

# Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 157

## **EDWARD CLARK**

### **1884 - 1952**



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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

**Cover Illustration:** *Edward Clark, QATB officer, Rockhampton, in 1950*

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
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## **Warrant Officer Class 1 Edward Clark DCM**

For 'courage, coolness and contempt for danger' during the Battle of Broodseinde in October 1917, Edward Clark of the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) – at that time second only to the Victoria Cross in gallantry awards for those of non-commissioned rank.

Edward enlisted in Brisbane in August 1914, the month in which recruiting commenced. He subsequently served at Gallipoli in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, in France and Belgium with the 5<sup>th</sup> Sanitary Section and then the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, and achieved the senior rank of Warrant Officer Class 1.

After the war Edward returned to the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade (QATB), serving for 33 years as a superintendent, including in Rockhampton 1930-1952. An obituary in 1952 said that he:

...had an extensive knowledge of ambulance work and was an excellent organiser. He was an ideal ambulance superintendent and was held in the highest esteem by his committee and by citizens of Rockhampton and the surrounding districts.

He was buried in the North Rockhampton Cemetery, being survived by his wife and three sons.

### **Early life**

Edward was born in April 1884 in Darlington, Durham, England, the second of five children of Henry Clark, an engine driver and Jane nee Foster. He served a three-year apprenticeship with the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Co., Darlington and worked as a specialist machinist.

Outside of work Edward had a keen interest in first aid – he studied anatomy and physiology, qualified in first aid and home nursing and, as a volunteer, taught first aid in the northern counties. In addition, he was a signalling instructor in the Durham Light Infantry volunteers and a non-commissioned officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

He migrated to Australia in late 1911 and joined the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade (QATB).

### **Enlistment**

Soon after enrolments for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance (3<sup>rd</sup> FA) began, Edward enlisted in Brisbane on 21 August 1914. He was one of three members of the QATB who enlisted very early and are on the Saint Andrew's Honour Boards – the others are ES Pilcher (booklet no.24) and AE Beech (booklet no.110).

Standing 168cms tall, Edward weighed 67kg and had blue eyes, dark brown hair and a fresh complexion. His religion was Church of England. Given his experience it is little surprise that he was promoted Corporal on 7 September 1914. He embarked in Brisbane on the HMAT *Rangatira* A22 on 25 September 1914, and further promotion - to Lance Sergeant - was made on board on 1 December 1914, eight days before the *Rangatira* reached Alexandria.

### **Gallipoli**

The stretcher-bearer component of the 3<sup>rd</sup> FA went ashore at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. The official records don't disclose whether Edward was in this group, but given his first aid expertise he was probably in the 'tents' component and assisted on the hospital ships until going ashore a few days later.

This is fortified by the fact that in Divisional Orders on 13 July 1915 he received 'special mention for gallantry or valuable service during the period 6 May to 28 June 1915'.



*The 3rd Field  
Ambulance Dressing  
Station on Beach  
Road, above Anzac  
Cove*

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Edward was promoted to Sergeant at Gallipoli on 3 August 1915, and must have had tremendous stamina to endure the conditions and survive the dangers on the Peninsula until 24 November 1915, when he was admitted to hospital with the annotation 'cardiac'.

### **Sanitary Section**

After the evacuation from Gallipoli in December 1915, the AIF underwent major re-organisation in early 1916 while in Egypt. Each of the Australian Divisions formed in that re-organisation had a Sanitary Section in the Medical Corps component that was attached to each Division.

On 28 February 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir Edward was placed with the 5<sup>th</sup> Sanitary Section attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division, and a fortnight later he was promoted to Staff Sergeant.

These sanitary sections were commanded by a qualified medical practitioner and had five NCOs and 20 Privates. Official historian AG Butler wrote that 'with notably little exception the selection of their personnel ensured a very high standard of achievement' in relation to various preventative health measures.

