

# Cortis, Edward

ASC 1902

School Register has him as a "clerk." The "Application" below has him as "Licensed Surveyor"

Cortis, Edward: Lieut., Mining Corps, No.1 Tunnelling Coy. 16/2/16 to 21/7/17. Returned home due to illness (Bronchitis and TB.)

Application for a Commission in the		<i>Mining Corps</i>	
		Particulars. <i>E.C.</i>	
Surname ...	}	... To be in block letters.	<i>Cortis.</i>
Other names (in full)	}	... ...	<i>Edward.</i>
Educational Qualifications ... <small>(Certificate to be attached for notation at District Head-quarters.)</small>			<i>Licensed Surveyor</i>
Military Qualifications (previous Military Service, if any, to be stated) <small>(Attention is directed to third sub-para. of C.M. Regulation 66. Present rank and corps to be stated.)</small>			<i>Member of school of Officers Engineers Depot. Moore Park Sydney. Lieutenant in Mining Corps</i>
Date on which applicant qualified at a competitive examination for first appointment as 2nd Lieutenant (U.T. Regulation 132) ...			
Present Civil Employment ...			<i>Authorized Surveyor</i>
Date of Birth and Age ... <small>(Certificate of Birth or Statutory Declaration to be attached for notation at District Head-quarters.)</small>	Date of Birth.	Age.	
	<i>22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1884</i>	<i>31 Years. 3 Months.</i>	
If a British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject ... <small>(In the case of the latter, date and place of Naturalization to be stated.)</small>			<i>British Subject. Gazetted 19/1916</i>
Married or Single ...			<i>Married. One child 7 months old</i>
Postal Address ...	<i>Edward Cortis C/o Aus. Bank of Commerce Bathurst. N.S.W</i>		Battalion Area
Next of Kin ...			<i>Wife. Annie Constance Cortis. above address</i>
<i>16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1916</i>		(Signature of Applicant) <i>Edward Cortis.</i>	

20.2.16. Emb per <del>Lyons</del> <del>St. David</del> <del>St. David</del>	
15.10.16. Dis from 3 <sup>rd</sup> hon Gen Hosp. Wimereux	
4.9.16. Emb for England on H.S. St David on Norm Gen Hosp Wimereux. France	PT 10/
5.5.16. Disembarked. Marseilles + entrained	} AC 34 191
8.5.16. Detained at Hazelbrouer	
10.9.16. In Hospital Sick France.	DO 7/1
24.9.16. Admitted 3 <sup>rd</sup> hon Gen Hosp. Bronchitis	DO 1/2
21.11.16. PROCEEDED OVERSEAS FRANCE	Weekly do
18.12.16. Admitted 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hon Gen Hospital Bronchitis	15/16
2.1.17. Injured leg from heap	112
18.2.17. Adm 4 <sup>th</sup> Hon. Hosp. Boulogne. N.Y.D. Sick	War Office 1917
14.2.17. In Hospital Sick	
29.4.17. Adm 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sty Hosp Wimereux. Susp Tuberculosis	12. 20/10/17
15.5.17. Adm 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hon Gen. Hospital	
17.5.17. Convalescence until 10/6/17	
6.6.17. Leave	
26.11.17. In Hospital Sick	1/10/17
2.2.17. Embked at Boulogne for England via Gen. Hospital	1/10/17
14.6.17. Dis from 3 <sup>rd</sup> hon Gen Hosp. Wimereux	1/10/17
21.7.17. Ret'd to Australia per H.S. D for Discharge Bronchitis, Fibrosis, Emphysema	I.B. 2 1/10

The following article was found by an internet search for Edward. It is quoted in its entirety and as such the author's work is acknowledged.

Readers may have seen the movie, "Beneath Hill 60."

**LIEUTENANT EDWARD CORTIS**  
1st Tunnelling Company

Edward Cortis was born in Bathurst, N.S.W. on November 22, 1884. In 1910 he married Annie Constance Morell. Five days after his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday he enlisted on November 27, 1915 for service overseas. He was a Licensed Surveyor and immediately sent for training at the School of Officer Engineers, Moore Park, Sydney, N.S.W.

