th Casualty Clearing Station at Remy Siding and then admitted to the 12th General Hospital at Rouen next day. On 26 September, he embarked on the Hospital Ship "St Andrew" for England.

Private Bryce was admitted to the Red Cross Hospital, Christchurch, Cosham on 28 September. His wounds were described as "gunshot to left thigh" and "slight shrapnel wounding". His father first received news of his wounding on 2 October with the following telegram from the Base Records Office : "REPORTED PRIVATE ALEXANDER BRYCE WOUNDED WILL ADVISE ANYTHING FURTHER RECEIVED". Further advice was sent to the family on 29 October: "PRIVATE A.W.R. BRYCE ADMITTED TO CHRISTCHURCH RED CROSS HOSPITAL SUFFERING FROM GUNSHOT WOUND LEFT THIGH, MILD."

On 29 October 1917, he was discharged to the 1st Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield. It had been a private home of expatriate Australians Mr & Mrs Billyard-Leake until offered in November 1914 for use by the convalescing wounded. Harefield was the only hospital in England to be used exclusively by Australians forces. Estimated originally to be capable to accommodating 50 soldiers under winter conditions and 150 in summer, at the peak of its use housed 1,000 beds.

On 3 November, Private Bryce was discharged to No 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, Dorset which was usually reserved for soldiers not expected to be fit for return to duty within 6 months. On 7 January 1918, he transferred to the No 4 Command Depot at

Hurdcott and then again on 23 February to the Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill. On 13 March, he proceeded to Southampton for transfer to Le Havre where he presented the next day. He rejoined the 26 Battalion on 18 March.

On 23 June 1918, he had a scrape with authority when charged with neglecting to obey an order and was awarded 28 days of field punishment. Next day, he reported to the 6th Field Ambulance with a condition generally described as "P.U.O." of pyrexia of unknown origin. The symptoms would have been a very high fever and a general feeling of unwellness. He did not re-join his unit until 4 July.

It was an extension of a period when the Allies were mounting "peaceful penetration" operations to snatch portions of the German front line without significant resistance. In one such operation in Monument Wood on 14 July, the 26th Battalion captured the first German tank to fall into Allied hands, CSN506 "Mephisto". Later in the year, the battalion participated in the great offensive that began on 8 August.

In May 1919, the 26th Battalion was disbanded. On 16 May 1919, Private Bryce left France for the last time. He disembarked at Southampton the next day.

Closing the Chapter

On 17 July 1919, Private Bryce departed London on the "Persic" to return to Australia. He disembarked at Sydney on 2 September and travelled by train to Brisbane. He was discharged from the A.I.F. on 18 October 1919.

He was issued with the British War Medal and the Victory Medal in recognition of his service.

Life after the War

Alexander "Long Alec" Bryce returned to Maleny and was a teamster at Teutoberg for the Eelctoral Rolls of 1919 and 1925. In 1937 he was a boundary rider on Wondovale Station in the Dalrymple area. In 1943 he was a poultry farmer at Yabulu Siding, Thuringowa. In 1949 and 1954 he was a station hand at Mt Elmo, Miriam Vale.

By 1958 he had retired, but was still at Miriam Vale on "Craiglea". He was still there in 1963, but for the Rolls of 1972 and 1977, he was living at 94 George Street, Bundaberg.

Alexander Bryce never married and he died in Bundaberg in 1978. His body was buried in the Bundaberg Cemetery in grave D1752.

The Bryce family were pioneers of Maleny and their descendants contribute to community and public service to the present day.