

= Hughie Edwards =

Air Commodore Sir Hughie Idwal Edwards , VC , KCMG , CB , DSO , OBE , DFC ( 1 August 1914 ? 5 August 1982 ) was a senior officer in the Royal Air Force , Governor of Western Australia , and an Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross , the highest decoration for gallantry " in the face of the enemy " that can be awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth armed forces . Serving as a bomber pilot in the Royal Air Force ( RAF ) , Edwards was decorated with the Victoria Cross in 1941 for his efforts in leading a bombing raid against the port of Bremen , one of the most heavily defended towns in Germany . He became the most highly decorated Australian serviceman of the Second World War .

Born in Fremantle , Western Australia , Edwards joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1935 , and a year later was granted a short service commission with the RAF . Serving throughout the Second World War , he gained a permanent commission and continued his career in the RAF after the war ; he retired in 1963 with the rank of air commodore . Returning to Australia , he was appointed Governor of Western Australia in 1974 .

= = Early life = =

Edwards was born in Fremantle , Western Australia , on 1 August 1914 , the third of five children to Welsh parents Hugh , a blacksmith and farrier , and his wife Jane ( née Watkins ) , who had emigrated to Australia in 1909 . Named after his father , he was always referred to by his middle name of Idwal in his family . Edwards received his initial education at White Gum Valley School , before attending the Fremantle Boy 's School where he achieved well academically , although he later claimed this was due to a good memory rather than high intelligence . However , Edwards was reluctantly forced to leave school at the age of fourteen as the family finances could no longer support him . Described as a " shy , under @-@ confident , introspective and imaginative lad " at this stage in his life , he gained employment as a shipping office clerk .

With the onset of the Great Depression , Edwards found himself unemployed , before gaining a job with a horse racing stable in Fremantle . His position entailed him taking the horses to the beach each morning for a swim , grooming them , and attending the twice weekly race meetings ; a lifelong interest in horse racing consequently emerged at this time . After later working for a brief period in a factory , he enlisted in the Australian Army in March 1933 and was posted to the 6th Heavy Battery , Royal Australian Artillery , with the rank of private . During this period , Edwards was an active sportsman , excelling in Australian rules football ? where he played six matches with leading Western Australian Football League ( WAFL ) club South Fremantle ? and cricket with the Fremantle garrison team .

= = Early Air Force career = =

In 1935 , he was selected for flying training with the Royal Australian Air Force at RAAF Point Cook , after which he transferred to the RAF , being granted a short service commission as a pilot officer on 21 August 1936 . Posted to No. 15 Bomber Squadron , he was appointed adjutant of No. 90 Squadron in March 1937 , flying Bristol Blenheim bombers . He received a promotion to flying officer on 21 May 1938 .

In August 1938 , Edwards was piloting a Blenheim near the Scottish border when he flew into a storm at 2 @,@ 300 metres ( 7 @,@ 500 ft ) . When the ailerons froze , the aircraft was forced down to 1 @,@ 600 metres ( 5 @,@ 200 ft ) and Edwards ordered the navigator and rear gunner to bale out of the aircraft . Down to 230 metres ( 750 ft ) , he made an effort to jump clear , but his parachute became entangled with the bomber 's radio mast pylon . In the ensuing crash , he sustained head injuries and a badly broken leg , which was only saved after extensive surgery , which left that leg shorter than the other . After the accident , he was declared unfit for flying duties until April 1940 , when he was posted to No. 139 Squadron for active service due to the outbreak of war . He was promoted to flight lieutenant on 21 May 1940 .

= = Second World War = =

In May 1941 , Edwards became commanding officer of No. 105 Squadron replacing the previous incumbent , who had been killed in an anti @-@ shipping raid on Stavanger . At that time , the Squadron was engaged in a series of daylight operations against Germany and the occupied countries , with its principal targets being enemy shipping , power installations , shipbuilding yards , locomotives , steelworks and marshalling yards . On 15 June , by now an acting wing commander , Edwards led six Blenheims on a search for enemy shipping and soon sighted a convoy of eight merchantmen anchored near The Hague . He launched an attack at low level , his bombs striking a 4 @,@ 000 ton ship . He was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for this action .

