



TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION



THE RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION
NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND

RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

ABN 23 136 193 517

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THE DATES & EVENTS LISTED BELOW ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CALL FOR MORE UP TO DATE INFORMATION.

Month / Date	Event Description
Sunday July 28	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm
Sunday August 25	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm Tobruk Memorial Service at The Shrine 2pm
Friday August 30	General Meeting 10.30am (Lunch and guest speaker)
Sunday September 22	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm
Sunday October 27	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm
Sunday November 10	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am.3pm
Friday November 22	General meeting 10.30am (Lunch and guest speaker)
Sunday December 1	Christmas luncheon (Booking details TBA)

Patron: Bill Gibbins

Committee of Management:

Vice President – Paul Dipnall

Secretary – Lachlan Gaylard

Committee Chair – Stuart Tolliday

Other Committee Members –

Bruce Bingham, Marlene Bingham,
Tony Codd, Glenda Garde, Tony Smith
Karolina Sevcikova, Gayle Sherwell

TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

NEXT ISSUE: OCTOBER 2024

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 6

We welcome contributions from our community
but cannot guarantee publication.

Email is preferred with documents in Word and
pictures in jpeg format but not essential.

Articles or letters with no contact details
will not be published.

Editor Stuart Tolliday

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VALE

THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD, AS WE THAT ARE LEFT GROW OLD;
AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM, NOR THE YEARS CONDEMN.
AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING,
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.
LEST WE FORGET

YOUNG, Ronald (Ron) William Frederick, S/4282, HMAS Vendetta, 23 May 2024, 102

RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

Vice President's Message – August 2024

Dear members,

It's a pleasure and privilege to report to you all the activities of your committee and what's happened at Tobruk House.



Since my last report to you your committee has been busy and engaged in many productive activities. Many of these activities represent new initiatives for our Association consistent with our aims and objectives to continue engagement of members and use of Tobruk House .

At our May general meeting we had a marvellous and very engaging presentation from David Mitchelhill-Green author of *Desert Diggers and Tobruk - Fiercely Fighting or Fighting Fall* . His presentation gave all in attendance new insights into the Tobruk Campaign sourced from wartime diaries , letters and newspapers of the time. David's superb presentation of hitherto unknown details of a soldier's life in the defence of Tobruk, had us all captivated.

In early June we had our annual visit to the Royal Children's Hospital. As always, it's a constant learning exercise into childhood epilepsy. The hospital staff were most hospitable as is their custom. They always extend warm hospitality and make us feel special.

It's clear our association is deeply appreciated by the hospital administration as evidenced by their kindness and willingness to answer any questions from members. A tour of the ward is always extraordinary from a technological point of view and I learnt that they can even monitor patients remotely in country areas.

Our connection with the hospital has created many benefits to patients and families in the treatment of childhood epilepsy. We should all feel very proud our support assists the stabilisation and sometimes recovery from this condition.

In late June we embarked on a new initiative which saw Tobruk House the meeting point for representatives from all Tobruk Unit Associations. This meeting was exceptionally well attended by all Tobruk Units with vigorous, yet respectful contributions made by all.

Your committee believes that further engagement with all Tobruk Unit Associations will engender a greater sense of belonging and understanding of the challenges we face in the future in keeping the memory of our veterans alive. We believe an open and inclusive relationship with all Tobruk Unit Associations can only assist to strengthen the bond between all unit associations and we look forward to building upon the success of this meeting well into the future through ongoing engagement .

As winter chills set in it's my pleasure to report to you the activities which complement our association and I wish you all the very best. I look forward to seeing you at our August meeting.

Kind regards

Paul F Dipnall

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Trove is a wonderful free searchable source of information about our past, providing digitalised images of many of Australia's daily newspapers. The picture below is from The Age on Wednesday July 2 in 1941 and carries news from Tobruk. You can read the story below.



MORALE GOOD AT TOBRUK -Enemy Perplexed

"The Age" Special Representative. LONDON, July 1.

Time has shown the wisdom of Sir A. Wavell's insistence in leaving at Tobruk part of the forces withdrawn from Cyrenaica, which was hailed at the time by the Axis as a major defeat. For seven weeks Tobruk, which is largely manned by Australians, has been a thorn in the side of General Rommel's army and has held up the Axis plans for the invasion of Egypt. The garrison has not only held out against great odds, but has continually harassed the enemy.

German commentators, in apologising for the failure of the Axis forces to dislodge them, explain that Tobruk in some respects is more heavily fortified than the Maginot and Siegfried lines. They ignore the fact that British troops, including Australians, captured the town from the Italians, who had declared that it was impossible to capture it by an assault.

