



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

44 VICTORIA AVENUE, ALBERT PARK, VIC 3206

www.ratsoftobrukassociation.org.au

PHONE No 0432 232 502

GENERAL MEETINGS START AT 10.30AM

THE DATES & EVENTS LISTED BELOW ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR MORE UP TO DATE INFORMATION
CALL 0432 232 502

Month / Date	Event Description
February 1	Polish Association book launch at Tobruk House 2pm – <i>'Our Journeys in Australia 1947-1977'</i>
February 20	The Shrine monthly service incl ref to Rats of Tobruk - 11.30am
February 23	Annual General Meeting and lunch at Tobruk House
March 2	Open Day 10am – 2pm (volunteers needed)
March 30	Open Day 10am – 2pm (volunteers needed)
April 13	Tobruk Sunday – see details on page 17
April 25	ANZAC day at Tobruk House – see details on page 17
May 25	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm
May 30	General Meeting

Patron: Bill Gibbins

Committee of Management:

Vice President – Paul Dipnall

Secretary – Lachlan Gaylard

Committee Chair – Stuart Tolliday

Other Committee Members –

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

TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

Deadlines

Editorial and Advertising

NEXT ISSUE: APRIL 2025

DEADLINE: MARCH 4

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will not be published.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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CONTACT US: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com



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

RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

Vice President's Message – February 2025

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope you had a joyful festive season and a great start to the new year. As we move into 2025, we look forward to another year of shared experiences and continued support within our association.



As the year gains momentum, I'd like to take a moment to remind you that annual memberships for the Rats of Tobruk Association are now due. Your ongoing support, through a modest subscription of just \$30, is essential to preserving the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk and ensuring the continued success of our activities at Tobruk House.

This year promises to be an exciting one, with key events already on the horizon. I look forward to seeing many of you at Tobruk Sunday and Anzac Day, two of our most significant commemorative occasions. These events allow us to come together to honour the bravery and sacrifice of the Rats of Tobruk while strengthening the bonds of our community. We are seeing an increased interest in the story of the Rats of Tobruk, evidenced by the growth membership and in attendance at our Tobruk Sunday commemoration service in particular.

I also encourage you to attend the Annual General Meeting, where we will reflect on the year past, share plans for the future, and discuss ways to continue building our association. It's an excellent opportunity to contribute your ideas and connect with fellow members. A comprehensive annual report will be presented at the meeting and then circulated to all members.

The Annual General Meeting is also where we elect our committee members for the year ahead. The responsibilities of these members are not onerous but never-the-less are critical to our future. I ask those of you who are interested and would be able to attend a monthly meeting to please seriously consider joining the committee for 2025. We need a diverse range of skills and interests to help steer our association forward.

We look forward to another year of camaraderie and remembrance as we honour the remarkable men of Tobruk. Your support ensures their legacy will endure for future generations.

Sincerely,

Paul Dipnall
Vice President

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

ABN 23 136 193 517

Reg No: A0054511Y

Date: 23rd February 2025

Time: 10.30am

Venue: Tobruk House, 44 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park, VIC

At this meeting, members will have the opportunity to:

- Find out about ROTA's operations and finances for 2024
- Learn about our new lease of Tobruk House
- Speak about any areas of concern

At this meeting, members will be asked to vote to:

- Accept the minutes of the last AGM
- Accept the annual report
- Accept the annual financial statements
- Confirm the appointment of the new executive and general committee members.

If you are unable to attend, please consider filling out the separate PROXY form attached.

At this meeting the recipient of the Royal Children's Hospital 2025 Rats Of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship will be presented.

REMINDER: ROTA SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE FOR PAYMENT ON 1ST JANUARY 2025



Affiliate members are reminded that this year's subscription was due for payment on 1st January. The subscription remains at \$30 for 2025.

Please note that individual payment requests are not normally sent to members. The cooperation of members by responding to this notice and paying their subscription as soon as possible would be greatly appreciated.

For payment information please refer to the 2025 Annual Subscription Payment Form on page 21. Payment can now be made using a credit or debit card.

If you are paying by EFT, ensure you include a unique reference such as your surname and membership no. (Account Name: Rats of Tobruk Association BSB: 633 000 Account No: 197610603)

If you pay by over-the-counter bank deposit, please ensure you send details to ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com or post to The Secretary, ROTA, 44 Victoria Ave, Albert Park, 3206.

