

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 169

HUGH RICHARD EDWARDS

1892— not known



Bootle Docks, Merseyside, Liverpool

This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.
Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

Cover Illustration: *Hugh Edwards was born at Bootle, Liverpool in 1892.
When and how he came to Australia is not yet known.
At St John's in Bootle in 1917 he married Alice Allsop.*

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
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Lieutenant Hugh Richard Edwards

Hugh Richard Edwards enlisted in Brisbane on 25 February 1915. His attestation paper showed his birthplace as Bootle Liverpool and he was given the number 1937. He was born in mid 1892, his height 5ft 6ins (168cm) and weight 140lbs (64kg). He had a fair complexion, grey eyes and brown hair, and his religious denomination was Congregational. His trade was given as painter. Bootle Docks was created as a part of the Mersey Docks and Sandringham Lane is not far from where Antony Gormley's collection of statues (*Another Place*) extends along the beach.

He was placed with the 15th Infantry Battalion-1 to 23 Reinforcements (December 1914 - November 1916) and then transferred to the 47th Battalion.

Initially he nominated his brother John Abram Edwards as his next of kin. John's address was c/- Resident Engineers at Yamba Qld. There is no record of an 'engineers residence' at Yaamba Q but in Yamba NSW there is reference to an office and residence of the Resident Engineer for river training works being removed to Yamba in 1888. That work was abandoned in 1903 and the Resident Engineer Office closed to be demolished in 1918.

However, upon his marriage to Alice Henson Allsop on 27 March 1917 at the Parish Church of St John at Bootle, Hugh's next of kin was changed on 22 May 1918 to his wife. The signature on this somewhat late request appears to be 'Allsop' and the writing resembles that in the marriage register and thus the request may have come from Rev Lester the vicar who married them.

Hugh left Brisbane on the HMAT *Kyarra*¹ in April 1915 and his Unit was at Gallipoli in June 1915. At the end of July and in August he was admitted to hospital on several occasions for eczema and influenza. He was transferred to No 2 Stationary hospital in Mudros on Lemnos.

After having fought at Gallipoli, Lemnos was a most uninteresting place, except for the beautiful harbour at Mudros, on which numbers of ships lay at anchor. The island, covered with loose stones, contained no more than a few primitive Greek villages, with whitewashed cottages and thatched roofs. If the monotony (apart from the guns) of Gallipoli appalled them, there was certainly little change of scene at Lemnos.²

On 17 September, Edwards rejoined his unit at Gallipoli. He was promoted first to Lance Corporal, then to Corporal and then Sergeant as he replaced others who were wounded. In late December 1915 he was transferred via *Ascanius* from Mudros to Alexandra.

1. The *Kyarra* was a 6,953 ton steel cargo and passenger luxury liner, built in Scotland in 1903 for the Australian United Steam Navigation Company. Her name was taken from the aboriginal word for a small fillet of possum fur.

For ten years *Kyarra* sailed between Fremantle, Western Australia, where she was registered, and Sydney, New South Wales carrying cargo and passengers.

On 6 November 1914 she was requisitioned and converted into a hospital ship (HMAT A.55 *Kyarra*) for the purpose of transporting Australian medical units to Egypt. The hull was painted white with a large red cross on the side. In March 1915, *Kyarra* was converted into a troop transport. Commonwealth control ended 4 January 1918.

On 5 May 1918, *Kyarra* was sailing from Tilbury to Devonport (UK) to embark civilian passengers and take on full general cargo. However she was sunk by *UB-57* near Swanage with the loss of six lives.

(Wikipedia. *Kyarra*. Accessed February 2017)

2. Sister Rachel Pratt, M.M., A.A.N.S., describing her experiences in the nursing of sick and wounded Anzacs from Gallipoli

In March 1916 he was transferred to the 47th Battalion and in June travelled to Marseilles via the *Caledonia*. December saw him in hospital again suffering from laryngitis and influenza. In mid December he sailed from Calais to England.

He was appointed to undergo training as an officer and by July 1918 was promoted to Second Lieutenant and to Lieutenant in December leaving Southampton for France. On 12 October he was detached to the 4th Army Musketry School in France. He returned to England to London General Hospital with tonsillitis.

Prior to his return to Australia he was granted leave from 27 April to 27 July, 1917 with pay, in order to attend a 'Course of instruction in Plumbing and General Contracting'. Rail Warrants were provided to and from Liverpool (£1/8/8 about \$2.80), a subsistence allowance of 6/- (60 cents) a day paid, and clothing provided – a suit (£2/5/6 about \$4.55) and overalls (14/11 \$1.50). The report at the conclusion of his NME (Non Military Employment) said that 'experience gained should help him considerably as the work he has been engaged in is various. He has made himself very useful while he has been with us. Conduct in general has been very good'. His paybook however was debited with 3/9 (38c) for deficiencies with tools.

It would seem that claims were lodged against Edwards for unpaid accounts in the United Kingdom, France and Belgium leading to him certifying that "I have settled all known claims and accounts owing by me to tradesmen and others in the United Kingdom, France and Belgium" and "should any accounts of which I am not now aware be submitted...after my departure from England I desire them to be forwarded to the following address in Australia..."

This points to a problem that had appeared resulting in a cable dated 22 March which refers to "claims by Messrs Pratt against Officers and number similar claims [sic]" and requiring that officers "pay debts before embarking...and sign a certificate to that effect"

Edwards was awarded the Victory Medal, the British War Medal and the 1914/15 Star. He returned to Australia on the *Ascanius* for discharge in January, 1920.

Hugh's name appears on the electoral rolls in Brisbane for only 1916 and 1917, and there is no record of his returning to the United Kingdom although records of such moves were not kept accurately. There is also no record of Alice either arriving in or leaving Australia.

At present no death record can be located for Hugh or Alice up to 1986 in Queensland, NSW or Victoria and there is no obvious UK death record (which go up to 1979) for Alice and definitely not one for Hugh. Did he live to a ripe old age?

In the 1921 Wharf Street Congregational Church membership list the country members include a Mrs JA Edwards - perhaps she was Hugh's sister-in-law? There is no sign of Hugh or Alice or Mr and Mrs JA Edwards in the 1910, 1914 or 1919 membership lists.

Reference List

National Archives of Australia, military Records, WW1

The Yamba History Tour. Port of Yamba Historical Society 10th August, 2013 (accessed 9 Feb 2017)

Through These Lines: WestMudros accessed 9 Feb 2017 (throughtheselines.com.au)

Bootle. Wikipedia accessed 9 February 2017

Australian War Memorial. First World War Embarkation Roll

Australian Electoral Rolls

Ancestry.com.au

Archives.com

1921 Year Book, Wharf Street Congregational Church, Brisbane

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Lest we forget