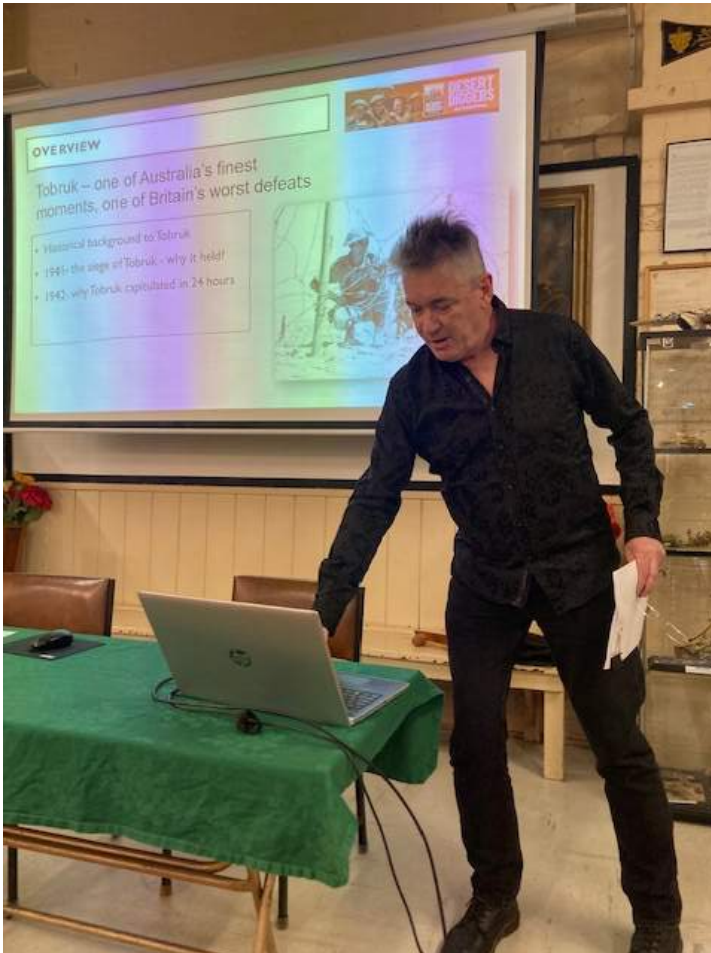
The difficulties which the Tobruk forces are creating for the Axis armies are illustrated, by records which arrived in Britain showing that of 1140 enemy troops who set out on a desert march only 210 survived. The rest were either killed or wounded by the R.A.F. or died from thirst and starvation when their supply planes, were shot down by R.A.F. fighters. The latest reports from Tobruk indicate that the garrison's morale is splendid.

A Rome communique says:— "There has been lively artillery on the 'Tobruk front. Axis planes bombed enemy supply depots and defence works at Tobruk and also an enemy naval formation north of Bardia. One destroyer was heavily damaged, and one was sunk. The garrison at Debra Tabor easily repulsed an enemy attack. An Italian submarine torpedoed and sank an enemy destroyer in the Eastern Mediterranean."

Italians Surrender

A Cairo general headquarters' communique states:— "After the occupation of Ghimbi, in addition to General Bertello, General Nam and Brigadier Tosti also surrendered with 245 Italian officers, 1941 members of other ranks and 841 Askaris. The material captured included six field guns. There is nothing to report from Libya."

MAY GENERAL MEETING



Melbourne author David Mitchellhill Green, at ROTA's May general meeting

Those who attended our last general meeting back in May were treated to an excellent presentation by Melbourne author, David Mitchellhill Green, who spoke of his latest book, 'Desert Diggers'.

David is not a newcomer to the subject of Tobruk. Some of our readers may be familiar with his earlier book 'Tobruk, Fiercely Stand or Fighting Fall'.

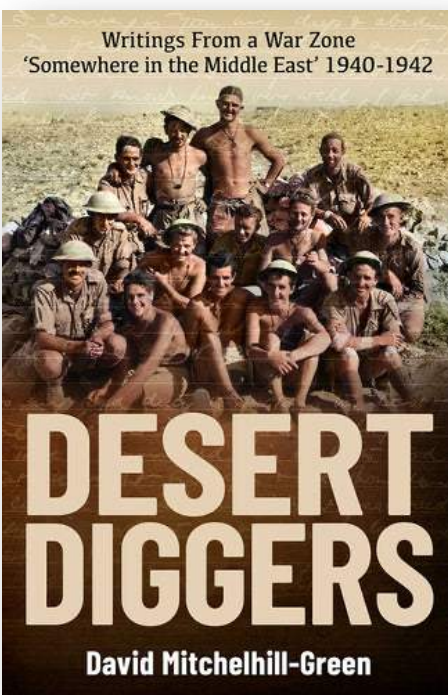
David's new book draws upon hundreds of soldiers' letters in a fresh and captivating narrative of the war in North Africa. It follows the first men to volunteer after the outbreak of the war, tracing their adventures in exotic ports before training in Palestine and, eventually, Tobruk.

What makes this book so enthralling, and quite different, is that David has managed to achieve something which is very difficult, namely, to seamlessly combine brief excerpts from a large number of letters with the author's own narrative of the history of the fighting in North Africa.

Told in the words of the men who served, the book offers a new personal perspective on the siege.

Berlin's scornful broadcasts were an unintended tonic for the troops.' 'Frequently we laughed and joked until the tears came into our eyes', one Digger quipped.'

'Amid frequent bombing and shelling,

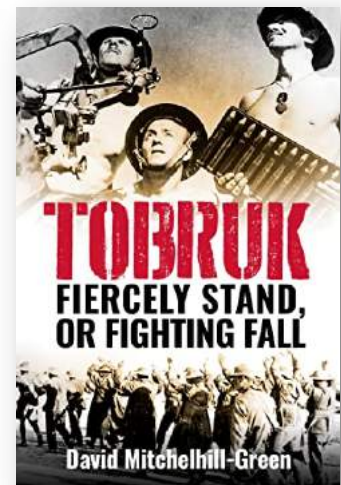


With immediacy and raw emotion, these skilfully woven letters provide a remarkable and compelling account of the Australian experience of war.- Australian War Memorial

In his presentation, David gave a brief history of the strategic importance of the port of Tobruk before examining why, after holding Tobruk for eight months in 1941, it was so easily relinquished in just 24 hours in 1942. He also quoted from some of the letters used in the book.