This is important for correct matching of payments, as bank deposits do not have adequate referencing.

Please note that Tobruk veteran's widows are exempt from paying the annual subscription. Life and honorary members are also exempt.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

This clipping from an unknown source comes from a scrap book held by ROTA. Unfortunately the owner/compiler of the scrapbook is not listed.

AUSSIES ANSWER "SURRENDER" PAMPHLET

Australian Diggers' answer to pamphlet pictured on top of page 5 was to hoist a white flag from one of the highest buildings in the town. "Come and get it!" read the biggest inscription on the flag. Appropriate Australian descriptions of the Germans also figured prominently on the flag. An Australian Tobruk unit paper gives a full account of this unfortunate German experiment. The Diggers, it stated, chased the pamphlets right out to the barbed wire for souvenirs. The paper advised the enemy to word their pamphlets differently if they wished them to be effective: "This is what we suggest: 'Aussies—we have been trying to get you out of your rat holes for the past three months and are getting fed up.

" 'Every one of you we get costs us ten, and it's getting a bit thick.

" 'Come and give yourselves up. The German beer is the best in the world, and we have millions of gallons here.

" 'Our prison camp is the most luxurious in the world with two-up schools every night, coursing every Wednesday, trots on Monday afternoons, and gee-gees every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. It's all yours if you please, please let us take Tobruk!"

AUSSIES

AFTER CRETE DISASTER ANZAC TROOPS ARE NOW BEING RUTHLESSLY SACRIFICED BY ENGLAND IN TOBRUCH AND SYRIA. TURKEY HAS CONCLUDED PACT OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GERMANY. ENGLAND WILL SHORTLY BE DRIVEN OUT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. OFFENSIVE FROM EGYPT TO RELIEVE YOU TOTALLY SMASHED.

YOU CANNOT ESCAPE.

OUR DIVE BOMBERS ARE WAITING TO SINK YOUR TRANSPORTS. THINK OF YOUR FUTURE AND YOUR PEOPLE AT HOME.

COME FORWARD—SHOW WHITE FLAGS AND YOU WILL BE OUT OF DANGER!!

SURRENDER!

This response, to the increasingly desperate attempts by Germany to overcome the Australian resistance during the siege is typical of Aussie humour, and very in keeping with the adoption of Lord Haw Haw's intended insult, calling the Aussies Rats, as a mark of pride.

Rommel's failure to extricate the Allies from Tobruk was a huge shock and caused great frustration for the previously undefeated General. He threw everything he had at them, including the cream of the German airforce, to no avail.

In fact each attempt seemed only to strengthen the resolve of the Australians to hold on. There is no doubt that the laconic humour of the Australian troops was an important factor in maintaining a good morale in what were actually very difficult and uncomfortable circumstances. Rommel certainly tried everything in his attempt to break their hold on the port.

Moreshead's tactic of "owning" no-mans-land was incredibly successful and it is of note that his strategies in Tobruk are still studied by our armed forces today.

ROTA CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON 2024

The traditional Christmas luncheon was held at Tobruk House on Sunday December 1. A large number of members and their guests enjoyed a wonderful festive meal.

The day began early for those erstwhile members of the catering crew. A huge range of salads was prepared with something for every taste. Turkey breast and ham off the bone (ably prepared by our indefatigable past president Bruce) and Karolina's traditional individual plum puddings made it a very Christmassy affair.



Lachlan's quiz about the siege created much discussion, and the raffle was as popular as ever.



Les Kenfield and Mick Ryan from the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums gave a rousing performance including a wonderful medley of Christmas carols, rarely heard performed on the bagpipes!

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2024

On Remembrance Day, Secretary Lachlan Gaylard gave a special presentation to members of ROTA and the Middle Park Albert Park Historical Society, focusing on the Rats of Tobruk and their connection to Albert Park. The talk covered the history of the first battle of Tobruk prior to the Second World War, the siege in 1941, and included the fall of Tobruk with South African troops in 1942.



The presentation also touched on the establishment of the Rats of Tobruk Association after the war, which helped support veterans and preserve their legacy. Lachlan discussed how Tobruk House became a community hub for veterans and its role in the post-war years. He emphasised the lasting impact of the Rats of Tobruk on the Albert Park community.

