Today I would like to pause and pay our respects to:

571060 Spr Edward German Hooker

Edward German Hooker was born on 11 October 1904 in Bournemouth, England, the youngest of seven children born to Sarah Ann (née Humphrey) and George William Hooker. At the age of seven, Edward emigrated with his family to New Zealand, settling in the Wellington suburb of Miramar.

In 1917, Edward's father passed away, leaving the family without a patriarch. Just 13 years old at the time, Edward likely entered the workforce early. His teenage years were troubled—he was convicted in 1920 for detaining a postal article and, after breaching probation in 1921, was sentenced to 14 days in prison and then sent to the Wereroa Training Farm (a Borstal) in Levin.

Following his release and rehabilitation, Edward found employment as a farm labourer in the Te Horo area. He later relocated to Wairau Valley in Marlborough, where he served as the County Ranger based in Seddon.

In 1924, he married Gladys Evelyn Hall, and together they began raising a family. The couple lived in the Wairau region before moving to Tawa Flat in the early 1930s with their two sons, Leicester Vernon and Edward Raymond Hooker. Edward worked as a labourer before securing a position as a surfaceman with New Zealand Railways. Three more children were born during their time in Tawa Flat.

Edward had a history of military service, having served with the Territorial Force in the 1930s as part of the 15th Battery, New Zealand Garrison Artillery. By the time he formally enlisted in the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) on 15 March 1941, he was a married man with five children, employed by the railways and living in Tawa Flat. He was initially posted as Sapper 2/28/66 in the 5th Works Company, part of the Fortress Engineers based in Wellington.

In February 1942, Edward was mobilised for full-time service. After brief attachments to the 35th Army Troop Company and the 22nd Field Company, which was attached to 1st Scots, Wellington Infantry then to the 2nd Wellington West Coast. On 7 April 1943, this unit deployed as part of “N Force” to Norfolk Island, as Compressor Operator and Quarryman, to guard this strategically vital location. He returned to New Zealand in November 1943 and joined the 11th Reinforcements pool, spending Christmas at home before embarking with the 12th Reinforcements on 29 June 1944.

After arriving in Egypt, he reverted to the rank of Sapper and underwent training at Maadi Camp. He was then posted to Italy on 29 September 1944 and joined the 5th Field Park Company, NZ Engineers in Italy, on 10 October.

The 5th Field Park Company supported the 2nd New Zealand Division during the winter of 1944–45 along the Senio River and into the final Allied Spring offensive, which began on 9 April 1945. As the Division advanced through Italy, Edward and his fellow engineers worked tirelessly behind the lines—building roads, clearing mines, filling demolitions, and providing crucial infrastructure for infantry and armoured units. The campaign ended with Germany’s surrender on 5 May 1945. The Division remained in Trieste to manage postwar tensions with Yugoslav partisans before being withdrawn in June.

Edward returned to Maadi Camp on 23 September 1945 and finally arrived back in New Zealand on 10 February 1946. After medical assessments and leave, he was officially discharged from the 2NZEF on 9 July 1946.

Edward resumed civilian life with his family in Tawa Flat, returning to his job with the New Zealand Railways. Tragedy struck in 1948 when the Hookers’ daughter, Beryl Mary, died at the age of 10 and was laid to rest in Porirua Cemetery.

In 1950, Edward applied to join the Regular Army but was declined on medical grounds. He and Gladys later moved to Raumati Beach in the late 1950s, where Edward worked as a caretaker.

Edward passed away on 16 February 1967. He has been laid to rest alongside his beloved daughter Beryl in Porirua Cemetery.