Both books are available from all good bookstores and we also have copies of Desert Diggers for sale at Tobruk House. Pick up a copy from our merchandise table on your next visit.

Our general meetings usually feature a special guest speaker. It's always worth coming along if you are able.



Mitchellhill-Green's first book on Tobruk offers a different perspective – asking why the remote fortress successfully fought off repeated attacks in 1941, before tragically falling to Rommel's Axis forces in just 24 hours in mid-1942.

RCH ROTA NEUROSCIENCE MORNING TEA



The annual morning tea at the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation took place on Friday 7th June.



RCH Foundation CEO Ryan Brown welcomed everyone and presented ROTA with a copy of a new book documenting the fascinating history of the RCH. (This has been added to the ROTA library and is available for members to borrow.)

Ryan talked about the importance of philanthropy and the impact it has on the lives of children. Associate Professor Mark MacKay expanded on the specific importance of the ROTA Fellowship.

He then introduced our current Fellow, Dr Jamie Leong, who told us about a case study she had done on a nine-year-old child with a three-month history of seizures. He was connected to EEG and his very active EEG revealed the problem to the RCH Epilepsy scientists. This was followed by very delicate surgery that was pioneered at the RCH and the outcome was that he had been completely relieved of his epilepsy!

RCH Foundation CEO Ryan Brown presents ROTA representative Stuart Tolliday with a copy of the new book recording in great detail the history of the Royal Children's Hospital.



2024 ROTA/RCH Neurology Fellow Jamie Leong



2019 ROTA/RCH Neurology Fellow Emma Macdonald-Laurs



Dr.Emma Macdonald-Laurs, her patient Frankie, & Dr Jamie Leong

Dr Emma Macdonald-Laurs, the 2019 ROTA Fellow, then introduced us to six-and-a-half-year-old Frankie, who she began working with as a little 15 month old girl in 2019 when she was a ROTA Fellow.

Frankie was born healthy and well, however, aged 15 months, Frankie had two very long whole-body febrile seizures, and over the next few years Frankie started having smaller seizures where she became fearful, stared blankly and then wanted a cuddle.

An MRI scan showed that she had sustained an injury to her temporal lobe from the big seizures she had as a baby. Medication, while an aid, was not solving the basic problem. However a truly groundbreaking AI based analysis system

enabled the very delicate surgery that Frankie undertook 7 months ago, leaving her completely seizure-free and ready to embark on a normal childhood.

Needless to say, Frankie's parents Kate and Nick are delighted.

Stuart Tolliday, the ROTA representative at the RCH Foundation gave the following short address to the RCH doctors, Foundation and ROTA members.

"Looking back through old copies of the Tobruk House News recently, I noticed that by the beginning of the twentieth century the Vale section was regularly half a page long. Fourteen thousand men had shrunk to a couple of hundred. I recalled my father saying that they decided to close the Ballarat subbranch when it reached the point that there were only two members capable of attending meetings, many years earlier. Of course this was happening all around the country, but the situation was decidedly different, in fact unique, for the Victorian Branch of the Rats, because they actually owned a valuable asset.

Wise heads back in October 1949 announced in the first edition of the newly created ROTA Vic. newsletter called the Tobruk Echo, that they had decided to purchase a building so that they would have their own place to call home. A call was put out for donations and money raising ideas. Although the somewhat elaborate plans for this new "home" (which included three floors and accommodation) didn't come to fruition, the building did. In 1955, what had been the Crossleigh Gardens Dance Academy and then the Albert Park Pool Hall, became Tobruk House, and the once covered parquetry floor was again put to use as a dance floor, one of the many activities run to raise the funds to pay the mortgage.

So when, in 2005, the committee started to focus on a future when they would no longer be making decisions, they elected to take charge of their own legacy rather than leave it to the vagaries of the RSL or government. They wanted to make a difference, and not risk their investment being simply absorbed into the funds of another organisation. This meant selling Tobruk House.



*At the special display acknowledging the story of the Rats of Tobruk and their association with the Cockatoo Ward:
(from left) Stuart Tolliday, Dennis Garde, Karolina Sevcikova, Malcolm Wilson, Heather Collins, Brian Collins, Dr Jamie Leong,
Glenda Garde, Gayle Sherwell, Margaret Wilson, Tony Codd*

"No bricks and mortar memorial for us" they declared. These forward-thinking men wanted to make a difference in a way that a statue or a cenotaph never could. After exhaustive discussion, and argument, they determined that they had been fighting for a safe and secure future and that would be realised in the lives of children. Tobruk House was put up for auction.

There is an old saying that you can't have your cake and eat it, but thanks to the generosity of Bill Gibbons, the eventual purchaser of the property, that is exactly what happened. Bill handed the keys back to the Rats for their continued use of the building. And so, having realised the value of their asset, the decision was made to invest most of the proceeds in what became in 2010 the Rats of Tobruk Association Royal Children's Hospital Neurology Fellowship.

