

## The Man behind the Medal

**Edward William Hudson**

**World War 1 & 2 – Group of 7**

**(WW1 1914-15 Star; WW1 War Medal; WW1 Victory Medal (bi-lingual); WW2 1939-45 Star; WW2 Italy Star; WW2 War Medal; WW2 Africa Service Medal)**



In 2001 I bought the above group of medals on an auction as it appeared to be an interesting Group, with potential. No research accompanied the medals and there was only one bidder against me. What a surprise it turned out to be when I eventually got the research requested – Edward William Hudson was taken prisoner by the Germans twice in World War 1 on two continents, and then surprise, surprise, he signed up again for service in World War 2. Was he a sucker for punishment? ... or did he enjoy the German's hospitality? ... or was he just one of those honest people who believed in standing up for his beliefs?

In September 1917, when he attested for service in Europe for the 'second' phase of World War 1, he gave his date of birth as 18 April 1892. However, when he attested for service for World War 2 on 7 June 1943, he gave his date of birth as 19 March 1898. From the research I have obtained, 1892 is probably the correct date as in February 1908 he attested for service with the South African Mounted Rifles. On this form he indicated that he had had previous service with Marist Brothers Cadets, which indicates that he probably completed his schooling at Marist Brothers. His WW2 attestation papers indicate that he had completed Standard 8 of schooling.

At the outbreak of World War 1 he served with the 1<sup>st</sup> South African Mounted Rifles as a Rifleman in the South West Africa campaign and was taken prisoner by the Germans at the Battle of Sandfontein on 26 September 1914.



*The Battle of Sandfontein*

To quote from Richard Steyn's book – 'Louis Botha – A Man Apart' (page 206) – "*In an all-day battle at Sandfontein, the first watering hole on the German side of the Orange (River), the UDF detachment was forced to surrender, having lost 16 dead, 40 wounded, and 205 taken prisoner against 14 dead and 25 wounded on the German side.*"

The South West African campaign ended when the Germans surrendered on 9 July 1915. The only other record I have of Edward Hudson and the South West African campaign is an entry stating that he was in the Wynberg Hospital on 12 August 1915.

On 17 September 1917, Edward attested again for service, this time with the 4<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry, regimental number 17158, for service in Europe. On his attestation forms he indicated that he had had nine years continuous service with the Cape Mounted Rifles and the South African Mounted Rifles. All forms signed by him, from 1908 onwards, gave his home address as being in Umtata, Cape Province. He was also a smallish man, standing 5 foot 5 inches tall and weighing 148 pounds.

On 13 April 1918, at the Battle of Messines Ridge, Hudson was reported missing.

There is a further entry on his forms, dated 7 June 1918 confirming that he was a Prisoner of War.

John Buchan's book, 'The South African Forces in France' records (pages 204 & 205) –

*"The stand at Messines by the South Africans played a major part in the Battle of Lys. For thirty hours the brigade delayed the enemy's advance, and took heavy toll of him."*



He then records

*"Once again the Brigade had performed what seemed to be its predestined duty in an action – fighting outside its own area with its flank turned; and, as was inevitable, it paid a heavy price.*

*For the three days its casualty list amounted to 639 all ranks; of these 89 were killed, 270 were wounded, and 280 were missing, of whom the majority were afterwards proved to be dead."*

Hudson was one of the lucky ones still to be alive ... and in German hands ... again.

*The Battle of Messines Ridge*

On 7 June 1943, Edward Hudson again decided that a fight against the Germans was called for and he attested for service with the South African Artillery – 18<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Division, with the regimental number 159758V. He was now married, had four children, and was living in Carnarvon Street, Bez Valley, Johannesburg. He was self-employed in a 'Fish and Chip' business, also in Bez Valley. He saw action in Egypt for under three months and then in Italy from April 1944 to the end of the war. He didn't qualify for the Africa Star as it was awarded for one day's service in North Africa between 10 June 1940 and 12 May 1943. Hudson saw service there in 1944.

On 25 October 1945 he was assigned to the Demobilisation Corps and applied for a discharge with benefits. On his discharge form he registered disabilities as being rheumatism and pleurisy. When he attested his children were 15, 12, 9 and 6. When I bought the medals, the children would have been 73, 70, 67 and 64. Which one of them would have decided to sell the medals? ... or was it a spouse, who was tidying out after a death and Edward William Hudson's supreme fight and capture by the German's (twice), really meant nothing to that person?

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**Allan Gordon**