The talk concluded with a reminder of the importance of Remembrance Day in honouring the sacrifices made by these courageous servicemen. Amongst the large group in attendance were many relatives of Tobruk veterans, some of whom were seeing Tobruk House for the first time. Following the talk, both groups mingled and enjoyed the ambience of the hall, especially the exhibition, which was created in 2020 under a Victorian government grant, that tells the full story of the siege and complements the many items of memorabilia on display.

There is no shortage of things to look at when visiting Tobruk House.



NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Our special guest speaker for this meeting was ROTA member Bob Hare. Bob Hare's father Captain Ivan Hare served with the 2/43rd Battalion. He was killed in action at El Alamein in 1942 and was posthumously awarded the Military Cross for gallantry in action during service at Tel el Eisa, Egypt.

Bob Hare discovered his father's experience of war through the diaries and letters that he left behind and Bob retraced his father's steps by travelling to North Africa.



A precis of Bob's father's story first appeared in the October 2019 Tobruk House News following his presentation at The Shrine. We have reprinted it here.

BOB HARE TALKS ABOUT HIS FATHER, CAPTAIN A I (IVAN) HARE



"Do you remember your father?" is a question I was often asked when I was a young boy. "Did you know your father?" Well, I didn't know what a father was; my little mate down the road had one but the first thing I knew about a father was my grandmother saying to me, "Your father was a fine soldier". In subsequent years I came to know what was meant by a "fine soldier".

I came to know my father by things that my family said to me, by talking to men he had taught when they were boys at school, from fellow company commanders and reading his war diary and the letters he sent home from the Middle East.

The following are annotated extracts of some of the events mentioned in his diary and letters: -

Sunday 29th December 1940 *"The ship pulled out about 5pm there were thousands of people and cars gathered - sixteen and half years ago I left the same pier with father waving cheerio - I left this time with a much heavier heart."*

Monday December 30th 1940 *"We joined the convoy round 6pm. The gigantic 80000 tonner the Queen Mary carrying 7500 troops, the 4 funnelled Aquitania and the Dominion Monarch"*

Ivan was to retrace his steps of 16 years previously, Suez Canal with a stopover at Colombo. At Geneifa base camp, *"Our train stopped alongside a column of prisoners just in from Tobruk; hundreds of them all, very well attired in great coats and grey uniforms and many cases and baggage of all descriptions- how they were able to get out with that lot is beyond me. I also saw an officer with a greyhound on a leash."*

This seems to me quite incongruous, the Italians well dressed, well fed, well looked after, on their way to prison camp and ultimate safety. Our diggers were about to enter the fray.

During 2 days leave in Jerusalem he visited the Church of The Holy Sepulchre and enjoyed the "inspiring experience" of being part of a Benedictine procession.

Then to Tobruk.



L-R Capt H J Williamson, Lt J D Gordon, Capt A I Hare, Lt J W Minocks,
Capt W R Tucker, Lt K C Barritt

"In the situation map you will see the outer perimeter defences some 27 miles long extended around the town ---100 odd strong posts -concrete redoubts they are which are studding the wire and a ditch each capable of holding 30 or 40 men in firing positions. They were built in 1930 and were thought to be impregnable and with the force the Ities had they should have been. Our difficulty is that our inferior numbers necessitates the line being thinly held. The strongposts are manned by as few as 6 men and a corporal. Extreme vigilance and active patrolling in the enemy territory is therefore essential".

"I sat down during the siesta to scribble off a letter or two, Fritz was doing a bit of casual shelling around the place at the time and I had no sooner started when one landed within 5 yards with a most deafening crash hurtling Snowy (batman) and self backwards and giving us both a good shower bath of rubble and dust. I fully expected to find Snowy in small pieces and he likewise me, however when the atmosphere cleared, we found each other perfectly intact and laughed it off."

"I am writing this in my hole about the size of a packing case and waiting for lunch or breakfast or whatever it may be called. We work by night and try to sleep by day. About 5 minutes ago a Nazi plane flew over in the moonlight. I knew silence wouldn't last, there's a rattle of machine gun fire now on my left, and quite a few mortars flying overhead, and now a couple of explosions two or three miles away the sentry has just informed me that there are incendiary bombs lighting up the sky, high level you can't hear the planes, conclude therefore they are Iti (Italian). The ack ack has opened on them. I've just looked out, it's better than all the Henley fireworks with red and green tracer in all directions and all along the front now the machine guns are spitting. The Hun seems very nervous at night and keeps his finger on the trigger we never fire unless there is a target and finally, I have a flea somewhere up my leg".

