

## Edith Mary Fletcher

Edith Mary Fletcher was born on 25 September 1913 in Orange, NSW. Her father, Oscar Ward Fletcher, was born in 1885 in Burnley, Lincolnshire, UK. He came to Australia in his twenties, married Jenny Lawrence at Canterbury, NSW in 1912. (Australia, Marriage Index 1788-1950). In 1914, Oscar started a business store in Penrith called Fletchers. In the first six years of Edith's life, her family was very busy. Her parents, Oscar and Jenny had three more children: Frank, who like Edith joined the forces in WW2, Albert (Bert) studied Economics at Sydney University and John graduated as a dentist. While managing a young family, and a mercery store, Oscar Fletcher set up a Soldiers' Memorial Committee in 1919 to raise funds for the Memorial Reserve project. This eventually led to Penrith War Memorial in Memory Park. Oscar was also President of the Penrith Chamber of Commerce in 1930 and an alderman from 1944 to 1948. (Penrith, The Making of a City, Lorraine Stacker, 2014).

In 1920, Edith, at 7 years of age, received best performer award in a recitation of "Daddy's sweetheart". A year later, she performed in a group dance to raise money for the Presbyterian Church, and won a prize for best dressed girl over ten years in a local competition in 1924. At 9 years of age, Edith presented flowers at the unveiling ceremony of the Penrith Soldiers' Memorial on July 8th 1922. (Penrith soldiers memorial brochure held in Penrith Local History Collection.) At 15 Edith won the Maths Honour award at Penrith Intermediate High School. (Nepean Times 1921, 1924, 1928). As a local resident of Penrith, at 21 years, Edith was involved in the St Stephen's Sunday school, helping with the children's singing at Christmas celebrations. (Nepean Times, 1934). In 1934 Edith was the hon secretary of the women's club called the Penrith Jollity Club, who raised funds for the local community. Edith lived with her family at 155 "The Wirral" on Derby Street, Penrith. Wirral means "myrtle corner", and referred to North West county in England. This house has since been replaced by villas.

Edith trained to be a nurse at Prince Henry Hospital and was registered on 6 October 1938. In March 1939, at 26 years of age, she was given a farewell party at Mavis and Brian Lamrock's house in Emu Plains, before travelling to England to work as a nurse. (Nepean Times, 2/3/1939). She travelled there via the TSS Largs Bay steamer. Edith was listed on the UK and Ireland Nursing Register of 1940. In 1939 she was based at Southport, Lancashire and in 1940 was appointed as a nurse to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in Birmingham. She planned to stay in England until the end of 1940, however with the outbreak of war, she was suddenly repatriated to Australia (Nepean Times Jan 1940). Edith was listed on the UK and Ireland Nursing Register of 1940.

In 1942 records from Australian Government Department of Veteran Affairs show Edith (Service Number – NX131538) was enlisted at Tamworth on 25 October 1942 as a Lieutenant with Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) within the AIF – Australian Imperial Force. She was then posted to New Guinea at the beginning of 1942. Her brother Frank, who had joined AIF was also posted to New Guinea ( Nepean Times Jan 1942).

Edith met Richard Von Tiedemann, who was with AIF Australian Imperial Force in Port Moresby. Richard was born on 3 July 1916; he was three years younger than Edith. Richard, before being transferred overseas, had been based at Gladswood Gardens in Double Bay. According to her daughter, Margaret, Edith and Richard met through a "blind date" when they were both working for the Australian army in Lae New Guinea during World War

2. Apparently, they were engaged over phone wired and others tapped into it! Their engagement was announced in the Nepean Times on 2 November 1944, a year before they married in Penrith.

Edith Mary Fletcher married Captain Richard Erdmann von Tiedemann on 14 November 1945 at St Stephen's the Martyr church in Penrith. Mavis Lamrock, wife of Brian Lamrock (Penrith solicitor and alderman) was the Matron of Honour and Captain Sam Wheeler was the best man. Richard was an accountant, and his father, Adolph, had emigrated from Germany as a merchant. (Lorraine Stacker).

In March 1947, Edith gave birth to a daughter, Margaret Louise and in June 1950, a son named William Richard. (SMH). Edith and Richard were living in Vacluse in 1973, when their daughter Margaret's engagement to Paul Ward-Harvey was announced in SMH on 7 February 1973. Paul had his own law firm and served a three year terms as president of Mosman Bowling Club. Edith and Richard had moved to 50 Prince Street Mosman by 1977 (listed on the Electoral Roll), where Edith stayed until her death on 25 November 1985. Her husband, Richard, died on 24 February 2000.