

CHRISTMAS EDITION

Tobruk House NEWS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION



THE RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION
NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND



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RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

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

Month / Date	Event Description
November 30	Christmas Lunch at Tobruk House 12pm (Bookings essential)
February 22 2026	Annual General Meeting 10.30am
March 15	Open Day 10am – 3pm
April 12	Tobruk Sunday (Details to follow)
April 25	Anzac Day (Details to follow)
May 24	General Meeting/Open Day 10.30am

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, Karolina Sevcikova

TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

NEXT ISSUE: FEBRUARY 2026

DEADLINE: JANUARY 1

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will not be published.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 – December 2025

Dear Members and Friends,

As the year draws to a close, it is worthwhile reflecting upon the achievements of our Association in 2025.



It has been a busy and memorable year, marking the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Rats of Tobruk Association (Victoria). Our esteemed veterans would be immensely proud of the enduring legacy they have left us. Your Association has upheld their values of resilience and determination—holding the line and building upon that magnificent foundation.

I wish to pay particular tribute to our committee, whose dedication and tireless work throughout the year have been nothing short of exemplary. It has been my absolute honour and privilege to work alongside such a committed team, united in service to the legacy of our founders.

The committee's many achievements this year have placed the Association in a stronger position than ever to carry forward its mission and ambitions. Membership and activity have grown substantially, a testament to the dedication of our members whose support and participation have been outstanding at every event.

We also extend our gratitude to our wonderful partners at the Royal Children's Hospital. Their ongoing warmth, generosity, and willingness to assist our Association in every endeavour have been truly invaluable.

Eighty years on, our organisation remains strong, vibrant, and active a living tribute to the vision and sacrifice of our founders. As we look toward Christmas, it is my great pleasure, on behalf of the committee, to extend to all our members and their families our warmest wishes for a joyful, safe, and peaceful festive season. I do look forward to seeing many of you at our Christmas luncheon at Tobruk House.

Let us pause to remember that this season's freedoms and celebrations were made possible by the courage and sacrifice of those who stood firm at Tobruk under the harshest of conditions. Their heroism shaped the world we enjoy today.

My warmest wishes to you all for a very Merry Christmas and a bright year ahead.

Warm regards,

Paul Dipnall
Vice President

PS Please don't forget to pay your membership fees for 2026 – see page 18 for details

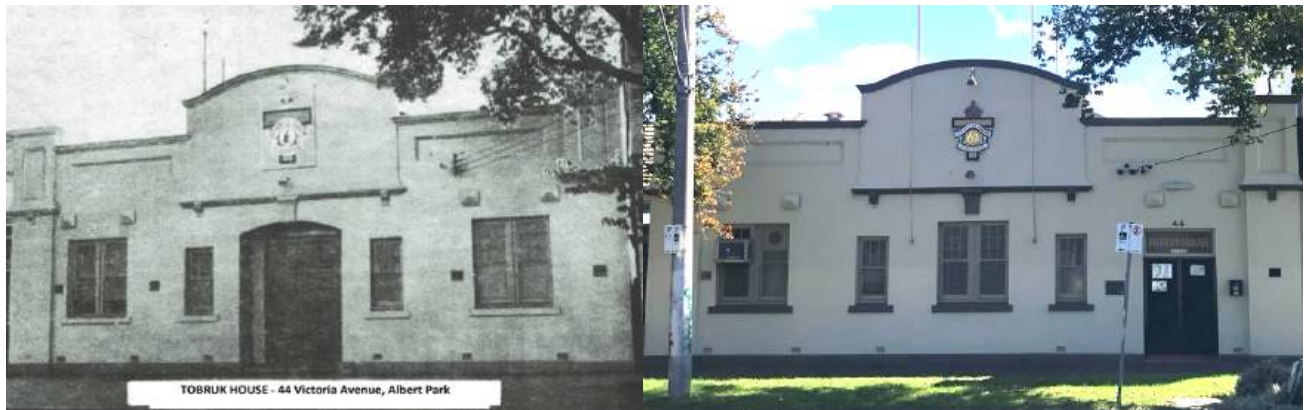
PPS Check out our very smart new tote bag (RatBag) – an ideal stocking filler! Also on page 18

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Our secretary, Lachlan Gaylard, continues his series looking at significant related aspects from each decade since the formation of the association. This time it is the 1950s.

As we look back over eight decades as an association, we turn to the archives of the 1950s. It was a decade when Melbourne hosted the Olympic Games, welcomed a new monarch in Queen Elizabeth II, and, for the Rats of Tobruk Association and celebrated a new home. The Tobruk Echo and newspaper articles of the time give us the following insight.

At precisely 3:55 pm on Saturday, 29 September 1956, Lieutenant-General Sir James Leslie Morshead, affectionately known to his men as "Ming" and "Rat Number One", turned a specially inscribed golden key to open the doors of Tobruk House for the very first time.



