

CROKER PRIZE FOR BIOGRAPHY 2023

2325 My Family Myth: Clarence James Power Carbery 1876-1970

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James Power Carbery was one of eight children born to Robert Stephen Carbery and Margaret Carbery, nee Poole, in Victoria on 3 October 1876.¹ He married Florence Elizabeth Davies on 8 May 1901, aged 16 years, at her father's home in West Wyalong, New South Wales (NSW). He used the name Clarence James Power Carbery, aged 24 of Lake Cargelligo, NSW.² Their daughter, my grandmother, Florence Ivy Carbery, always called Ivy, was born on 1 April 1902 in Narrandera NSW.³ Sadly, two months later, on the 13 June her mother died from a ruptured appendix in the same hospital where she had birthed her daughter.⁴

The family myth surrounding my Grandfather Carbery, is about his enlistment in the Great War. The story, or myth has several parts. It was said that he had changed his name and age after being rejected by the Military and regarded as unfit. On his Service Records, Service Number 2878, May 1916 in Condobolin (NSW), his age was 38 7/12 months, his height was 5' 2 and 1/2 inches, chest expansion 32-34 inches, and weight 120 lbs, widower, next of Kin as being his daughter Miss Florence Ivy Carbery, of the Sacred Heart Convent, Goulburn, NSW aged 14 years.⁵

The enlistment standards had now been lowered,⁶ and with the need to replace the men lost at the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, Clarence tried again in Goulburn (NSW) and on the 7 June, he lowered he age and meeting the new requirements, he was successful.⁷ Clarence was 40 years old. Clarence continued training in Goulburn and then was posted to B Coy 6th Battalion, (2 to 9) reinforcements and on the 25 October 1916 embarked on the *Ascanius* and sailed overseas, disembarked in England in December 1916.

The next entry in his Service Records have Clarence 'proceeding overseas to reinforce 5th Division via Folkstone per *SS Golden Eagle*' on the 28 February 1917 and then at Harve in the May, 'Pte gunshot wound, shoulder (R) to England per *Panama*'. Clarence is admitted to the General Military Hospital, Plymouth and then on furlough and then to the training depot at Weymouth. He returns to France 13 November 1917, 'Pte re-joined Bn from wounded, England'.⁸ Clarence is wounded again on the 26th April 1918 and admitted to the War Hospital 'GSW Rt thigh and Lt hand, contusion (severe)'. It is during this time of convalescence that Clarence meets Dorothy Alice Lawrence and, on the 14 August 1918, he is charged with 'offence absent without leave. Awarded one days pay'. They marry, on the 17

¹ Births Certificate of James Power Carbery, born 3 October 1876, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages of Victoria, 25291/1876.

² Marriage Certificate of Clarence James Power Carbery and Florence Elizabeth Davies, married 8 May 1901, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriage of New South Wales. 5296/1901.

³ Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages of New South Wales. 14618/1902.

⁴ Registrar of Births, Deaths and marriages of New South Wales. 6090/1902.

⁵ Service Records of Clarence James Power Carbery, p1,2 and 3.B2455, National Archives of Australia.

⁶ Enlistment Standards / The Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/article/encyclopedia>. Accessed March 2018.

⁷ Service Records of Clarence James Power Carbery.

⁸ Service Records of Clarence James Power Carbery.

February 1919 at St Pancras, London, England and Clarence returns to Australia on the 8 August 1919 per *Karooomba*, and was discharged 13 December 1919, 3rd Military District.⁹

According to Christopher (Chris) Carbery, Grandson of Clarence and Dorothy and as part of his family's oral history, when Clarence was about 12 years old, he ran away from home with his older brother Thomas, after a savage beating the boys received from their father, for which he was sent to gaol for six months. Thomas returned home sometime later; however, Clarence never saw his family again. Clarence had been indentured to the Melbourne Electric Light Company Co. which he hated. He wanted to be a farmer and had problems with his mother who was a very staunch Catholic. Chris goes on to say that he must have had some contact with his family as Clarence states that his father is deceased on the marriage documents in his service records.¹⁰ This is indeed true as Robert Carbery died in 1895.

Clarence and Dorothy go on to have three children and the family move around following work. Chris says that during the Depression Clarence had a mail contract between Wagga Wagga and Lower Tarcutta. He suffered episodes of ill health and the family moved to Sydney, and in March 1935 Clarence applied for assistance from the Repatriation Department.¹¹

Researching the Carbery Family has not been easy for the usual reasons to do with the levels of literacy in the 1800s, to the variations in spelling of the name from Carberry, Carbury to Carbery. Clarence certainly did try to escape from the abusive and controlling family. He did change his name however; he did not do that to hide his identity from the military as he used Clarence James Power Carbery on his marriage certificate to Florence Davies as far back as 1901. Clarence also lowered his age on that document. In fact, he would have been 25 years old, nearly 10 years older than Florence who was only 16. On his service records Clarence says he is 38 years old when he was 40 and three years later, he is still 38 as is evidenced on his marriage documents to Dorothy Alice in London as well. I remember Great Grandfather Carbery, visiting him in the Repatriation Hospital in Sydney. He was a small thin elderly man with a quick mind as he knew exactly how I was related to him.

Clarence died 24 January 1970 aged 94 and is buried at North Ryde NSW, where in 1982 Dorothy joined him aged 90.

⁹ Service Record of Clarence James Power Carbery.

¹⁰ Service Records of Clarence James Power Carbery.

¹¹ Electronic communication to the author from Christopher Carbery, Grandson of Clarence James Power Carbery over many months during 2016.