**Perdriau fortune origins**

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HOW RUBBER CAME TO AUSTRALIA.

**Henry Perdriau Tells a Story that is a Romance**

Over in Mosman, Sydney, hard by the bowling green, there lives a man who was born in Balmain 81 years ago. He has seen Sydney grow from a small city to the second “white city” in the Empire, and has himself played a great part in the making of it. His name is Henry Perdriau.

We shall leave Mr. Perdriau to tell his own story about the romantic rise of the great business that bears his name, but. we may add a few words of a personal character about this remarkable man himself.

Religious and philanthropic affairs have found in him a warm friend. He belongs to the Presbyterian Church, of which he has been an Elder for 20 years. He has also taken a great interest in Freemasonry. He joined the Balmain Lodge as far back as 1870, and is still a subscribing member. He was Master of this Lodge In 1883, and in 1926 was presented by his fellow Masons with a golden token to commemorate the jubilee of his membership.

For five years Mr. Perdriau was president of the Gladstone Park Bowling Club, and for about six years president of the Drummoyne Club. When the sun shines he is generally to be seen nowadays at the Warringah green, opposite his residence.

“Yes, eighty-one years is a long time, but I come of a long-lived family, and who knows that I won’t live to be a hundred. I still play bowls, and there's no telling! Every man ought to have some form of recreation. The trouble with so many of us is that we make a recreation of our business. Don 't misunderstand that remark. I don't mean that business is treated lightly, but rather the opposite — we throw all our energies into it, all our strength, and derive our chief enjoyment from it. That's a good thing, of course, so long as we don't overdo it.

“I can look back on a long business life; always at. it, always happy in it. In my own way, I think I have done a little for the good of our country. Under Providence, I have had a successful business life; and it has given me pleasure to see that my own success has meant success for others as well. I began in a small enough way. I was born, you may say, in the days of small things. Balmain, where I first saw the light, was a very small place then, and Drummoyne. where to-day we employ some 1500 people in our factory, was a name only. Sydney was a straggling, and struggling city - struggling, so to speak, out of its swaddling clothes. No railways, no telephone. The teams came down George-street. Cobb and Co.'s coaches brought the mails in from the country.

“It was in the year I was born that Joseph Fowles brought out his “Sydney in 1848.” You will find it interesting to look at nowadays. It contains some drawings of the streets and buildings of the time — the old military barracks (how well I remember it), the original little store of David Jones, the quaint old post office, and many other old places that have long since disappeared. Yes, I remember, too, the old Tank Stream. It was there all right when I was a boy. The fishermen used to row their boats up to - well, it was little below where the “Herald” office now stands. That was considered one of the best buildings of the city in my young days. Now a far greater one has taken its place.

“Look around! Magnificent buildings in every street where the grass was growing then! Sydney has a great destiny before it; nothing can prevent it.

**“Great Oaks from Little Acorns.”**

“But you have asked me to tell the story of Perdriau's. You are right — it's a romance! It begins with the year 1881. You will remember the old Balmain ferry service which my father used to run.; Having had some engineering training, I was soon giving him a hand with the ferry. Rubber was one of our chief difficulties — -or rather lack of it. Rubber was required for various purposes on the boats; and when these rubber goods were delayed, we were put to a great deal of inconvenience. At. last I decided to order an especially large supply, and to my astonishment more than five times the quantity of goods we required was sent. I knew, however, that other people were requiring such goods; and having something of a business head on me, I opened a small store in Erskine-street, placed a man in charge, and announced to my friends in the engineering line that I was in a position to supply their needs. So, you may say, it was an accident that brought Perdriau's into existence — a lucky accident! Great oaks from little acorns grow!

“I found I was supplying a commodity that was in constant demand, and so I continued to import these rubber goods. Then, as I became more interested in rubber than in the ferry business, I went in exclusively for it. Having looked into the manufacturing possibilities, I decided to establish a factory at the corner of Erskine and Clarence streets for the manufacture of such classes of rubber goods as we did not have in stock. With that decision—the factory started in 1885—began an activity and prosperity that astonished us all.

“I made all sorts of moulded rubber goods. Looking back now, I remember, among the many moulded goods I made were the rubber grips for the sculls that helped William Beach to retain his title as the world's sculling champion.

**Getting the Right Men.**

“The manufacturing side of the business continued to grow in importance, and my next move was into George-street, with the factory at the rear of the warehouse premises. We have never looked back.

“Every successful businessman will tell you how much he owes to the men he has succeeded in getting round him. Perhaps there is some luck in it; but, at the same time, one must have what is called a ‘good knowledge of men’ — one must know a good man when he comes along, and know how to keep him. It cuts both ways, of course. Just as a good employer treats his men well, and sees that they prosper as he prospers, so the good employee strives to give the best that is in him when he knows that his efforts will be rewarded. I have certainly been fortunate in the men I have been able to gather round me, and I am glad to say that in the big merger with the Dunlop Company I have been able to see that they are placed in very important positions. There are now few more highly paid men. in Australia than those of my directors who. have been taken over by the big £6,000,000 company. They have worked hard for it, and they have been rewarded.

“One of the boys employed in that old factory of mine was Albert Fenton. Later he became works manager at our big Drummoyne factory. Now he is one of the managing directors of the: Dunlop-Perdriau Company — a fine example of what ability and application and steady determination will do.