Tobruk House in 1956 and now. While a number of changes were made the grand plans for a second story never eventuated.

During the war, Sir Leslie Morshead commanded the 9th Division in the Middle East and led his men through the legendary Siege of Tobruk, where his steadfast and unyielding defence denied the German forces their breakthrough. His leadership earned him immense respect from his men, who knew him simply as "The Boss."



The weather on that historic day was far from promising. Heavy showers threatened to dampen the occasion, but just before the ceremony began the clouds broke and the sun shone brightly, as if nature itself were saluting the Rats.

A record gathering of more than 300 Rats of Tobruk paraded at the nearby Albert Park Central School before marching proudly down Victoria Avenue toward Tobruk House, led by the Caledonian Pipe Band. It was a stirring sight, banners held high, mates reunited, and the sound of pipes echoing through the streets.

When 'Ming' Morshead stood to attention before the doorway, he said little, but the glint in his eye said everything. As he turned the key to open the new home of the Association, a voice from the ranks called out, "Look out, Morshead's breaking through again!" The cry was met with a roaring chorus of the familiar Digger chant, "Ho-ho-ho!" Sir Leslie smiled and replied, "I've heard you do better than that!" So, of course, they did.

The Rats then poured into their new hall, where celebrations continued long into the night, and by all accounts, there were more than a few sore heads the following morning.

The golden key used by Sir Leslie that day was later presented to him as a token of gratitude and remembrance, a fitting symbol of the enduring spirit that forged both Tobruk House and the brotherhood of the Rats of Tobruk.

ROTA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

On Sunday 5th October a birthday party afternoon tea was held at Tobruk House to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Victorian branch of the Rats of Tobruk Association. Following a respectful observation of the speaking of The Ode by Stuart Tolliday, ROTA Chairman, our secretary Lachlan Gaylard spoke of the history and some recent research that suggests the 30 to 50 age group has the lowest awareness of the Siege of Tobruk. It is interesting to note that the younger generation has a higher level of awareness than their parents. (Perhaps in part we can credit our schools program with this slightly improved awareness.) Not surprisingly, older generations have the highest awareness.

Stuart explained that our original set of 24 exhibition panels had come about through the recognition that casual visitors to the hall couldn't gain an understanding of the siege unless they spoke to one of our members. The exhibition has been displayed in many places around Australia since its unveiling in 2021.

A recent series of stories in the Tobruk House News by committee member Glenda Garde featuring quotes from the soldiers inspired us to enlarge the original series with an additional eight panels telling of the experiences of the men who were there 'in their own words'.

Of course it wouldn't be a birthday party without a cake, and Sargent's Cakes kindly donated a large, decorated sponge, a generous portion of which everyone was able to partake. The cake was ceremoniously cut by Vice President Paul Dipnall and committee member Glenda Garde.

The more than 70 guests were keen to sample the cake and review the new panels, and gave them both a definite 'thumbs up'.



2/5TH FIELD AMBULANCE 2025 REUNION REPORT *by Glenda Garde*

October wouldn't be the same without a 2/5th reunion and so 26 of us met once again at Young and Jackson's in Melbourne to enjoy a lunch, some stories and, of course, the traditional raffle. The men of the 2/5th left Australia aboard the Mauritania on Caulfield Cup eve in 1940, making this reunion the 85th anniversary of this departure. Whilst obviously none of the men remain (Tom Pritchard having died last year), we sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters and, on this occasion, even a great-grandson, continue to meet.

As we settled down to enjoy a delightful lunch, we did think about what our fathers had to endure regarding food, particularly in Tobruk. Several menus from the time were shared around and spoken of and laughed about.

Jenny Vienna, daughter of Matt Hogan read an amusing story by Matt about peaches.

"Food was very short in Tobruk. At one time they said, "Tonight." And somehow the rumour went around, "Tonight, we're gonna have tinned pear, tinned peaches!" Great! So, everyone walked around all day thinking, "Tinned peaches, we're gonna have that tonight!" Sounds a bit stupid, but this is a fact, we really thought about tinned peaches all day long. Came teatime, at nighttime, well the tinned peaches came out..... and there was one little segment of a peach each. Not even half a peach, which wouldn't have been too bad, but we didn't expect just a sliver of a peach each! So that was our great treat for the day, we enjoyed it, but anyway there you go."

A highlight of the luncheon was when Peter Butters, son of Bill Butters, told of how his mother and father came to meet. His cousins from the Pattie family were also in attendance. (See the story below.) Peter has generously donated this beautifully preserved photograph album to ROTA.



Bill Butters and Athol Pattie were best buddies in the 2/5 Field Ambulance. On leave Ack took Bill home to meet his family in Seddon, Victoria and Ack introduced Bill to his sister, Glenice Pattie

Bill told me that AIF members were not permitted to have cameras, but many did. However we now have to put this situation into perspective.

