The Ensign Bearer



Robert Campbell Edwards
1862 - 1946

EDWARD Old English meaning prosperity/happiness. Edwards = son of Edward. Edwardes = Family name of the barons Kensington.

Basil Cottle. Penguin Dictionary of Surnames 1967-1968.

GREEN, Oswald Stuart
The Ensign Bearer: Robert Campbell Edwards

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Robert Campbell Edwards
1862 - 1946

Businessman - Churchman - Philanthropist



O.S. Green

FOREWORD

The author's attention was drawn to the philanthropic work done by Robert Campbell Edwards in 1961, when he became Head Teacher of State School 3672, Wattle Park.

The school is on ground formerly the property of Burwood Boys' Home. This close proximity to the Home brought about a more than ordinary close relationship between both Home and School - a relationship which extended beyond normal school hours.

To have the Superintendent come to the School with a small, wide-eyed, white faced little lad brought to the Home late on Saturday night because his mother had suicided; to be confronted by a truculent eleven year old who could not accept that adults were human because he had been so badly bashed by his father; to enrol aboriginal boys on their guard and apprehensive because of their former experience among whites, and to watch these and other lads gradually emerge from their traumas, change their attitudes and become accepted by and assimilated into the school population was an experience that one could never forget.

It was an experience that made one say, 'Thank God for such men as Robert Campbell Edwards' - a man whose compassion was expressed in physical terms when he founded the Burwood Boys' Home.

This memoir is amplification of notes taken earlier, and, I trust, will be accepted as a tribute to a Christian gentleman who did Good solely for Goodness sake.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dr. Robert Edwards and Mrs. A. Fullwood),

each of whom made material available and checked the original text.

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Records of the Box Hill Cemetery Trust



R.C. Edwards, his wife and Llewellyn, Robert and Gwendolyn

ORIGINS

Hesketh Pearson, in the introduction to her book, Extraordinary People, stated -

> "The subjects that have made the greatest appeal to me are those with strongly marked individualities — Singularity of character is the flesh and bones of enduring biography."

That being the criterion by which she selected her subjects then, without a doubt, Robert Campbell Edwards would have been a subject for one of her pen portraits. Singularity of purpose marked his life from boyhood days to his final hours.

Who were the Edwards from which the subject of this paper descended? That question is difficult to answer completely for there is a regrettable dearth of genealogical information.

Clow, whose approach to his work is similar to that of the hero worshipping Boswell, claims in his Book Of The Ages that Robert Campbell Edwards' ancestry was of Silurian descent - referring there to Siluria - the homeland of the ancient inhabitants of parts of England and Wales. Clow states that -

> "Though the Silurian family originally dwelt in Wales they did in ancient days wander into parts of England, Scotland and Ireland where they preserved the distinctive characteristic features of their race".

He goes on to claim that -

> "The Edwards of whom I speak belonged to this race and of a group within it that were of Royal blood, for he descended from a Prince of the Silurian family."

Unfortunately Clow is not explicit as to the source of his information so we are left with the query -

> Was Edwards the descendant of a group that migrated from Ireland to Scotland and then, centuries later, returned to Ireland?

James and his Ministers, following the example earlier set by Elizabeth I. in the South of Ireland, decided to try the experiment of a plantation on a grand scale in order to control the clans in revolt. To enable this to be done practically the whole of the six counties in Ulster (Donegal, Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Cavan and Armagh) were declared forfeit to the Crown.

Following the declaration of forfeiture, the Corporation of London, on March 29, 1613, formed the Irish Society under the title of The Society of the Governor and Assistants of London of the New Plantation in Ulster within the Realm of Ireland, and the lands of the clans were split up and redistributed among monied farmers from England and Scotland.

The fact that the Edwards were Presbyterians leads one to believe that they were planters who came from Scotland. They must have been what was, and still is, termed "landed gentry" for the family utimately became related by marriage to that aristocratic family to our ears incongruously named Dill.

For the present purpose the biography of Robert Campbell Edwards commences in 1756,[1] the birth year of the Robert Edwards who was to marry a lady named Anne but whose surname is unknown. She was six years his senior.

Robert died on August 16, 1838, and his wife's death followed some two years later - on February 4, 1840. Robert and Anne left behind them a son, also named Robert. He was born in 1799, the last year of the eighteenth century. It is of medical interest to know that his mother was forty-nine when she introduced her son to the world.

This son, unlike his father, married a young lady six years his junior. She was another Anne - Anne Jane Campbell.

From this union came the Edwards' family of Drumgowan. Robert (later of Mullaney), Anne (Mrs. E. Porter), Thomas (who took over the family property "Three Trees"), John (of Drumgowan),[2] Mathew (destined to become a bank manager) and Jane (Mrs. Motherwell). Clow writes -

> "These were very uncommon people in the sense that although they achieved no out-standing exploits such as would be to blaze their name on the pages of history, yet they won the affection of all classes in the neighbourhood where they dwell and where they still reside in honourable citizenship."

It was at this stage in the family history that the connection with the Dill family was established.

Again Clow is referred to. On page 95 one reads —

> "My own father was born in Londonderry and during my father's days there flourished a physician in that city, named Thompson. His place of residence was in Great James Street, and, being a man of renown, he managed to commend himself to the thoughtful interest of the Dill family who were in Society. He captured the interest of one of the daughters and married her."[3]

His wife lost her mother early and two of her mother's sisters named Dill, came to live in the Thompson home. In 1842, to Dr. Thompson and his lady wife was born a daughter who was christened Grace Anna. When she was nineteen Grace Anna and Thomas Edwards, five years her senior, were married. The year was 1860.

Tragically their married life was but of short duration. Whilst attending to the flour mill that was attached to the "Three Trees" property, Thomas had a hand caught in the machinery. Tetanus set in and four months after the birth of their son, Robert Campbell Edwards, he died an agonising death on August 19, 1862. Eight months later the second son, named Thomas Campbell was born.[4]

As Grace Anna had no reason to stay on the farm at Three Trees she left and went to live in Londonderry, where her father had leased a small terraced cottage not far from the Londonderry Model National School.

It was at this school that the boys were educated. Among documents held by the family is a Certificate of Merit and Award of Premium. Premium is, of course, a prize - possibly an amount of money. The Certificate states that "at a Public Examination held on the 22nd Day of December 1876 a Premium was awarded to Robert Edwards, pupil in the 6th Class for superior efficiency in the prescribed course of study and for general attendance to school business during the year." This would seem to have been the last year of Robert's formal full time education.