On February 11, 1916 he signed Attestation Forms which state he had no former military training and named his wife Annie C. Cortis of Aus. Bank of Commerce, Bathurst, N.S.W. as next-of-kin and allotted two-fifths of his pay to her.

His Application for a Commission as an Officer with the Mining Corps dated February 16, 1916 reveals he was married and had a 7 month old child. His medical examination by the Corps Doctor shows he was 183 cms (6ft) tall, weighed about 83 kgs (182 lbs) with a chest measurement of 94 cms (37 ins) and had good eyesight. The Application was gazetted as no.19/1916 and he was appointed with the rank of Second Lieutenant and posted to No. 1 Company, No 1 Mining Corps.

At a civic parade in the Domain, Sydney on Saturday February 19, 1916, a large crowd of relations and friends of the departing Miners lined the four sides of the parade ground. Sixty police and 100 Garrison Military Police were on hand to keep the crowds within bounds. The scene was an inspiring one. On the extreme right flank, facing the saluting base, were companies of the Rifle Club School; next came a detachment of the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry, then the bands of the Light Horse, Liverpool Depot, and the Miners' on the left, rank upon rank, the Miners' Battalion.

The Corps boarded HMAT A38 *Ulysses* in Sydney, NSW on February 20 and sailed for the European theatre. Arriving in Melbourne, Victoria on February 22 the Miners camped at Broadmeadows for a stay of 7 days while further cargo was loaded.

Another parade was held at the Broadmeadows camp on March 1, the Miners' Corps being inspected by the Governor-General, as Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth military forces.

Leaving Melbourne on March 1, *Ulysses* arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia on March 7 where a further 53 members were taken on board.

On Wednesday March 8, 1916 the whole force, with their band and equipment, paraded at Fremantle prior to leaving Victoria Quay at 9.30 o'clock.

The ship hit a reef when leaving Fremantle harbour, stripping the plates for 40 feet and, although there was a gap in the outside plate, the inner bilge plates were not punctured. The men on board nicknamed her 'Useless'. The Miners were off-loaded and sent to the Blackboy Hill Camp where further training was conducted.

The Mining Corps comprised 1303 members at the time they embarked with a Headquarters of 40; No.1 Company – 390; No.2 Company – 380; No.3 Company – 392, and 101 members of the 1st Reinforcements.

Finally departing Fremantle on April 1, *Ulysses* voyaged via Suez, Port Said and Alexandria in Egypt. The Captain of the ship was reluctant to take *Ulysses* out of the Suez Canal because he felt the weight of the ship made it impossible to manoeuvre in the situation of a submarine attack. The troops were transhipped to HM Transport B.1 *Ansonia*, then on to Valetta, Malta before disembarking at Marseilles, France on May 5, 1916. As a unit they entrained at Marseilles on May 7 and detrained on May 11 at Hazebrouck.

Assigned to No. 4 Section of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tunnelling Company, Edward was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant on June 15, 1916.

By September 10, 1916 he was admitted sick from the Field to the No 4 General Hospital at Wimereux, France with symptoms of P.U.O (Pyrexia (Fever) Unknown Origin) then three days later was transferred to England on the H.S. *St David*. He was admitted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital, Wandsworth, England diagnosed with Bronchitis. Mrs Cortis was advised that her husband was in hospital on September 11 and again that he was convalescing on October 12, 1916.

He was discharged from hospital on October 15 and marched in to the No 1 Command Depot and taken on strength at Perham Downs in the No 2 camp at Parkhouse several days later.

He proceeded back overseas to France on November 21, 1916 and after four days marched in to the Australian General Base Depot at Etaples, France.

While here illness struck again on December 18, 1916 and he was admitted to the Liverpool Merchants Mobile Hospital enduring another bout of Bronchitis and reported back to A.G.B.D. before re-joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Tunnelling Company on January 2, 1917. Mrs Cortis received advice on her husband's hospital visit on December 18, 1916.

