



# 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](http://www.ratsoftobrukassociation.org.au)

PHONE No 0432 232 502

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

Month / Date	Event Description
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 18	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm (volunteers needed)
May 30	General Meeting 10.30am
June 8	Open Day at Tobruk House 10am-3pm (volunteers needed)
July 27	General Meeting 10.30am
August 24	Shrine Service commemorating the Rats of Tobruk 11am
August 29	General Meeting 10.30am
October 5	ROTA 80 <sup>th</sup> birthday celebration at Tobruk House (details TBA)
November 21	General Meeting 10.30am
November 30	Christmas Lunch at Tobruk House 12pm

**Patron: Bill Gibbins**

**Committee of Management:**

**Vice President – Paul Dipnall**

**Secretary – Lachlan Gaylard**

**Committee Chair – Stuart Tolliday**

Other Committee Members –

Gayle Sherwell,  
Glenda Garde, Tony Codd

## TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

Editorial and Advertising

NEXT ISSUE: JUNE 2025

DEADLINE: MAY 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will not be published.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](mailto: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 – April 2025

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the April edition of Tobruk House News for 2025.



In late February, we conducted our Annual General Meeting, at which I was deeply honoured to accept your nomination for Vice President once again. It is an honour and privilege that I do not take lightly, given the calibre and quality of those who have served before me. It is indeed a pleasure to serve the members and the executive committee in the discharge of my duties once again. You will find a fuller report on the AGM in this issue and the full Annual report is available on our website.

Representatives from the Royal Children's Hospital again confirmed the importance of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship and Dr Nadia Trong, the 2025 Fellow was introduced to the meeting. The date for the annual ROTA visit to the RCH will be announced in the coming weeks so do keep your eyes peeled for this. I cannot recommend these visits more wholeheartedly.

Regrettably, Bruce and Marlene Bingham, as well as Karolina Secvikova, have retired from the committee. Their collective contributions have been greatly appreciated.

In recognition of their service to the association, the Bingham's were awarded life membership, a sincere gesture of appreciation from both the members and the executive committee. If any member wishes to join the committee, please contact our secretary. We have several vacancies, and if you know of anyone who would be willing to join the committee, please encourage them to nominate.

I am pleased to advise that our membership is growing steadily, thanks to the efforts of a very active membership and committee. The strength and growth of the association depend entirely upon the enthusiasm of its members and their willingness to encourage family members and friends to join.

Our next important event is Tobruk Sunday. This is a very significant occasion, and we encourage you all of you who can, to attend. The service, in memory of all our beloved veterans, will commence at 2:00 pm on Sunday, 13th April and will be followed by afternoon tea at Tobruk House. We encourage as many members and friends as possible to join us on the day.

And of course as usual Tobruk House will be open on Anzac Day from 9 am with the television broadcast of the march on the big screen and lunch provided at \$25 per head.

On behalf of our committee, I can assure you that this year will be another year of significant achievement and growth in memory of all our veterans.

Sincerely,

Paul Dipnall  
Vice President



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

If you have attended an event at Tobruk House in the past 70 years you will no doubt have purchased a few raffle tickets, and hopefully one of them might have landed one of the many donated prizes. You may have wondered in passing about the legality of this activity. A recent browse through the Tobruk House archives came up with this story which, although not quite the same as our more homely activities may be of interest. *(The Tobruk Echo was a fore runner to the Tobruk House News)*

OCTOBER, 1963

TOBRUK ECHO

PAGE ONE

# 60,000 Tickets But A Private Lottery

**A BARRISTER, Mr. Croxford, submitted to the Williamstown Court that, although 60,000 tickets were printed for a raffle conducted by the Rats of Tobruk Association, it was a private lottery within the meaning of the act as books of tickets were sent out only to members and there was no evidence of sale to the public. The Court upheld the submission.**

Douglas George Leeden, of 24 Birmingham street, Spotswood, who holds the two offices of President and Social Secretary of the Rats of Tobruk Association, was charged with aiding in the conduct of a lottery, and he pleaded not guilty.

The case was heard by Mr. P. J. O'Connor, S.M., and honorary justices Messrs. Kim and Dann.

Constable William Harris, of the gaming squad, told the Court that with Senior-constable Clarkson he went to Leeden's home at 10 a.m. on Saturday, 22nd June.

Defendant admitted: "I am running a raffle—it's for the Rats of Tobruk Association."

Leeden said the Association had some 2,500 badge members, of whom 750 were financial. There were 60,000 tickets printed for the raffle and they were made up into books of five.

The police produced a number of raffle books and also a balance-sheet submitted by Leeden as regards this raffle.

Sending out of tickets ceased after the police had made their visit.

Mr. Croxford submitted there was no case to answer and said the provisions of the Gaming Act did not apply to raffles of a private nature.

The Honorary Secretary of the Rats of Tobruk Association (Gordon Bramley) was called, and he gave evidence that books of tickets were sent out only to members. The addresses were taken from the membership list, and there was no possibility of books being sent to other persons.

Mr. Croxford said to the Court there was no evidence that any tickets were sold to members of the public.

Mr. O'Connor: Members of the Rats of Tobruk Association are also members of the public.