It so happened that Grace Anna's brother had migrated to Australia where he had successfully established himself as a chemist with a shop in 122 Bourke Street. In 1877 he returned to Ireland to visit his relatives.

Economic conditions there had continued to be bad. The effects of the potato famines of 1845 and 1847 were still being felt and in order to obtain work the young people were migrating in their thousands to the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and South Africa.

Thompson convinced his sister that her sons could look forward to successful careers if she could bring herself to face the inconveniences that then accompanied a lengthy sea voyage.

To Grace Anna, born August 1842, the welfare of her sons was all that really mattered, and so, on December of 1877 she,then aged 35, with Robert aged 15 and Thomas aged 14 joined the 167 passengers aboard the S.S. Luisitania (Master Capt. F. Hewson) and commenced the ninety day journey to Melbourne.

On their arrival in 1878 Thompson met the family and conveyed them to their new home - a small cottage at 4 Wangaratta Street, Richmond, not far from the Railway Station.[5] Part of that timber house is incorporated in the residence now occupying what was previously two blocks.



The First five storey building in Flinders Street, Melbourne

THE BUSINESSMAN

Whether the two boys continued their education after settling into their new home is not known. It has been stated that Robert at one time attended the Working Men's College (now the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology - more familiarly known as R.M.I.T.). Possibly he studied book-keeping. It is possible that the younger Thomas resumed school, for the first mention we have of his finding work is that in 1881 he joined the staff of Buckley and Nunn.

According to Clow the elder brother, Robert, "set himself about trying to find something to do and like all he had to make a few dives before he came to his feet." The first permanent position he obtained was with a Mr. E. Purcell, a wholesale draper of 83 Swanston Street.

There his employment as clerk and debt collector meant that every Monday he rode his bicycle to the homes of sundry customers from whom he collected small weekly payments. This experience later stood him in good stead, for he learned to establish relationships and he gained a good knowledge of local geography.

At the end of six months Robert felt that he had learned all there was to know about getting a few shillings from debtors - reluctant and otherwise. The consequence was that he transferred to Rolfe and Co., wholesale grocers and importers with premises at 98 Bourke Street West.

He was assigned to the Tea and Coffee Department - a fortunate move, for it decided his future occupation and mode of life. His work included the tasting and blending of tea and the costing and clearing of goods at the Customs Office.

The agent for some of the teas was the firm of Harrisons, Ramsay Ltd. whose Manager, Mr. Fraser Ramsay, took a liking to Robert and helped to educate him in the art of tea tasting.

It was not long before Robert saw the invoices showing that tea bought for from 5¼d to 5½d a pound was selling at 1/3, 1/6, and 1/9 a pound.

To Robert the profit seemed to be enormous and gave him the idea of setting up in business.

He discussed the matter with his mother, who was very proud of her straight-forward son.

"If it is as good as you think" she said, "I have some money in the Union Bank and will lend it to you for a year".

So in 1881 at the age of 19, with a capital of £300 (about $8,000 in today's currency) Robert established his tea and coffee business.

Said Campbell Edwards, "I remember my father telling me that the responsibility of having his mother's lifetime savings in his trust was so great that he hardly had a good night's sleep for the six months before he paid the money back in full."

At first he bought the tea from Harrisons, Ramsay Ltd., blended and packed it at night in the kitchen of the Wangaratta Street home, and then rode round during the day delivering the tea, collecting the money owing to him and seeking new customers.

However this procedure was too slow for Robert, who wanted to make big money, so he bought a horse and gig and went into Gippsland where the farmers bought half chests (56 lbs) instead of the pound or two.

Success followed this venture and to permit him to continue his policy of eliminating the middleman by selling direct to the public the decision was taken to employ country travellers, many of them young Irishmen.

The business prospered at such a rate that in 1882, at the age of twenty, he moved operations to a property in Flinders Street.

Continuing growth of the company caused a series of moves. Its first address in 1886-87 was at 42 Little Flinders Street. A year later it was at 25 Little Flinders Street East. For twelve months (1892) the centre of operations was at 322 Flinders Street. During 1893 and 1894 home for the Company was 30 Queen Street. 1895 found work being divided between Queen Street and 31 Bond Street. Then came a respite from packing and moving. During the period 1896 - 1903 trading was carried on at the Viaduct, 543 Flinders Street.[6]

A year later he persuaded his brother, Thomas, to join him, and Edwards and Company Ensign Tea, sold under the slogan There is Only One T In Australia, soon became a brand well known to thousands throughout the State.

The next big move was made in 1904. Then Edwards Ensign Tea Merchant erected the first five storey building in Flinders Street. The number was 100. The architect endeavoured to combine ancient architecture with the modern American style. The solid, in this case, squat Greco-Egyptian blue-stone columns of the first storey supported the upper storeys that were free from uncluttered ornamentation. These were surmounted by the twin minaret like towers. Between these was suspended an elaborate wrought iron web that supported the new Ensign Trade mark: a medallion around the edge of which was the firm's motto: Purity, Strength and Flavour Conquer All. In the center of the medallion was a modified Australian flag. In this instance the crosses of the Union Jack were replaced by the letter T. A Southern Cross was in the top right hand corner; a rosette was below the Jack and the letters E & C were below the stars. Immediately beneath the top balustrade was added a panel of opaque, multi-coloured tiles on which were imposed

the words Edwards & Co. Electric bulbs placed behind the panel gave Melbourne one of its first illuminated business signs.

During October 1919 the building was sold to the Sunday School Union, but Edwards & Co.continued in occupation of the ground, the fourth and the fifth floors.

On Saturday night, April 30, 1921 a fierce fire completely destroyed the building. Both the Age and the Argus gave almost two columns of the Monday's issue to a description of the spectacular blaze, which could be seen as far away as Box Hill.

The fire disrupted operations, but stocks of merchandise were brought from Sydney and the thirty-five employees were soon at work in rented premises at 529 Lonsdale Street. Two years later the firm moved to its present site - 310/18 King Street.

