

# Harold Edgar

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**Name:** Harold Edgar

**Born:** 14 March 1897

**Rank:** Gunner

**Service Number:** 1443424

**Unit/Regiment:** 78<sup>th</sup> Battery,  
35<sup>th</sup> LAA, Royal Artillery

**Died:** 12 February 1943



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## Pre-War:

Edgar, son of George and Mary Harold, came from Diss in Norfolk. He moved to Hampshire to work, was called up to fight in WW1 in 1916, and sent to France in 1918. He married Gertrude in 1919 and was demobbed in 1920. In 1939, at the age of 42, he became a soldier – once again. He had already lost 2 daughters, under the age of 10, and his 21 year old daughter had also died in childbirth. His 7<sup>th</sup> child, a son, was born as he enlisted from the TA Reserves into the TA.

## Wartime experience:

After moving to several different corps, Edgar was transferred to the 78<sup>th</sup> Battery, 35<sup>th</sup> LAA, Royal Artillery. Following further training and postings around the country, Edgar left behind his wife Gertrude and four children, he sailed from Greenock aboard RMS Empress of Japan on 12 November 1941, as part of Convoy WS12ZM. The ship sailed to Sierra Leone, then went on to Durban arriving on 18 December 1941. Whilst in Durban the news came of the attack on Pearl Harbour by the Japanese. On 21 December 1941, the units were divided up and the 78<sup>th</sup>/35<sup>th</sup> LAA changed ship to SS Narkunda. This Convoy of 4 plus 2 escort ships were destined for Singapore, arriving on 13 January 1942. The troops had been sent to defend Singapore but, in the end, had little to defend with, as their equipment and other supplies went to Basra.

He was evacuated to Sumatra to defend the oil refinery at Pladjoe but as the fighting had escalated, the men were advised to surrender and was captured on 8 March 1942. Edgar was one of the Java Party 5F, who were crammed onto trains and taken to Jakarta, then marched to Tanjong Priok, where they were held for seven months.

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On 22 October 1942, Java Party 5F were amongst over 1,000 men, who were made to walk the 3 miles to the docks, where they boarded the hell ship, Yoshida Maru to Singapore, arriving on 26 October 1942. On arrival many of Java Party 5F, including Edgar, were transferred to another hell ship Singapore Maru, which sailed on 30 October 1942, destined for Takao/Moji, Japan, which docked on 25 November 1942. They experienced the most horrendous conditions on the journey with cockroaches and rats, they had very little room to move in and even less food, with no drugs to help alleviate diseases. Out of the 1,100 prisoners that embarked on the Singapore Maru, there were many that died, and only 677 fit enough to disembark. There were over 404 who were sick, and, unfortunately, Edgar was one of the 35 who eventually died after being taken to Shimoneseki Quarantine Station, Fukuoka Camp 48 in Moji. Sadly, on 12 February 1943, Edgar died, at the age of 45, and was the last of the 35.

Edgar was cremated and his ashes interred in a common grave on a hillside above Hongani Temple in Kusunoki-Machi. His ashes were re-interred in a shrine along with 334 other soldiers, sailors and airmen in the Yokohama Cremation Memorial in the Yokohama War Cemetery, his name is carved on the memorial wall – panel 3. On the shrine of the Yokohama Cremation Memorial, the plaque reads:-

1939 - 1945

IN THE URN BELOW REST THE ASHES OF 335 SAILORS, SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH. THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WHO DIED AS PRISONERS OF WAR IN JAPAN. THE NAMES OF 284 ARE INSCRIBED ON THESE WALLS. THE IDENTITY OF THEIR 51 COMRADES IS UNKNOWN.

THERE BE OF THEM THAT HAVE LEFT A NAME BEHIND THEM THAT THEIR PRAISES MIGHT BE REPORTED AND SOME THERE BE WHICH HAVE NO MEMORIAL. BUT THEIR RIGHEOUSNESS HATH NOT BEEN FOGOTTEN AND THEIR GLORY SHALL NOT BE BLOTTED OUT.

*The above information and wording has been provided by Marilyn Leigh (Granddaughter) with the express permission of Edgar's youngest son, now 84, who gives his blessings to everyone reading about his father.*

*Additional information has been provided by Christine Wills (COFEPOW)*



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