Mr. Croxford countered that everybody was a member of the public, but when Parliament inserted a provision in the Gaming Act exempting private raffles from its provisions this must mean something.

Otherwise there could be no such thing as a private raffle. He instanced sweeps conducted in a home on the Melbourne and Caulfield Cups, and said these came under the heading of private raffles. They were conducted amongst the members of one group of people.

There was a discussion as to whether 60,000 tickets would be purchased by 2,500 members of the Association, and Mr. Croxford pointed out the tickets were 5 for 2/6, and the sales would be on this basis, so it could be said there were 12,000 blocks of tickets.

Mr. O'Connor asked if there had been any previous decisions by a Court on a matter of similar nature, and Mr. Croxford replied he did not know of any.

Dismissing the charge, Mr. O'Connor said: "We've come to the conclusion this raffle could be a raffle of a private nature."

It was indicated in court that some books of tickets had come into the possession of the police from a member of the Rats of Tobruk.

## FRONT PAGE PHOTO.

Our front cover in this special edition of "The Echo" shows Australian troops climbing a desert hill following a tank during battle manoeuvres in the Libyan Desert. The photograph was kindly supplied by the Department of Information.—Ed.

**Wishing "Tobruk Echo" a Happy 14th Birthday**

from

**JACK PARKER**

**GROSVENOR HOTEL**

(A Few Yards from St. Kilda Town Hall)

**10 BRIGHTON ROAD, ST. KILDA**

Telephone: 91-1542

**DAILY COUNTER LUNCH - - - - - ICY-COLD BEER  
FULL STOCK OF BEST WINES AND SPIRITS**

## OFFICE-BEARERS



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Perc Hollow

Secretary:  
Gordon Bramley  
(46-1446)

Treasurer:  
Ron Sandman



Patron:  
Brigadier R. W. Tovell  
C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D.



## VALE DAVID BULLARD

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the passing of David Ernest Francis Bullard OBE RFD ED. David served as the honorary solicitor of our association for many years on a pro bono basis and was made a life member in 2019 in recognition of his outstanding service.

David had a distinguished career as a solicitor and dedicated over three decades to serving in the Australian Army. Throughout his service, he held numerous leadership roles across various infantry battalions, including the Royal Victoria Regiment. He made significant contributions to officer training and staff development, serving with the Command and Staff Training Unit and the Officer Cadet Training Unit. His leadership also shone through his key appointments at Headquarters 3 Division and other command units.

David's commitment and leadership led him to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His remarkable service was honoured with several prestigious awards, including being made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, the Reserve Force Decoration with First Clasp, and the Efficiency Decoration.

His long and distinguished legal career, which included many voluntary positions, stands as a testament to his generosity and commitment to charity. He greatly respected the Tobruk veterans and the work carried out by the association.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to David's wife, Pat, their seven children, and their families. David will be greatly missed by the association.



David Bullard receiving his Life Member badge and certificate from President Bob Semple.



David Bullard and his wife Pat

# TOBRUK SUNDAY 2025



COMMEMORATING THE 84<sup>TH</sup> 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**



## ROTA 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2025 AGM took place at Tobruk House on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The decision to hold the meeting on a Sunday was a popular one and we had a large turnout of members as well as representatives from the Royal Children's Hospital. The 2024 Annual Report was presented and approved.



Professor Mark Mackay, Director of Neurology at the Royal Children's Hospital, spoke of the value and importance of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship and ROTA Vice President Paul Dipnall awarded Dr Nadia Truong, the 2025 Fellow, with the special medallion. Nadia was also made an honorary member of the association.

The committee for 2025 was elected unopposed. See the following page for details.

Past President Bruce Bingham and his wife Marlene Bingham stepped down from their committee positions and were each awarded a Lifetime Membership in recognition of the outstanding service each had contributed to the Rats of Tobruk Association.



*Professor Mark Mackay, Director of Neurology at the Royal Children's Hospital speaking about the impact of the Rats of Tobruk Royal Children's Hospital Neurology Fellowship.*



*ROTA vice president Paul Dipnall presents the 2025 Rats of Tobruk Neurology Fellow to Dr Nadia Truong*



*Bruce Bingham and Marlene Bingham were made honorary Life Members of ROTA, recognising their tireless work on the committee and its ongoing impact on the association.*

# RATS OF TOBRUK ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

Dear Members,

From the outset, I wish to acknowledge the hard work of our committee, who faced a tremendous workload in 2024. They handled each challenge with remarkable level-headedness and energy, deserving of great admiration. Thank you all.

Your committee held nine face-to-face meetings during the year, with a tenth scheduled for September, though postponed due to the busy nature of August. (A record of committee attendance is provided in the full report.)

Tobruk House was open for eight open days and three general meetings. The association was also represented at 38 separate veterans' services and forums by various committee members throughout the year.

2024 marked the passing of our last Australian Rat of Tobruk, Tommy Pritchard, ushering in a new era for our association. The baton of remembrance has now been passed to the next generation, and the association relies more than ever on the support of its members.

The committee also successfully negotiated a ten-year lease for Tobruk House. I take this opportunity to express our gratitude, on behalf of all members, to Bill Gibbins AM and the Gibbins family for their unwavering support of our association.

