

St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



H. C. HEDGER

AUSTRALIAN MUNITIONS WORKER

12TH JULY, 1918

Henry Charles (Harry) HEDGER

Henry Charles Hedger was born at St. Andrews, Guernsey, Channel Islands around 1896 to parents Herbert Brand Hedger & Emily Elizabeth Hedger (nee Stainer).

The 1901 Channel Islands Census recorded Henry Hedger as a 5 year old, living with his family at Buttes, St. Andrew, Guernsey, Channel Islands. His parents were listed as Herbert Hedger (Gardener, aged 28, born England) & Emily Hedger (aged 25, born St. Peter Port, Guernsey). Also listed on this Census was Henry's younger sister – Nelly (aged 2, born St. Andrews, Guernsey).

The Hedger family were passengers on *Ormuz*, which departed from the port of London, England on 14th March, 1902 & had contracted to land at Adelaide, South Australia. The family were listed as Mr H. Hedger (Butcher, aged 28), Mrs E. Hedger (aged 26), Henry Hedger (aged 5) & Nellie Hedger (aged 3).

Herbert Brand Hedger, father of Henry Charles Hedger & foreman of the Norwood Fire Brigade, died on 30th January, 1914 in Adelaide, South Australia.

Henry Charles Hedger, single, Brass Finisher, aged 21, of 197 Parade, Norwood, South Australia, applied for enrolment as a Volunteer for Manufacture of Munitions in Great Britain on 15th November, 1916. Henry Charles Hedger was given a Munition Worker number of 555. Henry Charles Hedger stated on his application that he had been apprenticed with Hitchcox Bros., Flinders St, Adelaide, South Australia for six years & was currently working for the same employers as a Journeyman for a year. He stated he desired to work in England as a Brass Finisher, or Brass Fitter Turner & could give three weeks' notice.

Henry Charles Hedger embarked from Adelaide, South Australia on 16th December, 1916 on *Berrima* & arrived at Plymouth, England on 17th February, 1917.

Henry Charles Hedger commenced work on 26th February, 1917 with Charlton & Co., Newcastle-on-Tyne, as a Brass finisher. He had been sent to Messrs Hawthorn & Leslie prior & on arrival there was informed that there was no work.

Australian Munition/War Worker Henry Charles Hedger died at 9.30 pm on 12th July, 1918 at Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England from Broncho-pneumonia, exhaustion, cardiac failure. The Death Certificate recorded Henry Charles Hedger's address as 4 Wentworth Place, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England.

A death for Henry C. Hedger, aged 23, was registered in the September quarter, 1918 in the district of Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, England.

Australian Munition/War Worker Henry Charles Hedger was buried on 16th July, 1918 at St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland, England – Plot number O. New Ground 673 & has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

H. Rumble, Honorary Secretary of the Australian Munition Workers Association wrote to the North East Coast of England Australian Munitions Workers Association on 20th July, 1918 to advise that Mr R. Charlton, employer of Henry Charles Hedger had asked what arrangements had been made for his employees funeral. Mr Rumble state that £10 were be made by the Australia Government. A special grave had been secured by Mr Rumble for £1. 2. 0d, which "*carried with it the option of buying during 14 years. He then asked what it would cost to buy, I told him about £5. 10. 0d so he decided that I should buy the ground and present the mother with the deeds – so you will see that the man must have done credit to himself. I am sure his mother will be proud of him.*"

In 1931, Mrs E. E. Hedger, of 44 Elizabeth St, Norwood, South Australia, applied for a War Pension in respect of her late son's work as a Munition Worker. She was advised that Munition Workers did not come within the provisions of the War Pensions Act. The letter also stated that in February, 1920 Mrs Hedger had been granted a Compassionate Allowance of 10/- per week pending investigation of her case by the Invalid and Old Age Pensions Branch. Inquires

found that Mrs Hedger's financial circumstances did not warrant a continuance of the allowance & it was cancelled in June, 1920. The letter closed stating that it "had been decided not to re-open cases in which allowances were made to dependents of Munitions Workers and subsequently cancelled."

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Worker Henry Charles Hedger – service number 555, Australian War Worker. He was the son of Mrs Hedger, of 197 Parade, Norwood, South Australia.

Australian Munitions Worker Charles Henry Hedger is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (*Capital Photographer*)

Australian Munitions Workers

Men enlisted under a joint Australian Commonwealth - Imperial Government scheme for providing skilled Australian workers to British war industries during the First World War. Under this scheme the volunteers would receive free passage to Great Britain, an allowance for travel time, a special allowance for the duration of service, and eventual repatriation to Australia. Married men also received a separation allowance, but were required to allot a portion of all their earnings to dependants. The men were expected to work in whatever industries they were directed to by the British Board of Trade, and under the prevailing conditions and wages for the duration of hostilities.

