Richards, Evany Selwyn
ASC 1905-06
Rank: Captain

Unit: 20th Battalion

Date of death: 5 September 1916: Died of wounds

Cemetery: Puchevillers British Cemetery, France


Studio portrait, of Captain Evan Selwyn Richards, 20th Battalion, of Vaucluse. A fire insurance inspector prior to enlisting on 5 May 1915, he embarked from Sydney, HMAT Berrima on 25 June 1915. He died of wounds on 5 September 1916, aged 26, and is buried in the Puchevillers British Cemetery, France.
**Sydney University Book of Remembrance entry**

Captain, 20th Bn., A.I.F., Gallipoli and France. Enlisting 12th April, 1915, and sailing as second-lieutenant 26th June, served at Gallipoli till invalided to England and during convalescence was attached for instruction to the Grenadier Guards. Rejoining Bn. in France in July, 1916, fought in Pozieres sector till severely wounded near Mouquet Farm 22nd August. Promoted lieutenant, 26th August, 1915; captain, 14th August, 1916. Mentioned in Despatches. Died of Wounds, No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station, Puchvillers, 5th September, 1916, and was buried in the Cemetery hard by. Early education at Wolaroi, Orange, and Sydney Grammar Schools. He was the admiration of us all (officers of Bn.) and those who knew him more intimately loved him . . . one cannot speak too highly of his splendid behaviour.

(Note: The information copied immediately below is from the “AIF Project” available on line. The AWM does not offer a digitized “card”. All Saints’ incorrect spelling and “School” is noted.  

Evan Selwyn RICHARDS

**Place of birth**  
Orange,
School
Wolaroi Grammar School, Orange; All Saint's School, Bathurst; Sydney Grammar School, NSW

Other training
Enrolled as a student in the Faculty of Science, The University of Sydney, at the outbreak of the war.

Address
'Southmoor', Wentworth Road, Vaucluse, N.S.W.

Marital status
Single

Age at embarkation
24

Next of kin
Mother, Mrs Edith Richards, 'Southmoor', Wentworth Road, Vaucluse, (Father Thomas)

Previous military service
Served in the University Scouts and the 26th Infantry Regiment, Citizen Military Force.

Rank on enlistment
2nd Lieutenant

Unit name
20th Battalion, A Company

Embarkation details
Unit embarked from Sydney, on board HMAT A35 Berrima on 25 June 1915

Other details from Roll of Honour Circular
During convalescence in England he was attached for instruction to the Grenadier Guards, Chelsea Barracks, London.

Fate
Died of wounds 5 September 1916

Place of death or wounding
Pozieres, Somme Sector, France

Age at death
26.3

Place of burial
Puchevillers British Cemetery (Plot I, Row D, Grave No. 54), France

Family/military connections
Brother: Captain Julian Walter RICHARDS MC, 4th Bn, returned to Australia, 11 March 1918.

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Original Attestation record has him as a "Licensed Surveyor"

### 20th Battalion

The 20th Battalion was raised at Liverpool in New South Wales in March 1915 as part of the 5th Brigade. A sprinkling of the 20th’s original recruits had already served with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) in the operations to capture German New Guinea in 1914. The 20th left Australia in late June, trained in Egypt from late July until mid-August, and on 22 August landed at Anzac Cove.

Arriving at Gallipoli just as the August offensive petered out, the 20th’s role there was purely defensive. From 26 August, until its withdrawal from the peninsula on 20 December, the 20th Battalion was responsible for the defense of Russell’s Top.

After further training in Egypt, the 20th Battalion proceeded to France. It entered the trenches of the Western Front for the first time in April 1916 and in the following month had the dubious honour of being the first Australian battalion to be raided by the Germans. The 20th took part in its first major offensive around Pozières between late July and the end of August 1916.

Copied from battalion notes AWM.

Mrs. Edith Richards, of Southmoor, Vaucluse, has been notified that her son. Captain Julian Walter Richards has been mentioned in General Sir Douglas Haig’s dispatches for distinguished and gallant service and, devotion to duty. Captain Richards is the youngest son of the late Mr. Thomas Henry Richards, of Vaucluse. His elder brother, Captain Evan Selwyn Richards was killed in action In September, 1916.

(Ed. Julian was Mentioned in Dispatches twice, as Lt. gazetted 4/1/17 and as Capt. 1/6/17.)
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<td>C.O. 20th Bn. Promoted to Lieutenant to take effect from</td>
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Embarked at Sydney per H.M.A.T. A33 "Harrima" on 26.6.15

- Promoted Lieutenant to take effect from 26-6-15
- Div. Order No 15 6-10-16
- Sick Ad to Hospital Malta Ex H.T. Soudan 13-10-15
- Hypopit to Hospital 9/10/15
- 13/10/15, Disembarked Malta Hospital Ship Soudan Sick slight.
- Adm. Hospital London Enteric.
- 13/10/15, Adm. Hospital Malta H.S. Soudan Enteric.
- 17/1/16, Found fit by Board Held in London.
Following are extracts from daily war diary:

“Lieut. Richards E.S. reported for duty Supernumerary list.”

“Capt. E.S. Richards wounded while observing movements.”

