

117219 Capt EM Stevens HAC. 17/8/1919 - 5/9/1944



Edwin's war 1938 - 1944

A snapshot of Edwin's war, taken from his many letters home.

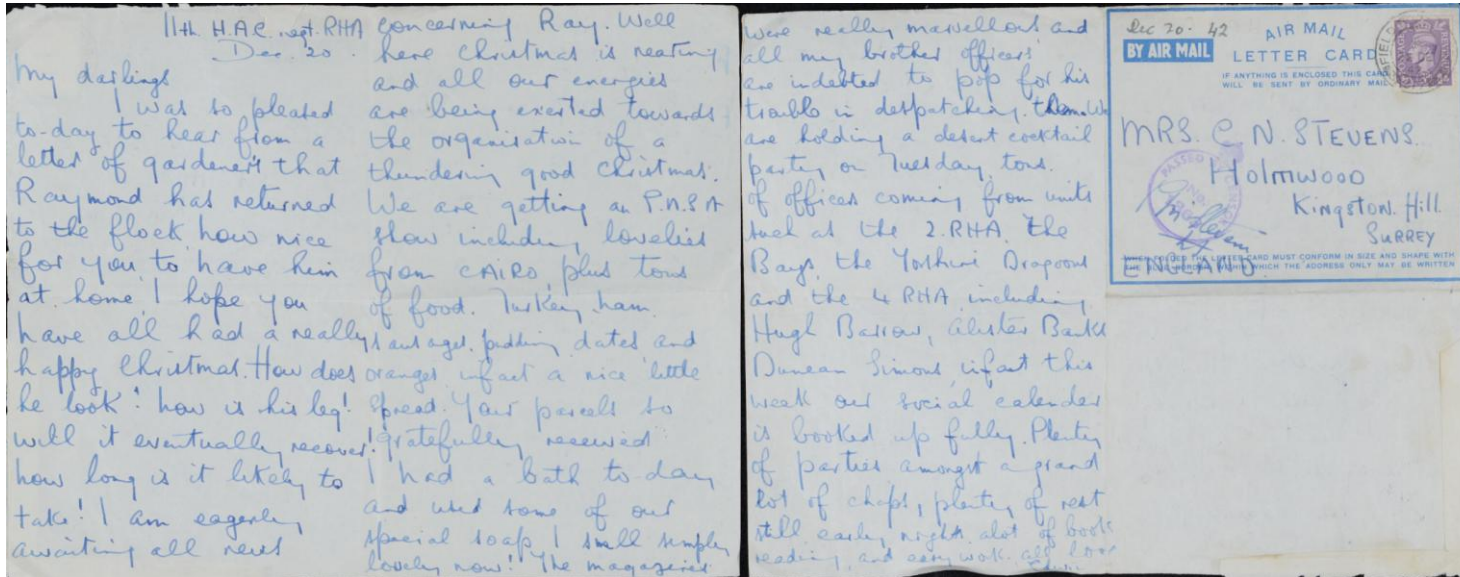
- 1939/05/15. Volunteered for Officer Training at the HAC, Finsbury Park, after work at Moyses Stevens.
- 1939/09. Attended and completed 121 Officer Training Course in Aldershot. Passing out as a 2Lt.
- 1940/01. Joined D Bty, 11 RHA Regt (HAC).
1940. Most of the year was spent in training at multiple UK camps.
- 1942-43. North African campaign in 1 British Armoured Division of the Eighth Army. [BATTLES HERE](#)
- 1942/07/15. Departed by troopship [SS Oronsay](#) in a convoy from Liverpool to Capetown & Durban.
- 1942/09/05. Arrived Egypt. He wrote ten letters home explaining his conditions & troop training duties, including live firing, fitness & entertainment [- HERE:](#)
- 1942/09. Posted to A Bty 11th RHA (HAC) in Cairo for training then fighting westwards towards Tunis.
- 1942/11/09. During the Second Battle of Alamein his personal 'George Truck' was hit by a 105mm shell. The men sitting on each side of him were killed. Shocked & briefly knocked out, he continued in command.
- 1942/12/20. Met Duncan Simonds (his future brother-in-law and my father) amongst 4 RHA officers at a Christmas function. The letters are [- HERE](#)
- 1943/01. Flew by [Hudson](#) with Maj Gen Galloway from Martuba in Libya to Cairo on the BDRA OP. He attended a course at the Base Depot Royal Artillery for Forward Observation Officers. Then leave.
- 1943/01. Hospitalised with dysentery.
- 1943/05. Appointed Technical Adjutant, RHQ 11 RHA (HAC) in Constantine, Algeria. Responsible for re-equipping his unit and waterproofing all their vehicles for the landings in Sicily.
- 1943/07. Edwin was not in the first wave of the invasion of Sicily. His story is [- HERE:](#)

