



COMMEMORATING THE

**85<sup>TH</sup>**

**ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE SIEGE**

# Tobruk House NEWS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION



THE RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION  
NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND



# 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

Date	Event Description
Thursday June 11	RCH Morning Tea 10.30am – registration essential, details p 16
Sunday June 14	Open Day 11am – 3pm
Sunday June 28	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 11am – 3pm
Sunday July 12	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 11am – 3pm
Sunday July 26	Open House Melbourne Open Day 10am - 4pm
Sunday August 9	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 11am – 3pm
Sunday August 23	General Meeting and Open Day from 10.30am Shrine of Remembrance service 1.00pm
Sunday September 6	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 10am – 3pm
Sunday September 20	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 10am – 3pm
Sunday October 4	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 10am – 3pm
Sunday October 18	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 10am – 3pm
Sunday November 1	Open Day (Including 85 for 85 Exhibition) 10am – 3pm
Sunday November 15	General Meeting and Open Day from 10.30am
Sunday December 6	Christmas lunch – bookings essential, details TBA

Immediate past Patron: Bill Gibbins AM

Committee of Management:

President – Paul Dipnall

Secretary/Treasurer – Lachlan Gaylard

Committee Chair – Stuart Tolliday

Other Committee Members –  
Gayle Sherwell, Glenda Garde,  
Andrew Balcerzak, Tony Codd,  
Karolina Sevcikova

## TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

NEXT ISSUE: AUGUST 2026

DEADLINE: JULY 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will not be published.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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## 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.

President's Message – June 2026

Dear Members,

As always, it's my very great pleasure to report to all members the recent activities of your association. To say that recent events since my last report have been hectic is an understatement.

April is always a very busy month for our executive and members. It could be said it's the one month of the year where crucial planning and execution of the committee's plans throughout the year reach a climax with major events on our calendar.

The first major event was Tobruk Sunday, a day when we commemorate the memory of all our brave resilient veterans who created history against the might of Hitler's army. As you are all aware, our veterans created the first turning point and defeat of the German army in World War Two. A defeat that was so resounding it destroyed the hitherto might of Hitler's army who had conquered Europe with seeming ease.

The highlight of the Tobruk Sunday service was the attendance of the Honourable Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Sam Mostyn AC. To have our highest office bearer of government in attendance was indeed a great honour bestowed upon our association in memory of all veterans and families. It signifies the enduring respect our veterans earned in Tobruk.

Our second guest speaker was Mr Keith Wolahan, former member of the House of Representatives and former army captain. Keith made a very favourable impression on all. His speech was extremely well crafted and well received by all in attendance.

The second major event in April was our participation on the one sacred national day in our calendar, where we celebrate the memory of all veterans who have served our nation, Anzac Day. The day was a perfect autumn day for the march with many onlookers present. Our thanks to the RSL organising committee who work tirelessly to organise this magnificent day. Our thanks to the many member volunteers and family members who always make this occasion a resounding success. Without their diligent support we would be unable to conduct such events.

We were thrilled that Melbourne Storm selected The Rats of Tobruk to honour the fallen on Anzac Day. In a special ceremony conducted before the game commenced the Rats of Tobruk were publicly acknowledged for their service to the nation prior to the match.

Please make a calendar note of our '85 for 85' exhibition. This is a great opportunity for you to see some rare memorabilia and personal artefacts collected by museums, families and your association. Check the calendar for viewing times and dates from May 24 to November 15.

With winter upon us, I conclude with my best wishes for your good health.

