# Dallington Cemetery, Northampton, Northamptonshire

# War Graves

*Lest We Forget*

## World War 1

**54    PRIVATE**

## E. TOMPKINS

**8TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**16TH  AUGUST, 1915**

*Also Mary Ann Tompkins*

*Mother Of The Above*

*22nd September 1922 Age 57*

# Edwin TOMPKINS

Edwin Tompkins was born at Great Houghton, Northampton, England on 30th March, 1894 to parents Henry James & Mary Ann Tompkins.

The 1901 England Census recorded Edwin Tompkins as a 7 year old, living with his family in a 4 roomed dwelling at 4 Well Yard, Vicarage Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northamptonshire, England. His parents were listed as Henry Tompkins (General Labourer, aged 31, born Great Houghton, Northants) & Mary Ann Tompkins (aged 37, born Towcester, Northants). Edwin was the eldest of four children listed on this Census – Edwin then Annie N. (aged 5, born Kingsthorpe, Northants), Maggie (aged 5, born Kingsthorpe, Northants) & Harry (aged 11 months, born Kingsthorpe, Northants).

Edwin Tompkins attended school at Kingsthorpe, Northampton, England.

The 1911 England Census recorded Edwin Tompkins as a 17 year old Joiners Machinist, living with his family at 10 Abbey Terrace, St. James, Northampton, England in a six roomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Henry James Tompkins (Tram Driver, aged 41) & Mary Ann Tompkins (aged 46). Henry & Mary Ann Tompkins had been married for 18 years & had 5 children. Edwin was the eldest of the 5 children listed on this Census – Edwin then Annie Nash Tompkins (Shoe Machinist, aged 15), Maggie Tompkins (At School, aged 13), Harry Tompkins (At School, aged 10) & William Frank Tompkins (At School, aged 8, born Kingsthorpe).

According to information supplied by his mother for the Roll of Honour, Edwin Tompkins came to Australia when he was 19 years old. Mr E. Tompkins, Labourer, aged 19, was a passenger on *Hawkes Bay* which arrived in Melbourne, Victoria on 11th August, 1913.

Edwin Tompkins was a 20 year old, single, Farm Hand from Meeniyan, Gippsland, Victoria when he enlisted at Broadmeadows, Victoria on 1st September, 1914 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 54 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Henry James Tompkins, of 133 St James Road, Northampton, England. Edwin Tompkins stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served with the Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry for 1 year but had left to come to Australia.

Private Edwin Tompkins was posted to 8th Battalion on 1st September, 1914 for recruit training.

Private Edwin Tompkins embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Benalla (A24)* on 19th October, 1914 with the 8th Infantry Battalion "A" Company.

Private Edwin Tompkins was wounded in action at Gallipoli between 25th & 30th April, 1915. He was admitted to 88th Field Ambulance on "W" Beach at Gallipoli on 10th May, 1915 with gunshot wounds to head. Pte Tompkins was admitted to 15th General Hospital at Alexandria then invalided to England – 2 dates shown on the Casualty Form – Active Service - 4th July, 1915 on Hospital Ship *Letitia* & 17th July, 1915 on Hospital Ship *Asturias*. The War Gratuity Card records that Pte Edwin Tompkins was invalided to England on Hospital Ship *Asturias* on 17th July, 1915 from Alexandria.

## 8th Battalion

The 8th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the A.I.F. during the First World War. Like the 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions, it was recruited from Victoria and, together with these battalions, formed the 2nd Brigade.

The battalion was raised from rural Victoria by Lieutenant Colonel William Bolton within a fortnight of the declaration of war in August 1914 and embarked just two months later. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt, arriving on 2 December. It later took part in the ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915, as part of the second wave. Ten days after the landing, the 2nd Brigade was transferred from ANZAC to Cape Helles to help in the attack on the village of Krithia. The attack captured little ground but cost the brigade almost a third of its strength. The Victorian battalions returned to ANZAC to help defend the beachhead, and in August the 2nd Brigade fought at the battle of Lone Pine. The battalion served at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private Edwin Tompkins died on 16th August, 1915 at 4th London General Hospital, London, England from wounds received in action – gunshot wounds to head.

A death for  Edward Tompkins, aged  21, was registered in the September quarter, 1915 in the district of  Lambeth, London, England.