"Now for lunch—bread jam (perhaps) and bully but no tea. We have our one and only hot meal just after dark and my worst frontline discomfort is to have to survive on a single cup of tea per day. We are getting plenty of rations and a reasonable quantity of water, about which we become very resourceful, we just gargle it and then clean our teeth and wash in it, next rinse our pair of socks and finally use the resultant solution to settle the dust".

"The nightly patrols continue. D coy sent out a platoon to capture 2 machine gun posts—they made contact and after a sharp encounter two Fritz stood up and shouted "Kamarad" and our two forward scouts approached them they no sooner came into sight when Fritz dropped to his belly manned his machine gun and shot Cpl Attrill and McAuliffe through the stomach. A terrific half hours fighting followed. There is only one word to adequately describe the Germans, but the moral censor would not permit its use in a diary."

One of the biggest battles in Tobruk was the attack by Bcoy 2/43rd on the strongpost R7 held by the enemy on August 3rd. It was doomed before it started. Lt R J Hamer (later to become Premier of Victoria) as battalion adjutant was involved in the planning under orders from superior command. Hamer recorded *"it is one of his vital points and to attack the enemy at his strongest point with an inadequate force is repulsive to my spirit. Heavy casualties are certain, and I have no real hope of success"*.

B company lost 106 men on the night of the 3rd of August - 28 dead and 78 wounded. Ivan took over command of the company ten days later to reform the company from reinforcements, with only 32 men of the original 129 remaining. Ivan, from an adjoining strongpost, described the events of the following morning.

"At 7 o'clock the CO ordered out our ambulance trucks flying the red cross and in the bright sunlight they moved stopping midway to the enemy. The enemy followed our example—soon I could see his trucks coming down the track from Medaur. It was a strange sight to witness – enemy stretcher bearers and our own working less than 300 yards apart collecting the wounded. From here we were close enough to see the uniforms German and Italian they were, and on each standing face to face was a sentry holding high the Geneva cross identical in shape and size—all they had in common, and a signal to all guns from miles around to hold their fire."

Suddenly I was amazed to see one of our trucks start up again and drive slowly right up to the enemy who were gathered about on the very post we had attempted to take. Soon the enemy was helping our chaps load up their trucks to return the wounded to our line. It was a remarkable truce. It lasted all day—when all the wounded had been gathered in, they set about burying the dead and at 5 o'clock their tasks complete the two parties separated, the Red Crosses were withdrawn, and the trucks disappeared in different directions. I should not spoil the Huns humanitarian act by mentioning that he brought up reinforcements in his ambulance—I saw them arrive I supposed that was counterbalanced by the advantage taken by the artillery observation officer and myself to search with our glasses ground that could not be formerly be seen through periscopes. I expect he was doing the same"

There was a patrol that was such a small event it is not mentioned in the official history and rates a terse account in the battalion history, but it affected Ivan quite deeply.

"Tuesday the 23rd (Sept) was a day I shall never forget. Our company was detailed to send out a patrol of lieutenant and 4 other ranks, I selected Lieutenant Fergus." "Jim Fergus leading his men, when one of them stumbled on a low trip wire and Jim received the full force of the explosion the remainder being wounded with shrapnel—Jim was unconscious and bleeding profusely, the men picked him up but he had only gone 100yds before he died. They struggled on for another 100 yds when two of the remainder became so weak from loss of blood that it became impossible to carry him any further and they themselves had to be assisted in by the remaining pair."

Search parties were unable to locate his body. It was presumed it was taken by an enemy party.

"I felt assured that my own conclusion was correct and that he had been given a decent burial as is the custom of the Italians. So Jim Fergus laid down his life just before midnight on 23rd Sept41. He was a close personal friend of mine and I felt his loss most deeply. Somehow on reflection it seemed he was meant to go that night. During the afternoon before he went out, we had a long chat about his platoon, and I complimented him on the manner in which he had built it up. He said that for the first time he had absolute confidence in his men and they in him. An hour later he came back and said "Think I'll have a bit of trouble in getting four other ranks Sir" "What's the trouble?" I replied. "They all want to go and are arguing the point about it." was his answer, and he was delighted.

To my "Cheerio Jim, and good luck" as he set off his last remark was "Thanks sir, and I'll bring you back a couple of prisoners". He was a great lad and a thorough gentleman and at the orders group that night shortly after he marched off, I said to the officers I've never heard Jim Fergus say a harsh word against anyone. Jim had been telling earlier in the day about one or two of his men who occasionally caused him a bit of trouble but "they are great fellows for all of that, I nearly called one of them a #### today," he said, "his weapons and dugout were so neglected, but I'm pleased I didn't because he was one of the lads who was arguing the point and wanting to come on the patrol with me".