Edward arrived in Marseilles on 30 June 1916 and the 5<sup>th</sup> Division moved by train to the north of France. The Division suffered grievously in the Battle of Fromelles and the infantry required a lengthy period of recovery and integration of numerous reinforcements. No doubt Edward and the rest of the Sanitary Section would have been busy educating new arrivals and pursuing various means to limit illness within the Division.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance**

In January 1917 Edward was transferred to the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, and the next month was promoted to Warrant Officer Class 1 in that unit.

During 1917 the 6<sup>th</sup> FA supported the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division at Lagnicourt, Bullecourt, Menin Road, Broodseinde and Poelcappelle. It was during the Battle of Broodseinde that Edward earned the DCM.



*A Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded to Edward Clark in 1917*

The recommendation said:

During the recent operations near Zonnebeke, this N.C.O. was constantly supervising the relays of ambulance bearers and forwarding medical stores and rations from Bellewaarde to the R.A.Ps. On night 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> while superintending this work at Westhoek the dump came under heavy shell fire one man was killed beside him and another wounded. He dressed the wounded man sent him to a place of safety and carried on sending forward the stores which were urgently needed.

By his courage, coolness and contempt for danger he kept his men together and effectively saved a critical situation at a time when shortage of stores and personnel would have seriously hampered the successful clearing of the wounded from the front.

In the first part of 1918 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and hence the 6<sup>th</sup> FA, were successively engaged at Ville-sur-Ancre, Morlancourt and Hamel. There were later engagements but Edward took no part in these, embarking at Tarantino on 24 September 1918 on the HT *Devon* and arriving back in Australia on 23 November 1918. He was formally discharged in Australia on 24 January 1919.



*The destruction on  
Westhoek Ridge.  
1917*

## Post war

Soon after his return - on 11 December 1918 - Edward married Brisbane-born clerk Hilda Eglinton in St Thomas's Church, Toowong with Church of England rites. Hilda's father Dudley was prominent in early Brisbane as a teacher, then secretary of the Brisbane School of Arts, and a dedicated astronomer. Edward and Hilda went on to have three sons – Edward Graham Eglinton, Arthur Neville and John Durham.

Edward resumed with the QATB and was quickly promoted to superintendent of the Clifton Centre (on the Darling Downs), taking up duty there in March 1919. That year there was the challenge of an outbreak of pneumonic influenza - with the QATB staff including in their activities the fumigation of schools and houses.

After six years Edward was transferred to the Mt Morgan Centre. He spent four years there in what was a troubled time – in 1927/28 the Mount Morgan Gold Mining company went into liquidation and the financial impact on the town was severe. Moreover, the QATB building, including Edward's residence, burnt down in January 1928. In the latter event Edward lost nearly all his possessions including his Army discharge papers.



*Ambulance Station  
Mount Morgan  
c1920*

In April of 1929 Edward transferred to the Rockhampton Centre and was the superintendent there until his death in 1952. A 1950 history of the Rockhampton Centre spoke highly of him and that 'his heart (was) wrapped up in everything appertaining to the Ambulance Brigade'.



*QATB Rockhampton. 1920s*

Other recognition came in the form of the award of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in the late 1940s. Outside of work Edward was a foundation officer of the Freemason Keppel Lodge in 1930, in which he served as Worshipful Master in 1937 and as Lodge Chaplain for several years.

### **Finale**

Edward was also Secretary of the Ambulance Superintendents' Union, and he collapsed and died outside the Industrial Court in Brisbane in 1952, where he was opposing an application for the variation of the ambulance employees' award.

His newspaper obituary said:

The principle he was fighting for was one that would not affect him materially, but he believed in working for the betterment of conditions under which his members worked. He believed in putting the needs of others before his own. That attitude was also exemplified in his ambulance work.

After a funeral in St Paul's Cathedral, Rockhampton, Edward was buried in the North Rockhampton Cemetery with Anglican rites.

In his memory, a new car for the Rockhampton Ambulance Brigade (No.20) had an engraved plaque affixed and was known as the 'Edward Clark Memorial Car'.

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Written by Ian Carnell  
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*Lest we forget*