



## #TimeWarpTuesday – 9 April 2024

Welcome to #TimeWarpTuesday! And 'Part Three', our final instalment of the story of Edward Davis MILLEN. If you have ever wondered about the man behind the name of the heritage listed stately 'mansion' house that is known as Edward Millen House, then you will be in for a treat. The man himself was a man of adventure and passionate belief in providing our soldiers all they needed to return from World War I and integrate back into life as a civilian. Edward Davis Millen was a journalist, grazier, land agent, politician, senator, cabinet minister, husband, father, grandfather, patriot and friend to Australia's soldiers. And contrary to popular opinion, he did visit Western Australia.

EDWARD DAVIS MILLEN (1860-1923)

-Part Three-

### VISITING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Edward had twice had to cancel planned visits to Western Australia due once to having to "undertake the reins of government, during the illness of the Acting Prime Minister (Mr Watt). On the second occasion, the Minister had all arrangements perfected for the purpose of visiting Western Australia, and addressing local committees, but was delayed at the eleventh hour, owing to the outbreak of pneumonic influenza, and the consequent quarantine restrictions"[1]. The long-awaited visit by Senator, the Honourable Edward Davis Millen, Minister for Repatriation took place in March of 1919. He was greeted with enthusiasm upon his arrival by the ship 'Somali' in Fremantle on the 12 March 1919. Edward's visit to Western Australia took place over 13 days, and according to '*Repatriation*', the official journal of the Department, the "Minister was able to meet representatives of the various Government and local bodies who are directly and indirectly interested in the work of Repatriation, and through the agency of deputation, personal interview, and public gatherings, a number of which the Minister addressed, he was able to accomplish a great amount of useful work" [2].

A full itinerary is not recorded but some of the places he visited included Northam, Bunbury, Perth, Kalamunda, Boulder and Kalgoorlie. It is not yet known whether he visited Victoria Park or saw the Rotunda Hospital (as it was by then known).

Edward praised the efforts of Western Australians and their work to embrace and guide returning soldiers back into civilian life. *The Western Argus* (a Kalgoorlie paper) reported of Edward's visit there a speech he gave in thanks to the Mayor of Kalgoorlie for the warm welcome. "For some time it had been his [Edward Millen's] desire to come to Western Australia, to come face to face with the people of this loyal State, and to find out where the Repatriation Scheme was running stiffly. As a result of his short stay he was confident that if all the States of the Commonwealth were like the West, there would be no "problem" of repatriation. The people here were showing in their after-war efforts the same loyal spirit which had been so marked during the war." [3]

In early 1920, the Rotunda Hospital was compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth Government to assist in the care of 16 returned soldiers who were suffering from chronic tuberculosis. The Rotunda's then relative isolation and space for patients to walk and rest in the abundance of clean air were highly prized features of the hospital. By later the same year, local newspapers were reporting the buildings name had been changed:

"DEPARTMENT OF REPATRIATION – EDWARD MILLEN HOME. The Rotunda Hospital in Victoria Park East was purchased some months ago by the Repatriation Department for medical purposes, but the name of the institution was considered in appropriate. The Repatriation Commission, therefore, approached Senator E. D. Millen, Minister for Repatriation, with the request that this property should be called the Edward Millen Home. To this request the Minister acquiesced, so that in future the property will be known under that name." [4]

The building, a jewel in Victoria Park's landscape was originally situated in a garden of sand, causing it to be sometimes described as a "mansion in a desert" [5] but in 1921 the Superintendent of Kings Park was put in charge of the planting of trees and gardens that would establish a welcoming environment for patients to wander, recover and enjoy while they convalesced. The verdant park land and mature trees that line the driveway to Edward Millen Home are testament today to the hard work of the gardeners over the years, and provide much joy to the eye of the beholder as they wander the grounds of the house.

Edward Millen Home would care for returned soldiers up until 1960 when all patients were transferred to the Repatriation Hospital at Hollywood. Following this time, it remained in use for other areas of medical care whilst still being owned by the Repatriation Department. That is until ownership was transferred to the West Australian Government Department of Health in 1982, when its name was changed again to 'Hillview Terrace Clinic'.