Government newspaper adverts appeared in August, 1916, and the first party of 76 workers departed Australia in September. Groups continued to be recruited and sent at intervals, with the eventual number of workers under the scheme totalling just over 5,000. Almost 1,000 of these had already been working in Britain under private agreements with large firms such as Vickers, and were brought under the conditions of the scheme. An additional 200 former AIF soldiers were also recruited in Britain. Initially only skilled workers were sought, however at the request of the British Government later groups included large numbers of navvies for general labouring.

These men were not members of the Australian Imperial Forces and did not serve in combat units, but were recruited to meet the shortfall in skilled labour that threatened many of Britain's key wartime industries including munitions.

(Source: Australian War Memorial)



*** Note – The Service Record file (72 pages) for Henry Charles Hedger, Australian Munition Worker No. 555is available to view on-line.*



Newspaper Notices

The newspapers at the time were encouraged not to report munition explosions or deaths through TNT poisoning as it would affect the morale of the civilian population and so reports in newspapers are virtually non existant. When the war ended the Australians returned home and life moved on.

MUNITION WORKERS

AUSTRALIANS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Melbourne, Thursday.

The Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) announces that during the period from the inception of the schemes for the despatch of munition workers and navvies to Great Britain up to June 30 last, 2662 munition workers had been disembarked in England for employment on munition and war work. There had also been enrolled under the munition workers' scheme 124 men who had been discharged from the A.I.F. in England for that purpose, and two discharged A.I.F. men had enrolled under the navvies' agreement, making the total number of men engaged in work in Great Britain under both these schemes 4,998. Of this number 384 men had returned to Australia – the majority on account of ill-health. There had been 23 deaths. The agreement of 38 men had been cancelled for disciplinary and other reasons. Six of the men had enlisted in the A.I.F., in England, five men had enlisted in the Royal Navy, and nine men

had enlisted in the British Army, leaving the total number of men still in England under the Commonwealth agreement as 4,533. In addition these men were registered on the index held in Australia House 674 Australian munition workers who proceeded to Great Britain under private contract prior to the inauguration of the Commonwealth scheme. Of the men still in England on June 30, 1918, 87 were waiting return up to that date, 152 men had proceeded to France to engage in special work, and 107 of them had returned again to England. Australian munition workers were employed at 409 different firms or centres, and navvies at 192, and the value of the output produced by the labour of these men was estimated at £6,000,000.

Provision for the payment of munition workers and navvies who proceeded to Great Britain on war work under the agreement with the Commonwealth Government is made in an amendment to the war financial regulations issued today. Munition workers and navvies are to be provided with a free passage from Australia to Great Britain and back. In the case of munition workers a dependants' allowance of 25s a week, with allowances for children, will be made for the first eight weeks after embarkation. Subsequently the allowance will be 20s. Separation allowances equal to that paid in the case of a private in the A.I.F. will be paid to dependants.

(Examiner, Launceston, Tasmania – 30 August, 1918)

DEATHS

HEDGER – On the 12th July, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, of pneumonia, Henry Charles (Harry), eldest son of Mrs and the late H. B. Hedger, of 197, Parade, Norwood.

(The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 22 July, 1918) & (Daily Herald, Adelaide, South Australia – 22 July, 1918) & (Daily Herald, Adelaide, South Australia – 23 July, 1918) & (Chronicle, Adelaide, South Australia – 27 July, 1918)

IN MEMORIAM

HEDGER – In Loving remembrance of my dearly loved son, Harry, late A.M.W., who died at Newcastle-on-Tyne, July 12, 1918.

Far away from those who loved him,
Comrades laid him down to rest.
One of God's brightest and best.

-Inserted by his loving mother.

HEDGER – In Loving remembrance of our dear brother, Harry, late A.M.W., who died at Newcastle-on-Tyne, July 12, 1918.

Your loved ones now who miss you here,
Will always hold your memory dear.

- Inserted by his loving sister and brother.

(The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 12 July, 1919)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1,700,000 men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two world wars and ensures that their memory is never forgotten. The applicable periods of consideration are 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921 for the First World War and 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1947 for the Second World War.

The Commission's principles:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed

During both WW1 (& WW2) a number of Commonwealth civilian organisations were accepted by the military as qualifying for war grave status.

Members of the Recognised Civilian Organisations had to meet two additional criteria not required by military casualties.

1. Their death had to be caused by war actions or the increased threat caused by war and
2. They had to be on duty at the time of their death - being posted overseas counted as 'being on duty'.

The Australian government deemed that their War and Munitions Workers (men and women) qualified for war grave treatment as they were recruited as a body and were posted overseas for the war effort. Some of their CWGC entries show a 'service number' indicating that they were an organised body.

St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland, England

St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne contains 288 Commonwealth War Graves – 179 from World War 1 & 109 from World War 2.



St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne (Photo by Mike Berrell)

Photo of Australian Munition Worker H. C. Hedger's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland, England.



(Photo by nettlyne – Find a Grave)



St. John's Westgate & Elswick Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne *(Photo by Mike Berrell)*