

Colour Patch of
20th battalion.

Private Harold Arthur EDWARDS + 2653 – 20th Battalion, 6th Reinforcements

Born: 1895, registered Molong, NSW.

Parents: Thomas & Emily Edwards

NoK: Father, Mr T Edwards

Occupation: Labourer (Blacksmith)

District Connection: Yeoval, Cumnock

Enlistment Date: 22 Jul 1915, Liverpool, NSW.

Enlistment Age: 21yrs 4 months stated, but actually 20yrs.

Embarkation: 2 Nov 1915, Sydney, *HMAT Euripides A14*

Fate: Died of illness, 22 Nov 1915, 20yrs.

Buried: At sea.

Honour Boards: Chatby Memorial, Alexandria, Egypt;
National War Memorial, Canberra; Yeoval Roll of Honour; &
Cumnock War Memorial Gates;

Biography:

Harold Edwards was the third child of Thomas and Emily (nee Liscombe) Edwards born in 1895. He had two older sisters, Bertha born 1892, and Lillian born 1893. Younger brothers were Bertrum, born 1897; Stanley, born 1906; and twins Arnold and Hector born 1908. All births were registered at Molong.

Thomas Edwards was a son of Ann (Nee Sills) and Arthur Edwards. The couple had been assisted married immigrants from Leicestershire, England, and arrived in Sydney on the *Conway* on 30 December 1856. They had three children, William born 1858 and Eliza born 1864, registered at Molong, and Thomas born 1868, registered at Wellington. Arthur and Ann Edwards moved from Molong to the property "Buckinbar" at Yeoval to live by the 1890s. Arthur Edwards died in 1897 and Ann Edwards died in 1903 at the residence of her son, Thomas.

Harold was a keen footballer, tennis player and cricketer before the War. Together with other local lads, he travelled to Liverpool to enlist in the AIF on 22 Jul 1915. His medical examination stated that he was 21 years and four months old (but was actually 20yrs old), 5 feet 7 inches tall, had a ruddy complexion, blue eyes, brown hair and was of the Church of England religious denomination. His occupation was listed as a labourer and that he had served 12 months apprenticeship with "J Miscombe, Blacksmith." (J Miskell, Blacksmith Yeoval, had his forge destroyed by fire in January 1914 and left Yeoval March 1914.

The Molong Argus – 22 Oct 1915, p4, reported on Harold's last leave before embarking overseas: "Two of Yeoval's soldier lads, Harold Edwards, eldest son of Mr and Mrs T Edwards, and Alf Johnson [Pte 6604 Alfred Arnold Johnson 20th Btn], son of Mrs C Johnson, arrived from Liverpool camp on Saturday. As Yeoval allows none of her soldiers to depart without some little memento in recognition of their response to the call of the Empire, they were entertained at a farewell gathering and each presented with a wristlet watch. They returned to Liverpool on Wednesday."

Pte Harold Edwards embarked on *HMAT Euripides A14* from Sydney on 2 Nov 1915 as a member of the 20th Battalion, 6th Reinforcements.

Trooper 1444 Thomas John Boorer - 6th Light Horse Regiment from Gloucester, NSW, on board the *HMAT Euripides A14* wrote a letter home about the voyage which was published in *The Gloucester Advocate*, 19 Jan 1916, p2. He remarked that the *Euripides* had to call into Melbourne and Albury to disembark sick soldiers as mumps, diphtheria and pneumonia diseases were prevalent on board and on the deaths of two soldiers who were buried at sea, one on 22nd and one on 23rd November.

Pte 3321 Stephen Henry Harper – 2nd Battalion, a 21yr old miner from Tingha, Inverell, NSW, died at 7.55am on 22 Nov 1915, as a result of complications post mumps. He was buried at sea at 10.40am the same day.

Pte 2653 Harold Edwards died at 10.10pm on 22 Nov 1915, from pneumonia. He was buried at sea at 6am on 23 November.

The Molong Argus, 10 Dec 1915, p4, reported in the Cumnock section of the paper:

“Much regret was felt locally when word was received that Private Harold Edwards had died at sea from that fell disease, pneumonia. The young soldier, who was the eldest son of Mr Thos. Edwards, of Yeoval, was a keen footballer and all-round sport, and was one of those who could always be trusted to play the game in any company and place. To his sorrowing relatives we extend our heartfelt sympathy.”

The Wellington Times, 23 Dec 1915, p5, published a “Return Thanks” from Mr & Mrs T Edwards thanking Rev. AW Leavers and others for their kind expressions of sympathy in their recent sad bereavement and also ran an In Memorium. *The Molong Argus*, 24 Dec 1915, p4, Yeoval, also reported:

IN LOVING MEMORY.
In loving memory of our dear son,
H. A. Edwards, who died while on active service, Nov. 22nd, 1915, aged 20 years and 8 months. Gone, but not forgotten.
No loved ones stood around him
To catch his last faint sighs,
Or whisper just one loving word
Before he closed his eyes.
Inserted by his loving parents, T. and E. Edwards.

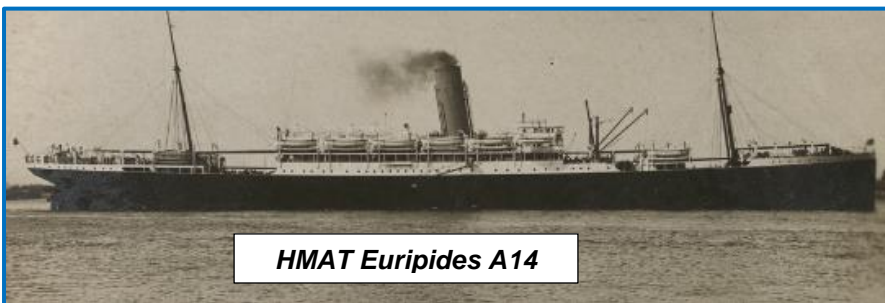
At the Union Church on Sunday last the Rev. C. W. Leavers conducted a memorial service in honor of the late Patrick Harold Edwards, son of Mr and Mrs T. Edwards, who died at sea from pneumonia on 22nd November on board the Euripides, bound for Egypt. The church, which was appropriately draped for the occasion with black and purple, was crowded to the utmost long before the appointed service hour. Mrs Scobie presided at the organ, and at the close of the service played the Dead March, after which the National Anthem was sung.

Thomas Edwards received Pte Harold Edwards' British War medal.

Harold's younger twin brothers both served in WW2. Pte Arnold Keith Edwards served in the Australian Army (NX156035 & N352527) with the 16 Australian Small Ship Company. He died on 30 Aug 1948, aged 46yrs. Pte Hector Vivian Edwards served in the Australian Army (NX122560 & N198697) with the 2/1 Australian Infantry Battalion.

Harold's mother, Emily Edwards, died on 25 Dec 1934, aged 62yrs. Thomas Edwards, their father, died on 2 Dec 1951, aged 84yrs. They are buried in the Yeoval Cemetery.

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2653 Pte Harold Arthur Edwards is also included on p249, of the WW1 book, *Wellington's Finest*, by Trevor Munro & Graeme Hosken, published in 2005.

Harold is commemorated on the Chatby Memorial, Alexandria, Egypt. The Chatby Memorial commemorates almost 1,000 Commonwealth servicemen who died during the First World War and have no other grave but the sea. About 70% of them were lost when 6 hospital ships or transports were sunk in the Mediterranean between 1915 and 1918, sailing to or from Alexandria. Others died of wounds or sickness and were buried at sea. He is also commemorated at the National War Museum, Canberra, and on the Yeoval and Cumnock Honour Rolls.