Edwin's war 1938 - 1944

- 1943/08/09. Hospitalised in Syracuse with malaria & rejoined his exhausted unit on 08/21 when they moved to the coast near Catania for rest after their Sicilian campaign victory.
- 1943-09/15. Appointed Troop Commander in A Bty 11 RHA (HAC) - shipped from Syracuse to Tunis for rest.
- 1943/10/03. To hospital in Bizerte with jaundice then flown to Algiers, Cairo & Alexandria for leave until 30/11.
- 1944/02/24. Appointed ADC to Maj Gen Galloway GOC 1 British Armd Div in Sidi Moussa, Algiers.
- 1944/03/07. Flew from Algiers to Naples with Maj Gen Galloway for four weeks, where Maj Gen Galloway took temporary command of 4th Indian Division assault on Monte Cassino. Letters are [- HERE:](#)
- 1944/03/15. He witnessed 500 Allied bombers dropping heavy bombs on Monte Cassino.
- 1944/05/05. Flew to Cairo in an [‘Avro York’](#) for training in aerial photography for Forward Observation Officers, then leave. He sent home loads of images [- HERE](#)
- 1944/05. The hand-coloured photo that illustrates the front page of this story was sent home from Cairo.
- 1944/06/10. Posted to HQ RA in 1 British Armd Div as Chief Liaison Officer and later Intelligence Officer.
- 1944/07/10. He was flown in secret from Algiers via Cairo, Tobruk & Malta to Naples. To manage loading of Allied invasion forces onto ships for the invasion of southern France in Op DRAGOON on August 15th.
- 1944/08/04. Maj Gen Galloway was ill, flown home & left 1 British Armd Div.
- 1944/08/14. Edwin rejoined 1 British Armd Div HQ RA, now moving north towards Rimini.
- 1944/09/05. During the attack on the San Savino-Passano Ridge he was fatally wounded near Cevolabbate, close to the junction of via Garibaldi and via Vicinale Ca' Ronchi. He died later that day.
- From joining up in 1939, Edwin wrote about 500 letters home. His last letters are [- HERE.](#)