“My son, E. M. Perdriau, joined the firm in 1896, and has identified himself with both the manufacturing and commercial side of the business. Ho has made many visits to England and America to keep up to date with the industry, and also spent a considerable time in the Straits Settlements, in Ceylon and elsewhere studying, the production and preparation of rubber. Now he becomes vice-chairman of the new company.

“Shall I tell you how Harold Daniell came to join us? Well, he had begun a course of engineering at Birmingham, and arriving as a lad in Australia he decided to interview the manager of Mort's Dock with a view to continuing his training. He was informed that they could not find room for another apprentice for some months to come, and he was walking back up Erskine-street on his return to the city, when he was attracted by the interesting display of rubber goods in my window. The next moment he was inside asking me for a job. I thought him a very bright fellow, and I put him on there and then, and he has remained with us ever since. Identified with both the administrative and the manufacturing sides of the business, he has kept closely in touch with developments in all branches. In fact, you might almost say he’s made of rubber — especially if you were to see him when he's matched against Beaurepaire or some other champion swimmer!

“Mr. Daniell and Mr. Chester C. Cross, who has also been associated with the business ever since he was a boy (he is the master organiser on the sales side) have now been appointed executive directors of the new Dunlop-Perdriau Company.

“You will notice that they all have one thing in common— a great love of sport. And that brings me back to what I was saying about business and recreation. Keep fit! — that's the motto. My son is a prominent member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Club, and when he feels a bit jaded he will take a little run to Broken Bay or Port Stephens and indulge in deep-sea fishing. Mr. Cross used to play in inter-State tennis, though he now goes in chiefly for golf, I believe. Mr. Daniell used to be a champion swimmer—still is, they tell me. And there's myself! Bowls; sir! But I haven't got the rubber in me that I used to have. And when the weather is not just what it ought to be, and I must needs stay at home, I get hold of my flute. I had lessons on the flute from John Lemmone. The great thing is to keep as young as you can as long as you can.

**Always in the Front.**

“Undoubtedly one of the reasons why the business grew so rapidly was because the Board was almost entirely composed of young men. Instead of growing old and out of date, we have always made a point of keeping up with the latest developments in the rubber trade. Let me give you an example. We had balloon tyres out on the road as a commercial proposition at a time when in other parts of the world they were still regarded as being in the experimental stage.

“We have not hesitated to instal the biggest and latest type of mills and colanders. Those at the Drummoyne factory are not only of the very latest design from an engineering point of view, but there is nothing bigger in the world. I. think that speaks well for Australia. We have done some big things, apart from the manufacture of tyres and general rubber goods. We pride ourselves on never having declined any work into which rubber enters, no matter how big, no matter how difficult. For instance, the installation of the first belt at the Kembla coal-loading plant many years ago was something new for us at that time — the biggest rubber belt in the world, as it then was. That has now been eclipsed by the great rubber belt at the Morwell coal plant in Victoria, where they use thousands of feet of belting 42 inches wide. It was at the Perdriau works that the first 'Morwell' belt installation was manufactured.

“We will take on anything in the rubber business that can be turned out in any other part of the world. We are afraid of nothing. That is not intended as boastfulness, but merely as a tribute to the brains and the skill of Australians. It is also intended as a recognition of our indebtedness to the protective tariff which the Federal Parliament has given us. There has always been a reasonable duty, and there has been no necessity for years' past for any rubber goods to be ordered from abroad.

“It is pleasing to know that when he paid his brief visit to Australia to complete the negotiations in connection with the DunIop-Perdriau merger, Sir Eric Geddes commented most favourably on the whole installation and layout of our works at Drummoyne. The factory is situated at the entrance to the Parramatta River, and we have all the advantages of water transport. The splendid natural lighting is also one of the chief features of the factory, which is always full of work. A little while ago we made our millionth tyre. That, I think it will be admitted, is a proud achievement for this Australian industry. We have our branch houses in all the capital cities, and Perdriau tyres have penetrated into all parts of the Commonwealth. Mechanical and general rubber goods, garden hose, mackintosh clothing and sandshoes are also turned out by the factory in almost unlimited quantities.

**Figures That Talk.**

“Formed into a limited liability company in 1904, with a paid-up capital of £40,000, the Perdriau Company, before the merger, had a subscribed capital of one and a half millions, provided by over 3000 Australian shareholders. Our employees then numbered 2300, with an annual wage bill of over a million sterling.

“In the merger with the Dunlop Company, which recently took place, the share consideration received by Perdriau shareholders, in the new Dunlop-Perdriau Company amounted to £1,950,000. I think there are few instances of such striking expansion.

“I may say that the Barnet Glass Company began manufacturing at almost the same time as I did, and they have worked very largely along parallel lines. Mr. F. S. Ormiston, who was associated with Bamet Glass from the beginning has now joined the Dunlop-Perdriau combination as a managing director, and the Hon. W. A. Watt is chairman of directors. The original personnel of the Dunlop Company remain at its full strength, plus the six new men I have mentioned. Oh, yes, I am on the Board, too.

“With a capital of £6,000,000 an enormous expansion of this great industry is bound to take place. I would not be human it I were not proud of what has come out of that little Erskine-street store.''