The site was transferred to the Town of Victoria Park on a conditional freehold basis in 2003. The Town committed then to fund the conservation of the heritage buildings and to assume ongoing management of the site.

## EDWARD'S DEATH AND LEGACY

In 1922, Edward's health was suffering and by February 1923, he could no longer continue in the role of Minister of Repatriation and resigned the position. He remained a Senator until his death on 14 September 1923, dying in the home in Melbourne that he occupied when Parliament was sitting.

His death moved many people and left a big hole in the leadership fabric of Australia at the time. Former Prime Minister W. M. "Billy" Hughes was most expressive of his gratefulness for the courageous patriotism, strength, integrity and faithfulness shown by Edward in his life and work. Mr Hughes said: " 'Death has beckoned away another of those men who for the last quarter of a century have taken a leading part in shaping the destiny of this young Commonwealth,' said Mr Hughes to-day. 'Senator Millen's death is a great loss to Australia. No man ever served it more zealously, more unselfishly. He has gone, but his life's work remains, a monument that will, as the years roll on, speak more and more eloquently of his work.' "[6]

Mr Hughes believed the stress and criticism laid at his feet contributed to Millen's illness and death. He said " 'no man ever devoted himself to the service of his country with greater zeal than the deceased statesman. He undertook the great work of Repatriation, to which he devoted his life, and for which he gave it up. His work would live to put to shame those whose unjust criticism did so much to bring about his untimely end. [7]"

Others also praised Edward: "One of the finest statesmen Australia has ever had... He possessed exceptional ability as a debater, and a political instinct that made him an able leader." [8]

Senator Pearce, a Western Australian Senator and the Minister for Home and Territories spoke to the house on the 26 March 1924. He asked the Senate to formally express its condolences to Edward's wife and family and in doing so eloquently expressing his contribution to the growth and prosperity of Australia:

*"The late honorable senator, as we all remember, was a keen fighter, but he was always a chivalrous opponent. He was a good Australian, with an Empire outlook...but everyone will agree that his great, his outstanding work, was the repatriation of our soldiers. He founded the Repatriation Department. Few members of the public realize the tremendous difficulties that he encountered in that undertaking. In the first place, unlike other Government Departments, it was an entirely new service. The work was wholly new to Australia. There was no precedent in Federal or State administration to guide him. Secondly, in accordance with the sentiment of the time and the general feeling both in Parliament and outside it, the Department was staffed, not as other*

*Departments are with officers experienced in administrative work, but, in both the Repatriation and the War Service Homes Branch, with returned soldiers, the greater part of whom had no experience in the administration of Government or public Departments. Upon the late honorable senator was cast the burden of founding a new and great Department, of commencing the work without any precedent to guide him, and of carrying it on with officers who had had no previous experience in governmental administration. I well remember the words that Senator E. D. Millen used when he was asked to undertake this work: 'I realize; he said, 'what I am undertaking. This work will kill me, either politically or physically.' These words were, indeed, a prophecy.*