Kind regards,

Paul F Dipnall  
President



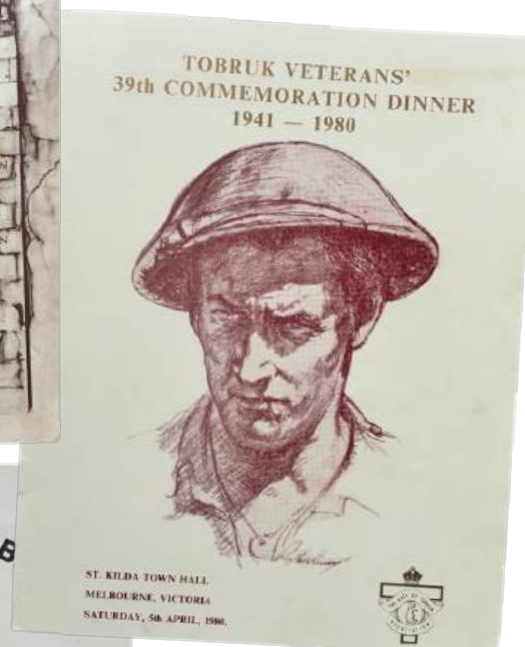
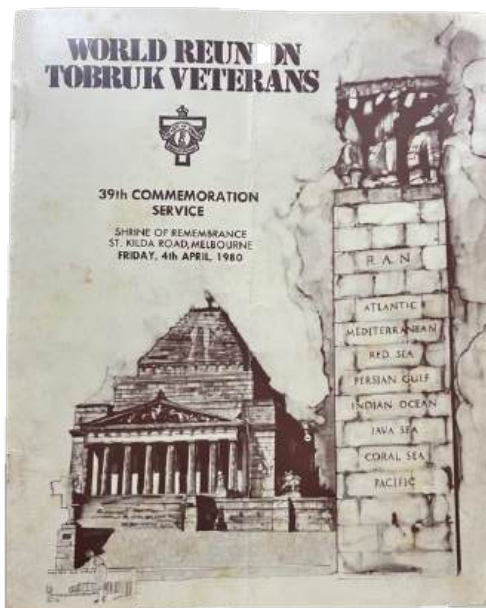
## FROM THE ARCHIVES *(Story by Lachlan Gaylard)*

As part of our continuing series exploring ROTA through the last eight decades, we now enter the 1980s, a period marked by the transition from Fraser to Hawke, renewed economic optimism, and a changing Australia. In Victoria, a Rat of Tobruk himself, Rupert "Dick" Hamer, had recently served as Premier, and the promise of prosperity gave the decade an unmistakable sense of excitement and momentum.

In 1977 a world reunion had been held with great success and in Victoria, the Rats of Tobruk Association, (then the Victorian Branch) was honoured to host the 1980 World Reunion, and what a remarkable occasion it proved to be. Delegates and families were treated to an extraordinary seven-day festival of Tobruk remembrance, comradeship, and commemoration.

So significant was the event that Tobruk House itself was transformed into an information and reception centre for the week, where visiting Rats, families, and dignitaries could acquaint themselves with the extensive itinerary of activities and ceremonies.

With Tobruk House far too small to accommodate the influx of visitors, the St Kilda Town Hall became a central gathering place, offering light refreshments and opportunities for fellowship amongst old comrades and guests from across the world.



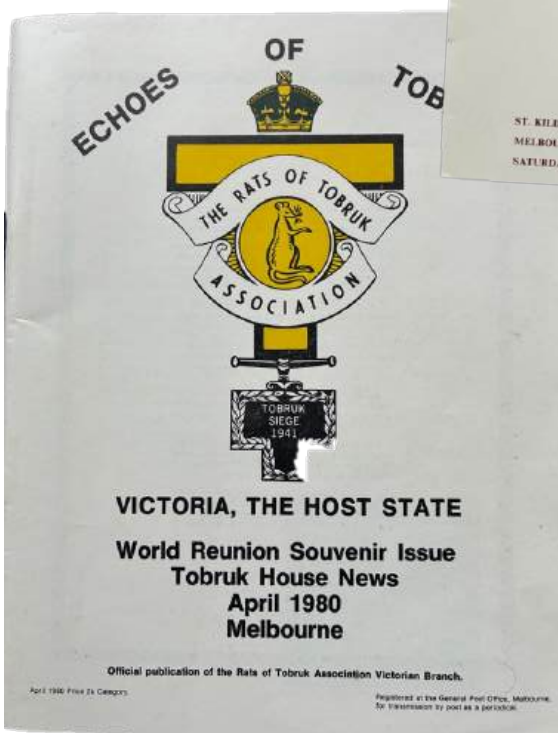
The centrepiece of the reunion was undoubtedly the solemn service at the Shrine of Remembrance, formally marking the 39th anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk. The occasion included the consecration of the new Tobruk banner, along with the pipe band unit flags, in a ceremony that reflected both dignity and deep tradition.