By February 14, 1917 he was taken to hospital sick and admitted the next day to the 10<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station diagnosed with Suspected Tuberculosis and his name entered on the Supernumerary list. After a few days he arrived at the 7<sup>th</sup> Stationery Hospital, his illness noted as N.Y.D. (Not Yet Diagnosed) and taken on 10 A.T. to Boulogne. Mrs Cortis was sent another advice on February 18 regarding the situation with her husband. By February 25 the illness was downgraded to Bronchitis and was discharged to duty, rejoining his unit on April 3, 1917.

Admission to the 12 Casualty Clearing Station with symptoms identified as Tuberculosis in Left Lung occurred on April 28, 1917 and was conveyed via 8 A.T. to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Stationery Hospital in Wimereux, France but later reduced to severe Bronchitis. He left Boulogne on May 12, 1917 on the H.S. *Jan Breydal* and the Lieutenant was re-admitted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital at Wandsworth, England the same day. On April 29 Mrs Cortis was advised once again of husband's illness.

He was discharged from hospital for convalescence to Perham Downs until June 14, 1917. Recommendation for return to Australia due to Bronchitis, Fibrosis and Emphysema saw him return on the transport A14 *Euripides* embarking on July 21, 1917. A letter to Mrs Cortis advised her of his return the same day. His name was struck off the Supernumerary list on August 10, 1917.

Also on the voyage returning home due to illness was the company's former Chaplain, Captain James Wilson and it seems the two officers formed a friendship which would develop further the following year. The transport docked on September 18, 1917 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Military District and he returned to the 2 MD. Lt Cortis' appointment was terminated on February 12, 1918.

About a fortnight before his military appointment was terminated Lt. Cortis gave a lecture at the Annual Meeting of the Institute of Surveyors on military tunnelling work during his term on the Western front. It was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Thursday January 31, 1918.

Lieut. Cortis, a returned soldier, a member of the Institute of Surveyors, attended the annual meeting of the Institute, and gave some account of his war experiences. He was one of Professor David's 1200 selected miners, engineers, and surveyors, and he was with others to Hill 60, three days after landing in France. The first job in which he was employed was the excavation of a dugout at Hill 60 for about 1000 men. It had a head cover of from 20 to 50 feet, and cost, roughly, about half a million of money. But it spared the soldiers. Its galleries penetrated well out into No Man's Land, the cost of which was high because of the timber and iron used in its construction, and it demonstrated its own efficiency.

Speaking of the tunnels dug under Messines Ridge, the Lieutenant gave an interesting account. These tunnels were pushed forward under our own deep lines below the surface of the ground. About 5000 sandbags were sent for every night to contain the spoil from the excavations, but the infantry usually stole about 1000 of them to keep themselves warm in the trenches. The engineers forgave them the theft. Long months they toiled in their tunnels pushing them forward below the first, second, and third German lines. Then they dug tunnels parallel to the lines above them, and stowed therein 920 tons of ammonal, tamped the ground well, connected the explosive by electric wires with the British lines, made everything ready, and waited for about twelve months for the explosion. An ounce of ammonal was exceedingly powerful, and it could be easily seen what lifting power 920 tons of it would have. When the explosion came it was believed to have blown up an enormous number of the enemy. Our soldiers rushed forward at once and occupied the craters, sustaining very few casualties in doing so. (Applause)

Mining at the front was of two systems, offensive and defensive. The offensive was deep down; the defensive was shallow and was designed to prevent the enemy from reaching our trenches. In offensive mining it was necessary to listen to ascertain whether the enemy was tunnelling toward us, and if he was, then we allowed him to approach quite close, put in a charge, and blew him in. Sometimes the enemy did the same to us, but the British had an advantage in this warfare of 13 to 5. Sometimes the men worked in awful ground—pea soup it was called.

Major David was a grand man. Soon after arriving in France he organised a geological survey of the ground, the men put down under his direction test bores along a section of the front, and it was owing to the professor's geological knowledge that he could advise the British authorities whether it was necessary to specially fortify any particular spot or not. If the ground in front of our lines was a quagmire there was no need to take extra precaution, because the enemy could not cross it. The Australians, too, were a restless set of men. Shortly after they reached France they started raiding. The British were inclined to sit down and rest, but the Australians were energetic. In their raids they sometimes were punished, but they developed raiding warfare. They also, he believed, developed the artillery barrage, at first on small sections of front, but afterwards on larger ones. The barrage system was afterwards used on the Somme, at Vimy Ridge, at Messines, and in the last battle of

In March, 1919 Lt Edward Cortis was Secretary of the Soldiers and Citizens' Political Federation who nominated Chaplain Captain James Wilson as their Independent Candidate in the by-election for the seat of Petersham. Chaplain Captain Wilson's

nomination was deemed invalid and the Federation was unable to run a candidate in the by-election.

