

Writings (and a podcast) about HARRY MURRAY VC by Cameron Richards¹



Harry Murray VC. L. c1919 R. showing off his medals in the early 1960s at Glenlyon

Harry Murrays's 2006 statue unveiling in Evandale provides a backdrop to the writing of the 2025 book *Prosperous: The Kennedy Murrays and the origins of historic Evandale in early Colonial Australia* (go to <https://www.amazon.com.au/Prosperous-historic-Evandale-Colonial-Australia/dp/1763785602/>). This book also traces not just (a) Harry's attempts to investigate his Scottish highlander ancestry as a Murray believed to be closely related to the Duke of Atholl Murray line at Blair Atholl, but also (b) the later revelations that his 2 x Great grandfather Kennedy Murray Sr was actually not really a Murray but a verified descendant of the historically significant 'Dean of Lismore' Sir James MacGregor and his direct line. This was a key lineage of the Glenlyon MacGregors, a key family of Clan Gregor. They had had to change their name under threat of death after the 1603 Royal Prohibition because of 'highlander politics' involving the 'theft' of traditional MacGregor lands. On his 1917 trip to visit the Duke of Atholl, Harry Murray had also made a detour to nearby Glenlyon where he developed a close lifelong friendship there – later coincidentally acquiring farm in North-West Queensland named 'Glenlyon' before naming his only daughter after that Glenlyon friend Clementine.

- Also, later in 2025 Cameron made a separate Podcast about Harry from both a family as well as 'wider knowledge' perspective (this was one of a series of four episodes that includes related podcasts about the Kennedy Murrays). To get free access find Episode 177 at <https://creators.spotify.com/pod/profile/familyhistorymysteries/episodes/>

- The summary next page is from Ch. 6 of Cameron's other 2025 book *Exploring Ancestral Memories and (lost family histories'* (go to www.amazon.com.au/Exploring-ancestral-memories-family-histories/dp/1763785645/)

¹ Cameron Richards is the 'great-nephew' of Harry Murray who grew up on a neighboring sheep station in North-West Qld with surviving childhood memories of Harry. His father Neil was about to start work in a local bank when Harry Murray was visiting his sisters in Launceston in 1948 -and invited his close cousin to come up and do some 'jackerooing' for him (then assisted Neil to later buy his own sheep station on a neighboring property).

Harry Murray – p.55 of *Exploring ancestral memories and ‘lost family histories’* (2025)

“My interest in exploring my Kennedy Murrays ancestry began after attending the unveiling of a statue of ‘Harry Murray VC’ in his birthplace of Evandale in 2006. This was just up the road from the still-surviving Prosperous (now Fallgrove) House of his grandfather KM Jr – and across the road literally from KM Jr’s original’ Morven District police station at 6 Rodgers Lane (built by himself on his own land) and likewise the c1830 Murray school next door at 8 Rodgers Lane. There were various ‘mysteries’ in Harry’s life that relate to the fate of Prosperous House and farmlands. A key one related to how Harry’s father Edward Kennedy Murray was supposed to inherit a large section of the main farm – and was perhaps most affected at the age of about 20 when the farm was sold off in a ‘fire sale’ in the early 1860s after his father’s death. I have come to understand how this not only affected the family in general – but especially Edward (and by extension his son Harry in the 1890s and beyond). In Frankl & Slatyer’s book *‘Mad Harry: Australia’s most decorated soldier’* (2003), they recall a telling anecdote. This concerned Harry telling his nephew Joe Murray Cocker on a 1948 visit that he did not want to visit his father’s grave because they had fallen out before Harry’s departure as a young man for the Western Australian goldfields (the last time he had seen his father alive). They go on to record how Harry then dramatically changed his mind and, after visiting both his father’s grave and the adjoining family crypt of his grandfather KM (and finding both overgrown with weeds), organised to have the Kennedy Murray family crypt maintained into the future.

In a way the ‘main reader’ I visualised for the Prosperous book (as also a Murray family history) was actually Harry or rather his memory. I can still vividly remember his presence as a young boy on regular Christmas and other visits (from before he died in 1966) to the neighbouring property of Glenlyon inherited by his son Doug (my father’s lifelong ‘brother’ as well as cousin). With some of his WW1 (and also WW2) memorabilia kept on ‘living room display’ there in following decades, I grew up planning to write a book someday about Harry. But by the time I was ready to do so (c2006), two other books had been written about him. In the Frankl & Slatyer’s book, Harry is also recorded at various instances referring to the inspiration of his assumed Scottish highlander ancestry for his attitudes, values and standards as both a soldier and a man in his private life.

This includes how after the great 1917 investiture in London’s Hyde Park (when Harry was the star of the show after being presented by King George with two earlier DSOs as well as his VC), Harry had been invited to Blair Atholl Castle in Scotland by the head of the Murray clan the 8th Duke of Atholl (John Stewart-Murray) to discuss their possible family tree connections [Harry had assumed from the family history mythology that KM Sr was a relation of the Atholl Murrays]. And on that same visit Harry had made a side trip to nearby Glen Lyon and developed a relationship there with Clementine Montgomery and her parent’s family. This was just a decade or so before he bought the sheep station at Richmond (Qld) coincidentally named ‘Glenlyon’. Somehow I really wanted to be able to report to ‘Harry’s memory’ that (a) not only was he actually descended from a pivotal ‘hidden MacGregor’ lineage of Clan Gregor, but also verifiably from the Glen Lyon family of the auspicious Sir James MacGregor (c1480—1551), and (b) that he had really been visiting the ancestral family lands on those 1917-1919 visits to visit the Montgomerys. In any case, my podcast about Harry on Family History Mysteries reflects the kind of overview of his personal or family life (as well as his military career) that I might have written a book about if I had got to that earlier.”