

## Harold Edwards



**Lance Corporal Harold Edwards**  
**54th Battalion, AIF**  
**Service Number: 2397**

**Born:** 1897, Penrith, NSW

**Died:** 29 May 1918, Bournemouth, England

Harold Edwards was born in Penrith in 1897, the fifth son of George and Malvina (nee Player) Edwards. The family lived in Henry Street Penrith where George worked as a railway employee. After attending school, young Harold worked as a baker. He also had served six months in the cadets before enlisting.

Edwards enlisted on 18 April 1916 and served with the Depot Battalion at Dubbo, NSW until 22 June, when he was allocated to A Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Battalion. On 30 September, Edwards left Sydney aboard *HMAT Aeneas* arriving in Plymouth on 19 November.

After a brief period of training in England, Edwards proceeded overseas to France on 21 December. His Battalion took part in the 2nd Bullecourt and Polygon Wood offensives during 1917. On 11 January 1918, he was promoted to Lance Corporal in the field. Edwards went on leave to England in March and on his return his Battalion took part in the Villers Bretonneux offensive. On 17 April, the 54<sup>th</sup> Battalion was lying in readiness when the Germans unleashed a concerted gas barrage, including mustard, sneezing gas and phosgene, on the villages of Villers-Bretonneux and Bois l'Abbe. Edwards suffered exposure to mustard gas and was admitted to the 55<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance before being transferred to the 61<sup>st</sup> Casualty Clearing Station. On 18 April, he was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Rouen. His condition did not improve and on 23 May he was transferred to Boscombe Military Hospital in Bournemouth Hampshire England for further treatment.

Edwards died as a result of his exposure to mustard gas on 29 May 1918. He was accorded a military funeral on 3 June with a gun carriage, firing party, bugler and pallbearers. Edwards' brother, James, who was in 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford recovering from a gunshot wound to the thigh, was able to attend the funeral. James had enlisted in September 1915 and served with the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He returned to Australia in 1919.

**Memorial Details:**

- Bournemouth East Cemetery, Hampshire, England
- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

**Sources:**

- [National Archives of Australia](#) : B2455 EDWARDS H
- [Australian War Memorial First World War Nominal Roll](#)
- [Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour](#)
- Penrith City Library biography files

**Trove:**

- [Nepean Times 8 June 1918, Pg. 3, Col. 2](#)
- [Nepean Times 9 November 1918, Pg. 3 Col. 4](#)