Private Edwin Tompkins was buried on 21st August, 1915 in Dallington Cemetery, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England – Plot number K. 284 and had a Private Headstone erected. His death is still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Newspaper item from the *Northampton Mercury*, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England – 27 August, 1915:

***MILITARY HONOURS***

***GALLIPOLI HERO BURIED AT NORTHAMPTON***

*The funeral of Private Edward Tompkins, of the 8th Australian Forces, son of Mr and Mrs H. J. Tompkins, if 133, St. James'-road, Northampton, took place at Dallington Cemetery on Saturday, appropriate military tribute being paid to the gallant life given for his country.*

*The coffin was conveyed on a gun carriage obtained from Weedon Barracks by kind permission of the officer commanding, and was drawn by a team of six horses. Attending was a firing party from the Northampton Depot.*

*The chief mourners were: Mr and Mrs H. J. Tompkins (father and mother), Misses Annie and Maggie Tompkins (sisters), Masters Harry and Will Tompkins (brothers), Mr and Mrs William Tompkins (uncle and aunt), Mr and Mrs John Tompkins (uncle and aunt), Mr Arthur Tompkins (uncle), Miss Ellen Tompkins (aunt), Mrs Walter Ingram (aunt), Mr and Mrs Percy Tompkins, Miss Elsie Tompkins, and Master Reg. Tompkins (cousins), and Miss Alice Curtis. Amongst those also present were four employees of the Tramways, on which the bereaved father worked for twelve years.*

Private Edwin Tompkins requested in his Will, dated 28th April, 1915, that the whole of his property & effects be given to his mother – Mrs Mary Ann Tompkins, on 133 St. James' Road, Northampton, England.

Private Edwin Tompkins is listed in the UK De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914-119 (Volume 1 page 351):



**TOMPKINS, EDWIN**, Private, No. 54, 8th Battn. Australian Imperial Force, eldest *s*. of Henry James Tompkins, of 133, St. James' Road, Northampton, by his wife, Mary Anne, dau. of William Griffin; *b*. Great Houghton, co. Northampton, 30 March, 1894; educ. Kingsthorpe and Council School, St. James' End; was an employee in Wolverton Carriage Works, and joined the Oxford and Bucks Territorials in May, 1913; emigrated to Australia in July, 1913, and settled in Victoria as a Farm Hand; joined the Australian Imperial Force after the outbreak of the European War, 1 Sept. 1914; left for Egypt, 19 Oct 1914; took  part in the landing at the Dardanelles, 25 April, and died in King's College Hospital, London, 16 Aug. 1915, of wounds received in Gallipoli the previous May; *unm*.

**TOMKINS, Edwin**, *Private, No. 54, 8th Battn. Australia Imperial Force, eldest S. of Henry James Pmpkins, of 133, St. James' Road, Northampton, by his wiofe, Mary Anne, dau. of William Griffin; b. Great ougton, co. Northampton, 30 March, 1894; educ. Kingstorpe and Council School, St. James' End; was an employee in Wolverton Carriage*

*Works, and joined the Oxford and Bucks Territorials in May, 1913; eigrated to Australia in July, 1913, and settled in Victoria as a Farm Hand; joined the Australian Imperial Force after the outbreak of the European War, 1 Sept. 1914; left for Egypt, 19 Oct. 1914; took part in the landing at Dardanelles, 25 April, and died in King's College Hospital, London, 16 Aug. 1915, of wounds received in Gallipoli the previous May; unm.*

Private Edwin Tompkins was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Tompkins' father – Mr H. J. Tompkins, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in January, 1922).



**Edwin Tompkins' Memorial Plaque - also known as "Death Penny"**

*(Photo courtesy of Mark Broemmer)*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Edwin Tompkins – service number 54, of 8th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Mr H. J. Tompkins, of Break House, Helmdon, Brackley, Northants.