“Capt. E.S. Richards died of wounds.”
“Few men can stand the terrific shell fire without getting nervy”
Dear Mrs. Richards,

I have had no opportunity of writing to you before as we have been in the trenches. I am just sending you a short note to tell you how much I miss the assistance of your son. He was the keenest soldier that I have ever had under my command, and was absolutely fearless. He died from the effects of a shell wound which shattered one knee and cut the other. He was buried at the Cemetery at PUG VILLERS. He is a big loss to the regiment at the present stage where few men can stand the terrific shell fire without getting nervous, if I may use such an expression. He is one of the few men I have met who did not seem to be affected by it. On such occasions as this words mean nothing. I can only say that myself and my brother officers sympathise with you in your great loss, and to tell you that your boy was plucky and cheerful to the end, and died like the gallant soldier he had always been.

On hearing of his death I immediately wired to his brother in the 1st M.C. Company, but was unable to get your address at the time.

I am,

(Sgd) A. Windross
Lt. Col.

O.C.

Mrs. A. Richards,
“Southmoor”
Wentworth Road,
Vaucluse,
WATSON’S BAY, New South Wales.
September, 7th, 1916.

Dear Mrs. Richards,

Being orderly for your son Captain Richards, B.S.,

I have a duty to do which is painful to me, as it is to you, it is dealing with the last few days of Mr. Richards. On August 22nd, 11 a.m. Mr. Richards went over towards the enemy trenches to gain some information, but on returning to our line was shot through both legs by a machine gun bullet; he was immediately brought to the dressing station, he was then transferred to here (2nd. C.O.S.) arriving here 9 o'clock the same evening. On August 23rd, your son had his right leg amputated above the knee, the same evening he was in good spirit and slept, but next complained of pain in his left leg. He was then operated on, which eased him of pain for a few days, but on August 29th had to lose his left leg. During the next few days, Captain bore his pain and trouble without a complaint, always thankful for what little could be done. On the night of September 9th, 1916, 11.30 p.m. he passed away without pain and looked calm and contented. Mrs. Richards, I feel now, while I am writing, I have gone too much into detail but I would like you to know all. Mr. Richards was buried here, in the officers' graveyard, he had the Union Jack on his coffin and a bunch of flowers which the matron brought for him. I was personally on the service and was grieved to think you were so far away. May I see a few words in favour of Matron Davies and Sister Straw, who devoted nearly all their time on your son, night and day, they saw to his comfort and ease he could possibly obtain while undergoing his painful struggle. Your son also had many learned surgeons, and Sir Anthony Borrby and Colonel Smith made several visits. Well Mrs. Richards, I am going to take a few flowers to your son's grave to-night before I rejoin the Battalion. Mr. Richards asked me to let you know all, and I must say he is a credit to all, he was liked by all, and was a leader of men, cool and calm in action, and is missed by his fellow officers. He has always been a good master to me, and I miss him more than I ever missed anyone before. All his personal belongings I have seen that forwarded on to you, which I trust you will receive as soon as this letter. Now Mrs. Richards I must close trusting in God some day to be able to show to comfort you for your great loss, and let you know about his army career.

Well again, I must close.

Remaining your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) A. Birchall (326)

P.S. Will write you another letter shortly.
Captain Evan Selwyn Richards, who died of wounds in France on September 5, was 26 years of age, and the oldest son of the late Mr. T. H Richards. He was educated at the Sydney Grammar School, and was in his fourth year at the engineering school of the University when he enlisted. He spent some time at Anzac as signaling officer, and was then invalided to England. During his convalescence he was attached to the Grenadier Guards for a special course of
Before the war Captain Richards held a commission in the 26th Regiment. He was one of the group of young University men that the late Colonel Maclaurin attracted to himself in that regiment and in the Scottish Rifles. Death has been very busy with them; within the last few weeks. Frank Coon and Arthur Ferguson have been killed, and now Alan O'Connor and Evan Richards. The deceased officer's only brother, Lieut. Julian Richards, is serving in France. He went to Gallipoli in the ranks, and was promoted for his conduct at Lone Pine.

SMH 19/9/16

Richards

E S

World War 1

PUCHEVILLERS BRITISH CEMETERY

Country: France
Locality: Somme

Location Information: Puchevillers is a village on the D11 about 19 kilometres north-east of Amiens. The British Cemetery is a little west of the village. The first Commonwealth War Graves Commission signpost is situated by the church in the village.

Historical Information: In June 1916, just before the opening of the Battles of the Somme, the 3rd and 44th Casualty Clearing Stations came to Puchevillers. Plots I to V, and almost the whole of Plot VI were made by those hospitals before the end of March 1917.

SMH 18/7/17
Mrs. Edith Richards of Southmoor, Vaucluse, has been notified that her son, Captain Julian Walter Richards has been mentioned in General Sir Douglas Haig’s dispatches for distinguished and gallant service and, devotion to duty. Captain’ Richards is the younger son of the late Mr. Thomas Henry Richards of Vaucluse His elder brother, Captain Evan Selwyn Richards was killed in action in September, 1916.

The two letters below were found in his 85pp Service Record. They offer condolences from both his orderly and commanding officer. These, however, gave a conflicting account of his wounding by a shell on the one hand and a machine gun on the other.

We read that he was wounded 22nd August. This was the date that 2nd Division of which 20th Bn. was part, returned to the line at Pozieres and to continue the attack on Moquet Farm.

In the letter below, we can feel the anguish of his mother. She had received a telegram advising of his death but the authorities had not yet so advised.

Note last line of following copy. Richards was commended for “gallant conduct”, however, records of the AWM do not list this as having being awarded.