On 4 July 1941 , Edwards led a daylight attack ( " Operation Wreckage " ) against the port of Bremen , one of the most heavily defended towns in Germany . Edwards ' force of twelve Blenheims attacked at a height of about 50 feet through telephone wires and high voltage power lines . The bombers successfully penetrated fierce anti @-@ aircraft fire and a dense balloon barrage , but further fire over the port itself resulted in the loss of four of the attacking force . Edwards brought his remaining aircraft safely back , although all had been hit and his own Blenheim ( serial V6028 ) had been hit over 20 times . His actions in the raid earned him the Victoria Cross .

The full citation for Edwards ' Victoria Cross appeared in the London Gazette on 22 July 1941 , it read :

Air Ministry , 22nd July , 1941 .

ROYAL AIR FORCE

The KING has been graciously pleased to confer the Victoria Cross on the undermentioned officer in recognition of most conspicuous bravery : ?

Acting Wing Commander Hughie Idwal Edwards , D.F.C. ( 39005 ) , No 105 . Squadron .

Wing Commander Edwards , although handicapped by a physical disability resulting from a flying accident , has repeatedly displayed gallantry of the highest order in pressing home bombing attacks from very low heights against strongly defended objectives .

On 4th July , 1941 , he led an important attack on the Port of Bremen , one of the most heavily defended towns in Germany . This attack had to be made in daylight and there were no clouds to afford concealment . During the approach to the German coast several enemy ships were sighted and Wing Commander Edwards knew that his aircraft would be reported and that the defences would be in a state of readiness . Undaunted by this misfortune he brought his formation 50 miles overland to the target , flying at a height of little more than 50 feet , passing under high @-@ tension cables , carrying away telegraph wires and finally passing through a formidable balloon barrage . On reaching Bremen he was met with a hail of fire , all his aircraft being hit and four of them being destroyed . Nevertheless he made a most successful attack , and then with the greatest skill and coolness withdrew the surviving aircraft without further loss .

Throughout the execution of this operation which he had planned personally with full knowledge of the risks entailed , Wing Commander Edwards displayed the highest possible standard of gallantry and determination .

In July 1941 , Edwards took the Squadron to Malta , in order to conduct operations against Axis shipping carrying reinforcements from Italy to Tripoli and Benghazi . The unit remained in the area until October , when they returned to Britain . Participating in a goodwill mission to the United States , he was appointed chief flying instructor at an operational training unit in January 1942 , before re @-@ assuming command of No. 105 Squadron on 3 August . During this time , Edwards married Cherry Kyrle " Pat " Beresford ; the pair were later to have a son , Anthony , and a daughter , Sarah . He was promoted to temporary wing commander on 1 September .

On 6 December 1942 , Edwards participated in a daylight bombing raid on the Philips Factory at Eindhoven , The Netherlands . Despite heavy opposition , the bombers successfully damaged or destroyed many of their targets , with two gun posts being silenced . Several members of the raid were decorated , including Edwards , who was awarded the Distinguished Service Order ; becoming the first airman to receive the Victoria Cross , Distinguished Service Order and Distinguished Flying

Cross in the Second World War . Promoted to acting group captain , he assumed command of the bomber station at Binbrook in February 1943 , where , despite his senior position , he continued to participate in operations . On 18 August , he was promoted to war substantive wing commander .

With the end of the European campaigns in sight , Edwards was transferred to the Pacific theatre , first to Ceylon as Group Captain , Bomber Operations . In January 1945 , he was mentioned in despatches , and appointed the senior administrative staff officer at Headquarters , South East Asia Command ; serving in this position until the conclusion of the war .

