

## Pte. Sidney John "Sid" Edwards (1879-1915)

Sid Edwards was born 11 December, 1879, in Barnstaple, England, in southwestern England. His parents, Mr. And Mrs. Alfred A. Edwards, later brought the family to the United States and settled in Winchester, Massachusetts, eight miles north of Boston. Sid graduated from Winchester High School in ca. 1897 and then attended the Burdette Business College of Boston. He was in the employment of the A.C. Lawrence Leather Co. of Boston for a number of years. He left Massachusetts in 1906 at the age of 27 and traveled west...

August of 1913 finds Sid in the Canadian southern interior, settled in Hedley, having secured employment with the stamp mill of the Hedley Gold Mining Co. (Nickel Plate mine). He became a new member of the Loyal Orange Lodge that month, Hedley's local protestant fraternal organization. He also became a member of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Rocky Mountain Rangers militia unit based in Penticton.

When the war broke out in August 1914, it was but a few months before Sid was off to join the fighting. In November he went to Penticton to join up with the 102<sup>nd</sup> R.M.R. and traveled with the unit from there to the coast where they went into training camp in Victoria.

February 1915 there was a notice in the *Hedley Gazette* stating a photo of Sid was on display in a local shop window, along with another Hedleyite soldier and the "Keremeos boys" in a group photo, all presently at training camp in Victoria. (This group photo of the Keremeos contingent may very well be the same the Hedley Museum is in possession of and, if so, then Sid is in this photo as well.)

And by early March 1915, Sid's unit, the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion, had crossed the Atlantic and was in training camp at Shornecliffe, Kent, England, on the southeastern coast. Sid wrote to a friend in Hedley, "Men have been sent from here to the front and been killed in two

with him and wrote home the following, "...the one thing that always eases my mind is the fact that we won the position we went after, though the cost was pretty heavy... men were falling thick and fast that night; it was the 20<sup>th</sup> of May at a place near La Bassa... I crawled out the best I could over the dead and dying, which were about in hundreds... It was cruel work as the shells were dropping in hundreds about us all the way, and for some distance the machine gun fire rained on us like hail."

Charlie Christiana, another Hedleyite serving with the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, wrote to a Hedley friend, "the enemy likes to find out where the machine guns are and then shell hell out of us – that's how poor Sid was caught... some of the boys saw him buried on the battlefield and notified his parents."

Sid was the first of the six Hedley machine gunners to be killed in the war. Soon after notice of his death was received in Hedley, the town raised \$3,000 within a matter of weeks, for the purchase of machine guns for the Canadian infantry. Accounting for inflation, this amount raised translates to about \$70,000 today – from a town with a population of less than 400. Due to Hedley's prodigious fund raising, the townspeople dubbed themselves "the machine gun town" when they sent their group of new recruits off to enlist.

A lieutenant of Sid's former platoon wrote to his father, "About two weeks ago he was taken from my platoon to help to form a machine gun section and it was while acting in that capacity that he was killed by the bursting of a shell. It will be a little consolation to you to know that he did not suffer at all, for he was killed instantly, and also to know that he was a general favorite with everybody with whom he was brought into contact. I feel like all the members of the platoon that I have lost a brother. He was certainly a son to be proud of and his was a glorious end, one which I would look upon with pride if he was a son of mine."

Pte. Sidney John Edwards is memorialized on the Vimy Memorial in France, as he has no known grave. He was 35 years of age at the time of his death.

### **Hedley Boy Killed In Action**

A letter received by Mr. Alfred J. Edwards of Winchester, Mass., reports the death of his son, Sidney J. Edwards in Belgium on the night of May 20<sup>th</sup>. He was instantly killed by the bursting of a shell while performing duty as a member of a machine gun section.

Sidney John Edwards was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Edwards of Wedgemere Heights, Mass. He was a graduate of the Winchester High School and of the Burdette Business College of Boston. Following his graduation he was in the employ of the A.C. Lawrence Leather Co., of Boston for a number of years. He left Winchester nine years ago and went to the Canadian Northwest where he secured employment in the reduction plant of the Hedley Gold Mining Co., at Hedley, B.C. At the opening of enlistment in Canada, he joined the British forces and was a member of the first Canadian contingent to go to the Continent. He was 36 years of age.

The following letter was received by Mr. Edwards from Lieut. H. Price, of Sid Edward's company:

France, May 24, 1915

To Mr. A.J. Edwards, Winchester, Mass., U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Edwards:

It is with deep regret that I have to tell you about the death of Sidney J. Edwards, who was a member of my platoon. He was killed on the night of May 20<sup>th</sup> while performing his duty as only a Britisher can. About two weeks ago he was taken from my platoon to help to form a machine gun section and it was while acting in that capacity that he was killed by the bursting of a shell. It will be a little consolation to you to know that he did not suffer at all, for he was killed instantly, and also to know that he was a general favorite with everybody with whom he was brought into contact. I feel like all the members of the platoon that I have lost a brother. He was certainly a son to be proud of and his was a glorious end, one which I would look upon with pride if he was a son of mine. I can assure you that you have the heartfelt sympathy of every man in the platoon. Accept my sympathy and believe me, yours very sincerely,

H. Price, Lieut.

The above from the Winchester, (Mass.) Star, refers to Sid Edwards, who worked in the mill and was well and favorably known here, and the news of his death will be read with regret by many of our Hedley people.