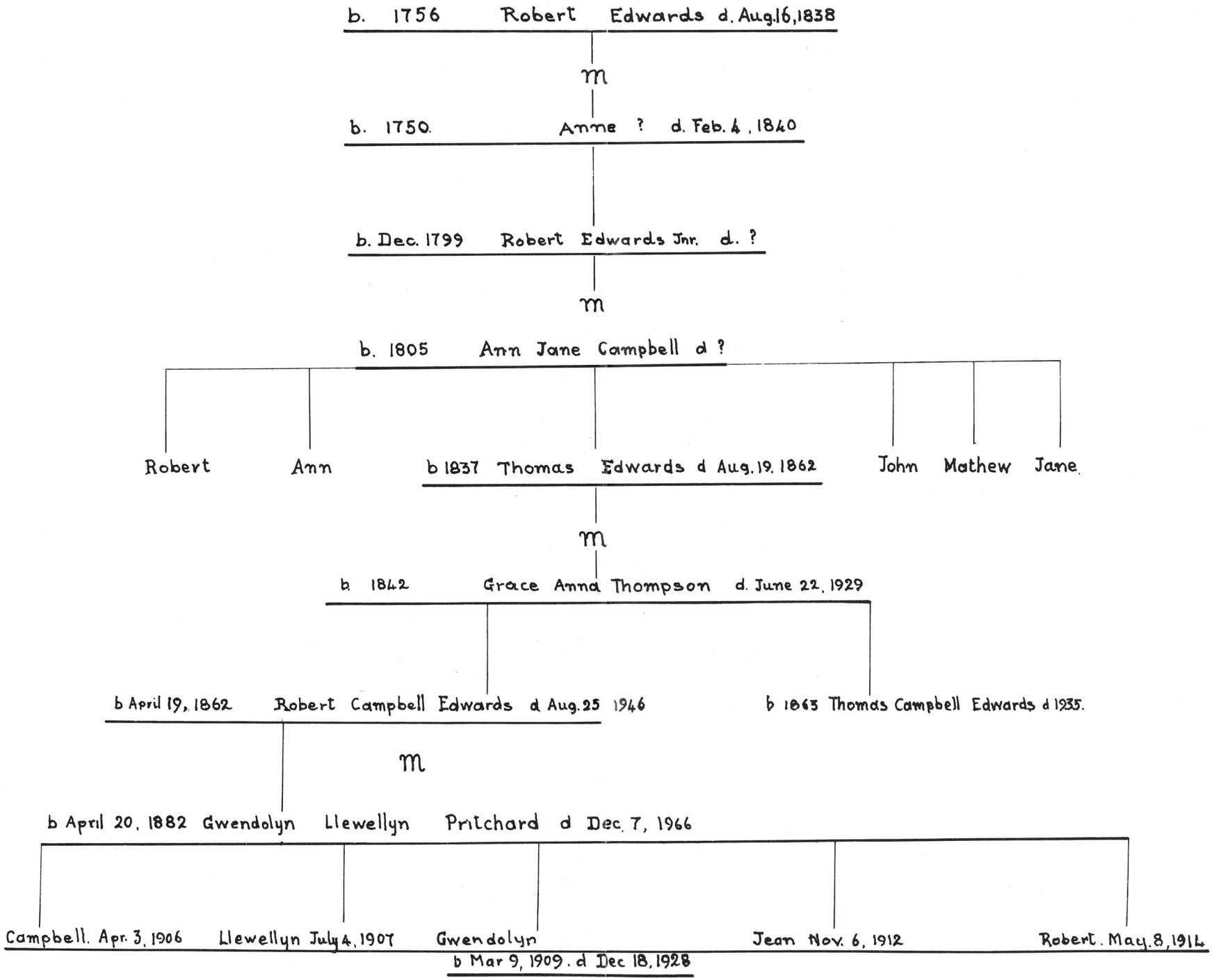
At the time of the fire Thomas D. Edwards was Managing Director and Campbell Edwards was the Senior Partner.[7]

In 1905 Robert Campbell Edwards, at the age of 43, retired from active participation in the firm. However, he continued as Chairman up to the time of his death.





Possibly a rejected design for Ensign Tea Logo ▷


b. 1756 Robert Edwards d. Aug.16,1838
m
b. 1750. Anne ? d. Feb. 4, 1840
b. Dec. 1799 Robert Edwards Jnr. d. ?
m
b. 1805 Ann Jane Campbell d ?
Robert
Ann
b 1837 Thomas Edwards d Aug. 19. 1862
John
Mathew
Jane.
m
b 1842 Grace Anna Thompson d. June 22, 1929
b April 19, 1862 Robert Campbell Edwards d Aug. 25 1946
b 1863 Thomas Campbell Edwards d 1935.
m
b April 20, 1882 Gwendolyn Llewellyn Pritchard d Dec. 7, 1966
Campbell. Apr. 3, 1906
Llewellyn July 4, 1907
Gwendolyn
b Mar 9, 1909. d Dec 18, 1928
Jean Nov. 6, 1912
Robert. May. 8, 1914

Under his leadership the firm had opened offices in Sydney (first at 226/28 Clarence Street, "Near the Town Hall" a letterhead dated 11 June 1896 stated, then at 152 Clarence Street, and finally at 56/58 Foster Street) and at Petries Bight, Brisbane. Coffee, Cocoa, and Tea for blending were being imported from India, America, and from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where the firm had its own platation at Kandavalley. It had also patented the process for manufacturing fig coffee.