I am proud to have represented the Rats of Tobruk Association here at the RCH Foundation over the past 6 years, and I cannot express enough our gratitude to the Foundation for its recent granting of significant additional funds, to ensure our Fellowship will continue into the future.

In turn, ROTA has made a specific ongoing commitment to allocate a part of the annual membership fee to supporting the Fellowship. I believe that these two actions underline and cement the importance and value of that decision made some 14 years ago.

With the added benefit of various Gifts in Will, both made and being considered, I believe the Fellowship will continue to provide a world class opportunity for our brightest young doctors to delve into the neurological mysteries that can prevent children from reaching their full potential. We recognise that the people of the RCH Foundation, and the wonderful doctors and nurses at the hospital, possess a passion that matches our own for the realising of the goal of the original Rats, and so, on behalf of all of ROTA, I say thank you."

Mark, Emma and Jamie then took everyone on a tour of the Rats of Tobruk Cockatoo ward where they explained some of the work done by specialized epilepsy scientists to analyze and identify the various causes of epilepsy in their patients.

These annual visits to the RCH leave everyone with a sense of awe at the amazing work being done by the dedicated people at the hospital and to which the RCH Fellowship contributes. If you want to know how you can contribute to continuing this wonderful work, please contact Kathryn Sell at the RCH Foundation 03 9345 6389 or email: kathryn.sell@rch.org.au



KING'S BIRTHDAY 2024 HONOURS LIST Story from the NT News June 10, 2024 by Sierra Haigh, Alex Treacy and Camden Smith

The late Mr Sydney George Kinsman.

Five days before the two-year anniversary of his passing, the late Sydney George Kinsman will be posthumously honoured by becoming a Member for the Order of Australia in the general division.



World War II veteran and Rat of Tobruk, the late Mr Sydney Kinsman Photo: Emma Murray

Living to just short of 101, Mr Kinsman was many things in his life: A WWII veteran who partook in the siege of Tobruk; an escapee from a prisoner of war camp; a float builder for the May Day parades in Alice Springs; a volunteer firefighter; and much more.

But to his family, and his daughter Tricia Bruce, he was "just a really good man, who loved and cared for his family, community, and his country. He would be so humbled by this," she said.

It's a sentiment echoed by his eldest grandson Benjamin Bruce, who said it was a proud moment for the family seeing their grandad get the medal.

"For me personally, Grandpa's attitude and approach to life will forever be an inspiration, so for his contributions to be recognised in this way is something quite special," he said.

Originally from Adelaide, Mr Kinsman enlisted to military at 19 years of age, before moving to Alice Springs once WWII ended.

of ways – from being a life member on the Alice Springs Show Society to a being a former committee member for Nathalie Gorey Pre-School.

Mr Kinsman was instrumental to Anzac Day in the town, and was a life member of the Returned Services League Australia.

The Sydney Kinsman Monument was erected in his honour by the Alice Springs Town Council in 2021, and in 2019 he was named Centralian Senior Citizen of the Year.

But to his grandson, knowing his grandfather is being honoured and how much it would have meant to Syd makes him smile.

"He never considered anything he did as beyond ordinary expectation, but acknowledgment that he was having a positive impact always bought him joy," Mr Bruce said.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

**Janice Murphy Karen Parker Robert Wilson Barry Powell Phillip Coppin
Phillip MacArthur William Dopson David Green Helen Ruane Kristen Knox**



Your membership helps to ensure the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk

WHAT ABOUT THE SIGNALS? (Story by Glenda Garde)

DOT, DOT, DOT ... DASH, DASH, DASH - - - COLD COURAGE

To continue our THN series of articles about the work undertaken by the various units involved in the siege, in this issue we examine what the 'signals', or 'sigs' (as they were known) did in Tobruk. Once again, we have tried to use the words of the men themselves to enlighten us; from the horse's mouth, so to speak.



For an infantry division to fight effectively, its commander must be in contact with his subordinate units at all times. To do this during the Second World War, the divisional signals had to provide the commander with communications, whether by despatch rider on motorcycle, over the telephone and wireless, or any other necessary means.

Communications had to be maintained around the clock, under all conditions, and no matter how difficult.

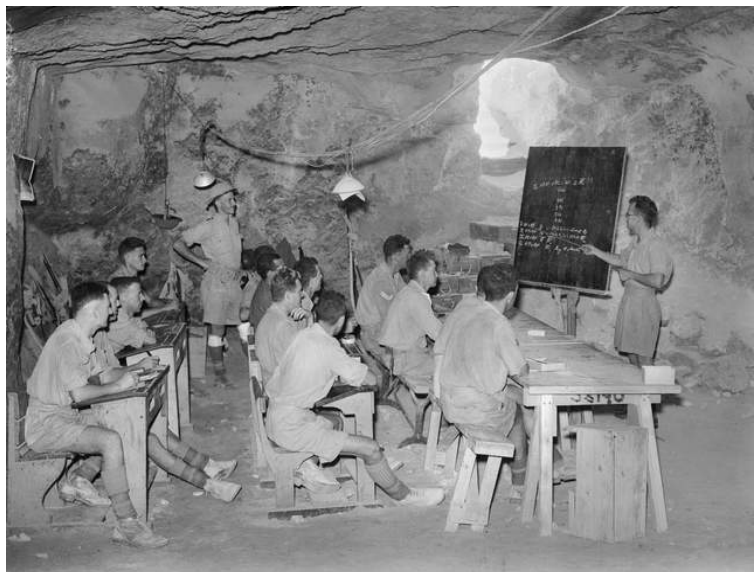
Operations room of the 9th Australian Division Signals during the siege.