The association reaffirmed its support for the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship by making the \$5 donation from each membership subscription a permanent fixture.

As we enter 2025, the association's 80th year, we hope to see continued growth and engagement from our membership. Following feedback from several members that weekday events are difficult to attend, we have decided to hold the 2024 Annual General Meeting on Sunday, February 23rd.

2024 has been a successful year for the association, marked by an increase in events and greater use of the hall by ROTA members and other military associations. We are pleased to see the space being utilised more frequently, fostering a stronger sense of community and collaboration.

On behalf of the committee, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the continued support and active participation from our members. Your dedication has been crucial in driving the association's success and ensuring its ongoing growth. We truly value your commitment and look forward to another year of shared achievements and further strengthening the bonds within our association.

The fiscal year was slightly affected by a series of unplanned maintenance issues at Tobruk House. These included two separate roof leaks, along with the necessary clean-up, and the much-needed replacement of our hot water service. As a result, these unforeseen expenses led to larger-than-expected spending from the Patriotic Building Fund.

ROTA Inc. recorded a surplus of \$4,116.82 for the year. However, when consolidated with the expenditure from the Patriotic Building Fund, the association ultimately reported a deficit of \$8,058.57 for 2024.

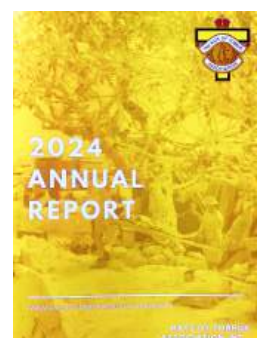
Due to the new lease of Tobruk House, the association has a series of new financial obligations to meet. Your committee will be working through these commitments and will provide regular updates to the membership as information becomes available throughout the year.

I thank you all for your ongoing support. It is an honour to serve as secretary of this association, and I look forward to an exciting 2025 with you.

The full report is available on our website.

Yours

Lachlan Gaylard  
Secretary and Acting -Treasurer





# RATS OF TOBRUK NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND

## 2025 FINANCIAL YEAR REPORT

The Rats of Tobruk Association's (ROTA) commitment to the care of future generations of Australian children, through the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Neuroscience Fellowship, enables vitally important research and care for paediatric neurology patients and their families.

In 2010, The Rats of Tobruk presented a cheque for \$1.5 million to the RCH Foundation, generously donated from the sale of Rats of Tobruk House in 2007. With this gift began the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund, providing specialised training for up and coming neurologists and changing children's health both in Australia and around the world.

To further honour the Rats' legacy of wanting to make a positive difference to the lives of sick children all over the world, the Cockatoo Ward, which provides comprehensive care to patients with neurological conditions, is affectionately also named the 'Rats of Tobruk Ward'.

Now in its sixteenth year, the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship has an inspirational track record of success and achievement, and is incredibly valued among the RCH community. The report provides an update on the financial status of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund in 2025.

ROTA's support is instrumental in ensuring our exceptional medical professionals in the Neurology Department have the resources necessary to provide unparalleled care to children in need. One hundred percent of the inaugural \$1.5M gift made in 2010 is retained by the RCH Foundation as a perpetual endowment. The funds held in the endowment are invested and managed so that interest can be directed both to funding appointment of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellow each year, and reinvested to maintain the endowment's value.

In FY24 there was a capital injection of funds to ensure the Endowment can fully support the Fellowship. This took the opening balance of the Endowment for FY25 to \$2,547,720.

I am pleased to inform you that for FY2025 The Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund will receive a total interest rate of 7.40% for the year to 30 June 2025 (3.0% Capital / 4.40% Operating). Capital Interest for FY25 is estimated to be \$72,310 and operating interest is estimated to be \$109,236. This impact will be instrumental to the Fellowship and for this we are most grateful.



Representatives from the Royal Children's Hospital pictured at the 2025 AGM, from left Natalie Andrews - Gift in Will Coordinator, Kathryn Sell - Manager, Gift in Wills, Stuart Tolliday - ROTA Chair, Nadia Truong - 2025 Fellow, Mark Mackay - Director of Neurology

The Fund will continue to be protected and applied exclusively for the RCH Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship, a unique program of research and care. ROTA's recent generous contribution and careful planning with the hospital have secured the Fellowship over the near term. The long-term future of the Fellowship may be strengthened through bequest commitments.

The RCH and RCH Foundation are deeply grateful for ROTA members' generosity as this service makes a vital difference for so many neurology patients and families around Australia, and befittingly honours the Rats' values and intent to positively impact the future.

You can download a copy of the full report from our website [here](#).

## 2025 RATS OF TOBRUK NEUROSCIENCE FELLOW



Dr Nadia Truong has been announced as the 2025 Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellow. Nadia undertook a general Neurology Fellowship in 2024, and is looking forward to getting more detailed insight into the treatment of complex epilepsies in 2025. You can read more about Nadia in our next issue.

## YOUR COMMITTEE FOR 2025

Following the Annual General Meeting, we are pleased to announce the 2025 committee members and, where relevant, their relationship to the Rats of Tobruk. There is still a very strong direct connection to the original members and a total commitment by all of the committee to promoting the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk.