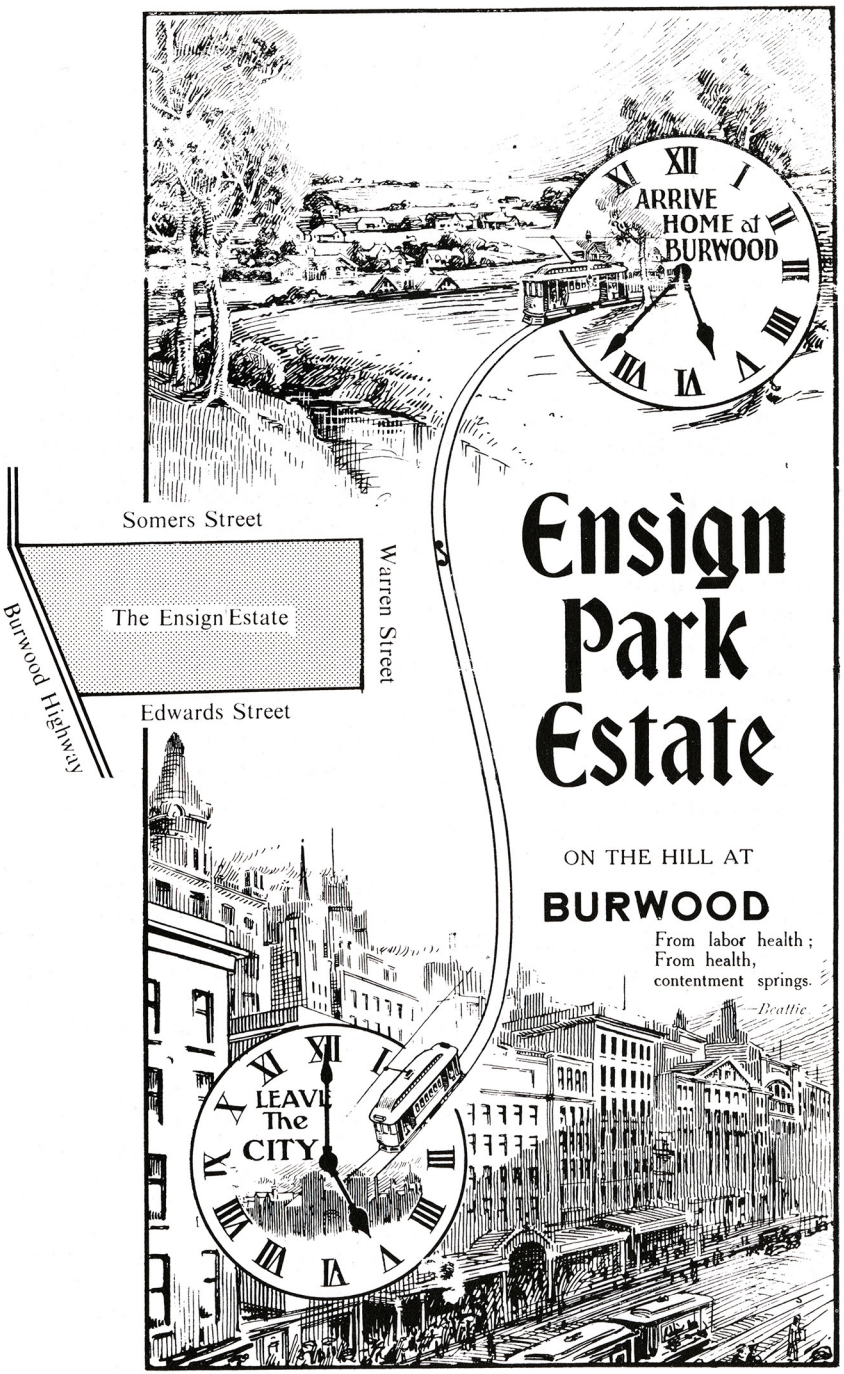
To promote the sale of the firm's merchandise, seventy seven door to door salesmen traversed the countryside of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, using horse and buggy, motor cycles and later cars. Their calls were made at regular intervals, and often overnight accommodation was at the home of a farmer. Some of the travellers also took orders for soft goods.

About fifty years after Robert Campbell Edwards had set up as a tea and coffee merchant he found himself precipitated into a vastly different business world - that of property purchaser and developer.

In 1891 the land boom that had comenced in Victoria in 1888 collapsed almost overnight. Suddenly, wrote Vance Palmer in "The Legend Of The 90s", "like a calm in the heart of a cyclone there was a lull. Then the wind began to turn the other way: building societies crumpled, banks began to totter, and it seemed as if nothing would be left standing." The bursting of the boom that put thousands out of work and rendered hundreds homeless did not seriously affect Edwards. His account was with the Union - one of the two banks that did not close their doors - and he had not speculated in land or property. In fact the greatest commercial depression that had affected Melbourne helped him in a remarkable way. Much land which had been subdivided was now a burden to the creditors of defunct syndicates and they were glad to dispose of it at any price.

In the suburbs whole street of new houses stood empty. Edwards did not have to search for bargains. Bankers, Real Estate Agents and Syndicators came to him with offers. He bought a hundred cottages in Richmond,[8] an extensive area in Burwood, now bounded by Somers Street, Warren Street, Edwards Street and Burwood Road,[9] and four farms in Gippsland. Other purchases included forty acres in Station Street, Box Hill, from Ellingworth in 1905 for £500, and a mansion in 14½ acres in Elm Street, Glen Iris for £1500, in 1909.

Probably it was this involvement in a new field of business that decided Edwards to leave the active conduct of the tea and coffee business to his sons. An unused account form carrying the Station Street address and with the date 190-? reads "Dr. to R. Campbell Edwards As Agent for Above" the Above being Breeders of Pure Stock, Sheep, Dairy Cattle, Pigs, Poultry. Exporters of Fruit, Apples, Pears, Cherries etc., Orchards: Henry Street, Blackburn off Springfield Road; Bakers Road, Blackburn; Station Street, Box Hill. Farms: "Dunwere", Whitelaw; "Emerald Hill", Whitelaw; "Erinvale", Kilcunda Road, Bena; "The



Plains", Koonwarra; as well as properties at Pound Creek and Buffalo.[10]

Interestingly, the 1934 Ensign Handbook of recipes for the housewife, and formula and statistics of use to the farmer also advertised Ensign Baking Powder and Jelly Crystals.

1905 was a momentous year for Edwards. His tea and coffee business was firmly established, his other interests were prospering, moreover he had passed beyond middle age. Now his thoughts turned to the founding of a family.

The voyage out in the Lusitania had not been a happy one for the yound lad so when his mother left for a visit to her relatives he chose not to go. Instead, during her absence, he married one of his church friends - Gwendolyn Llewellyn Pritchard - daughter of a mining engineer, William Pritchard of Pembroke, Wales. On the day of the wedding Robert was twenty years and one day older than his bride. To Gwendolyn and Robert were born Campbell, April 3, 1906; Llewellyn, July 4, 1907; a daughter Gwyn, March 4, 1909; Jean, November 6, 1911 and Robert, May 8, 1914. Campbell following his father, is now in charge of the business. For generations the Edwards had been gentlemen farmers in Ireland. Llewellyn carried on the family tradition.[11] Gwyn became ill on board ship and died during December 1928 - a few weeks after returning from a family visit to Ireland. Jean married timber merchant Alan Fullwood. The genes bequeathed by his great-grandfather manifested themselves in Robert, who took out his medical degree.

