

PERCY GERALD MEALE

Born: 26th February 1895, Little Ryburgh¹

Enlisted: Army Service Corps (Private M1/08877)²



Medals: 1914 Star; British War Medal; Victory Medal³



Percy Gerald Meale was born on the 26th February 1895 in Little Ryburgh, the youngest child of Alfred James and Sarah Martha Meale. Percy's father, Alfred James Meale was baptised in Stibbard parish church on the 26th December 1852, the son of Robert and Mary Meale (the surname being recorded as *Male* in the parish register).⁴ Alfred married Sarah Martha Watson on the 28th February 1879 in Great Ryburgh parish church.⁵

In the 1911 census for Stibbard, Percy is aged 16 and an apprentice motor engineer living with his 58 year old widowed father, Alfred (a carpenter), and three of his four siblings (Americ, Ephraim and Florence).⁶ The 1901 census for Great Ryburgh lists his other sibling, Alfred.⁷ Percy's four siblings were:

Americ Alfred	Born 1881, in Ryburgh. ⁸ In the 1911 census he is aged 29, and a decorator. ⁹
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¹ FreeBMD, Quarter to June 1865, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.296 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Information kindly supplied by Percy's family; 1911 census Stibbard (Schedule 124) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

² British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

³ British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁴ Baptisms Register 1852, Stibbard (www.ancestry.co.uk). There are several variations in the spelling of the family name: *Meal*, *Male* (as on the BMD records and the 1901 and 1911 census returns), and *Meale*.

⁵ Marriage Register 1879, Great Ryburgh (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, Quarter to March 1879, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.433 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁶ 1911 census, Stibbard (Schedule 124) (www.ancestry.co.uk). There is also variation in the places of birth listed for the children across the 1891, 1901 and 1911 census', as either Little Ryburgh or Great Ryburgh.

⁷ 1901 census, Little Ryburgh (Page 22) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁸ FreeBMD, Quarter to June 1881, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.297 (www.freebmd.org.uk). The BMD register records his name as *Amrice*, rather than *Americ*.

⁹ 1911 census, Stibbard (Schedule 124) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

Alfred Edward	<p>Born 3rd February 1883, in Ryburgh; baptised 3rd April 1884 in Great Ryburgh parish church.¹⁰ In the 1901 census, he is aged 17 and a carpenter.¹¹ He died on the 15th December 1902, aged 18.¹²</p> <p>There are extant British Army pension records which show that Alfred enlisted with the Royal Field Artillery in Norwich on the 20th November 1902. The age given on the enlistment papers was 18 years 5 months, and he states that he is already serving with the militia in the 3rd Battalion the Norfolk Regiment. He was posted to South Africa in February 1905, where he met with an accident in May 1905 which resulted in the loss of his right eye (it was replaced with a glass eye). This was deemed not to affect the performance of his duties as an Artillery Driver, and he continued to serve with the Royal Field Artillery until the 8th August 1914, when he was discharged from the service as being '<i>no longer physically fit for war service</i>'.¹³</p> <p>However, there is currently some confusion here, as records show that Alfred Male died in December 1902, whereas the family history recounts that it was Americ (the elder brother) who had a glass eye;¹⁴ so who actually did sign up in 1902 (Alfred or Americ) is yet to be resolved, but it must be assumed that Americ actually served (and under the name Alfred).</p>
Ephraim Alexander	<p>Born 1885, in Ryburgh.¹⁵</p> <p>In the 1911 census he is aged 25, and a builder's labourer.¹⁶</p> <p>Ephraim emigrated to Australia on the 28th February 1914, arriving in Freemantle, Western Australia in April that year.¹⁷ On the 1st June 1916, he enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), aged 31, at Perth. He sailed for England, arriving in January 1917, and then went to France in April 1917, serving with various battalions of the AIF before being transferred to the Australian Employment Company (similar to the Army Service Corps in the British Army) in August 1918. He returned home to Australia on the 2nd January 1919 and was discharged from the service on the 13th April 1919. Ephraim was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal, issued in 1934.¹⁸</p> <p>He died in Australia on the 4th November 1949, aged 64, and is buried in the Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth. A plaque placed by the Office of Australian War Graves, which bears the rising sun symbol, carries the</p>

¹⁰ Baptisms Register, 1884, Great Ryburgh (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, Quarter to March 1883, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.321 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹¹ 1901 census, Little Ryburgh (Page 22) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹² FreeBMD, Quarter to December 1902, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.174 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Information kindly supplied by Percy's family.

¹³ British Army WW1 Pension Records 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Information kindly supplied by Percy's family.

¹⁴ Information kindly supplied by Percy's family.