The year was 1941 and to a degree cameras were still in their infancy. When I was young Bill still had a 'Box Brownie' which was a well known camera at the time, but because of the era the Brownie's lens was inferior to what we now expect, and was not good for taking photos whilst moving, as you will see, but any photo is better than no photo!

These photos highlight the areas travelled by 'our Rats of Tobruk boys' involved with World War 2.

In December 1946 Bill & Glenice were married and enjoyed 70 years of Wedded Bliss.



We also listened to the words of 2/5th soldier, Johnny Rutherford, taken from the Tobruk Echo November 1963....

'Each year the boys look that little bit older, yet, strangely enough, the passing of the years seems to only to strengthen the bonds of mateship forged by men who shared a common experience- a practical mateship in which men from all walks of life rally to the assistance of men who are less fortunate.'

Johnny, who after the war moved to Canberra to work at the Australian War memorial was spot on, and I am sure that he and the other men of the 2/5th would be pleased to know that, through the next generation, these bonds of friendship continue.

THE BAGPIPES ROCK MELBOURNE WITH AC/DC'S CLASSIC HIT Story by Glenda Garde

A Rats event wouldn't be complete without a performance by the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes & Drums (our band) at Tobruk House. No matter how many times you hear it, the pipes and drums will always send shivers up your spine whenever they strike up, and they will always attract a crowd.



A forest of bagpipes and a display tartans from all over with pipers from far and wide assembled at Melbourne's Federation Square. It's not hard to spot ROTA band member Richard Luke in his bright red jacket!

Well it wasn't at Tobruk House, but a recent event at Federation Square in Melbourne had a similar effect.... times 1000! Of course, in the world of Australian pop and rock music, Melbourne has certainly seen its share of memorable occasions. The Beatles waving from the Melbourne Town Hall balcony in February 1964 to greet 15,000 fans, and Abba's euphoric reception at the same location in 1977, come easily to mind. So now we can add another one to this list.

A few months ago, as rock and roll fans prepared for the Australian return of AC/DC, Melbourne's mayor called on keen bagpipers from across the country to show off their skills to break the record for the largest-ever bagpipe ensemble, and they certainly heeded the call! Wednesday, 12 November, saw 374 pipers of all ages and abilities show up at Federation Square to honour AC/DC's classic hit, *It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll)*, but also to pay tribute to its iconic music video filmed in Swanston Street back in 1976 for popular TV show at the time, *Countdown*. The original clip was played on the big screen to accompany the performance.



Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums bagpipers Kevin Conlon and Les Kenfield being interviewed by the ABC prior to the record attempt.



What made this even more unforgettable is that Les Kenfield and Kevin Conlan, our band members from the original video clip, were on the stage resplendent in their easily identifiable red jackets with the bandmaster, leading the pipers.

And so back to November 12, 2025; they certainly smashed the record, previously held by 333 pipers (Sofia, Bulgaria 2012). Over 374 pipers made their presence felt and many thousands turned up to witness the event. What a blast!

And just in case you've forgotten, or perhaps have never known, here's the story of THAT film clip involving ACDC and our own ROTA Pipes and Drums band.

(Taken From Age Newspaper Feb. 13, 2010)

Bagpipe player Kevin Conlon will never forget the day he received a phone call out of the blue from former AC/DC singer Bon Scott asking him to feature in the video clip for *It's a Long Way to the Top (If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll)*.

"I got a call from Bon and he didn't know who I was, and I didn't know who he was," Mr Conlon says. "He wanted to buy a set of bagpipes and have a few lessons. I told him they would cost over \$1000 and it would take 12 months or more of lessons to learn how to play a tune. He said that was fine and came down for a few lessons, but as we were only going to be miming, he just had to look like he was playing."

The clip, featuring AC/DC playing the song with bagpipe players from the Rats of Tobruk Pipe Band past bemused shoppers down Swanston Street on the back of a flatbed truck, has become one of the most-watched clips of all time, with nearly 7 million views on YouTube. The song became an anthem for any young musician trying to make it in rock'n'roll.



It was voted the ninth-best Australian song of all time by the Australasian Performing Right Association, and has been covered by pop stars, metal bands, female country singers and kids' bands.

Paul Drane directed the clip in his role as producer and director of *Countdown*. "It's fantastic. That band on that truck in the middle of Melbourne, the live music capital of Australia. It's amazing that they went on to become one of the biggest bands in the world."

"I just thought, 'What's special about this song? What can I do?' Bon said, 'I wouldn't mind using some bagpipes in the clip.' Molly [Meldrum] said, 'Let's make it like Moomba,' so I said, 'Well, we had better get them on a truck down Swanston Street.' "

They made a quick call to the council to get approval, and did two takes down Swanston Street, before filming another version in the City Square.

"I had no idea or intention, whatsoever. We did it all very quickly for about \$200," said Drane. "At the time the band were just struggling musicians like everyone else."