The couple's first home was "Akaroa" Royal Crescent, Camberwell. In 1910 they moved to a brick residence that Robert had built on 40 acres of land he owned in Station Street, Box Hill. The house and 24 acres of land is now Kingswood College (formerly Box Hill Grammar School). Adjacent land in Station Street that was Edwards' property is now occupied by Loyal Orange Lodge Homes.

The late C.F. Walker, Head Master of the Grammar School, in a letter to the author states "The late Campbell Edwards did intend to build a mansion on the highest point (Gwynton Park). The house he built was considered to be the Lodge ..... The row of Oak trees marks the intended drive." When he built, Robert Campbell was presented with one of the passes that the Victorian Railways Department was giving to builders in order to encourage settlement in the vicinity of the line. The recipient of such a pass enjoyed free rail travel for two years.

At the time Station Street was unpaved. The buggy drive to Box Hill was a hot, dusty one in summer and a cold, muddy one in winter. Added to this the house did not have the amenities to be found in homes in the closer suburbs. For example water had to be hand pumped. So Gwynton Park was rented out and became the first of the many homes, mainly in the Camberwell-Hawthorn area, that the Edwards family lived in. Campbell Edwards thinks, "We must have lived in twenty-six homes in twenty-five years." and Robert supports him in this contention.



Gwynton Park 1910 (Kingswood College)

Most housewives would have been infuriated by the frequency of transfer from one address to another, but (the words are those of Mrs. Fullwood) "mother coped very well, being a capable, beautiful and gracious lady, making our childhood very agreeable. I believe she enjoyed moving from house to house, making each a happy home."

As there were times when the business necessitated that their father travel in Victoria, and annually to Sydney, the young folk soon learned to depend on their own resources and to accept responsibility. Campbell recalls his father instructing him how to lay linoleum covering in the kitchen during his absence. At that time the lad was 12 years old.

An anecdote that illustrates the singularity of the man is as follows: Mrs. Edwards prevailed upon her husband to attend an auction with the object of buying a suite of furniture that had taken her fancy. His reply to her query as to whether he had been successful in his bid was "No, I wasn't going to pay the price being asked. I bought the house." And so the family found themselves living in "Tara", the Camberwell mansion built in the 1860s by the three times Premier of Victoria, Sir John O'Shanasay. "Tara" is now Broughton Hall, the Church of England Home for Elderly People.

The family's suburban wanderings included a return to Gwynton Park. Later they lived at 33 Broadway, Camberwell, from whence they went to 231 Burke Road, East Malvern. In 1928 they were back at "Tara". Finally Robert Campbell Edwards bought 'Northbrook' in High Street, East Malvern. This house eventually became the Malvern City Council Library and rest rooms for elderly citizens.

CHURCHMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST

As has been shown Robert Campbell Edwards was an outstanding businessman - extraordinarily successful, but although he must have found pleasure and have felt a certain degree of pride in having achieved his monetary objective, he most surely did not enjoy making money solely for the sake of making money. His wealth was but a means to and end. He gained chief satisfaction from being in a position in which he could use his wealth to assist his church, and assist those less fortunate than he.

He evidently was a lad serious, sensitive and compassionate beyond his years. He became a businessman because being the elder of the two boys, his was the task of making a living for the family.

Ireland was a bitter, appalling land for the poor when the potato crops of 1846-1848 failed. A million peasants were rendered destitute, homeless. In their hovels - if they were allowed to keep them - in their "scalps" or by the roadside tens of thousands died of starvation or of the pestilence that accompanied the famines.

Those terrible years were known by the people as "the famine". But, writes Woodham-Smith

> "The famine was never "over" in the sense that an epidemic occurs and is over. The poverty of the Irish people continued, dependence on the potato continued, failures of the potato to a greater or lesser extent, continued and hunger continued."

The sensitive lad never forgot the heart rending poverty of the poor, and that early environment was the determining agent in the fixing of the pattern of his adult life.

Politics and religion were focal points of attention in the pre "movies" pre-wireless years. Men and women of this technological age have but the haziest conception of the intensity of thought, discussion and passionate controversy that those two subjects aroused in the people of Edwards' time.

Living in such an environment caused Robert Campbell to turn his thoughts deeply to religion. Like many of his adolescent contemporaries he gave much time to the study of the Bible. With evidence of poverty and suffering all about him he became dissatisfied with the harsh, Calvanistic beliefs then still held by many Presbyterians. More and more his thoughts tended to concentrate on the message of compassion,

hope and redemption that he found in the New Testatment. The turning point came when his work as a young traveller took him to Bendigo. There, as a result of an earlier meeting with the evangelist, Peart, he attended a gathering of the Disciples (fore-runner of the Churches of Christ) in the Temperance Hall. While waiting for the service to begin he commenced to read a Greek edition of the Testament that he habitually carried with him. Watt, the missioner, noted this and complimented the young man on his evident deep seated interest.

> "The result was that Edwards became so obedient to the faith and was baptised by immersion into the name of Christ in the Hall by Watt. As regards to Primitive Christianity, Edwards thought it a fine idea - one, indeed, that no man could go wrong with; and his heart was afire with enthusiasm to spread it abroad."[12]

So sincere was the young man, so enthusiastic, that his mother eventually followed her son's example. When Mrs. Edwards told him of her intention -

> "Campbell Edwards was struck with a most joyful surprise. He said, "Do you mean it, Mother?" But she did mean it - for Bryant immersed her, in the Glenferrie Road Christian Chapel."

The conversion of his Mother encouraged Edwards "to try his hand at preaching". Accordingly he took an interest in the Yarralung undenominational mission, near the Yarra River Bank, beyond Burnley, where the young toughs of Melbourne gathered to play pitch and toss, and two-up. There his box pulpit exhortations attracted attention, but Edwards gained no converts.

His next move was to establish a Sunday School in, significantly, a carpenter's shop on a block of land at the corner of Chestnut and Balmain Streets, Richmond. The Sunday School opened with an enrolment of 120 pupils. A Band of Hope was started and a mission commenced. Later a suitable building was erected on the site. There Edwards preached for seven solid years. Again, they were barren years as far as the gathering of a harvest of converts was concerned. Then during a visit to Toolangi, he met Robbit Clow and arranged for him to take over the Balmain Mission. Clow organised the mission into a Church of Christ.