VX1501 Reg Ballard 9th Div. Signals

"The first bit of training was on motorbikes at Puckapunyal and that was my main training during the Pucka bit, but I knew morse code. I'd done a bit of that in scouts and that sort of thing, but I wasn't very fast. But word got around that if you could do a certain speed, you got an extra two and six a day specialist pay, which in those days you were only getting five shillings a day which was later six shillings, so the two and six was wonderful!

A few of us got our heads together and we practised, and we moved from Puckapunyal to Ingleburn in New South Wales. During that period at Ingleburn, I went for my test for the specialist's pay and passed it and that's how I became a specialist operator, a Morse code man.

In signals you were always doing some sort of communications, whether you were in camp or not and you were gradually introduced to that sort of thing. They had to run a signal office, to get communications around the place and the lines were running here and there, and the wireless came into the act a bit and that sort of thing, but that was early in the part.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020306

A 9th Division Signals school in progress in the cave classroom in Tobruk.

There were linesmen and signallers in a section that laid the lines. I wasn't in the line section but that was their job to lay the lines. The first thing they did was lay the lines from the various areas, and they'd go out and bring lines in and they'd be all connected up into a communications system very much like a post office setup."



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020368

A signaller of 9th Division Signals at work with a field set near Tobruk

"You set up and had a certain frequency on the wireless and then get in touch with other areas on that frequency.

There would be a set per division, or a couple of sets at a division and they would be in contact with two or three sets, perhaps with the artillery, or the artillery regiments or the brigade and then back to the rear, back to army headquarters, corps headquarters and that sort of business.

You were getting communications all the time one way or another, and it went on for twenty-four hours a day."

"Messages would come through by wireless in code. It had to be in code because headquarters had deciphering fellows. A lot of the communication of course from Cairo to Tobruk was by wireless.

I wasn't working on that but some of our boys did, and they were wireless hams, young fellows who were pretty expert. It might be three or four or there might even be five men working on this and there would be dispatch riders coming and going, line men going out to repair lines."

QX7689 Douglas Maclean 2/15th

"Well, signals is one of the most important – now I can really blow my bag a bit. But it's probably one of the most important things in the army because the only way they – now in Tobruk from battalion backwards, a



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

040592

A member of a signals unit repairing telephone lines after a strafe by the Germans

battalion's a thousand, they're the front line, the 2/15th. From back to there, they were all wireless sets. They had divisional sigs men there and they did all the work going back. Any message from the colonel to the brigade it went through there or if we just – we had telephone lines but they were often broken, he'd speak to him on the telephone.

But if there were orders for an attack, they all came through this, up over the Fuller Phone, but usually that's because the Fuller Phone could be busted. But forward of that in Tobruk, it was all telephones. And that's what made being a sigs a very dangerous job. You spent all your time – because from battalion to company headquarters – a battalion's about eight hundred men, a company's about two hundred and they both had quarters, and from then on joined out into three sections and they all had telephone lines. And they each – at company headquarters, they always had three sigs and your job was to keep those lines in order. And very seldom did it go a day that you weren't out two or three times fixing lines. And they had to be done. Often you had to crawl on your tummy and get along and fix them. You see, they were all lined. Telephone lines were not like you've got here up in the air with two lines, they were one line along the ground and earth return, which was an old bayonet stuck in the ground and that made the circuit, the ground made the circuit, and it was connected onto the ground. And they were very uncomfortable periods crawling on your tummy there, having somebody using you as target practice and – and how we got out of it alive – well I suppose that's just a guess. We lost a few but most of us got out."

SX9082 George Richardson 9th div sigs

"I was a linesman, a signaller. Didn't know anything about line work, I hadn't done anything like it, but I knew what it operationally was, lay line, communication and we used to get a score of the formation. When you go into action, you go to a section and there are initials, like I was in B section, Beer section. The fellas who handled the line in headquarters were Don section. I forget the rest of them but if you went to a brigade then you might have been in J, K or L section and you know a lot of those fellas, never saw them again till after the war cause that's how signallers - you've got to think of the Postmaster General's department or whatever they call it now, and the different sig offices around, the different post offices around the place.



A 9th Division signaller in the field in Tobruk

In the army, they're sig offices and that's how they organise signals in a division, so we were 9th Division Signals. And we had to provide the communication to the whole division while in action, or out of action too.

Well, we used to run lines out to wherever it was. Half the time we didn't know who it was for and the other mystery about linesmen that a lot of people never understand is that we would not run a line to a corner. We would throw the line out to the right and out to the left, so we'd use twice as much, sometimes three times as much cable as was required, because of shells, bombs and trucks and soldiers. Soldiers sometimes cut the

line to use as wire for a job, you know, thinking they're getting away with it, not realising they were cutting off their communication!

You'd be called out at any time, didn't matter when it was. At night I would have to get back using the stars and that sort of thing. We had one experience that I seem to come back in my mind every now and again.

