

## Private William Henry Edwards, Royal Army Service Corps

died 16 May 1941, Egypt, aged 32



28 Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton

William Henry Edwards was born on 5 January 1909 at Church Bank, Ruyton XI Towns. William was the son of Edwin Edwards, a bricklayer's labourer, and his wife Mary Elizabeth nee Hughes. It has not been possible to identify the date of their marriage.

Edwin was born in Ruyton XI Towns, where his father was a mole and rabbit catcher. Mary's family have not been possible to identify. However, at the time of the 1911 census the family of Edwin Edwards consisted of himself, his wife Louisa – Mary Elizabeth must have died by this time – and three sons of which William Henry was the second. It appears that William's younger half-brother's mother was Louisa. The family were still living at Church Bank.

Between 1911 and 1921 the family seem to have broken up. In the 1921 census William Henry is found living with David and Esther Cross as their adopted son. David was a lorry driver with Cooperative Dairies and Esther worked as a laundress. They had married in 1909 also lived in Ruyton XI Towns and appeared to have no children of their own. The census also records that William Henry's mother was dead. At the time William's half-brothers Richard and George were living with their grandfather Richard, by this time a widower, also in Ruyton.

David Cross died in 1928, and Esther continued to live in Ruyton. The next record we have of William Henry was in the 1939 register where he was living at 28 Sandford Avenue, above a confectioner's shop run by William Headley. The house is now occupied by Mynd DIY.

William Henry is described as a Painter's Labourer. Also living in the house was John Edwards, a Plumber. He was a widower who had been born in Bromfield but had lived in Church Stretton since at least 1911. It has not been possible to establish a connection between the two of them, though it appears they did at least work together.

We know little of William's service career. At the time of his death, he was serving with the 17<sup>th</sup> Base Supply Depot of the Royal Army Service Corps in North Africa. The Corps was essential in providing logistical support to the army, especially important given the demands of the desert campaign. William was killed on 16 May 1941. At that time there was a limited offensive on the border between Egypt and Libya against the Axis forces, and it is possible William was killed as part of that event.

William is buried at Ismailia War Cemetery on the west side of the Suez Canal. Almost 300 Second War casualties are buried there. William is commemorated on the Church Stretton War Memorial.

Esther Cross died in 1942 in Ruyton. It has not been possible to establish when William's father Edwin died.



Ismaili Cemetery, Egypt