Edwards' failure as an evangelist probably was the result of the very intensity and persistence with which he made his appeal to his listeners to come forward, and because of his insistence that it was not enough for one to stand up and acknowledge Christ, but that a true Christian is one who must be prepared to obey the teachings of Christ, as in the Sermon on the Mount.

When he failed as an evangelist Edwards may have been downhearted but he was too much of a realist to be defeated. He continued to follow his star and remained active in both Church and Sunday School work. "Anyone who wishes to meet him at any time can drop into the Sunday School at Thomas Street, Hawthorn" wrote E. Winch to Clow, "and he will there find the dear old Patriarch - now 73 years of age - still at his task".

His lack of success as an evangelist did not lessen Edwards' devotion to the philanthropic work either. It merely changed his course of action. To him had been given the opportunity to make a fortune: he would use that fortune to help others. To Rowland Moris he said more than once

> "Show me the man with a message who will work at his job as I do mine, and I will gladly support him."

Earlier he had paid the return passage of the great evangelist, Pond, and his wife to Drake University, Des Moines, IOWA, U.S.A. where Pond graduated as a Professor. He supported Missions in China, Africa and the Pacific.

At one stage he was the largest financial subscriber to Home Missions in Victoria. He supported the Balmain Street and the Hunter Street Missions in Richmond. With his assistance the Mission at Blackburn was developed into a Church, and he was the means of launching churches at Box Hill, Hartley, Thomas Street, Hawthorn and Montrose. From him Glenferrie, Prahran and Gardenvale received assistance.

He was a Victorian representative at the 1906 Conference that decided to found the College of The Bible, and when the Methodists had occasion to sell he bought the mansion at Elm Street, Glen Iris, added an additional 14½ acres and made the property available for use as a College.

> "For a time he was putting into such work" a sum equalling £1,500 a year".

As a young man he contributed to Dr. Barnardo's Homes for the underprivileged boys of England. The welfare of the children of India also was one of his concerns. He paid for the upkeep of some and contributed liberally to their Homes. He financed the building of some of the units of the hospital at Dhond, and built a chapel in the hospital compound.

The Burwood Boys' Homes (now the Burwood Children's Home)[13] was founded by R. Campbell Edwards in July 1895 for the purpose of providing a home for waifs of the day. "No truly destitute boy" he directed "is to be refused admission or turned away." When the first superintendent, Hawkins, objected to this policy on the grounds that incorrigible boys from other institutions were being admitted to Burwood Boys' Home Edwards' rejoinder was that boys bearing written evidence of good behaviour, boys of good pedigree did not have a legitimate call on benevolence. His own words were,

> "the intelligent boy who is the holder of a reputation is not wholly bankrupt, to assist such is only putting your money on a favourite racehorse - giving yourself the highest chance of success. Why should a boy with a pedigree and a reference be encouraged to eat bread that was designed for someone having neither a "good" name nor shelter?"

Edwards, assisted by his mother and some of her friends, bore the

whole financial burden of running the Home. They arranged an annual concert in the Hawthorn Town Hall and personally solicited support from the public.

Dunstan, an English orchardist who succeeded Hawkins, established a vegetable garden in which the boys worked when they were 14, thereby assisting to support themselves and the Home.

When mischievous rumours were spread that Edwards was exploiting the boys for his own benefit he had the Home incorporated as a Government Home. It is now supported under the Hospital and Charities Commission, but still receives magnificient support from the Edwards' Trust.

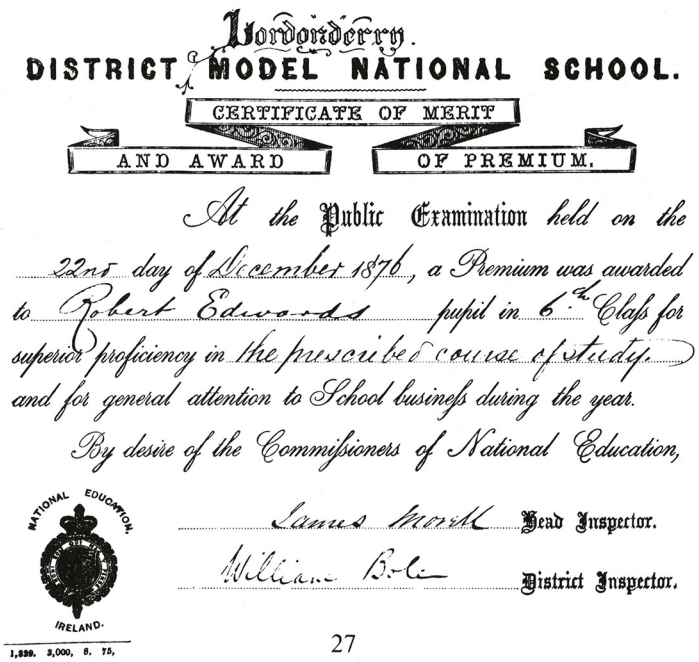
According to Clow -

> "No man in trouble would Edwards turn away .... rather than turn a deserving one away, he gave him the benefit of the doubt."

When Clow asked one who knew Edwards if he could give him an idea as to how many people had benefited by the life of Edwards the reply was "Eternity alone will reveal it."

In 1922 the Edwards family set up The Robert Campbell Edwards Charitable Trust. This received support from property, shares etc., donated wholly by Robert Campbell Edwards. In Sydney, at the same time the Campbell Edwards Foundation was established.

At the present time the Victorian Trust has funds valued at one and a half million dollars and offers support for churches, hospitals and Homes for the elderly.


Londonderry.

DISTRICT MODEL NATIONAL SCHOOL.

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

AND AWARD OF PREMIUM.

At the Public Examination held on the 22nd day of December 1876, a Premium was awarded to Robert Edwards pupil in 6th Class for superior proficiency in the prescribed course of study, and for general attention to School business during the year.

By desire of the Commissioners of National Education,

James Morell Head Inspector.

William Bole District Inspector.

NATIONAL EDUCATION IRELAND.

1,839. 3,000, 8. 75.

THE MAN

Thus far this account has dealt with the ancestry of Robert Campbell Edwards, with Edwards the businessman, and with Edwards the churchman and philanthropist. What do we know of Edwards the man?

Fortunately to help in portraying him physically and to help in arriving at an assessment of his character the assistance of his family and of one of his contemporaries, Laurence Ralph, now in his eighties, is available, and the writings of Clow, Pond and the late Rowland Morris are of considerable importance.