Edwin's war 1938 - 1944

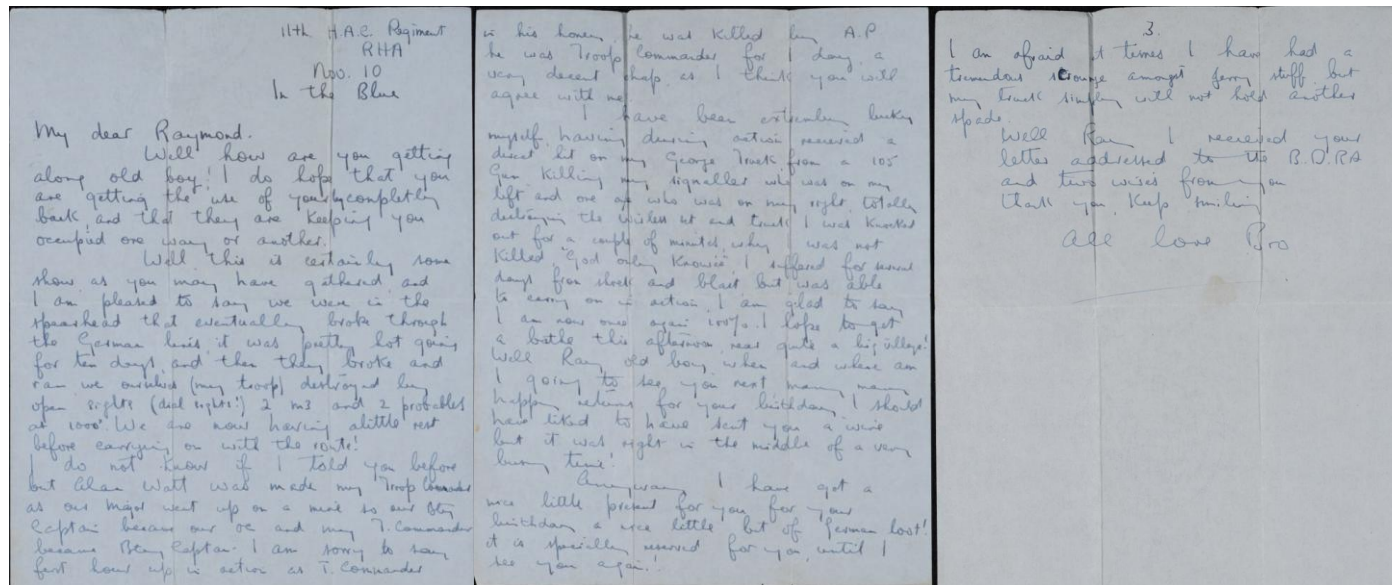
Here are two letters home from the Egyptian desert in late 1942 after the Second Battle of El Alamein, that demonstrate the extremes of his wartime life:



November 10th.
To his brother Raymond following the Second battle of El Alamein, Egypt. When he survived a direct hit on his truck from a 105mm gun that killed those sitting on each side of him.

December 20th.
To his parents, on meeting his future brother-in-law, Capt Duncan Simonds, 4th RHA, at a Christmas function in the desert.

[\[letters here\]](#)