There are still several vacancies, and the committee can appoint new members at any time so if you are interested in helping drive the organisation forward, please contact Lachlan Gaylard to explore the opportunities.



**Paul Dipnall**  
Vice President



**Lachlan Gaylard**  
Secretary



**Stuart Tolliday**  
Committee Chair  
VX25453  
William (Bill) Tolliday,  
2/32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.



**Tony Codd**  
841126 (British Army)  
Albert Leslie Codd,  
Royal Corp Signals



**Glenda Garde**  
VX20578  
Neil Crosland Barrie,  
2/5<sup>th</sup> Field  
Ambulance.



**Gayle Sherwell**  
VX46637 John  
Kenneth Sherwell  
2/23<sup>rd</sup> Bn



## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FRANK DORMAN Story by Frank's niece, Raylee Schultz- nee Dorman

(Ed note: Several years ago, the THN carried a number of articles referred to as 'The Life and Times of...' submitted by relatives of Rats. Some of these stories are now kept in a bound folder for visitors to peruse on open days at Tobruk House. We were recently delighted to hear from Raylee Schultz who researched and wrote the following story about her uncle, Frank Dorman of the 2/48<sup>th</sup>. We welcome such articles, as would our readers.)



*Cpl Frank Edwin Dorman SX 8471 2/48th Battalion 9th Division*

Frank Edwin Dorman was born 22nd January 1914 in Broken Hill the seventh child of John and Maud Rose Dorman. As a young child, Frank moved with his family to Merbein where the family settled, living in modest conditions on the river flats near the old Merbein Race Course. His dad John and older brothers were wood cutters.

During his early years, Frank attended Merbein West School and Merbein State School. After leaving school he also helped his father & brothers wood cutting, before marrying in 1934.

Six years later, aged 26 yrs, with the event of WW2, Frank enlisted in the Australian Military Forces. He was living in Broken Hill at the time and working as a miner. The place of enlistment was Wayville SA on the 10th July 1940.

Frank went on to serve in the 2/48th Infantry Battalion, 9th Division and completed 1852 days' active service. He was discharged on 4th August 1945, five years after enlisting. His discharge papers mention that Frank had dark brown eyes, dark hair, dark complexion, was 5'6" and by then a Corporal.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November 1940, after the initial training, Frank's battalion embarked on the HMT Troopship

Stratheden and sailed from Outer Harbour for overseas. They had marched out from Woodside SA sweating under full dress, great coats, steel helmets, respirators and packs. They slogged 4 miles to Oakbank station, and along the sides of the road were crowds of cheering people, waving flags, shouting goodbyes and wishing them good luck.

The fighting around Tobruk is a lasting memorial to the 2/48<sup>th</sup>, and it brought well deserved praise from the Prime Minister of Australia, the Army Commander and the General Officer Commanding the A.I.F.

High regard was held for the 2/48th Battalion which fought with great distinction in the two great historical battles of the Western Desert Campaign, the siege of Tobruk and the Battle of El Alamein. The 2/48th Battalion served in the Middle East and Tobruk for a period of 2 years and 3 months.

El Alamein was a great success for the Allies and by the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1942, Axis forces were retreating, but the 9<sup>th</sup> Division was needed elsewhere and with the battle over, it was time for them to return to Australia and fight a new enemy, the Japanese. The 2/48<sup>th</sup> left Alamein on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and headed back to Gaza in Palestine, where it participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Divisional Parade on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1942.

The 2/48th Battalion returned to Australia 25th February 1943 aboard the Troopship Nieuw Amsterdam. Their next stop was the Atherton Tablelands in Northern Queensland where they trained for the jungle warfare of New Guinea.



*Members of 2/48<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Tobruk. Frank Dorman third from the right.*

It was while they were in the Atherton Tablelands that Frank was promoted to Corporal.

At the beginning of August 1943, they embarked on the U.S.S. Henry T Allen for Milne Bay, anchoring on the 6th August. Little of note happened during the voyage, there had been the usual discomforts the soldiers had come to expect on a troopship, and the conditions were as crowded as ever.

While in New Guinea, they fought in battles around Lae, Finschhafen and Sattelberg. Their final campaign was at Tarakan, where they made their second amphibious assault landing.

They played a big part in the costly fighting which destroyed the Japanese forces which had built their defenses in the jungle of that island.

Frank was in New Guinea until February 1944 when the 2/48th embarked on the "Edward N. Westcott" and returned to Brisbane.

This unit went through the hell of Tobruk, blasted their way to El Alamein and then went on to stalk their way through the oppressive jungles of New Guinea and Tarakan where a Japanese with a machine gun seemed to lurk behind every tree.

The 2/48th Infantry Battalion was Australia's highest decorated unit of the Second World War, awarded four Victoria Crosses (3 of them posthumously) and more than 80 other decorations.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1945, after the completion of 1852 days of service (932 days which were spent overseas) Frank was discharged at Wayville SA. From there he headed to Broken Hill to see his family, only to find his wife Joyce, had found a new relationship. This was devastating for Frank and he found this news hard to cope with.