At the very early part of Tobruk, they had defence lines and I think they called them red, blue, white or whatever, you know different lines and we used to have to go through all these lines. And we went through one line and a bloke said, "Watch out for the next buggers, they're mad," you know.

They turned out to be Libyan soldiers in their own country and, you know you have a lot of shot and shell and all that sort of stuff, but all of a sudden, I heard a voice said something like, "Halt." I don't know what he said and I'm looking down at two eyes and a long rifle with a barrel and I said, "Australian," and my bull-at-a-gate sergeant rushed up and said, "Linesman, signals." I said, "You bloody idiot, say Australian," because, you know he was a Libyan bloke and eventually we made friendly contact with him and he stood up. I'll never forget it. He was about seven foot tall. I can see him now standing up.

We even had our own fellas shoot at us now and again thinking we were somebody else and the only thing you'd do when there was any fire, was hit the deck. I've cut out a lot of memories about what I did as a linesman, but I can remember things that I saw. For instance, there was a wonderful photographer, famous for the Second [World] War, from Victoria. I can see him now sitting on a blockhouse, a small hut out in the boon docks, the Stukas are coming down and dropping bombs and he's got his camera and he's sitting there with a camera to his eye. I thought, "Bloody hell you've got some guts." We're looking for ground, but he's a photographer, a cameraman and he's got to get the picture, so he's still sitting on this place a good six foot off the ground!

The other courageous blokes I saw like that was there was a time when we were laying a line and we could see this artillery battery firing and we got near it and it was suspicious. The blokes looked funny. The blokes turned out to be hessian overalls, or filled with hessian, with tin hats.

They're dummies and when we got close to them this NCO came out and he said, "Hey, are you signals? Hey, can you let us have some wire?"

As I said, we hated giving wire away, but for essential services, we would. Got into trouble when we got back, but what their job was... talk about courage! This was cold courage. Their job was to draw the fire of the Stukas, pull wire, set off explosions that went out of a smokestack like you've seen on ovens, so the Stukas would attack. They reckoned it was a better job than being with the batteries firing the guns. Gees, you know the things that I could tell you about cold courage.

Now cold courage is, as a linesman, regardless of what's going on, you still had to do it. You've not got any hot courage to do anything against anybody. All you've got to do is join a wire, but it's cold courage."

(Ed: The reference above to dummies intended to fool the pilots is an oft repeated ruse used by the Allies to misdirect the enemy throughout the war. This "Taffy's Tale" from Ralph Whittle may well be about the same attempt.)

TAFFY'S TALES

COLLECTING THE CASH WITH THE COLONEL'S CAR

September 1st, 1941 dawned bright and clear. It was the anniversary of the attack on Warsaw, and with members of the Polish Carpathian Brigade gradually coming in to relieve us, our conversation with those attached to us centered on that day in Warsaw in 1939.

Later on that morning I had to go over to the cash office on the beach, and the post office nearby. The Colonel kindly offered his Batman/driver and the staff car, so we set off. The cash office was found on a cliff near the beach and entry was through a hole at the top and down a ladder into a cage like office.

After transacting unit business there, Dave and I headed for the post office. This was located on the side of a hill, dug into it with a galvanised iron roof covered with sandbags, and the entrance protected by more sandbags. Right at the top of the hill was a 3.7AA post, protected by light machine guns. Down at the bottom of the hill, where we had to leave the staff car, was the most amazing set up - a bogus AA post designed to trick the Germans!



Ralph "Taffy" Keith
Linthome Cresdee Whittle
Sgt 2/8 Field Ambulance -
SX9054



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020798

Sand-bag figures adorned with tin hats and uniforms were the gunners. Galvanised water pipes, arranged as guns pointing to the sky simulating real AA positions, would look really life-like from the air. Then came the piece-de-resistance!

In a slit trench sat a Pommie gunner with a case of grenades nearby. His job was to throw the grenades around among the pipes to look as if the guns were firing.

A dummy anti-aircraft position built on the Palistrino Escarpment, Tobruk



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

024578

Pictured here is a dummy Bofors anti-aircraft gun with dummy crew after a raid. Similar guns and dummies made by Lieutenant W J Wilkie of the Camouflage Section, 9th Division at Tobruk were dive bombed and machine gunned repeatedly by the German Air Force

Ingenuity plus, or a big joke, who knows? Anyway, we said "G'day" to him as we moved up to the post office. But just before we got there, the Sergeant in the top AA post sung out to us, "We've just had a signal that 200 plus planes are approaching Tobruk from the west, so you better warn the Postie and that bloke down below. This is only an estimate."

We knew what he meant, because there was no radar in Tobruk - only giant listening ears out on the perimeter, attuned to picking up sound - and the sound from that post was estimated to be that of 200 airplane motors!

We yelled out and told the bloke down below, and then went into the post office. We had hardly finished talking to the Postmaster's staff when all hell broke loose. A squadron of Stukas began to dive on the AA posts (both of them)

and with the scream of the dive bombers, the explosions of the bombs, the chatter of the Stuka's machine guns, the answering chatter of the AA machine guns and the boom of 3.7" guns firing rapidly, the impression on the eardrums was mind bending. Quickly we dropped to the floor and crept near the protecting sandbags. During a lull we looked out - the staff car could not be seen for dust - but a wave and a flash from a grenade told us the dummy post was still alive and firing!