*"The work accomplished by the deceased gentleman will stand for ever as a monument to him. I say without fear of successful challenge that no other country has so successfully repatriated its soldiers as has Australia; no country has done so much for its returned men. The difficulties of that conversion from a state of war to a state of peace cannot be over-stated. It was a gigantic task for a young country like this to bring back its men from scenes of war and carnage and re-establish them in civil life; and when we look back and remember that this had to be done during that troubled reconstruction period which, in every country, caused immense dislocation, and opened up new and difficult problems of Government, we must realise that the late honorable[sic] senator grappled with his task in a way that has built for him an enduring monument. As in all such cases, he had to bear criticism while he was engaged in this momentous work. He was fearless of criticism. He never wilted under it; but some of the criticism to which he was subjected, particularly by certain section of the press, was most unfair and ungenerous. It bit deeply into his soul, and those who were nearest to him knew, as I knew, that it did much to shorten his life. Under the strain and stress of what he regarded as unfair and ungenerous criticism, accompanied often by the imputation of base motives, he struggled on, moved by the highest promptings to do his very best. I know he felt that criticism. I know that it did much to weaken his effort, and to embarrass him, and it did much to undermine his health, both physically and mentally. He endured a tremendous strain in carrying out his work, and the least that could have been expected of his critics was that their criticism, at such a time and in such circumstances, would be generous and helpful. At a certain period of his Ministerial life, when a change was made in the Government, he knew that his physical strength was ebbing, and that to retain office would be to endanger his life and preclude any chance of a recovery of health. He considered then the advisability of retiring, but the one thing, and one thing only, that prevented him from leaving office was the thought that his ungenerous critics would say that his retirement was a confession of failure and a justification of their criticism. This feeling alone induced him to retain office and fight on with failing health and strength to consummate the work he had begun.*

*"I feel keenly the loss of the late honorable[sic] senator, because of the long personal association I had with him. He was a colleague of mine in this Chamber from its inception. We were not always on the same side. We were very often in political conflict, but we were always personal friends, and none of the fighting that took place ever left a sting. It can truthfully be said of the deceased gentleman that his whole life was spent in the service of his country, and the greater part of that life was given while he was a Minister, in the time of Australia's greatest peril and crisis. Australia has lost a good citizen and a statesman, and this Parliament has lost one of the keenest intellects it ever possessed. Of the loss to his widow and family we cannot speak, but it must be great. All we can do is to extend to them our sympathy and condolence. Another great intellect in this Parliament has passed away; another life, packed full of usefulness and active service, has been shortened by the stress and strain of political exigency [9]"*.

"A FRIEND OF THE SOLDIERS. - Perth, September 16. [1923]. The Minister of Defence (Mr. E. K. Bowden), speaking at the National Rifle Association smoke social, expressed great regret and sorrow at the death of Senator Millen. The repatriation scheme stood as a monument to Senator Millen's clear vision and unbounded enthusiasm in the cause of the returned soldier. Many mistakes had been made, but they could not be laid at his door and were the result of departmental errors. The Australian scheme of repatriation was the most comprehensive in the world, and Australia had done more for the returned soldier than any other country. Senator Millen had no precedent to guide him and the scheme was purely the outcome of his own labors [sic], and as a result of his untiring efforts he had broken down in health [10]". Perhaps it could be said, if indulgence may be given for any perceived romantic views, that Edward had in common with the soldiers he fought so hard for, the desire to give one's all in service for the betterment of his country.

Edward Millen House remains to this day as a steady reminder of a time past when Australia answered the call to arms and then also in peace answered the call to embrace her heroes back home to civilian life.

Senator, the Honourable Edward Davis Millen left behind his wife, Evelyn, two daughters and their families, including four grandchildren: Moya, Reginald, Ruby and Ronald.

END OF PART THREE

We hope you have enjoyed the first half of our look back at the life and achievements of Edward Davis Millen. Be sure to check back next week for Part Two, and the Western Australian connection.

We are always keen to collect photographs, memorabilia, and other items related to the history of the suburbs within the Town of Victoria Park and can scan and return originals to you. If you have something you'd like to share, please reach out. You can get in touch with us via Ph: 08 9373 5500, E: [vicparklibrary@vicpark.wa.gov.au](mailto:vicparklibrary@vicpark.wa.gov.au), or by coming in.

#LoveVicPark #VictoriaParkDictionaryofBiography #EdwardDavisMillen

FOOTNOTES:

[1] 1919 'REPATRIATION.', *The West Australian* (Perth, WA : 1879 - 1954), 12 March, p. 6. , viewed 01 Mar 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27598118>

[2] Australian Government 1919, *Repatriation*, Department of Repatriation, Melbourne, Vol. 1, No. 2, 25 April 1919, p. 5. Accessed online via Trove on 10 March 2024, 1919 'REPATRIATION.', *The West Australian* (Perth, WA : 1879 - 1954), 12 March, p. 6. , viewed 01 Mar 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27598118>.