He stayed in Broken Hill to be close to his 2 young children Ronald and Valerie, until 1954 when he went to Radium Hill Uranium Mine in SA. He worked as a miner while there, then became a "shift boss" till the Radium Hill mine closed down 1961. From there he went to Andamooka opal mine where he was appointed the Mines Department Field Officer.

Frank often came back to Merbein to visit his brother Marn and sister Rene and their families. During these visits he brought with him various Opals from Andamooka and delighted in giving them to his relatives.

Frank often spoke of the bonds of leadership and mateship which welded the 2/48th Battalion into the formidable fighting team which repeatedly defeated the enemy. As with other men who served in Tobruk, Frank carried the title of Rat of Tobruk in a very humble but proud manner.

Frank spent his last years living in his little cottage on the Murray River in Sunraysia enjoying his favourite pastime, fishing. It is a beautiful spot on the Murray River and over the years his family and friends enjoyed his hospitality around his BBQ. The property is still in the Dorman family today.

Frank Edwin Dorman passed away suddenly at Mildura Base Hospital 20th May 1991, and is buried at Merbein Lawn Cemetery.



## 'OUR JOURNEYS IN AUSTRALIA' POLISH BOOK LAUNCH

Attendees at Tobruk House in early February for the launch of the book, *'Our Journeys in Australia 1947-1977'* were treated to a wonderful afternoon of song, stories and great Polish food!

Our friends from The Polish Museum and Archives launched an English translation of the book, which was originally written in Polish forty-five years ago and follows the lives of a group of Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade men after they migrated to Australia post-war.

The many Rats of Tobruk Associations at that time remembered their 1941 Polish Comrades in arm by lobbying the federal government to accept the Polish Rats as prospective migrants.

The museum states, when speaking of the many Polish immigrants, "We are the community's memory..." and the same can be said of our association and the Tobruk siege.

If you would like a copy of this book, please email: [polishmuseumarchivesaustralia@gmail](mailto:polishmuseumarchivesaustralia@gmail)



*The Polish orchestra in Tarrareah 1948 (As at January 2025, Mr Wladyslaw Krzysica (saxophone) is the sole remaining veteran, who arrived in Australia in 1947.)*



*Songs of the Carpathian Brigade performed by representatives of the Polish Scouts*





Edward Kremzer- Honorary Consul of Poland in Hobart  
 Andrzej Soszynski- Honorary Consul General of Poland in Melbourne  
 (Both consuls are sons of Polish Rats.)  
 Lucyna Artymiuk- President Polish Museum and Archives  
 Elizabeth Dziedzic- President Polish Community Council Victoria

Andrzej Soszynski spoke in some detail of the significance of the new book.



## WHAT ABOUT THE NEWS FROM HOME AND OTHER PLACES? Story by Glenda Garde

As a news 'junkie', I can't imagine what it would be like to not know what was happening in the world but, of course, the lack of news was yet another thing that the troops had to endure during the siege, so, once again, let's hear from the men themselves.....

Tobruk House is fortunate to have amongst its collection of memorabilia some original Tobruk Truths, which are sometimes displayed on our open days. (Yet another reason to schedule a visit!)

### **THE TOBRUK TRUTH... "it would keep you going...."**

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



*"The Dinkum Oil and the Tobruk Truth....Only Morshead could do it! "I want a paper published as soon as possible. But I can't give you any gear. I'm told there's a Roneo machine there." ...And he had the back of Italian requisition forms to print it on, and believe it or not, in an old bombed out building in Tobruk, they brought out a paper, one sheet, and, by the time it got to the end of the line, she was folded.*

*You know that old saying, "They were tattered, they were torn, you could see that they'd been worn, the old red flannel drawers that Maggie wore". Well that paper was like that, but it always was printed.*

*It even got blown up two or three times, so they brought in extra ones, as they realised we were gonna stay there, so they brought in a little bit better. They brought in a second-hand typewriter and an English Roneo machine. One you pull the handle and wax paper or something.*

*Anyway you print it, and again it lifted morale. Whatever happened that day would be in it, or that couple of days, or week. ...One sheet, you haven't got much you know, but basically it was keeping us up with what other battalions were doing. "Did the convoy get through to Malta? Where was the battle last night way out at sea? What was going on in the other part of the world?" Only one or two lines maybe, but it kept us informed and we didn't stagnate and that was the biggest thing of all. And Bill Williams was the first editor and only editor of The Tobruk Truth."*

### **Rupert Goodman 2/4<sup>th</sup> AGH**

*"We had plenty of humour. We had, in Tobruk, ....a printing press. They discovered something the Italians left behind. And they printed a paper every day. And this was called, The Tobruk Truth. And it had information from wireless and other things...some humorous bits. Like, 'A bomb fell on the sergeants' quarters. Four mules were killed'. That sort of thing. There was a lot of humour that went about. That, I suppose, was a good thing. There was a lot of humour in the daily news sheet. That would keep you going."*