Capt EM Stevens HAC. Sept 4-5 1944

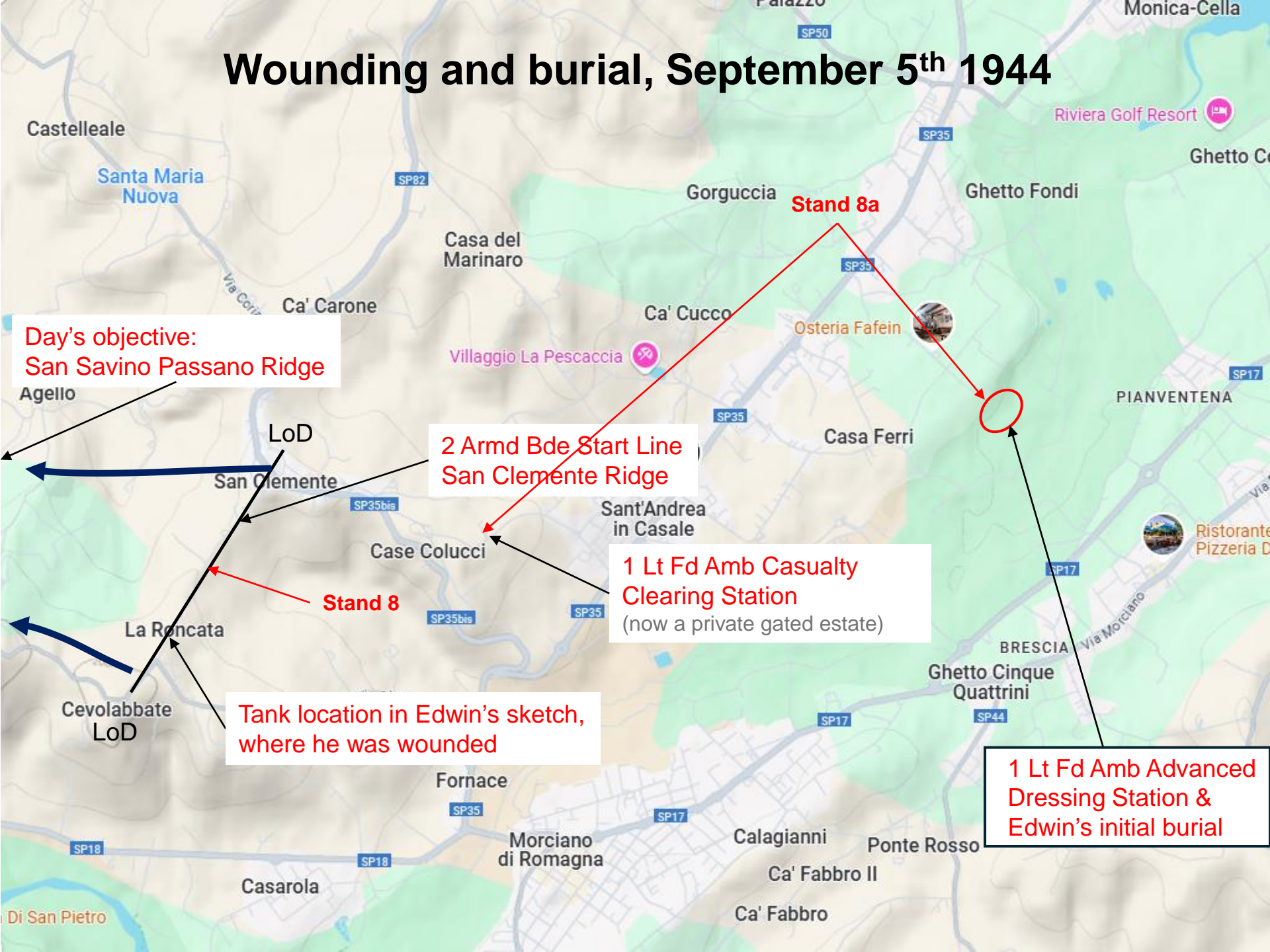
4 Indian Division and 46 Infantry Division were leading the V (BR) Corps assault on the Gothic Line in late Aug-early Sep 44. Both Divisions were tasked with breaking into the German defensive line and opening a 'hole' for 1 Armoured Division to pass through and then exploit to the River Marano.

46 Infantry Division believed that they had created such a hole in the German line on 4 September 1944 and so V (BR) Corps ordered 1 Armoured Division to advance from their reserve position 100 miles away overnight on 4-5 September 1944. This was an enormous undertaking across mountainous terrain prior to an attack next morning. The 'hole' was believed to be beyond the San Savino-Passano Ridge, so this ridge was established as the Line of Departure (LoD) for the 5 Sep 44 attack by 2 Armoured Brigade.

It turned out that no such 'hole' had been created, so that when 2 Armoured Brigade arrived at San Clemente, still on their way to the LoD on the San Savino-Passano Ridge, they discovered that the Germans still held that ridge and that they were in full view of the massed German anti-tank guns. As 2 Armoured Brigade advanced as ordered, they were systematically destroyed by the German anti-tank guns and forced to retreat with heavy losses of life and equipment.

Edwin was near Cevolabbate – just to the south of San Clemente, close to the junction of via Garibaldi & via Vicinale Ca' Ronchi, briefing Brigadier EPN Jones Commander Royal Artillery HQ 1 Armoured Division on the day's plan, when they were spotted & he was fatally wounded by German artillery fire.

Wounding and burial, September 5th 1944



Day's objective:
San Savino Passano Ridge

2 Armd Bde Start Line
San Clemente Ridge

1 Lt Fd Amb Casualty
Clearing Station
(now a private gated estate)

Tank location in Edwin's sketch,
where he was wounded

1 Lt Fd Amb Advanced
Dressing Station &
Edwin's initial burial

Hand drawn plan of action for September 5th 1944



117219 Edwin Stevens was a Captain Staff Officer serving in HQ Royal Artillery 1 British Armoured Division. Promoted 11/1/1944 from 11 (HAC) RHA to Divisional HQ under Maj Gen Galloway.