[3] 1919 'SENATOR MILLEN AT BOULDER', *Western Argus* (Kalgoorlie, WA : 1916 - 1938), 1 April, p. 22. , viewed 01 Mar 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article34205679>

[4] 1920 'DEPARTMENT OF REPATRIATION', *The Daily News* (Perth, WA : 1882-1955), 14 October, p. 6. (THIRD EDITION), viewed 01 March 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article79562200>

[5] Bissett, Helen 2011, op. cit.

[6] 1923 'PROMINENT AUSTRALIAN', *The Sun* (Sydney, NSW : 1910 - 1954), 14 September, p. 11. (FINAL EXTRA), viewed 27 Feb 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222681093>

[7] 1923 'Death of E.D. Millen.', *Western Herald* (Bourke, NSW : 1887 - 1970), 19 September, p. 2. , viewed 27 Feb 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article142608039>

[8] 1923 'SENATOR MILLEN DEAD.', *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* (NSW : 1888 - 1965), 21 September, p. 1. , viewed 11 Mar 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article85869925>

[9] Australian Government 1924, 'Death of Senator the Honorable E. D. Millen', *Parliamentary Debates, Senate Hansard*, No. 13, 1924, Wednesday, 16 March 1924, Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne, pp. 1-3. Accessed online 01 March 2024.

[10] 1923 'A FRIEND OF THE SOLDIERS.', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), 17 September, p. 12. , viewed 09 Mar 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37206496>

# "Repatriation"

A Monthly Bulletin Published by the Department of Repatriation for the Information of its Local Committees and all interested in the Return to Civil Life of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Forces

PRICE—THREEPENCE PER COPY. No. 2.] MELBOURNE, 25 APRIL, 1919. [Vol. I.

RECEIVED BY THE GENERAL POST OFFICE, MELBOURNE, FOR TRANSMISSION BY POST AS A NEWSPAPER.

## HELP THE MAN with the MEDAL



### DARDANELLES

25th April, 1915.

May I, speaking out of a full heart, be permitted to say how gloriously the Australian and New Zealand contingents have upheld the finest traditions of our race during this struggle still in progress, at first with audacity and dash, since then with sleepless valor and untiring resource. They have already created for their country an imperishable record of Military virtue.

IAN HAMILTON,  
*Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in the Eastern Mediterranean.*

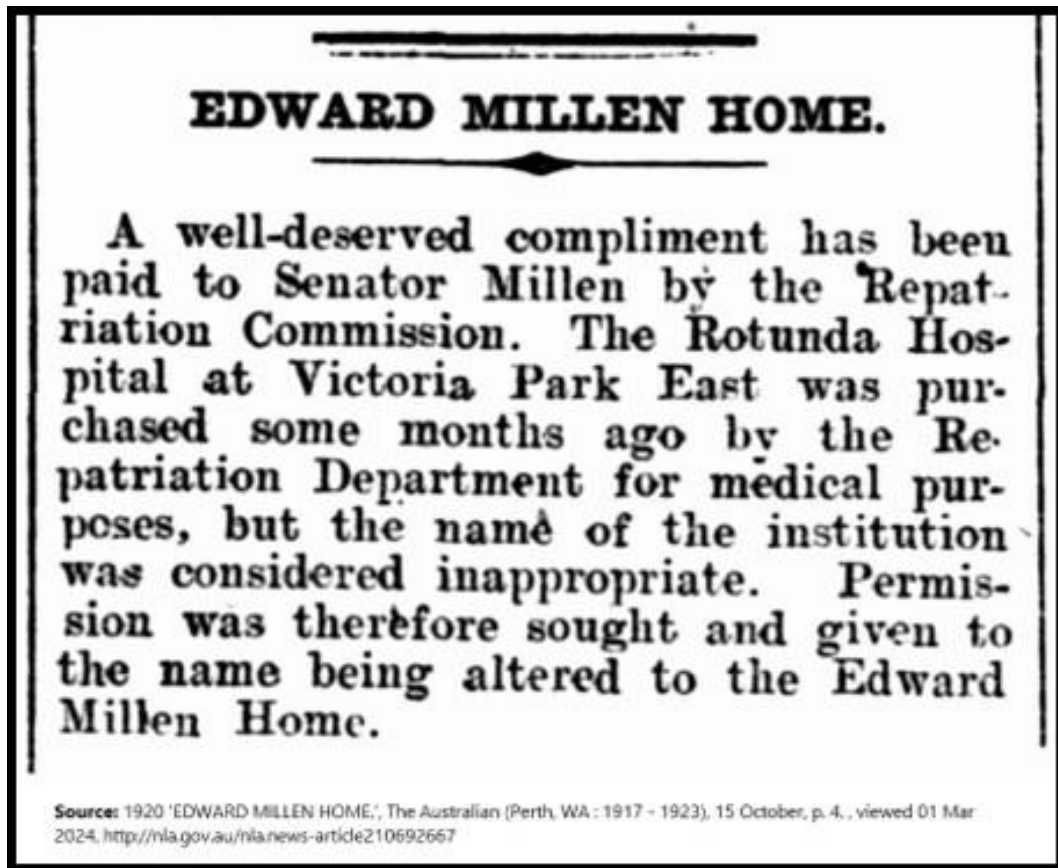
"LEST WE FORGET."