### **Harold Graham 2/13th**

*"The Tobruk Truth was a really excellent publication. It was usually only one foolscap sheet, but it detailed the elements of the world news of the day and gave any little funny stories they could write up. It did a lot for the morale I think, to know that somebody back in the base area was passing out information which the troops in the forward areas would never have got otherwise. See, we didn't have any communication with the outside world, so we didn't know whether the Germans were in Istanbul or Cairo or where they might have been. But the paper always took a bit of a swipe at Lord Haw Haw, who was the German commentator, and they put in some funny little stories in the paper as well as giving a resumé of the important news to date.*

*And it was a well-received, a well-looked for, paper. There weren't that many copies of it. A couple would come out to a company and they'd just be passed around. It might be days before you'd read it, get your turn to read it, but they were good."*

#### **....AND AS FOR THE NEWS TO AND FROM HOME....**

##### **Harold Graham 2/13th**

*"I wrote letters practically every day. But receiving mail depended on the light of the moon really, when we could get destroyer supplies and mail up. They couldn't operate on the moonlit nights because they left a trail in the water, etc., that the German bombers could pick up easily.*

*So all the supplies had to come in in the dark of the moon and it was rather wonderful service they gave. The destroyers usually allowed about one hour to come in, drop their load, which was ammunition, food and everything else, pick up casualties on the other side of the ship and out of the harbour again. They had one hour in which to do it. It made some of our war favours look silly.*



*There's one letter. I must have had plenty of time on my hands when I wrote this .....*

*'Stamps are at present unavailable, cables are not to be sent until stamps arrive, so I've postponed writing you this letter for some days, but have now decided to write it and post it whenever I can. I received a lovely parcel of assorted sweets from you last night and I've nearly made myself sick on them all day. ...I only wish you knew just how much I appreciate them.*

*I also received one from my mother the night before containing fruit salad, cream and cake. I don't think there was any need to say how much I enjoyed it, a change from the good old bully! Things are fairly much the same here, although the news of the big push last night has worked wonders in the men and in the excitement they have all forgotten how tired and dirty they are.*

*I had no sooner finished writing you my last letter and boasting about our luck when it broke and we received a terrific shelling which lasted for hours and we got pretty badly knocked about.'.... "... writing letters was the only means of communication we had, and we used to look forward very much to getting mail.*

*A lot of the mail was lost at sea cause it came up with destroyer on the dark of the moon, and if a destroyer got sunk, well the mail went down with it. Sometimes they were able to recover some of the mail bags that might float up or something like that, but generally speaking we lost quite a lot of mail."*

##### **Bernard Donnelly (Barney) 9<sup>th</sup> Div. AASC**

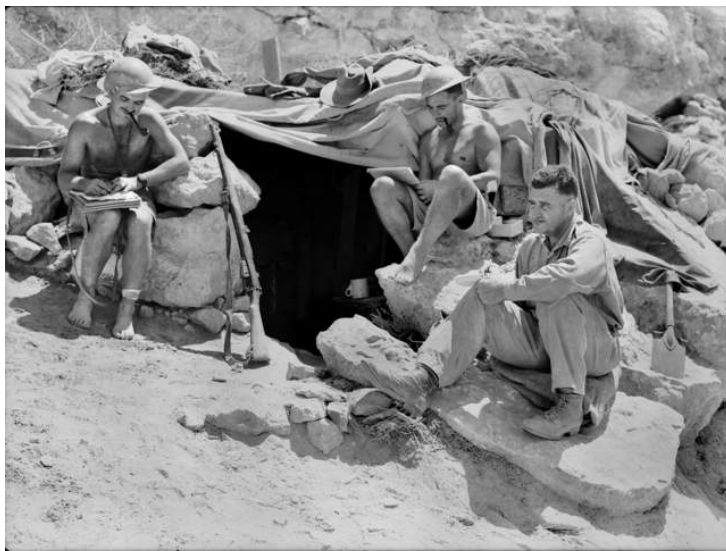
*"We did not hear very much about the war in general at all, and sometimes our families didn't even know where we were, other than that we were in the Middle East. One time in the letters, not the letters from home but from a letter I wrote to send back home, in the town which had been, somebody picked up a few sheets of paper that had been blowing around the street, it had sort of a letter head and it had 'Tobruch' on it, T-O-B-R-U-C-H which is Italian way of spelling for Tobruk, and I was able to send that home. Whether they knew where it was or what the hell it was all about, I don't know, but it was hard to get paper, the Salvos [Salvation Army] and the Red Cross, they used to come around sometimes and give you a piece of paper and an envelope to write a letter home.*

*And if we got any newspapers from home, of course we avidly read them and got some idea of what was going on, but the only way we learnt anything about the war outside of our area of Tobruk was by listening to the radio from BBC London [British Broadcasting Corporation] and also then we had Lord Haw Haw.*

*Lord Haw Haw, of course, was an English so-called gentleman whose name was William Joyce and he used to put his radio speeches on at night-time and he was the one the first one to ever coin the name 'the Rats', the 'Rats of Tobruk'. He said that we were living like rats in holes and why didn't we come out and fight? So the Rats was a name we took to our heart and it became a sobriquet of honour and we still are very proud to be called a Rat."*



## Lloyd Tann 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020495

letter and I'd write the time of day. If I said, for instance, 'quarter past nine.' When I ended a letter, I'd say, 'So long', if we were going to move. If we weren't going to move, it'd just be the usual 'Goodbye' or 'I'll write again tomorrow' or something of the sort. But if we were about to move, I'd say 'So long' and I'd put the time of day. Nine fifteen. Then they'd know that I'm going to move easterly.