On September 5th Edwin was serving under the new Commander Royal Artillery, Brig EPN Jones, who operated from a tank, converted into a command post. Early that morning they went forward to review the day's plan of action. Stopping on the reverse slope out of sight, they were scoping the German positions from across the road, when they were spotted & shelled.

See image, where Brig Jones later marked the fateful spot. Original drawing likely to have been sketched by Edwin.

What3words location:

[///hostels.swipes.peelers](https://www.what3words.com/uk/117219-edwin-stevens)

Capt Edwin Mackenzie Stevens - DOW September 5th 1944

Hit in the chest by a shell splinter, Edwin was evacuated to the Casualty Clearing Post operated by 1 Lt Fd Amb RAMC. Here he was assessed, given First Aid and moved back to the 1 Lt Fd Amb RAMC Advanced Dress Station

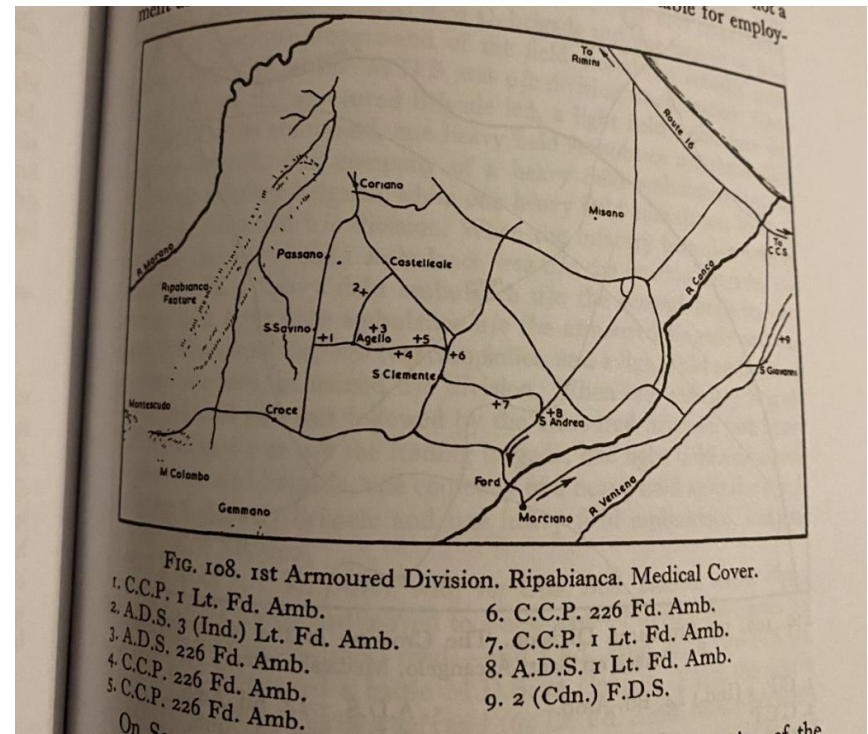


24th September 2025.
His nephews Raymond & Colin Simonds, visiting the spot where he died and was initially buried.

