

Dan Woodriff's kit bag



As Combewood House archivist, I was shown just another treasure tucked away in a trunk in the house. It was the kit bag that Daniel Lethbridge Woodriff took with him during his service in the AIF in World War One.

Dan had enlisted with his brothers Frank and Geoffrey. They were the sons of Francis Henry and Margaretta Mary (nee Tingcombe) Woodriff of Combewood. Geoffrey enlisted on 10 May 1915. He was killed in action on 19 May 1918. Frank enlisted on 11 January 1916 and returned to Australia in 1920.

Nineteen-year-old Dan, a student, enlisted on 16 May 1917 at Victoria Barracks with the consent of his parents. He left Sydney on the *Canberra* in November 1917. Gunner Woodriff served in the 37th Battery, 10th Field Artillery Brigade, in France. He was invalided home in 1919 after contracting influenza.

On his return, Dan married Hilda Lyle Strang on 22 September 1926 at St Pauls Anglican Church, Castle Hill. Hilda wore a Honiton lace wedding veil lent to her by Dan's mother who had inherited the veil through her Tingcombe/Lethbridge family. The veil was also worn by Margarite on her wedding day. Dan and Hilda farmed an orchard at Glenorie called Torwood. They had one son, Roger. On 27 January 1949, while working in his orchard Dan suddenly passed away. When Hilda sold her orchard, she gave Dan's kit bag to Margaret Cox (Margarite's mother) for safekeeping at Combewood.



But there is another story here. It is revealed when the bag is turned inside out and another name is seen. So, who was Sergeant Garcia and why did he not have this bag? At first, we speculated on some tragic story, but it is probably much more practical. A search of Sergeant George Maurice Garcia's military record shows he joined up

on 8 January 1917 and served in the 10th Field Artillery Brigade. His service number was 37551. And that is probably the issue. My scenario is that Garcia received this kit bag. But realised his service number was incorrect. So, they gave him another kit bag, and this kit bag recycled by turning it inside out, and Woodriff was the lucky man to receive it.

Sources

- Combewood House collection
- Australian National Archives – World War One personal dossiers
- Sydney Anglican church registers

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