Bon Scott died prematurely in 1980 of acute alcohol poisoning; his replacement lead singer Brian Johnson has requested that the band no longer play the song out of respect.

And so there you have it; a remarkable story still talked about 50 years later and particularly remembered by Les Kenfield, Kevin Conlon and Alan Butterworth; the three band members on the back of the truck!

TOBRUK FIG TREE CUTTING PLANTED IN PORT LINCOLN

Story By Emma Pedler And Tim McGlone from ABC Eyre Peninsular



Graeme Bourke (second from right) with other Rats of Tobruk descendants and community members.
(ABC Eyre Peninsula: Tim McGlone)

Since a cutting from the famous Tobruk Fig Tree was brought back to Australia from Libya more than 80 years ago, dozens more have been taken and propagated around the country. But until this week none had made their way to Port Lincoln despite "at least 100" of the Rats of Tobruk hailing from the Eyre Peninsula.

It was something 32-year-old history buff Tim Cook was determined to rectify when he first learnt about the World War II siege. "I had the idea for the first time when I was 13 or 14, so it has taken a long time," he said.

"I had a fascination with war histories as a kid and I started looking a lot more into Australia's involvement, reading a lot of books and watching a lot of documentaries, and I ended up zeroing in on the war in Africa.

"The one thing that stood out through all these documentaries and these books was this fig tree." More than 18 years later, Mr Cook and his mum, Julie Cook, were given the honour of planting the sapling in front of the local descendants of the Rats of Tobruk this week.



Caves beneath the original Tobruk Fig Tree served as a makeshift hospital during the siege.

Among them were Graeme, Paul, Jack and Noelene Bourke, whose father, Allan Bourke, was wounded during the siege and treated at "Fig Tree Hospital" — the makeshift dugout whose entrance was marked by the tree.

Allan recovered from his injuries and came home, but his brother Bernard Bourke was wounded and killed in battle in Egypt in 1942.



Australian troops fighting hard at Tobruk in 1941. (Supplied: Australian War Memorial)

Back in Australia, Allan started a family on the block of land he was awarded at Wanilla, on the southern part of the Eyre Peninsula. He died in 1989 but his legacy as a Rat was destined to live on.

"I got quite emotional about it during the planting," Graeme said. "Just for the history of that tree at Tobruk and here it is, replicated to a

point, in Port Lincoln. [Fig Tree Hospital] was an area where the soldiers could feel safe."

According to local historian Lee Clayton, many of the 14,500 Australia soldiers at Tobruk came from South Australia.

"At least 100 were from the Eyre Peninsula, but it is likely to be much more, as many went to Adelaide and enlisted there, so it is difficult to know exactly where everyone was from," he said. The campaign waged by Australian soldiers in the harsh North African desert for 242 days in 1941 was a critical battle during the World War II. Mr Clayton said the Rats — those in the 9th Division — proved "very annoying to the Germans", who had not been defeated until that point.

Lee Clayton says thousands of South Australians were involved in the Siege of Tobruk. "Tobruk was a battle that many Eyre Peninsula soldiers were involved in," Mr Cook said. "The tree was a symbol of defiance and, I suppose, a symbol of hope for those that were involved in the siege. They knew they would be safe there."

Mr Cook worked with the Melbourne-based Rats of Tobruk Association to coordinate the sourcing of a sapling from the original Tobruk fig. He explained that the ailing health and passing of members had made the task challenging and delayed its completion.

"It's certainly been a process [to get a sapling], to the fault of no-one," Mr Cook said.

"I'm glad Mum and I have been able to see it through ... it's a really great day."

City of Port Lincoln Mayor Diana Mislov said the fig was "more than a tree. It's a powerful symbol of remembrance and resilience," she said. "We are privileged to have this."

Graeme Bourke said the connection formed between returned soldiers and their families had stood the test of time.

"There were about 38 families who came to Wanilla in the late 40s, early 50s ... the families of soldiers who had served, and airmen," he said. "Consequently, I was brought up in that community out at Wanilla. Everyone knew each other — we could almost be termed as one big family from out there."

A LIVING LEGACY FROM TOBRUK CONFLICT Story & photos Lynn Elder, the Mansfield Courier 22-8-25

A fig tree recently planted at the Mansfield Botanic Park signifies the contribution by the renowned Rats of Tobruk during World War Two and provides a lasting memory for future generations.

Instrumental to this latest tribute is Mansfield's retired Major Bruce Bingham whose father was a sergeant in the engineers and served in Tobruk in the 2/13 Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers during the siege.

Another local descendant of a Rat of Tobruk is Jamieson's Jude Ridley whose father Max Rogers served as corporal with the 18th brigade in the seventh division who was joined by her daughter Janene.



Head gardener Lauren McGinty (crouching) and Troy Gorton from the Mansfield Shire planted the young fig tree.