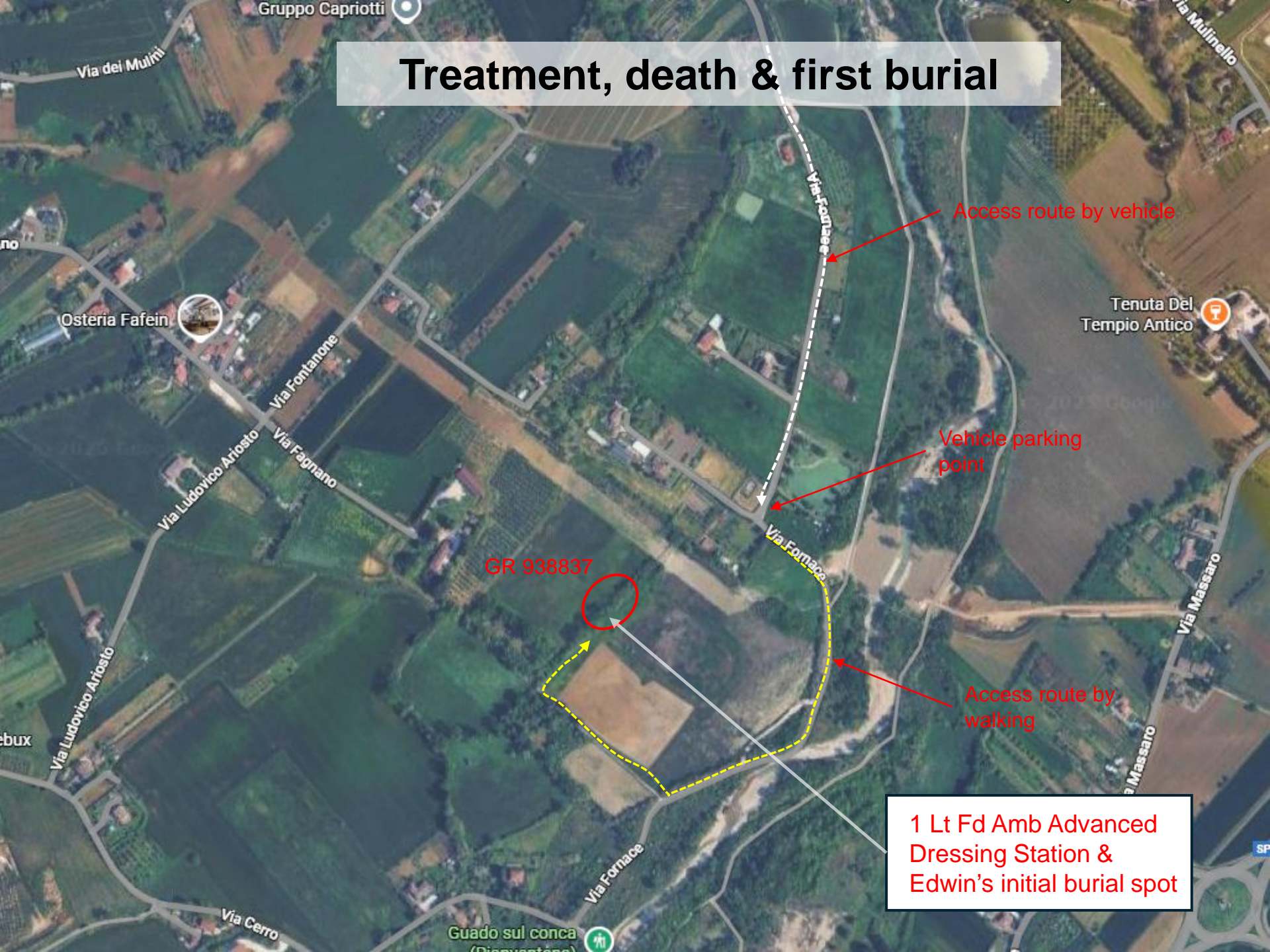
What3words location:
[///visits.brunch.beanpole](https://visits.brunch.beanpole)

1 Lt Fd Amb RAMC Advanced Dressing Station was at Grid Reference 938837. This is shown as +8 on the sketch opposite. Here he died and was immediately buried outside with his RA colleagues, in Row A Grave 5.

‘In some corner of a foreign field’



Treatment, death & first burial



Access route by vehicle

Vehicle parking point

Access route by walking

GR 938837

1 Lt Fd Amb Advanced
Dressing Station &
Edwin's initial burial spot

Gradara Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Rimini

Edwin was reburied in Gradara Military Cemetery in Plot 1 Row B Grave 30, on 15th June 1945 by 19 Graves Registration Unit - initially with a plain white wooden cross. This was replaced in time for his parents to visit in January 1950 by the standard CWGC sandstone headstone design. His parent's own inscription was included at the base of the headstone.