For his service to his country Lieutenant Edward Cortis, 1<sup>st</sup> Tunnelling Company received the British War Medal (33137) and the Victory Medal (32722).

In 1925 in the Register of Tunnelling Company Officers his address was Manly Council Chambers, Manly, N.S.W.

He was a member of the A.E.M.M.B.C. and Tunnellers' Anzac Day Reunion Dinner his address being in 1928 c/- Phoenix Investment Trust Ltd, 608 Bligh Street, Sydney and remained until around 1946.

A letter was sent to the Repatriation Department on March 11, 1938.

In November, 1940 an application was made for a duplicate Returned Soldier's Badge which had been accidentally lost while working on Survey work in the N.S.W. bush in 1939. It was replaced. His address was 2 Wellington Street, Woollahra in 1940.

#### **Edward Cortis died in Sydney in 1946.**

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Edward Cortis is commemorated on the Honour Board of the Department of Public Lands, Brisbane, with his former colleague and fellow 1ATC officer, Lt John Saxon.



*The ground round about was strewn with pieces of iron, timber, concrete and wire ... rifles, equipment and ammunition were scattered about. The unburied bodies, rags and human bones, told tales of a series of battles... (Frank Hurley, Official Photographer)*

# AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

DISCHARGE SECTION

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Rank *Lieut* Name *CORTIS E*

Unit *1<sup>st</sup> tunnelling Coy. cable (y 110<sup>d</sup>) our records show <sup>then</sup> <sub>Coys</sub>*

Casualty *Pyrexia severe Admitted 11/9/16. 14<sup>th</sup> Gen Hospital*

*Convalescent, went London 14/1/16 Rec 29.9.16.  
 15.10.16 Disch. from 3<sup>rd</sup> Lond. Gen. Hosp. I.B. 63/54 Dated London 26.10.16  
 26<sup>th</sup> Bronchitis Mild. Admitted 17/2/16 Liverpool Merchants Hosp.  
 N.Y.D. Sick Child Admt 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 7<sup>th</sup> State Hospital London 322/7949<sup>B</sup> Rec 5/1/17  
 & Tuberculosis Admt Adm 29/4/17 32<sup>nd</sup> State Hosp  
 W.S.P. 1134451 8865<sup>D</sup> dated London 3.5.17 2<sup>nd</sup>*

DATE.	PURPORT.	REF. NO.
OCT 4 - 1916	N.O.K. Advised in Hospital pyrexia 11.9.16	
12 OCT 1916	N.O.K. Advised Convalescent	
1 <sup>st</sup> JAN 1917	N.O.K. Advised in Hospital 18.12.16 Bronchitis	
26 FEB 1917	N.O.K. Advised in Hospital 18.2.17 sick	
8 MAY 1917	N.O.K. Advised in Hospital 29/4/17 Returning to Australia per H.P. A14 Left England 21.7.17	
AUG 15 1917	N.O.K. Advised Returning to Australia Form P. 84 6.9.17 L.H.S. 1.2.17 8 <sup>th</sup> dated London 3.8.17 (R)	
18.9.17	Returned "Eripides" to 3 <sup>rd</sup> M.D. for 2 <sup>nd</sup> M.D. Bronchitis, Fibrosis, Emphysema.	
29.8.19	Form re War Record, A. M. F. List, Despatched	
10.9.19	Form of Commission A.A. 9.2.19 M. 31/1339.	

APPLICATION FOR WAR SERVICE LEAVE GRATUITY P.P. 560  
 JUN 28 1919  
 No. 169411

## WAR HISTORY INDEX MS

4. 11. 20 Duplicate R.P. Badge 8878. Part per Part-1