Major Bruce Bingham, Cr Steve Rabi Mayor Mansfield Shire (rear) Cr Mandy Treasure and Cr Boonie Clarke (front) ROTA members Jude Ridley and daughter Janene.

Mansfield RSL sub branch members, the mayor Cr Steve Rabie, councillors Bonnie Clark and Mandy Treasure, council staff and other interested parties gathered for the planting of a cutting obtained from a tree propagated in Melbourne from the original fig tree at Tobruk.

Major Bingham and his wife Marlene are both life members of the Rats of Tobruk Association, dedicated to the memory of the original Rats of Tobruk, but unfortunately none are alive today. Providing the address for the ceremony the major explained the last surviving Rats decided they wanted a lasting memory of the siege, so donated money to set up a foundation at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.

"This foundation finances a doctor each year to complete his or her training as a pediatric neurosurgeon in the children's ward. The work of these pediatric Neuro Surgeons is recognised worldwide," Major Bingham said. "This foundation and the planting of the Tobruk Fig trees will ensure that the memory of the famous Rats of Tobruk will never be forgotten."

Across the Shrine of Remembrance's 13 hectares reserve in St Kilda Rd are more than 320 trees. These are dedicated to the memory of our Australian military units, battalions, squadrons and ships.

"They are a living reminder of the thousands who have served and were sacrificed in war, peace keeping and peacemaking," he said. "One tree, a ficus carica, also known as the common fig tree, is a very special tree we know as the famous Rats of Tobruk Fig Tree Memorial. "During World War Two, the 9th Australian Division and some allied forces were at the Siege of Tobruk in North Africa, defying the might of Rommel's Afrika Corps and the Italian Army for 242 days, the longest siege in British military history. Controlling North Africa gave access to the Suez Canal," said Major Bingham. "This enabled oil from the Middle East oil fields and raw materials from Asia to be readily accessible. Hence, Tobruk became an important strategic location. The deep harbour and town surrounded by hills made it easy to protect. Just inside the Tobruk defences was a fig tree, the only feature in an otherwise barren desert landscape," he said.

"This fig tree became known as the Fig Tree Hospital and marked the entrance to an underground network of caves used by the Australians to treat wounded soldiers prior to their removal to the 2/4th Australian General Hospital in the Tobruk township.

Unfortunately, the fig tree was visible from many kilometers away and was shelled for several hours each day by the German artillery."

The tree managed to survive and a cutting from this tree was brought back to Australia, propagated and planted in the Shrine of Remembrance Garden to honor the famous Rats of Tobruk. A cutting from this tree is planted in Tobruk Gardens, opposite Tobruk House in Victoria Avenue, Albert Park.

The tree planted in the Mansfield Botanic Garden is a cutting from that tree, which was planted by the then Governor General, General Hurley in 2015.

Other cuttings have been propagated and sent to parks and schools in other states.

A Tobruk Fig Tree adorns the entrance to the Wangaratta RSL with a bronze plaque providing the background.

The original fig tree is still growing in the Tobruk desert and is believed to be 100 plus years old, said Major Bingham. "This tree is dedicated to all the Rats of Tobruk but in particular the Rats from this district and region who formed part of the famous Australian 9th Division.

"On behalf of the Rats of Tobruk Association I would like to thank the Mansfield Shire for making this special space available to the Tobruk Fig Tree." He also thanked the shire's head gardener Lauren McGinty for her assistance and advice.

Cr Rabi also thanked the council crew saying it was not just about planting a tree today but for the years to come. "It is not about celebrating war, but remembering our fallen," he said.

RATS OF TOBRUK NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND

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 with researchers across the world to change that.



This fellowship was established by the Rats themselves to be their legacy and has to date provided opportunities for fifteen 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. (Almost half of our previous Fellows have continued to work as neurologists at the RCH.)

The 'Rats of Tobruk Association Neuroscience Fellowship Fund' has become a 'virtual' monument to the mighty Rats of Tobruk.

Since the fellowship fund was established by the surviving veterans, an annual Fellowship has been awarded to a young doctor so that he or she can undertake studies associated with paediatric neuroscience. The Fellowship has had an inspirational track record of success and achievement. It is an internationally sought after, prestigious fellowship. The growing number of recipients is contributing to an international network of paediatric neuroscience specialist.

Adding a gift in your Will is another way to help ensure the continuation of the Fellowship.

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)

A STORY OF PERSEVERENCE

A short time ago, ROTA was contacted by John Steinbeck who had an interesting tale to tell about his father, Edward George Steinbeck NX23114, who served with the 2/4 Fld. Coy.

At the outbreak of war, Edward was employed as an engineer with BHP. As a protected industry, he was working on a special aircraft design project and, as such, could not join up. However, he solved this by travelling to Victoria where he claimed to have been unemployed for 6 months. Edward had little time for authority and was a born leader. In Tobruk, as a sergeant, he was offered several field commissions to become an officer, but refused them all, as he identified with the men he led. In Tobruk, he did the job of an officer and had his own driver and led his own platoon.