ANZAC COVE, GALLIPOLI.

[Issued under the Authority of Senator the Hon. E. D. Millen, Minister for Repatriation.]

Australian Government 1919, Repatriation, Department of Repatriation, Melbourne, Vol. 1, No. 2, 25 April 1919, p. 5. Accessed online via Trove on 10 March 2024, 1919 'REPATRIATION.', The West Australian (Perth, WA : 1879 - 1954), 12 March, p. 6. , viewed 01 Mar 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27598118>.



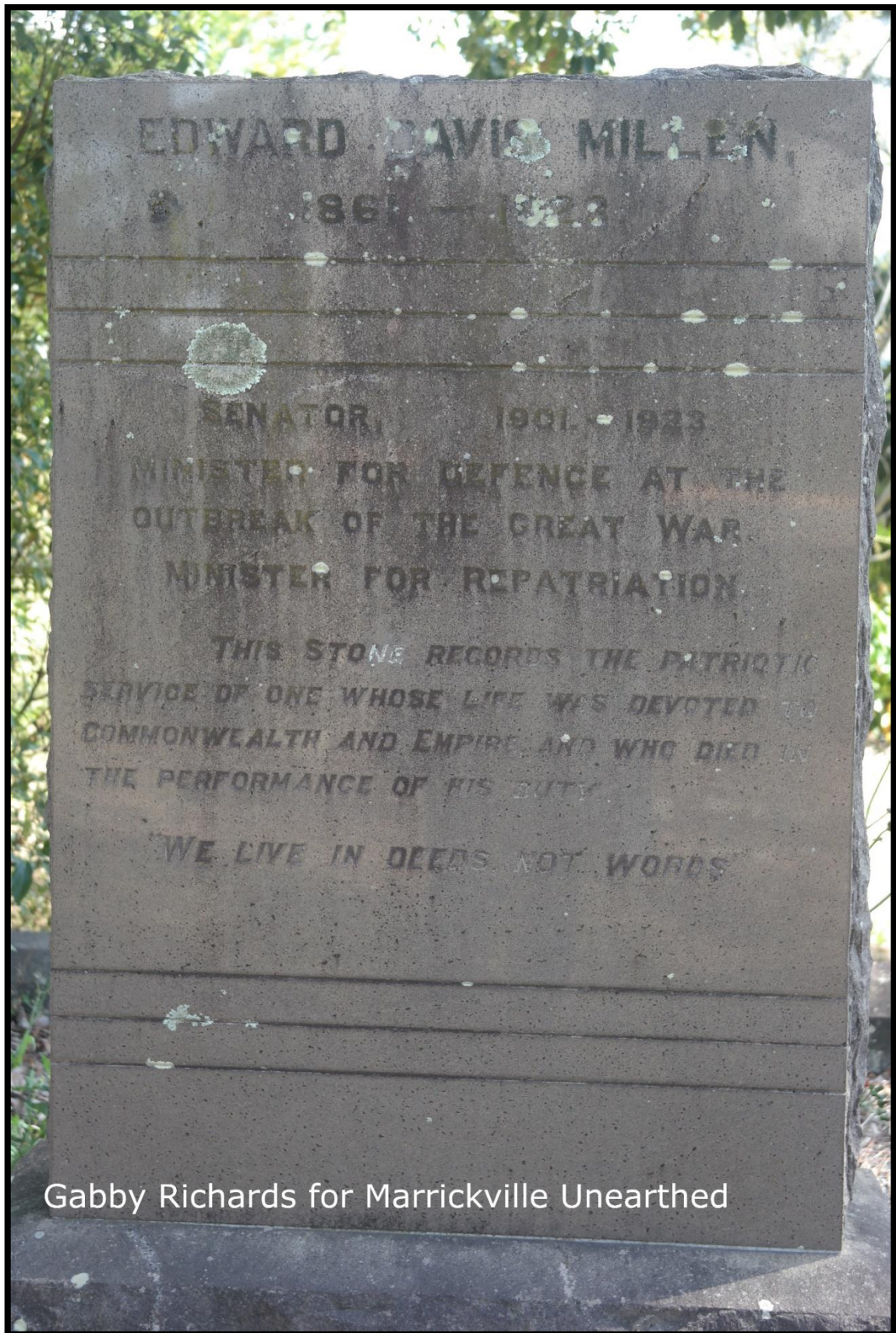
**1920 'EDWARD MILLEN HOME.', The Australian (Perth, WA : 1917 – 1923), 15 October, p. 4., viewed 01 Mar 2024, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article210692667>**  
Courtesy of Trove and the National Library of Australia.