¹⁵ FreeBMD, Quarter to June 1885, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.297 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

¹⁶ 1911 census, Stibbard (Schedule 124) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁷ UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Freemantle, Western Australia, Passenger Lists, 1897-1963 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁸ Australia, WW1 Service Records, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

	inscription: 2598 Private E Male, Aust. Employment Company, 4 th Nov 1949 age 64. ¹⁹
Florence Adeline	Born 1888, in Ryburgh. ²⁰ In the 1911 census, she is aged 21. ²¹ Florence emigrated to Canada in September 1920, and married Egbert Walter Waldron on the 22 nd December 1920. She died on the 19 th January 1990 in Bellville, Ontario and is buried in Foxboro Cemetery, Canada. ²²

By 1914 both of Percy's parents had died; his mother in 1904, aged 48,²³ and his father in December 1913, aged 59 (he is buried in Little Ryburgh).²⁴ Percy most probably continued to live in Stibbard with family members (possibly his grandparents) until he enlisted in the army later that year - his name appears on the Stibbard Roll of Honour for 1914. Although the British Army WW1 Service Records 1914-1920 do not appear to have survived for Percy, we do have copies of his Medal Roll record and index card which records that he was awarded the 1914 Star (issued to men who served in France (or Belgium) from the 5th August 1914 to the 22nd November 1914) with a qualifying date of 4th November 1914 (see Figure 1).

Campaign: 1914				(A) Where decoration was earned.	(B) Present situation.
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	MEDAL which includes it	PAGE
(A) MEALE	Secondary School Canton, Fed. Prov. Aust.	PTE	8044	VICTORIAN CROSS	101
(B) P. Meale	A. S. C.	M1	8044	1914 STAR	2
Action taken				15 6 02	7 10 05
QUALIFYING DATE: 4. 11. 14				4.5.53.	

Figure 1: Medal Roll index card for Percy Meale

Percy's M1 prefix to his service number indicates that he was with the Mechanical Transport section of the Army Service Corps.²⁵ He was a motorcycle dispatch rider, and his family have kindly provided a photograph of Percy with his motorcycle (see Figure 2).

¹⁹ Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Information kindly supplied by Percy's family.

²⁰ FreeBMD, Quarter to December 1888, Walsingham, Vol4.b, p.288 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²¹ 1911 census, Stibbard (Schedule 124) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²² Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919-1924 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Ontario, Canada Marriages, 1801-1928 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²³ FreeBMD, Quarter to September 1904, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.161 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁴ Burials Register 1913, Stibbard (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, Quarter to March 1914, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.388 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁵ See *The Long, Long Trail: The British Army in the Great War 1914-1918* (<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/letter-prefixes-to-british-soldiers-numbers-in-the-first-world-war>).



Figure 2: Percy Meale in uniform, with his motorcycle

His Medal Roll index card also notes that he was with the *Secunderabad Cav. Fd. Amb.* – the Secunderabad Cavalry Field Ambulance (2nd Indian Cavalry Division). A Field Ambulance was a mobile front line medical unit manned by troops of the Royal Army Medical Corps under the command of a Division. It was responsible for establishing and operating a number of points along the casualty evacuation chain, providing medical care to the sick and wounded close to the front line, with the purpose of either returning them to duty or evacuating them to Casualty Clearing Stations, and men from the Army Service Corps would be attached to these Field Ambulance units.²⁶ Percy also served in Mesopotamia, and ended the war in Bangalore, India.²⁷

By 1920, it appears that both Florence and Percy were living in Ipswich (1 Surbiton Road, Ipswich), as this is address that Florence gives on her *Passenger to Canada* emigration form in which she lists Percy as her nearest relative, when she emigrates to Canada that year. Percy followed a few years later, emigrating to Canada in 1923, aged 28. He sailed on the *Antonia*, on the 22nd June, on a 3rd class ticket with £10 in his possession. On his *Declaration of Passenger to Canada* form he notes his current occupation as 'fitter', his intention to live permanently in Canada and undertake farming. Percy's nearest relative in England is recorded as an aunt, Mrs Allison, living in Ipswich. His brother-in-law Egbert Walter Waldron, of Bellville (Ontario) paid his passage.²⁸

Percy married Ivy Jeffries (born 10th January 1910, in Birmingham) on the 4th August 1931, and they went on to raise a family in Canada. Ivy appears to have emigrated with her family to Quebec in 1912, aged 2, on board the *Teutonic*.²⁹ By the time the 1935 Canada Voting List was drawn up Percy was a storekeeper in Foxboro. In 1945 he is listed as a mechanic (still

²⁶ See *The Long, Long Trail: The British Army in the Great War 1914-1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/the-evacuation-chain-for-wounded-and-sick-soldiers/field-ambulances-in-the-first-world-war>).

²⁷ Information kindly supplied by Percy's family.

²⁸ Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919-1924 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁹ Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

in Foxboro); by 1957 he is a fitter, living in Belleville.³⁰ Percy died on the 31st July 1964, aged 69, in Belleville, Ontario. His widow Ivy, died in Belleville, Ontario in 1987, aged 77.

Percy Meale's name is included on the Roll of Honour in All Saints, Stibbard (about 3 miles from Wood Norton) among the list of seventeen servicemen who served from 1914. The Roll of Honour records the men 'who faithfully served their King and Country in the Great War 1914-1919' (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: From the Stibbard Roll of Honour

We are indebted to Percy's family, who have kindly provided us with information regarding his family history, his life in during and after the war, and photographs for use in this research.

³⁰ Canada Voters Lists, 1935-1980 (www.ancestry.co.uk).