As an engineer, Edward used his talents to convert captured German and Italian equipment for use by the Australians. He was mentioned in dispatches twice.

One of the missions described to John by a soldier who had served with Ted in Tobruk, was that, as an engineer and also an explosives expert, he had worked out (at considerable risk to himself) how to locate and diffuse German Teller mines. The Australians were desperately short of mines to protect their positions against the German tanks and infantry.

Ted went into the German mine fields at night, directly in front of the German positions, dug up the Teller mines with his bayonet, and, in the dark, laid out tape lines along which soldiers could follow, collect the mines, load them onto small vehicles, which had been pushed out along the tape lines to prevent noise. This action was of twofold advantage, because it took out a German minefield, and the Australians could then reuse the Teller mines to protect Australian positions.

Ted was renowned for planning and leading these night operations against German positions. At this time, there were no commandos, as such, in Tobruk, but the following poem was written by one of his men.

COMMANDO TED

*There's a bloke, a section sergeant
Ted Steinbeck is his name
He would have us all commandos
For his motto's 'Death or Fame'*

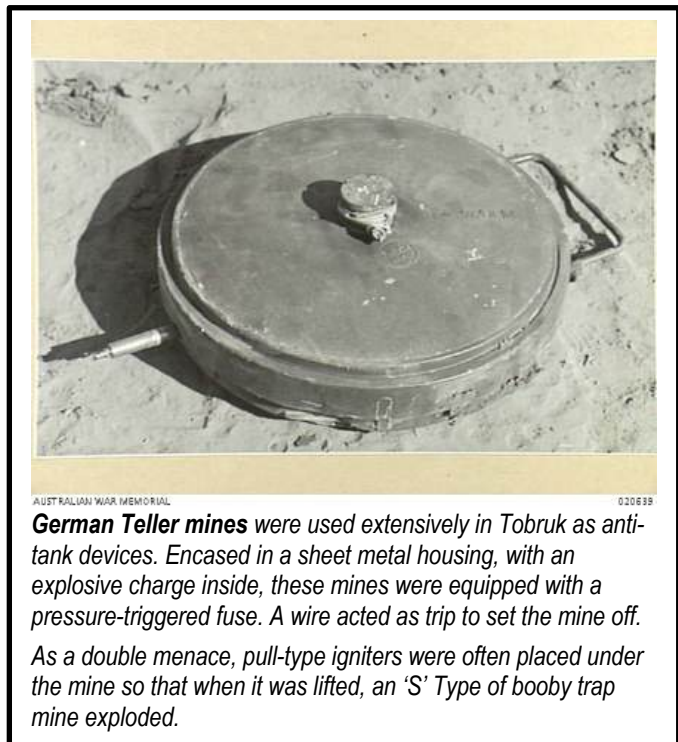
*The light of battle in his eye
He's always on the scrounge
What! Short of Mines?
There's Fritz's lines
We've got not time to lounge*

*So come on boys, cut out the noise,
I'll write the job as done
And section two return with mines
Before the setting sun.*



*Lord knows whatever else he'd do,
Our Section Sergeant Ted,
Uneasy now we sleep at night
Upon our earthen bed.*

*We never know the moment
He will send us to the front
I'm sure he lays awake at night
Just planning out some stunt.
The story is fair dinkum, Ted,
A suggestion if I may,
The blokes who follow you around
Should get commandos pay!*



Ted also served in New Guinea and died in 1960.

WARRANTYTE PRIMARY SCHOOL ANNUAL VISIT

A busy week for ROTA was capped off by the annual visit from Year 6 students from Warrantyte Primary School. With assistance from our association volunteers and friends from the VMVC (Victorian Motor Vehicle Corps) the children were welcomed to Tobruk House where they explored the many displays.

The VMVC is a non-profit club run by enthusiasts of ex-military vehicles and even before the children arrived, passers-by were stopped in their tracks by 'Gordon's jeep' parked on the nature street, which encouraged a few people to take a look inside the hall.



The 17 children listened to an explanation of the origins and meaning of the Ode and, after a brief summary of the story of the Siege of Tobruk, they broke into groups to do some exploring.

John from the VMVC had brought along an extraordinary collection of medical equipment which had the children (and volunteers!) enthralled.



Gordon's jeep and assorted military paraphernalia was another favourite.



Stuart's group learnt about the role of the artillery and infantry via his father Bill Tolliday's recorded recollections.



Gayle and Helen spoke of the conditions encountered by the Rats – flies, fleas and sand storms – before allowing the children to try on some uniforms (because doesn't everyone enjoy a 'dress-up'!)



All present were most impressed by the behaviour of the students, and it was obvious because of a Q&A session at the end, that the children certainly knew a lot more about the siege than they did before they entered Tobruk House.