Daily bombing runs by the near vertical diving JU87 Stukas were an integral part of Rommel's attempts to re-take Tobruk.

Then three more Stukas attacked and the frightening cacophony of sound, ground heaving and rattle of guns (and teeth) began again. Finally all was silent, and only the clatter of debris and clouds of dust continued the nightmare. We got up, went out and up to the AA post, where one man had been killed, the Sergeant and two others wounded, and one gun knocked out.

While helping the wounded as best we could, another signal came in and the Sergeant yelled "Quick, reload ... there's another 200 plus coming in over the harbour. You blokes better get out of here!"

We raced down the hill, where the staff car, although covered with dust, miraculously was not damaged. We waved to the silly (but brave) Pom who appeared unscathed - although his pipes were a bit of a mess, and we set off on the road home. As we drove towards the turn off, we looked up and there, floating majestically towards us, way above the AA which burst futilely below them, were about 200 high-level bombers in perfect formation.

We stopped the car and made towards a friendly dugout, and as we did so, the armada turned and flew over the harbour. As if by magic, the bombs began to fall en masse, tumbling down like autumn leaves, to explode in mighty waterspouts and plumes of smoke and dust as they fell on the harbour's edge. Thumbing their noses at the AA, the massed formation turned, flew over the harbour, and out to sea, leaving us to contemplate the wreckage. Considering the number of planes and bombs involved, this was very little. When we got back to our main dressing station, the Colonel was obviously glad to see us, the cash, and his car, return safely, as from where he was, we appeared to be in the thick of things.

We learned later, that, apart from a direct hit on several AA guns, a fire in the huge food dump, several trucks burnt out and five men killed, Hitler's anniversary surprise for the Carpathian Brigade Poles could've been considered a rank failure!



VX15131 Ron Williamson 7th Div. AASC

...."They were mainly First World War songs. "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty", because everybody seemed to know them. That sort of song.

"Our Sergeant Major was a delightful fellow. Not a strict disciplinarian, but he wanted very high standards. He was an English guy who'd come out as a young fellow to Australia and he was a lot older than we were.

Actually, he was lucky to get in. I think he was at least 38 or 39 when he enlisted, but he was a great guy and we were trying to sing one night. We were sitting around talking and singing and he said, "Now I want some of you to sing 'igh and some of you to sing low and we'll see how we go", so we tried to sing and make some harmony, but it didn't work out too well!"

Sergeant Leo Jones of the 2/23rd Infantry Battalion with his improvised banjo made from a kerosene tin and packing case while he was serving in the Tobruk area. September 1941 AWM Collection

ANNUAL TOBRUK MEMORIAL SERVICE AT THE SHRINE

The annual Tobruk service at the Shrine will be held on Sunday August 25 at 2pm.

The special guest speaker this year will be Colonel Daniel Strack, Assistant Commander, 4th Brigade, 2nd Australian Division.

Daniel is the grandson of Rat of Tobruk Bert Veitch VX23447 2/5th Field Ambulance.

This is always a short but moving service and we encourage your attendance.

As the date coincides with our August Open Day at Tobruk House why not come over to say hello and have a cup of tea before the service? You will be most welcome.



HALL FOR HIRE



Tobruk House is available for hire.

In recent times it has played host to several 70th birthday parties, numerous meetings of military groups, a police meeting and even a funeral! With a large screen projection system and a clear PA it can offer many possibilities.

If you are looking for a unique Melbourne venue for your special event, please contact the secretary on 0432 232 502 for more information.



ROTA MERCHANDISE



See Order Form on page 19 for postage costs and other details.



LADIES SUMMER POPPY SCARF
Light Blue, Dark Blue, White,
Grey, Black
\$15



SIEGE OF TOBRUK BAR MAT
\$40



ROTA RUGBY TOP
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL
XXXL, XXXXL, XXXXXL
\$60



ROTA POLO SHIRT
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL
XXXL, XXXXL, XXXXXL
\$45



ROTA 'BASEBALL' CAP
One size fits all
\$28



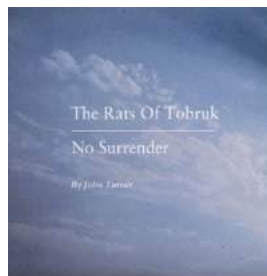
SIEGE OF TOBRUK 'ROLL-UP'
STUBBIE COOLER
\$10



ROTA BADGE CAR
WINDOW STICKER
7cm x 8.5cm approx
Sticks to inside of window
\$10



RATS OF TOBRUK 1941
LAPEL BADGE
\$15



'RATS OF TOBRUK' CD
INCLUDES 'NO SURRENDER'
Written and sung by
John Turner
\$15



80TH ANNIVERSARY SIEGE
MEDAL
\$50



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC - APPLICATION FOR AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP



Please forward this application together with payment of \$30 to:
The Secretary of ROTA, Tobruk House, 44 Victoria Ave, Albert Park, Vic, 3206.

Contact Email: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com

Contact Phone No: 0432 232 502

Name:

Title
Given Name (s)
Surname

Address:

Suburb / State
Post Code

Email:@..... Contact Phone No:

Please Print Clearly

Are you over 18 years of age: **YES or NO** To be eligible for membership the applicant must be over 18 years of age

Are you a descendant / relative of a Rat of Tobruk: **YES or NO** **If yes please print his details below:**

.....