Private E. Tompkins is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 54.
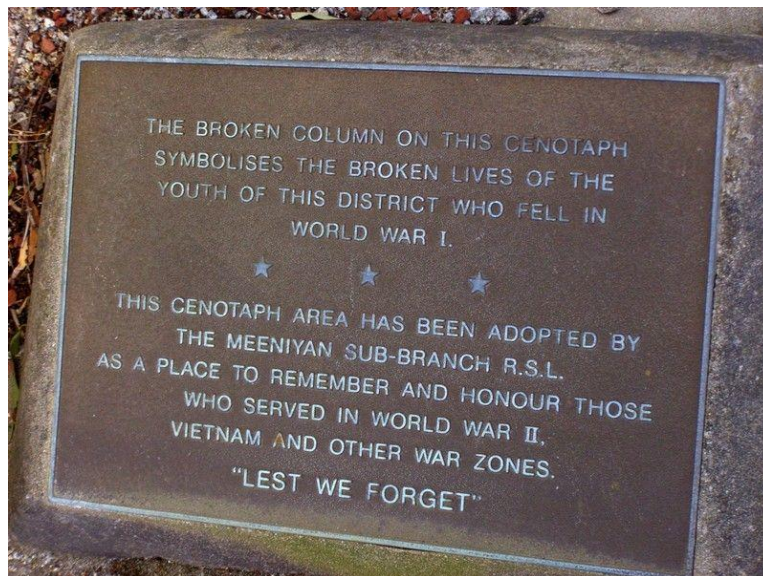


*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

E. Tompkins is remembered on the Meeniyan Cenotaph, located on the Median Strip Whitelaw Street, Meeniyan, Victoria.



**Meeniyan Cenotaph** *(Photos from Monument Australia)*



THE BROKEN COLUMN ON THIS CENOTAPH SYMBOLISES THE BROKEN LIVES OF THE YOUTH OF THIS DISTRICT WHO FELL IN WORLD WAR I.

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THIS CENOTAPH AREA HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY THE MEENIYAN SUB-BRANCH R.S.L. AS A PLACE TO REMEMBER AND HONOUR THOSE WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR II. VIETNAM AND OTHER WAR ZONES.

"LEST WE FORGET"



MOSS R.L.
SIMMONS E.
SMITH W.
SPARGO H.
SWEENEY D.
SWEENEY N.
TAYLOR H.C.
THOMAS B.
THOMPSON H.
TOURRIER W.
WILDEN A.
BOLLOM E.
SHRIVES E.
TOMPKINS E.

(27 pages of Private Edwin Tompkins' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives*

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Article from *The Great Southern Star* , South Gippsland, Victoria, Australia (Page 1 & 2) – April 20, 2010:



## *Remembered*

### *Fallen Gallipoli digger finally honoured*

*By Brad Lester*

*A Soldier fatally injured at Gallipoli in 1915 will be eternally recognised when his name is added to the cenotaph at Meeniyan.*

*Private Edwin Tompkins' contribution to the Allied effort during World War One has not been recognised on any war memorial in the world, but will now be, thanks to the Meeniyan RSL sub-branch and amateur military historian, Mike Irwin of Rawson.*

*Pte Tompkins; name will be engraved on the memorial in Meeniyan's main street and a ceremony held on August 31, 95 years after he died at the Fourth London General Hospital.*

*Pte Tompkins enlisted in Number 54 A Company of the Australian Imperial Force at Broadmeadows in September 1914, aged just 20. He gave his address as Meeniyan where he had worked as a farmhand.*

*Meeniyan RSL sub-branch secretary Richard Powell said it was therefore fitting his name be added to the obelisk war memorial at Meeniyan.*

*"The guys on the obelisk are the guys who joined from Meeniyan who died in the First World War and Edwin is not recognised anywhere else, so he should go on, even though it is more than 90 years late," he said.*

*"How many other soldiers who were not recognised will we find in the future? It is important that fallen servicemen be remembered for the recognition of their great sacrifice.*

*The most valuable sacrifice that a person can make is to give their life for a cause, and we should car so their death was not in vain."*

*Pte Tompkins arrived in Egypt in January, 1915 to undertake training and was posted with his regiment to the Dardanelles in April, landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula on April 25.*

*"IN his day, the Australian forces were just the same as the English forces because we were that English back then," Mr Powell said.*

*After receiving a gunshot wound to his head, Pte Tompkins returned to England where he died on August 16, 1915 as a result of his wounds and was buried at Dallington Cemetery, Northampton.*

*Pte Tompkins' gravestone in England was damaged by vandals in 2007 and it was not until late last year that Mr Irwin learnt Pte Tompkins had enlisted at Meeniyan.*

*A member of the Gallipoli Association of Great Britain, Mr Irwin read in the association's journal how the community had repaired Pte Tompkins' grave. The same story stated he had enlisted at Meeniyan.*

*David Parish of the Western Front Association in Northampton was responsible for organising a replacement headstone for Pte Tomkins, as well as his mother who is buried in the same plot.*