Our association with the Warrandyte Primary School goes back many years and we have been hosting visits such as these for more than 10 years. Thank you to the teachers and all of our volunteers who make it such a memorable event.

NAME BADGES NOW AVAILABLE

Following many requests, especially by regular attendees of ROTA meetings and events, we are pleased to advise that we can supply new name badges. In keeping with the latest styles these lightweight badges attach to your clothing via powerful magnets so there are no pins that could damage the fabric of your clothing.



The badge features your chosen first name in larger print so that it is easy for others to read.

They cost \$15 each and if ordered before December 20 will be available for collection (and payment) at the hall at the AGM on Sunday Feb 22.

The actual size of the badge is 76mm x 25mm.

Order forms will be available soon. If you would like to order a name badge please send us an email - ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com

FRANK'S ROOM

On a recent trip to WA, members Ken and Mary Butterworth (who are also associated with the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums) spotted this sign (below) in the Lighthouse Keepers Cottage Museum at Bluff Point in Geraldton.

Geraldton Historical Society houses its collection in the delightful Bluff Point Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage - a whitewashed building which served as the home of the Geraldton lighthouse keeper and his family from 1876 to 1943.

The cottage features a tower which was home to one of two lights - the other once stood on the beach nearby.



You can see the original fresnel prism lens as well as an extensive collection of historic photos and artefacts which paint a picture of pioneering life in the district.

The words 'A Rat of Tobruk' jumped out at them so Ken took a photo for us.

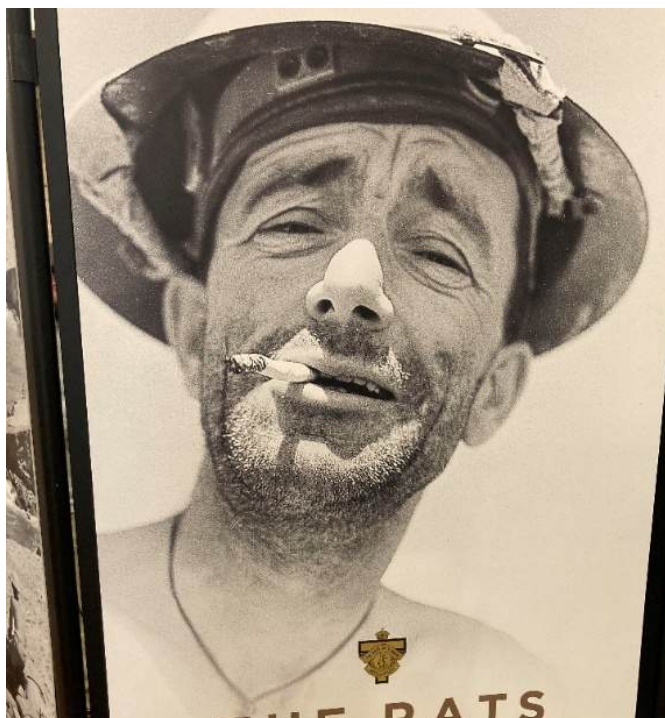
Frank had been a lighthouse keeper there for 10 years from 1970 to 1980. It was something of a 'family business' as Frank's father had also been a lighthouse keeper so presumably Frank was well accustomed to the life.

It was pleasing to see the small update at the bottom regarding the passing of



Tom Pritchard – evidence that there is still great interest in the story of the Rats.

WHAT ABOUT THIS BLOKE? *(Story by Glenda Garde)*



'TOBRUK. PTE. J. COLLINS, WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN IN A FRONT LINE POSITION' (caption on Australian War Memorial image)

At the 80th birthday celebration of ROTA, which was held back in October, fellow ROTA member Olivia Gleeson and I were standing in front of the very first panel of our recently expanded exhibition.

We both declared that we really loved this image as it seemed to somehow epitomise the men who served in Tobruk, but then we started to think about the soldier displayed. Well, who was he, and what was his story?

Service records can tell us many things and so the National Archives is always the first port of call when embarking upon such a quest.

Born in Moonta S.A. in 1902, SX1793 John Leonard Collins was an older enlistee who was married when he enlisted.

He was a labourer and enlisted on March 1 in Wayville SA in 1940, serving for 2295 days, including 1374 days outside Australia.



Caption: Food supplies are taken up to front-line troops regularly during their ten days' service in the front line. Meals are taken in cramped conditions, but they are always enjoyed. August 1941

John served with the 2/10th Infantry Battalion and, after also serving in New Guinea, he was discharged in 1946. His was therefore a long war.

John must have been a bit of a favourite with photographer George Silk, as he also appeared in several other AWM images.

John Leonard Collins died in 1976, aged 73 and is buried in the Mundulla cemetery in South Australia.

I'm afraid that there was little else to discover, but if you know anything about John, please contact us.... It's a longshot but you never know!!