= = Later career = =

Edwards continued his career in the post @-@ war RAF , and was granted the substantive rank of squadron leader from 1 September 1945 . Posted as a staff officer at Air Headquarters , Malaya , from November 1945 until February 1946 , he served with the Netherlands East Indies Forces for a short period before returning to Malaya as air adviser to the General Officer Commanding . In September 1945 , he was posted as station commander at the RAF Base in Kuala Lumpur ; he remained there until May 1947 , and was awarded an Officer of the Order of the British Empire ( OBE ) for his services in south @-@ east Asia .

Returning to Britain in June 1947 , he undertook a six @-@ month course at the Staff College , before receiving a two @-@ year posting as senior personnel staff officer of No. 21 Group , Flying Training Command . Promoted to wing commander on 1 July 1947 , his next posting was as the senior instructor on the leadership course at Digby , Lincolnshire . Subsequently , he was appointed station commander at Wattisham , Suffolk . He was promoted to group captain on 1 January 1954 . Edwards was the Station Commander of the RAF base RAF Habbaniya in Iraq during the Suez Crisis of 1956 , and also the critical time of the Iraqi Revolution of 14 July 1958 . He returned to Britain on 21 October 1958 to command the Central Fighter Establishment , West Raynham , with the acting rank of air commodore .

Awarded a Companion of the Order of the Bath in the 1959 New Year Honours , he was promoted to the substantive rank of air commodore on 1 July 1959 , and appointed as an aide @-@ de @-@ camp to Queen Elizabeth II in March 1960 . His final appointment with the RAF was as Director of Establishments at the Air Ministry , London , from January 1962 until his retirement on 30 September 1963 .

= = Later life and governorship = =

Returning to Australia , Edwards became the Australian Representative for Selection Trust . In 1966 his wife , Cherry , died ; he married Dorothy Carew Berrick in 1972 . The pair were said to complement each other well , as Dorothy limped on her left leg after being knocked over by a car on a crosswalk in Sydney in 1970 , while Edwards limped with his right after his flying accident in 1938 . In 1974 , Edwards relinquished his position as the Australian Representative for Selection Trust and was appointed Governor of Western Australia . He was sworn in on 7 January 1974 , and appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George ( KCMG ) the following October .

His knighthood involved some controversy , following his wife 's public comment that he was the only Australian state governor without such an honour . As knighthoods were then conferred by the Queen on the recommendation of her Federal and State governments , and the Governor was the Queen 's representative in the state , this was seen as highly inappropriate , especially given the Western Australian ALP State government of the day , led by John Tonkin had a policy of not recommending Imperial Honours . However , the Tonkin Government was defeated in April 1974 and the incoming Liberal Premier , Sir Charles Court , was happy to make the necessary recommendation .

While Governor , Edwards ' first official role was to christen Alan Bond 's America Cup challenger , Southern Cross . One of the couple 's first visitors to the Governor 's estate was a man by the name of Thomas Dunhill , who had consumed ten beers and wanted to see the house . Lady Edwards apparently found him in the pantry ; he was arrested by the police but no charges were laid . Ill

health forced Edwards to resign his vice @-@ regal appointment on 2 April 1975 , and he and Lady Edwards went to live in Sydney , where he continued in semi @-@ retirement with commercial interests .

On 5 August 1982 , while on his way to attend a Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground , Edwards unexpectedly collapsed and died ; his ashes were buried in the Karrakatta Cemetery , Perth , after a State Funeral and cremation at Northern Suburbs Crematorium in Sydney . His Victoria Cross is on display at the Australian War Memorial , Canberra , and on 26 November 2002 a life @-@ size bronze statue depicting Edwards was unveiled by then Governor of Western Australia , John Sanderson , in Kings Square , Fremantle . The Hugh Edwards Ward at Hollywood Private Hospital has been named in his honour .