When I thought we were going to Greece, I remember writing a letter that said 'So long', so they knew I was going somewhere, but I also said, 'Give my love to Sally on her birthday. I won't get time to write before we leave', and dad said, "Who on earth's Sally?" Mum says, "Sally on her birthday. Salonika! He's going to Greece." So that was the way we sort of passed any

information. They also would comment in their letters back to me. Their letters were not censored. The COs didn't read the letters coming in. You could have received any old thing. And I had parcels of course. My mother did virtually all the writing. Dads aren't very good at writing letters."

As I have previously mentioned, my father wrote frequently to my mother and to other members of his family. His letters were dated and merely said, 'abroad', but there were

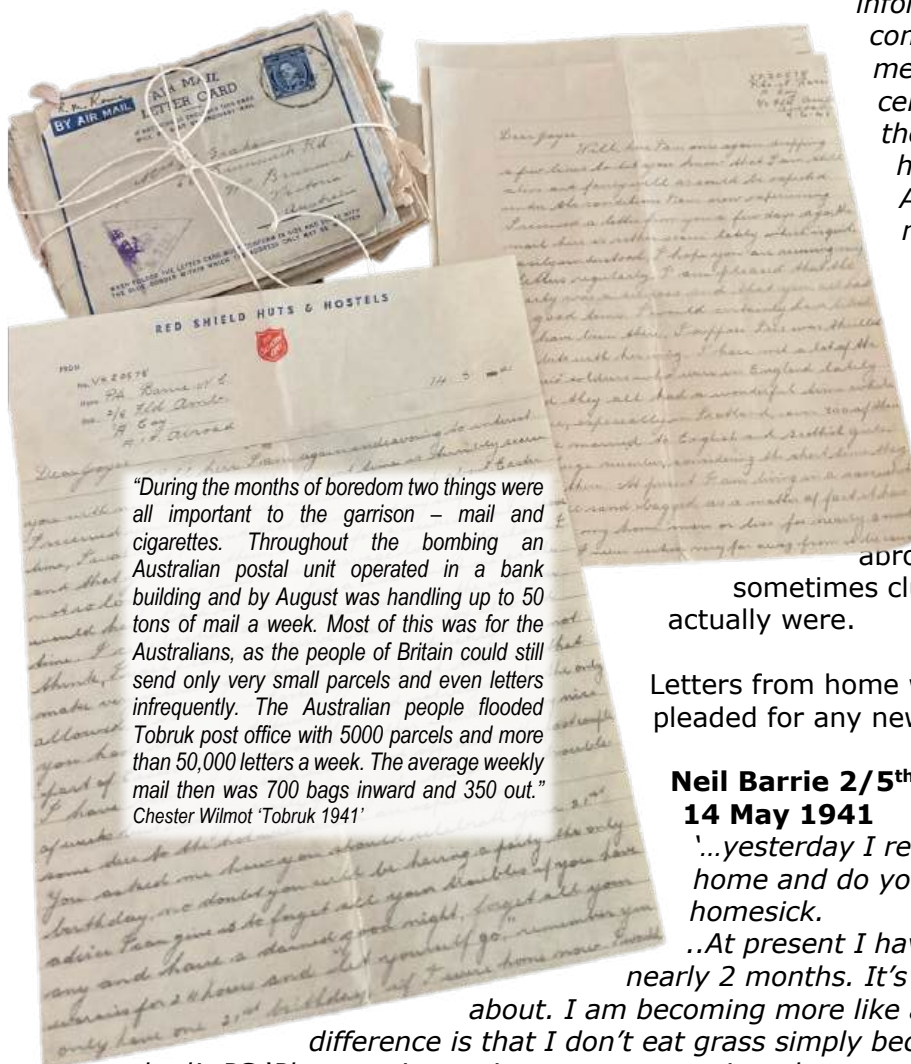
sometimes clues as to where the troops actually were.

Letters from home were treasured and he often pleaded for any news from home.

## Neil Barrie 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance Written 14 May 1941

'...yesterday I received a couple of snaps from home and do you think they made me homesick.

..At present I have been living in a cave for nearly 2 months. It's not safe to go wandering about. I am becoming more like a rabbit every day. The only difference is that I don't eat grass simply because there isn't any to be had! PS 'Please write again soon, as news is rather scarce.'



"During the months of boredom two things were all important to the garrison – mail and cigarettes. Throughout the bombing an Australian postal unit operated in a bank building and by August was handling up to 50 tons of mail a week. Most of this was for the Australians, as the people of Britain could still send only very small parcels and even letters infrequently. The Australian people flooded Tobruk post office with 5000 parcels and more than 50,000 letters a week. The average weekly mail then was 700 bags inward and 350 out." Chester Wilmot 'Tobruk 1941'

## INTERESTED IN GETTING ON THE BAND WAGON?

The Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums was created as a living memorial to those who fought in the Siege of Tobruk.