"33 years of age, he has been married only 14 months and was always speaking about his wife. The boys are going to send home his watch by airmail and I am looking after items of his until it's permitted to send them off".



Ivan kept himself fit. When they had left Tobruk for Syria he organized cross country runs and on one occasion he and Bob Quin did a reconnoitre into the hills covering 32 miles in 15 hours.

Ivan was awarded the military cross for gallantry in the Tel el Eisa sector. He was killed in the El Alamein battle. His body lies in the Commonwealth cemetery there.

2024 WARRANDYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL ANNUAL VISIT

Towards the end of last year, Tobruk House resounded with the sound of year 6 children from Warrandyte Primary School enjoying their annual visit to learn about the siege of Tobruk. Superbly organised by committee member and former teacher Marlene Bingham, the children worked in groups focusing on various aspects of the siege and all of our volunteers were greatly impressed by both the interest and behaviour displayed by the group.



Many thanks must go to the Victorian Motor Vehicle Club, a non-profit club run by enthusiasts of ex-military vehicles who came along with the most amazing display of various military items, from vehicles to uniforms and even medical devices, which intrigued the children.

The VMVC have been helping us out for many years now and use the hall for their monthly meetings.



After discussion with teachers, it was decided that we will aim to have this event earlier in 2025 to enable the children to return to school and work on their day spent at the hall. They will also be able to share their newfound knowledge with the rest of the school.

RATS OF TOBRUK ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS

The Rats of Tobruk Association has been involved with a number of schools across Australia in one way or another. Two of those schools with which we have a long relationship make special awards each year in the name of the Rats of Tobruk, to pupils whose tenacity and hard work has stood out in their final year at primary school. The awards include a financial contribution to assist those children with their transfer to the secondary school system.



ROTA member Stuart Tolliday was invited to the grade 6 graduation at Warrandyte Primary School to present four awards.

These children had recently spent a day at Tobruk House (see the story on page 11) so they were all very conscious of the amazing task performed by the Rats during the siege, and therefore the connection to their award was top of mind.

Stuart was very impressed with the fig tree (pictured above left) that was planted some years ago in front of the Tobruk Hall performing arts centre at the school.

For 2025 the Rats of Tobruk Association sponsored four awards at WPS. All were to acknowledge students who strived to do their best and demonstrated exemplary values. The winners were Jed James, Jack Costen, Robert Du Pleisis and Jai Poole.



Our good friends Sue and John Turner have once again spoken to the children from Morwell Central PS about the siege. (John was the creator and performer of our favourite sing-along 'The Rats of Tobruk'.)

ROTA members will recall that Morwell Central evolved from Tobruk Street Primary School where the original relationship and award was established and John, as the Principal at the school, was instrumental in ensuring that the story of the Siege and the connection to the school was not lost in the transition to the new name and location.

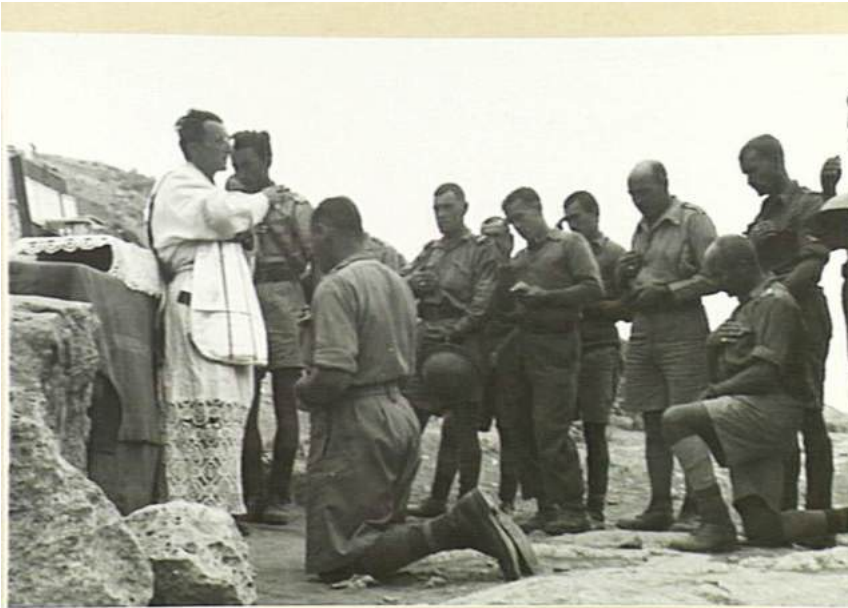
John presented awards to Oliver Semmler and Kirralee Haddock on our behalf.