Physically, Edwards was a representative of Clow's Silurian people. He was of medium but strong build; a spare, tough and wiry man with fair, sandy hair, blue eyes and always a neatly trimmed beard. At the time of his death he had a shock of grey hair.

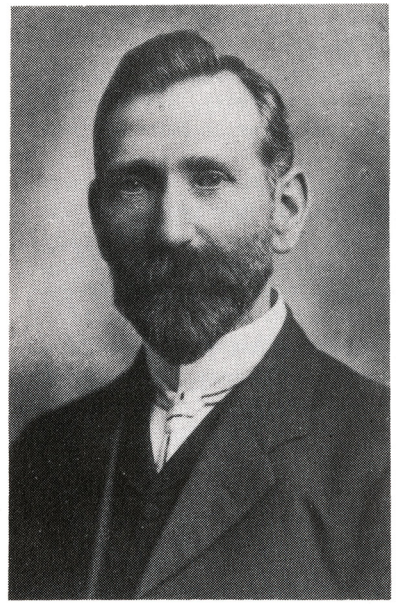
> While in business his dress was that of a prosperous merchant, 'which is to say a morning coat, perfect waistcoat, silk hat and striped trousers'.

"None has been more immune to praise or criticism," wrote Clow, so it is not surprising to learn that when, later in life, Edwards spent much of his time on his farm at Bena, his was the dress of the working farmer, or that, again according to Clow, he would have been prepared to walk the streets of Melbourne bare-footed had it been necessary for him to do so in order to help someone in distress.

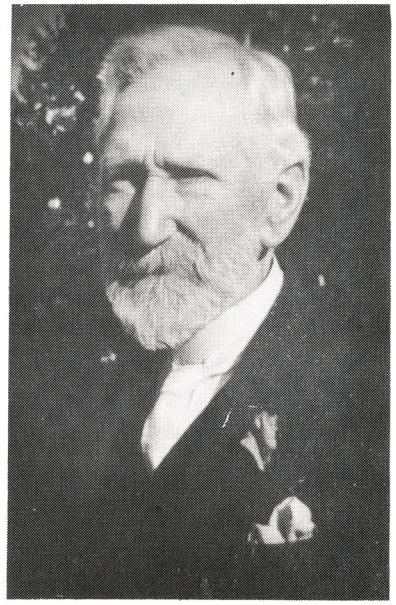
He was an exceedingly energetic man, always on the move. And although all who knew him agreed that Robert Campbell Edwards was a modest man, refusing to accept thanks or commendation for his charitable deeds, the use of the word ENERGETIC for the company's cable code, together with a touch of floridness in the capital letters of his handwriting and signature is indicative of a subconscious, but pardonable pride in the possession of those attributes - energy and individuality.

At the age of seventy he taught himself Hebrew in order to be able to read the Bible in the original. A letter written in 1934, when he was seventy-two, is that of a strong-willed, self-disciplined man. Mentally he remained alert till his last hour.

An astute businessman, he was quick to judge the potentialities of a proposition, quick to arrive at a decision, and quick to act should action be necessary.



Robert Campbell Edwards at the age of 44



Robert Campbell Edwards at the age of 78

That he had courage and was prepared 'to trust in his own untried capacity' is proved by the fact that when he decided to engage in the tea and coffee business he knew he would be facing opposition from twenty-three other tea and coffee merchants, including Griffiths, that were vying for the custom of a State with a population of 862,346.

His was a character compounded of Anglo-Scottish (Thompson-Edwards) longheadedness and an idealism derived from the Irish mysticism that had been a pervasive element in the environment in which the Edwards had lived for generations.

Paraphrasing the words of C.E. Taylor in the Australian Christian (September 11, 1946), at the moment of his conversion 'Edwards heard a Voice; he felt a Touch, and he shared a Vision'. Thereafter his life was to be lived according to the Christian ethic. He preferred to see the good

in Man rather than the Bad. It was right to help those in need so he helped, even though that meant denying himself.

Such help was both direct and indirect. Indirect because his theme was, "I am out to help others help themselves and others." He provided the wherewithall, he organised then he left it to others to carry the project through.

Like Ewart Gladstone, Robert Campbell Edwards would have preferred to preach. As Gladstone was directed into politics by his father so Edwards was directed into business by force of circumstance. Just as Gladstone's political philosophy carried the marks of his moral philosophy so the business life of Edwards was influenced by his religious philosophy.

Psychologists will discern an aspect of this in his preference for a white tie; in the choice of Ensign for the company trade name. Remember that he was living in the dynamic formative period of the Salvation Army when the Corps marched to their evangelistic meetings with drums beating, tambourines castenating and their ensigns flying. That period when Salvationists were prepared to go to prison and did go to prison in defence of their right to hold street meetings. The use of the words Purity and Strength in the company's motto also is of psychological significance.

Throughout his life Edwards remained his own man. It was in this respect that he won and retained the affection and support of his understanding family. Many, no doubt, regarded him as an eccentric. They were wrong. Quixotic would have been an apt description in that he was an idealist, a visionary steadfastly following his star.

Robert Campbell Edwards died of cancer in the Stanhope Private Hospital, South Yarra, on August 25th, 1946 at the age of 84, and is buried in the Box Hill Cemetery.[14]

His monument is a massive bluestone pillar that came from the burnt out ruins of the Flinders Street property.[15] It bears one word, EDWARDS. No date, no indication as to whom Edwards was. Sadly, ironically, his name has been scored by a vandal: one of the type he sought to help. But he has a greater monument than that. His real memorial is his 'elegant and lovable family', the Burwood Children's Homes, the College Of The Bible, and the countless individuals who have been given new hope and the opportunity to gain some joy from Life as a result of his personal concern. So long as the Campbell Edwards Trust and the Sydney Foundation continue to exist so long will a tangible memorial to this singular man continue to remain. His spiritual memorial, his effect for good on the lives of others and their successive generations, will continue unseen: indestructible and influential as the waves of the ocean.

ADDENDA

Origins—

[1] The earliest record of a person named Edwards, held at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, is dated 1655. However there is no known connection with the Robert Campbell Edwards family.

[2] 'Three Trees' is a townland a mile or so south of the town of Carrowkeel, County Donegal, on the west bank of the river Foyle. Drumgowan, also is in Co. Donegal. There is a Mullane in the Parish of Drumachose, near Limavadey, Co. Londonderry, but Mullane does not appear in the 1926 Topographical Index. A Townland is the smallest rural land division in Ireland. The average size is 352 acres.