YOUR ROTA SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE FOR PAYMENT ON 1ST JANUARY 2026

Affiliate members are reminded that this year's subscription is due for payment on 1st January. The subscription remains at \$30 for 2026.

As in the previous year, \$5 from each subscription will be contributed to our Royal Children's Hospital Rats of Tobruk Neurology Fellowship fund.

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 **2026 Annual Subscription Payment Form** on page 20.

If you pay by over-the-counter bank deposit, please ensure you send details via email to ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com or post to The Secretary, ROTA, 44 Victoria Ave, Albert Park, 3206. If you are paying by EFT, ensure you include a unique reference such as your surname and membership number. This is important for correct matching of payments, as bank deposits do not have adequate referencing. Payment can also be made using a credit or debit card.

Please note that Tobruk Veterans' widows are exempt from paying the annual subscription. Life and Honorary members are also exempt.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Robert Webster Bernadette Potter Michelle Bingham Craig Bingham Scott Barrass Alexander Hunt Peter Johnson Wendy Carew Inty Smith Sue Buckner Robyn Hahn



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

NEW ROTA TOTE BAG (*It's a RATBAG*) JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS

We are very pleased to be able to offer this smart new ROTA tote bag as an addition to our range of merchandise.

Featuring a woven fabric comprising of 60% polyester and 40% cotton, our tote has a spacious volume capacity of 10 litres and can carry approximately 5kg. The logo is printed on one side only using a photo print process which guarantees a very clean bright image.

The tote bag is priced at \$16.50* and will be available at Tobruk House from mid-November so guests at the Christmas party can collect their orders then. It can of course be mailed out. See the order form on page 18 for mailing information.

***Special launch offer – 2 for \$30!**





RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC

Registration No: A0054511Y

NOMINATION FORM

Committee Members for 2026

In accordance with the Association Rules (2017), at the 2026 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 2026. (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: _____
(*Only if different to the Nominee)

Nominated Person's Agreement:

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

and agree to comply with the rules and expectations of ROTA committee members.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC - 2026 SUBSCRIPTION

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

Contact Email: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com

Contact Phone No: 0432 232 502

Membership No: _____

Name: _____
Title Given Name (s) Surname

Contact Details (Only complete if details have changed):

Address: _____
Suburb / State Post Code

Email: _____ @ _____ Contact Phone No: _____
Please Print Clearly

The 2026 Annual Membership Subscription is \$30 and is due and payable on 1 January 2026.

Please note that if payment is not received by 31 March 2026, your membership will be suspended. It is also pointed out that the Association's rules state that a member is taken to have resigned if the member's subscription is more than twelve months in arrears.

Payment: 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 members register. A suggested reference is your membership no and surname.

Bank Account Details: Account Name: Rats of Tobruk Association BSB: 633 000 Account No: 197 610 603

Credit Card Payment: Please provide the following details:

Name on Card: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Card No: |

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

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

Privacy Clause:

Information requested in this form is necessary for the association to 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.

Association Rules:

As a member of 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

Member's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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



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



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'
STUBBIE HOLDER
\$10



RATS OF TOBRUK 1941
LAPEL BADGE
\$15



SIEGE OF TOBRUK BAR MAT
\$40



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



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



ROTA TOTE BAG
40cm x 35cm
\$16.50



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'
BALLPOINT PEN
\$5



'HEROES OF TOBRUK' MUG
\$15



80TH ANNIVERSARY SIEGE
MEDAL
\$50



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC

MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

(PRICES VALID DEC 2025 – JUNE 2026)

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				\$11.50		Postage for up to 2 medals to same address.
ROTA Rugby Top	\$60				\$15		
ROTA Polo Shirt (navy blue with red stripes)	\$45				\$11.50		
ROTA “baseball” style cap	\$28				\$11.50		
ROTA Bar Mat	\$40				\$16.50		
Heroes of Tobruk stubbie holder	\$10				\$11.65		Postage for up to 2 units to the same address
ROTA Tote bag	\$16.50				\$11.50		Launch special offer – 2 for \$30 (+ post)
Heroes Of Tobruk Mug	\$15				\$11.65		
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
\$16.50 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 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 with credit card you can scan this form and email it to: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com

Privacy Clause:

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

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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

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Membership Approval: _____

Delegate of the Committee of Management

December 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



Marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, *Eucalypts of Hodogaya* reflects on a remarkable story of post-war reconciliation and remembrance. This exhibition explores how Australian and Japanese architects, gardeners, and builders overcame cultural divides after the Second World War to collaborate on a site that blends Eastern and Western traditions in a garden of peace.

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.

HERstory



This exhibition shines a light on women based in Victoria, sharing their stories of service, courage and contribution from 1942 to the present day. Through powerful portraits and personal reflections, *HERstory* pays tribute to the strength, resilience and legacy of Australia's military women—those whose stories have too often gone untold.