We extend our congratulations to all these worthy recipients. It is great to see schools taking such an interest.

WHAT ABOUT THE PADRES AND CAREGIVERS? Story by Glenda Garde

Continuing our series of articles about the various aspects of life in Tobruk during the siege, using the words of the men themselves....

John Campbell 2/3 Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Corps



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020964

A Polish padre in Tobruk. Oct 1941

"We didn't see...the padre...the Salvation Army padre in Tobruk. There was one and I think I only saw him once. He had a large area to cover and he probably went where he was most needed, but he was very well respected and everybody...in fact the Salvation Army generally were terrific people. There wouldn't be anybody who I know of who wouldn't have admired the work that they do for the servicemen. And they still do in the community for that matter.

I think only once that I can recall did we actually see him at our outfit. But there were so many little places spread all over the place that you couldn't expect the man to be

everywhere at once. It was quite a fair area altogether within the fortress and 20,000 troops. But I think they were a very, very necessary part of army life.

The padre was a person who was able to sit around a gun pit and talk to people, man to man, about anything. And I think it's the class of person who takes up that job who needs to have the abilities to converse with anybody at any level. But this man in Tobruk was equally as good. He always had something in his bag or his pocket, writing paper, pencils or something that you needed and didn't have. He was always able to provide something if you needed it. But he was a man you could talk to about anything you wanted to talk about. Not that I had occasion to talk to him about anything in particular. But I do know that he was well respected and well known throughout Tobruk."



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P02727.003

Group portrait of soldiers and Salvation Army representatives outside a large tent prominently displaying a Salvation Army Red Shield sign and the familiar comforts sign depicting a kangaroo that reads 'Hop In, You're Welcome'.

Harold Hunt (Jim or 'Young Snow') 2/17th 9 Div.

"As a front-line soldier, they'd (Salvation Army) always visit you, have a yarn to you. If there was any Salvation Army paper or letters, like writing paper, they'd give you a couple of sheets each if they had it, cut a pencil in half and you and your mate shared a pencil, but it was more the fact that they had enough respect to come around and visit, because after seven months you get awful bored with the same group of faces, and someone new coming in, "oh, he looks different, don't he?"

They always looked clean and tidy and they always appeared to me, and I'm saying my own experience, they always appeared to me as being very sincere. To wear as well as they did, month after month, to have the dedication they did, because remember they were with tough soldiers, and if they were hypocritical they'd have pinned them back. as a slightly younger fellow, I couldn't really 'open up' in all respects. I had to grow up, put it that way, and you don't grow up by whinging. "Cop it sweet", the old army saying, cop it sweet and grin is about the best philosophy I had, and it worked."

Lawrence Calder (Jack) VX12643 2/1 Army Field Workshops

"Padres did play a good role in counselling fellows. Before an action, which obviously was going to cause some sort of injury or injuries, the padres would be there with the fellows before they left our area and go through the wire to whatever."

The padre we had at that particular stage in Tobruk was a – I think he was a Roman Catholic padre, I'm not sure – but he counselled different people. They also played a great part in people who wanted to write home and say certain things which they didn't want their platoon commander to know about. The reason for that, of course, is that the platoon commander was responsible for censoring every letter that ever left it, unless it was a special letter and that was done by the padre.

Now the padre would give special dispensation to some people and they could write home more than what they could if their own platoon commander had given that in their letters. Personal, perhaps. Their own feelings. Nobody ever made the mistake of saying where they were because the possibility of the enemy getting that letter and knowing who they were. But a lot of it probably related to personal things.

We had fellows who were married. In their mid-twenties, late twenties and they found out that their wife was on with someone else back here in Australia. That created a problem, and they wanted to write home to somebody about it, but they didn't want their platoon commander or their company commander to know all about it. So they would do that through the padres. That sort of thing.