[3] Dr. Thompson had at least three children. One brother, an Army man in India, was killed by a tiger. The chemist son and his wife left two daughters.

[4] Thomas Campbell by deed poll took the name Dill, and thenceforth was popularly known as T.D. There is a supposition that the Dill family was of German origin. According to Cottle the Irish Dillon is a Normanisation of the German Dill that came to Ireland in the 12th century. Also the introduction of the name Anna (a variant of Ann, Anne) gives credence to the belief.

After leaving the company, at various times, he had three grazing properties in the Riverina; a fruit cannery at Tatura; and a former Winter-Irving property at Dhurringle. He also owned General Stores in the country and the Bon Marche in Richmond. He was very much interested in the Home Rule movement and made frequent visits to Ireland, and the U.K. He died in London in 1935 after an operation. The Shipping List records the ages of the boys as being 14 and 13 respectively.

[5] Later Edwards built a fine home at Christobel St., Camberwell, for his mother, where he also held other property.

Businessman—

[6] During the period 1895 - 1910 the business included three or four other businesses, one of which was the Oriental Tea Co., and Tea Rooms in Swanston Street. In 1902 Edwards & Co. briefly established agencies in Auckland and Dunedin, N.Z.

[7] Sometime prior to the fire Robert Campbell sold the Melbourne business to his brother Thomas. The transfer proved to be not in the best interest of the Company so when the opportunity to do so came Robert repurchased it. It was then that Edwards and Co. was registered as Edwards Ensign Tea Pty. Ltd.

[8] As a means of encouraging worthy tenants to care for their houses Edwards allowed them to buy them on payment of a nominal deposit. Progressive payments were made in amounts that could be well afforded.

[9] This area was subdivided into 49 home sites and sold under the name of Ensign Park. The present boundaries of the area are Burwood Rd., Somers St., Warren St., and Edwards St. These were but a few of the properties that Edwards bought.

[10] The farms were share dairy farms - except 'The Plains,' Koonwarra, and Pound Creek which were 'turn out' properties.

The Bena property consisted of 320 acres divided into three farms. Two were worked by share farmers; the third was leased. Tenants received half of the profits, and were paid 6 a month. £1.10 a week to present readers seems a meagre payment. But it must be understood that £5 a week was a good wage; that farmers grew a good deal of their own food, and that final payments were received every six months. In fact, Edwards was regarded as being a considerate owner. Bill Littlewood remembers him as being a kindly Christian man who always brought the youngsters chocolates and lollies. Under his direction farms were cleared of weeds and vermin. Today these properties are part of the lush green scenery of South Gippsland Strezlecki Ranges and would bring good prices. True to his character, when Kilcunda Road residents decided that they must have a school Edwards gave them an acre of land on which to build.

[11] After spending the years 1925 - 32 in the Melbourne tea business Llewellyn left to devote some years to the development of a property at Tarwin Lower, which he held in partnership with two others.

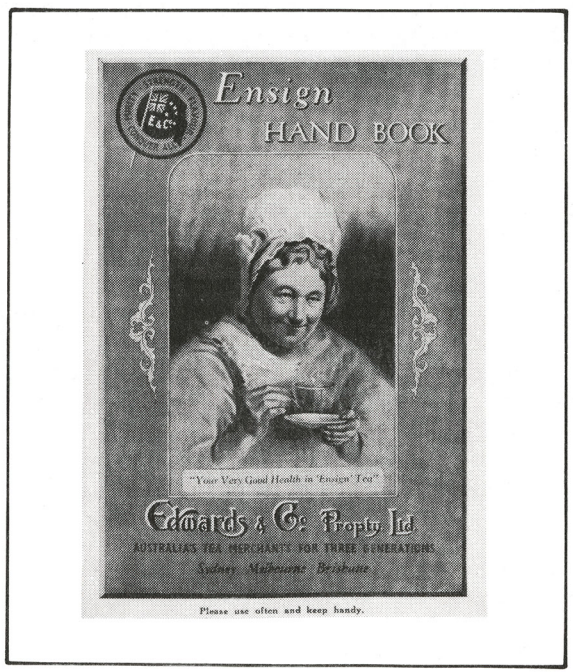
Churchman & Philanthropist—

[12] Edwards always believed that the ideal church was a building in which the congregation gathered to listen to inspired but unsalaried preachers: men of the same mould as the Prophets of the Old Testament and Disciples of the New Testament.

[13] The Home, on Warrigal (Boundary) Road property owned by Robert Campbell Edwards was formed 'for the rescue of boys from depraved and dangerous surroundings, also boys destitute and uncared for or boys wild and lawless -.' Lord Brassey, then Victoria's new Governor, declared the Home open during July, 1895. The Burwood Boys' Home School was listed in the Schools Register of June 1896, and by the end of that year fifteen boys were in attendance.

When the Committee decided to admit girls the Hospital and Charities Commission was asked for permission to rename the Burwood Boys' Home. Permission was granted and the new name, Burwood Children's Homes (Incorporating Burwood Boys' Home), appeared in Government Gazette No. 87, October 13th, 1976.

Wattle Park Primary School and Wattle Park High School now occupy sites that originally were owned by the Burwood Boys' Home. The latter, on 15 acres, opened on February 7, 1962, with an enrolment of 68 pupils.



The Man—

[14] Robert Campbell's wife died of a stroke at the age of 84, while in the Kalonga Hospital, North Balwyn and is buried in the Box Hill cemetery.

[15] To convey the massive stone to the Box Hill cemetery must have been an extraordinarily difficult task, for it was moved at a time when no cranes and transports as are now known existed.

That he overcame the difficulty of transport and of placement is further evidence of Edwards' determination and ability to translate ideas into realities.

The Company Today

This company was one of the commercial casualties of World War II. Man-power Regulations reduced sales staff, and the introduction of food rationing drastically curtailed the market, for housewives could not accumulate sufficient coupons to enable them to buy tea in large quantity - even had the supply been available.

As an importer of tea, coffee and cocoa the company is now practically non-existent, but small quantities of tea sufficient to satisfy customers' requests are still distributed.

Unpredictable circumstances that followed the end of World War II resulted in the company becoming a manufacturer of high quality clothing at its West Melbourne factory.