***Mr James Delury in front of Edward Millen Home, circa 1940.***  
*Local History Collection, Town of Victoria Park Library Service*



***Nursing sisters in front of Edward Millen Home, circa 1940,***  
*Local History Collection, Town of Victoria Park Library Service*



Gabby Richards for Marrickville Unearthed

**Memorial stone on the grave of Edward Davis Millen, Rookwood Cemetery, (Presbyterian IE, plot 41) Sydney, NSW.** Image courtesy of Gabby Richards and Marrickville Unearthed.

Inscription:

EDWARD DAVIS MILLEN,  
1861-1923.

Senator 1901-1923.  
Minister For Defence At The  
Outbreak Of The Great War.  
Minister for Repatriation.

This Stone Records The Patriotic  
Service Of One Whose Life Was Devoted  
To The Commonwealth And Empire, And Who Died  
In The Performance Of His Duty.

"We Live In Deeds, Not Words."

Monument dedication date: 25 September 1927

"A memorial erected over the grave of Senator E. D. Millen, who died in 1923, was unveiled yesterday at Rookwood Cemetery by Mr. W. M. Hughes, M.P. Mr. Hughes said that the story of Senator Millen's life was intertwined about the history of his country. Those who knew him, when they read the simple words on the memorial, saw the figure take shape and substance, and saw again the man who, for nearly 30 years stood in the forefront of the public life of this State and of the Commonwealth. No man ever served his country with greater diligence. His interest in public affairs was never casual or half-hearted. He was a great fighter for 30 years on the platform and in Parliament he was among the very few counted in public life. The memorial bears the inscription: — "Edward Davis Millen, 1861-1923. Senator 1901-1923. Minister for Defence at the outbreak of the Great War. Minister for Repatriation. "This stone records the patriotic service of one whose life was devoted to the Commonwealth and Empire, and who died in the performance of his duty. 'We live in deeds, not words'." Sydney Morning Herald (NSW), 26 September 1927.