*Mr Irwin travelled to Meeniyan to inspect the cenotaph and discovered the fallen soldier's name was not on the memorial and has since donated $100 towards engraving costs.*

*"When Edwin Tompkins landed from the TS Clan McGillivray at Gallipoli on the morning of April 25 1915, he would have encountered a scene of complete chaos, confusion and death," Mr Irwin said.*

*"Boats full of dead Australians drifted close to the beach, victims of Turkish shrapnel fire.*
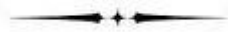
*"The small beach at Anzac Cove was already cluttered with dead, wounded and men waiting for orders; officers trying to find their companies or platoons. Nothing was as expected."*

*The Northampton News newspaper of August 1915 reported Pte Tompkins; funeral was postponed by two days after his death certificate failed to arrive.*

*"A large congregation gathered at St. James Church to pay a last tribute of respect to a brave soldier, who was laid to rest with full military honours, and the martial character of the ceremony seemed to rob even death of some its sting," the newspaper stated.*

**Private Edwin Tompkins** *(Photo with permission from Tim Cooper)*

## Newspaper Notices

The military funeral of Pte Edwin Tompkins, of 133, St. James'-road, Northampton, will take place at Dallington Cemetery to-morrow.

(*Northampton Chronicle and Echo*, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England – 18 August, 1915)

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**THE AUSTRALIANS**
**OUR BOYS IN ACTION**

VICTORIA

Wounded – E. Tompkins (dangerously)

(*Observer*, Adelaide, South Australia – 29 May, 1915)

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**AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES**

**71st CASUALTY LIST**

VICTORIA

DIED OF ILLNESS

Pte E. Tompkins, England

(*Bendigo Advertiser*, Victoria – 31 August, 1915)

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**DIED ON SERVICE**

**Private Edwin Tompkins**

(died of wounds) was a native of Northampton, England, 20 years of age. He arrived in Victoria in July, 1913, and took up farming pursuits at Meeniyan, Gippsland. When in England he was a member of the Oxford and Bucks Territorials.

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 1 September. 1915)

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**DIED ON SERVICE**



**Private E. Tompkins**

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 7 September. 1915)

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Photo of the private headstone for Edwin Tompkins & the original Oak Cross at the foot of the grave.



*(Photo with permission from Tim Cooper)*

<u>Newspaper item from *Northampton Chronicle & Echo*, Northampton, England – 5 June, 2007:</u>

## Heroes' gravestones attacked by vandals

*The families of two war heroes buried in a Northampton cemetery are being urged to come forward after their graves were vandalised 'beyond repair'.*

*Private Edwin Tompkins from the 8th Australian Infantry, and Private William Harry Davis from Kings Liverpool Regiment are both buried at the Dallington cemetery in Northampton.*

*Private Tompkins, whose parents lived in St James' Road, Northampton, was wounded in the head during fighting in Gallipoli in 1915 and died in London, and was buried in Dallington cemetery in August 1915.*

*He was buried with full military honours, with a horse-drawn carriage taking his body to the graveyard along Harlestone Road.*

*Private Davis was the son of Mrs E Davis of 33 Argyll Street, St James and died on March 5, 1919.*

*Northamptonshire's Western Front Association wants to replace the headstones, but cannot trace the families of the men.*

*David Parish, chairman for the Northamptonshire branch, said: "The graves have been damaged beyond repair by mindless acts of vandalism over the last few months.*

*If I took this too seriously I'd cut my throat, it happens so much.*

*If the graves get left like this they could just get forgotten about and have children playing over them."*

*He said the damage was likely to be due to groups of young people congregating in the graveyard.*

*He said: "The police and the council have been good, they have cleared away the branches where there was a den in the trees nearby but the only way to stop this happening is to watch the graves all day and night.*

*"I would like parents to remind their children of the importance of these cemeteries to the families concerned and that they are not recreation grounds, as a lot of damage does happen during the school holidays."*

*Any relatives of the soldiers can contact Mr Parish on Northampton 846047 or 231800.*

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**Dallington Cemetery, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England**

Dallington Cemetery, Northampton contains 30 Commonwealth War Graves – 14 from World War 1 & 16 from World War 2.



**Dallington Cemetery, Northampton** *(Photo below by Kokai)*

Photo of Private E. Tompkin's headstone in Dallington Cemetery, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Tim Cooper)*