The Salvation Army, they were always there. They were always up with the front-line boys with their letters and their writing stuff or their hot coffee or tea or whatever it may be. No, they done a marvellous job. Probably better than anybody else. Comforts. Minor comforts.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P02727.014

They didn't produce a bottle of beer or anything like that, but if somebody wanted a bit of writing paper or wanted somebody to post a letter, they'd do it for them."

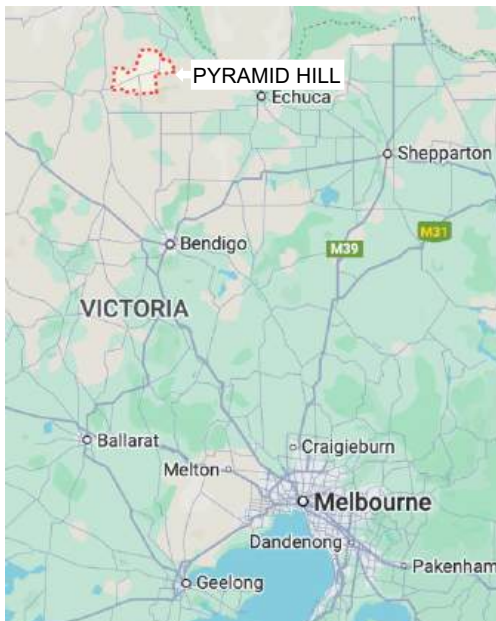
Informal portrait of Salvation Army Minister, Red Shield War Representative and unofficial Padre, Major Arthur William 'Mac' McIlveen, outside his quarters in Tobruk. Mac's story appeared in a previous article about the Salvation Army last year.

RATS TAKE PRIDE OF PLACE WITH NEW DISPLAY (Story from the Loddon Herald Nov 19 2024)



Descendants of Pyramid Hill's 17 Rats of Tobruk were humbled on Monday when portraits were unveiled in a new display in the former RSL hall. They were joined by members of the town's historical society and students from Pyramid Hill College and St Patrick's Primary School to see Descendants of Rats of Tobruk Australia Association member Ray Windlow reveal the new display.

Society president Alan Mann said the portraits were a fitting honour to the soldiers who served from the district who fought in the Siege of Tobruk in World War Two. He thanked Mr Windlow for the association's donation. "We will certainly treasure this kind gift to continue sharing the stories of local men who served."



Soldiers honoured on the tribute wall are Ernest Crabb, Wallace Curnick, Lindsay Forster, Robert Innocent, Hilary Lester, John L'Huillier, Hugh MacRae, Douglas McAlister, Malcolm McGillivray, Stuart McIntosh, Calvert McKean, Gordon Moss, Charles Twigg, John Weir, Charles Wood, Denis Wood and Richard Young.

Descendants Trevor McIntosh and Terry Wood were among the first to recount stories of their fathers to students discovering the deeds of local men more than 70 years ago.

Mr Windlow said: "They were average people who left the land ... they were like you and they had names and they had families."

He said the portraits helped recognise the merit of service given by the men.

Mr Windlow thanked the historical society for their assistance in researching local soldiers who were at Tobruk.

TOBRUK SUNDAY 2025



COMMEMORATING THE 84TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMENCEMENT
OF THE SIEGE OF TOBRUK

SUNDAY APRIL 13TH 2025

A COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE WILL BE HELD AT 2PM IN MOUBRAY ST
(AROUND THE CORNER FROM TOBRUK HOUSE).

GUEST SPEAKER: MAJ. GEN. JEFFREY ROSENFELD AC OBE (RETD.) .
“ THE MEDICAL FACILITIES AT THE TOBRUK SIEGE ”

FOLLOWED BY LIGHT REFRESHMENTS IN THE HALL.
PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL OCCASION.

ANZAC DAY 2025

TOBRUK HOUSE

44 VICTORIA AVENUE

WILL BE OPEN ON ANZAC DAY

FROM 9AM TO 3PM

PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

VIA LACHLAN GAYLARD

0418 882 323

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

**Patrick O'Boyle Chris Thiree Michael McDowell Paul Benson
Elizabeth Kleinhenz John Stewart Jackie Allan Trevor Adams
Rodney Hardy Helen Haar**

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



TEN YEAR MEMBERS

We congratulate the following on the tenth anniversary of their membership of ROTA:

**Donna Aranyi Sue Hunt Bruce Freeman Margaret Swain Robyn Tyler-Reeves
Jennifer Lamont Michael Weinert David Critchley John Macmillan June
Sargent Gail Pattrick Thane Drew Susan Peters-Smith Veronica Killner
Kay Cleak John Robertson Judith Ridley Catherine Nikkerud Gayle Boyle
Naomi Abbott John Phelan Simone Loone Robert Ward Hadleigh Hocart
Peter O'Connor Vicki Clark Sandra Caple Elizabeth Fitzpatrick
Helen Robinson Marilyn Waters Peter Waters Matthew Allen Frederick Vale
Craig Proctor Robert Lawley Jeanette Biddle Michael Trenear Cathy Oates
Andrew Dower Kimberley Aitken Terry O'Toole Bruce Muller Lucy Hiles
Nicole Relph Marion Zeller William Blackmore**

THE RATS OF TOBRUK NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP

Each year in Australia, over 250,000 people are diagnosed with epilepsy. Yet, for around half of those, including around 35 per cent of children, the cause of the epilepsy is unknown. Thanks to the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship, supported by the Rats of Tobruk Association, teams across the RCH are working to change that.

This fellowship was established by the Rats themselves to be their legacy and has provided opportunities for twelve young doctors to advance their studies and knowledge of child epilepsy since it began in 2010.

These doctors are now contributing to the efforts to discover the cause and find treatments for child epilepsy in hospitals around Australia and the world.



To learn more about how you can contribute to this most worthy cause by adding a gift in your will, or most importantly, to let the Foundation know of your intention, please contact
Kathryn Sell, Planned Giving, RCH Foundation
(03 9345 6389 or email: kathryn.sell@rch.org.au)



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC

Registration No: A0054511Y

NOMINATION FORM

Committee Members for 2025

In accordance with the Association Rules (2017), at the 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM), all positions on the Committee of Management will be declared vacant and elections held for these positions. Nominations are sought to fill these positions. All nominations must be on this nomination form.

The following rules apply:

- Only a member entitled to vote at general meetings (must be financial), is eligible for nomination.
- An eligible member can nominate himself or herself; or with the member's consent, be nominated by another member.
- Completed nomination forms must reach the secretary by 31 January 2024. (Completed forms can be sent by mail to Tobruk House, 44 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park, Victoria, 3206 or electronically to ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com)
- The committee has the discretion to reject a nomination where the form is not correctly completed.
- A member can be nominated for more than one position.

I hereby nominate: _____
(eligible member's name)

for the position of (please tick the applicable box(s)):

☐ President

☐ Vice-President

☐ Secretary

☐ Treasurer

☐ Ordinary Committee Member

Nominator's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Nominated person's Consent (only required where nominated by another member):

I, _____ accept this nomination.
(member's name)

Signature: _____ Date: _____



ROTA MERCHANDISE

See Order Form on page 23 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 'BASEBALL' CAP
One size fits all
\$28



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



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'
STUBBIE HOLDER
\$10



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'
BALLPOINT PEN
\$5



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



RATS OF TOBRUK 1941
LAPEL BADGE
\$15



'HEROES OF TOBRUK' MUG
\$15



80TH ANNIVERSARY SIEGE
MEDAL
\$50



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

(PRICES VALID FEB 2025 – JUN 2025)

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		
Heroes of Tobruk stubbie holder	\$10				\$11		Postage for up to 2 units to the same address
Badge Car Window Sticker (Sticks to inside of window)	\$10				Inc postage		20% discount for more than one sticker.
Heroes Of Tobruk Mug	\$15				\$11		
Heroes of Tobruk pen	\$5				\$3		Postage for up to 3 pens to the same address
			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.

DESIGNING REMEMBRANCE



This nostalgic exhibition delves into the forgotten designs for Victoria's war memorial, commemorating the Shrine's 90th anniversary. Explore the entries of the 1921 War Memorial design competition, each a testament to the social and political tapestry of that time. From grand monuments to humble sanctuaries, you'll discover the different visions that were proposed.

TASTE OF COMBAT



This exhibition honours the vital work of the Catering Corps and unveils the fascinating science and innovation behind military meals. Explore what and how troops have eaten – from the Boer War to Afghanistan. There are personal stories from cooks on submarines to soldiers with field rations, showcasing the skills and adaptability of Defence chefs, whether cooking in combat zones or delivering fine dining for diplomats.

IMMORTALS



Discover the many faces of Victorian Digger memorials in this captivating photography exhibition by Clayton Tremlett. After more than six years of dedicated research, Tremlett presents a comparative portrait study of sixty-six First World War memorials.