As the last Rat of Tobruk passed away in August 2024, it is more important now than ever to be here as a living memorial and keep the good name of the Rats of Tobruk alive. The band has a close relationship with the Rats of Tobruk Association in Melbourne and fully supports them on Tobruk Sunday, ANZAC Day and some of their Open Days.

If you are a piper or drummer and would like to represent the Rats of Tobruk, please get in touch with the band. You will be made most welcome. If you have any young budding pipers or drummers who would like to learn bagpipes or drums, we'd love to hear from you. Our band practices on Thursday nights at Macleod College, Carwarp Street, Macleod from 7:30pm.

The band is looking at getting back to overseas travel to perform in Tattoos in the near future, and have previously performed in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland and Australia, the Basel Tattoo in Switzerland, the Kremlin Zoria or Moscow Tattoo in Russia, the Libyan Military Music Festival and the International Music Festival in Shanghai, China. The band needs to rebuild to take part in these amazing events again and keep the living memorial alive.

## Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums



**Learner positions available**  
**Playing positions available**

### Pipers

**Playing members**  
**Learners**

### Drummers

**Playing Members**  
**Learner snare drum**  
**Learner tenor/bass drum**

**Play and perform in a friendly, laid-back atmosphere**  
**Tuition in a fully supportive environment**  
**Opportunity to perform internationally**  
**Opportunity for competition**

**Practice venue – MacLeod College, Carwarp St MacLeod, Vic 3085**

**Contact the band 0411 598 738**

**rotmpd@gmail.com**

**Never regret wondering**



## A "RAT" WITH A NICE TURN OF PHRASE (Story from the Veteran's Affairs [Anzac Portal](#))

Sapper George Vincent Sarto Rudge was with 2/4 Field Coy RAE and one of the Rats of Tobruk. He was also a poet with an eye for detail who spent much of his spare time recording in his diaries the events in which he was involved.

He described the devastation caused by the war and the sad sight of thousands of prisoners on the roads into Tobruk. He wrote about the dreadful conditions the troops had to endure during the siege, including the shortage of drinking water, the problems with rats (the four-legged type), spiders and fleas, the dust, sand and heat and the terrible food. But through it all he maintained a sense of humour and wrote more than a dozen poems. This is one of them.

*To My Mother*

### A Night in the Desert

I'm lonely tonight in the desert  
In vain have I tried to sleep  
The stars that shine above me  
Their silent watches keep.

And it's peaceful here in the desert  
With the enemy guns so still  
And I think of a world gone crazy  
By a mad dictator's will.

Now the siren shrieks a warning  
And planes swoop overhead  
We scramble into our dugouts  
And hug the earth's cold bed.

Our guns go into action  
And searchlights rake the sky  
And with bating breath I gaze on death  
As I see a comrade die.

The bombs rain down with a piercing scream  
And burst with a deafening roar.  
I realise this is no dream  
And I curse this bloody war.

I silently murmur a fervent prayer  
As I kneel by the side of my pal  
I think of his dear old mother  
His sister or maybe a gal.

He gave up his all for his country  
So carefree young and gay  
And here in this lonely desert  
His dear life he had to pay.

But his name will go down in history  
On the scroll of honour at home  
And his soul will live forever  
In a hero's sacred dome.

Now the sky is clear again  
And the stars their watches keep,  
As we crawl back into our dugouts  
And in vain we try to sleep.

High in a tower of stillness  
Night spreads a jewelled hand  
And I earnestly yearn for my return  
To my Mother and Aussie land.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020604

*A night photograph showing an air raid in progress on Tobruk showing searchlights, gun flashes tracers and bomb explosions. (From the AWM collection)*

## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

**Brett Kempster Judith Pearce Erica McKenna Daniel McKenna-Reid Benjamin Pollard**

**Ryan Brown Natalie Andrews Alicia Exell Michael Collison Jeffrey Collison**

**Leanne Young David Killen Eric Greer Peter Chenoweth Jill Shanahan Kylie Ma'a**

**Bradley MacDonald Amanda Shelton Luke Miles Janet Roussety**

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



## EVERY PICTURE TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS



Visitors to Tobruk House may have wondered about the paintings of 19 Rats of Tobruk on the back wall. They are the work of Archibald prize winning artist Peter Wegner.

In addition to his Rats of Tobruk series, Peter has spent the last decade working on his Centenarians series, producing well over a hundred portraits of individuals aged 100 and over.

Like his Rats of Tobruk series, Peter's Centenarians series began with family—his Auntie Rita, who lived to 104, was the first subject he drew.



One hundred of these works are now on display at the Gippsland Art Gallery (located in Sale, 220km from Melbourne) from 8 March to 18 May, including five portraits of Rats of Tobruk.

## 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 fourteen 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](mailto:kathryn.sell@rch.org.au))





# ROTA MERCHANDISE

See Order Form on page 22 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**



'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**



80<sup>TH</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> 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





## 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](mailto:ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com) 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**

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever served in the Australian Armed Forces? **YES or NO** If yes please print details below: \_\_\_\_\_

### 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](mailto: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.

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](http://www.ratsoftobrukassociation.org.au)

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Delegate of the Committee of Management

March 2025

# 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 90<sup>th</sup> 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.