Gradara Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

CMF Form 7

Report No. I9GR/OC/0148 Sheet I of 3 Schedule No. _____

Place of Burial British Empire Cemetery-Gradara Map Reference Sheet I09 - 024843

The following are buried here

REGIMENT	ARMY NO.	NAME AND INITIALS	RANK	DATE OF DEATH	PREVIOUSLY BURIED AT	RE-BURIAL	DATE OF RE-BURIAL	PLOT	ROW	GRAVE
9.L. <u>RAC</u>	407278	HAYDEN J.A.	1 <u>PLC</u>	5.9.44	ICGR/	Cross & Disc	25.5.45	I	B	II ✓
9.L. "	7945648	PINN D.	2 <u>TPR</u>	"	MJG/	Cross	"	I	B	20 ✓
10.H. "	7901167	GOODALL H.S. ✓	3 <u>SGT</u>	4.9.44	2476	Cross & Disc	"	I	B	21 ✓
BAYS "	7953796	PEACOCK J.S.	4 <u>TPR</u>	5.9.44	Sh. I09	Cross	"	I	B	25 ✓
<u>RA (HQ) (Hampshire)</u>	117219	STEVENS E.M.	5 <u>CAPT</u>	" " "	938837	"	"	I	B	30 ✓
<u>9 L. (RAC)</u>	5890416	COWIE L.J.	6 <u>CPL</u>	" " "	"	"	"	I	B	12 ✓
<u>(218 FB DELS SQN)</u>	288825	BUTCHER J.W.D.	7 <u>LIEUT</u>	" " "	"	Cross & Disc	"	I	B	26 ✓
<u>FORRESTERS</u>	486369I	READ S.	8 <u>CPL</u>	5.9.44	"	"	"	I	B	36 ✓
10.H. <u>RAC</u>	237383	THOROLD A.W.	9 <u>LIEUT</u>	" " "	"	Cross	"	I	B	22 ✓
10.H. "	7903637	BROWN F.A.	10 <u>SGT</u>	" " "	"	"	"	I	B	23 ✓
10.H. "	203626	KERFOOT-ROBERTS S.	<u>LIEUT</u>	7.9.44	"	"	"	I	B	24 ✓

I WAS PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS OF EXHUMATION AND HAVE OBSERVED THE ORDER CONTAINED IN LETTER No. 2091GR DATED 2 OCT. 43. RECOVERIES WERE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ATTACHED LIST.

O.C. [Signature] Lieut.

I9 Graves Registration Unit.

FORM 502/2-44/10,000

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was founded by Fabian Ware who was horrified by the way bodies were disposed of during the early part of The Great War. Under his leadership, all bodies found were eventually collected from their temporary graves and moved to special cemeteries. He believed that all our war cemeteries should have consistent features that distinguished them from their civilian counterparts. So, they all have a sandstone headstone in similar style that allows for the different religions and a 'Cross of Sacrifice' near the entrance. They are maintained to a high standard by all the countries whose forces fought & died in that war.

The Stevens Archives at The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

When he left the UK in 1941 never to return, Edwin became a prolific writer, sometimes daily, to his family. Over 1,000 pages of his letters, aerogrammes & telegrams survive, in both hardcopy & digital format.

His letters, pictures and some wartime souvenirs, the letters of condolence received by his family, together with some of the personal effects recovered from his body, are all now preserved in the archives of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Where they are available to study.

The same applies to his elder brother 117204 Capt Raymond Stevens HAC RA. They volunteered to join the HAC in Finsbury Park, London on the same day, the 15th May 1939.

Raymond was killed at Oosterbeek near Arnhem on 24th September 1944.

Their poor parents lost their two sons in 1944, less than 3 weeks apart.

Compiled in 2025 by their nephew Raymond Simonds.

‘LEST WE FORGET’