Given Name (s)
Surname
Service ID
Unit

My relationship to the veteran is:

Payment Details:

Payment of **\$30 Annual Subscription** must accompany the application. (There is no joining fee.)

Payment by electronic funds transfer (EFT) is our preferred method of payment. Payment can also be made by credit card.

EFT Payment: If you are paying by EFT, it is important that you include a unique reference so that the payment can be matched to the application. A suggested reference is the words 'New Member' followed by your surname.

Bank Account Details: Account Name: Rats of Tobruk Association BSB: 633 000 Account No: 197610603

Credit Card Payment. Please provide the following details:

Name on Card: _____ Amount \$ _____

Card No. |__|__|__|__| |__|__|__|__| |__|__|__|__| |__|__|__|__|

CVC: |__|__|__| (3 digit number on the back of Visa/MC, 4 digit on front of AMEX) Expiry Date __ : __

If you pay by EFT or credit card you can scan this form and email it to: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com

Privacy Clause:

Information requested in this application form is necessary for the association to determine your eligibility for membership, maintain the members register and to keep you informed about the association, its activities and products. It will not be provided to third parties for direct marketing purposes. As a member you have the right to inspect the members' register.

Promotional Photos:

At the Association's functions, photo's may be taken for promotional purposes and publication in the Tobruk House News. By attending any of these functions you give permission for the use of your image in the manner described above.

Annual Subscription:

By joining the Association, you agree to pay the Annual Subscription when it falls due on the 1st January each year. The amount of the Annual Subscription is set by the Committee of Management, prior to the start of each year.

Association Rules:

By joining the Association, you agree to abide by the Association Rules and policies approved by the Committee of Management from time to time. These are available on the Association's website www.ratsoftobrukassociation.org.au

Applicant's Signature: **Date:**

Membership Approval:

Delegate of the Committee of Management

January 2024



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

Item	Cost per Item	Quantity	Size (Refer page 20)	Postage Yes/No	Postage (Ordinary Mail)	Total	Comments
Rats of Tobruk, 1941, Lapel Badge – butterfly /clutch fitting	\$15				Inc postage		
Rats of Tobruk, 1941, Lapel Badge – stick pin fitting	\$15				Inc postage		
80 th Anniversary Medal	\$50				\$11		Postage for up to 2 medals to same address.
ROTA Rugby Top	\$60				\$15		
ROTA Polo Shirt (New look navy blue with yellow stripes)	\$45				\$11		
ROTA “baseball” style cap	\$28				\$11		
ROTA Bar Mat	\$40				\$15		
ROTA ‘roll-up’ Stubbie cooler	\$10				\$11		
Badge Car Window Sticker <small>(Sticks to inside of window)</small>	\$10				Inc postage		20% discount for more than one sticker.
‘The Rats Of Tobruk’ CD	\$15				\$11		
			Colour				
Ladies Poppy Scarf (light weight)	\$15				\$11		Postage for up to 4 scarves to same address
\$15 postage for orders of multiple items to the same address			Total amount to be paid:			\$	

Payment is required before the items are sent. Delivery time can vary depending on stock availability and could be up to 6 weeks. Payment by electronic funds transfer (EFT) is our preferred method of payment. Payment can also be made by card, cheque, or money order.

EFT Payment: If you are paying by EFT, it is important that you include a unique reference so that the payment can be matched to the members register. A suggested reference is the abbreviation ‘MERCH’ followed by your surname.

Bank Account Name: Rats of Tobruk Association BSB: 633 000 Account No: 197610603

Payment can also be made by Credit or Debit Card.

To arrange this please call: **0432 232 502**

Purchaser’s Name: _____ **Contact Phone No:** _____
(Please Print)

Email Address: _____ @ _____

Delivery Address: _____

Suburb: _____ **State:** _____ **Postcode:** _____

Please forward completed form to:

‘Merchandise Officer, ROTA, 44 Victoria Av, Albert Park, Vic, 3206.’

If you pay by EFT or card, you can scan this form and email to: **ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com**

All enquiries to the Merchandise Officer

email: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com Phone: 0432 232 502

What's on at The Shrine



LAST POST – Every Sunday at 4.45PM



The Last Post Service is another reason to make a family visit to the Shrine on Sunday afternoons. This new moving ceremony features a piper, bugler and Shrine Guard in historic uniform.

TRENCHES TO RUNWAY



This exhibition delves into the profound impact of military clothing design and wartime conditions on popular fashion, tracing these influences from the 1870s to the present day. Discover how wartime led to innovative design solutions and how the fashion industry reinterpreted these styles, giving them new meaning and expression in civilian life.

INK IN THE LINES



This Australian War Memorial touring exhibition focuses on the stories of Australia's military veterans, through stunning photography of their tattoos. Many members and veterans of the Australian Defence Forces have tattoos, and while their reasons for getting tattooed are as varied as the people themselves, self-expression and belonging play a part. They also share a common purpose in getting inked: to remember.

TOYS, TALES & TENACITY



This first-of-its-kind exhibition at the Shrine explores the experiences of children during war through toys and games. Come for an immersive and thought-provoking journey as we explore the intertwined stories of war, childhood, and the enduring spirit of youth in the face of adversity.