Saturday evening saw a highly successful gala dinner attended by numerous dignitaries, including the Premier and Lady Morshead, further underscoring the significance of the reunion within Victoria's commemorative and civic life.

On Sunday, attendees travelled to HMAS Cerberus, continuing the week's program of fellowship and remembrance.

The reunion concluded on Monday with light refreshments at the St Kilda Army Drill Hall, before a farewell afternoon tea at Tobruk House brought the memorable week to a fitting close.

A special 48 page 'Souvenir Issue' of the Tobruk House News was produced to mark the occasion with a coloured cover.



While much has changed across the decades, one thing remains constant; the dedication of hardworking and committed committees and members determined to preserve the spirit of the Rats of Tobruk.

## 'A PHOTOGRAPH KEEPS A MOMENT IN TIME FROM RUNNING AWAY..'

(Story by Glenda Garde)

We all know the truth of the adage that a photograph tells a thousand words. Well five years ago, while preparing the multi panel siege exhibition which we have just recently added to and published as a book, we spent countless hours searching for photographs to complement the stories we were telling about the many roles undertaken by the diggers in Tobruk.

It quickly became clear that the Australian War Memorial website is an extraordinary treasure trove of remarkable images. We have also welcomed feedback about the article on wartime photographers that appeared in our April edition of THN. As a result, we have decided to feature an AWM photograph in each edition for our readers to enjoy.

To begin the series, the image below captures one of the most dangerous tasks carried out in Tobruk. This photograph was taken in September 1941 by Thomas Fisher, one of the photographers featured in our April edition.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

020638

*An Italian tank mine being made useless by SX869 Sapper (later Corporal) Gordon Lindsay Hantken of the 2/3 Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, 9th Division. Known as MK B II, it was commonly used to trap tanks and motor transport vehicles.*

## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

**Peter Collins John Steinbeck Gail Fuller Richard Oates Neville Collie  
Wayne Dalton Denise Velagic Conor Lehman Fiona Lehman  
Denise Catchlove Louise Devine Paul Pinkey Jennifer Pinkey  
Barbara Fraser Wendy Macfarlane Simone Colburt Allan Colburt Thomas Carey  
Elizabeth Elder Gerard Ward Mark Cranny Tracey Cranny Fiona Robe  
Debra Pitman Justin Kuang Ian Fraser Hugh Wynne Lynette Ramsay  
Anne Vaughan Ben Collingwood**



Your membership helps ensure the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk

## TOBRUK SUNDAY AROUND AUSTRALIA

The 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the Siege of Tobruk was commemorated with special services around the country. In Melbourne the commemorative service was held adjacent to Tobruk House and fortunately the weather was kind to us this year.



*The Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums marches on to the parade ground.*



*VIPs and other invited guests enjoyed the protection of a marquee kindly provided by the Port Phillip City Council in case of inclement weather.*



*The Governor General opened proceedings*



*Keynote speaker Keith Wolahan*



*Sergeant Tobi Griffiths read 'This Place They Call Tobruk'*



*Gayle Sherwell read 'God's Acre at Tobruk'*

The service began with the entrance of the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums and the Flag party, comprising the Australian flag, Carpathian Brigade flag and the Rats of Tobruk flag.

Australia's Governor General, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, joined us and many other special guests for this wonderful day of remembrance. She made a short, well researched and on-point address and laid a wreath.

Guest speaker Keith Wolahan gave an outstanding speech to the approx. 150 people in attendance. A former member of Federal Parliament, he is also a veteran; a qualified commando, having been deployed once to Timor-Leste and three times to Afghanistan. Keith spoke of the gruelling conditions faced in Tobruk and also briefly outlined the lives of four Rats of Tobruk, all very different men, very representative of those who answered the call to serve.

Two poems of great significance were read during the service. Sgt. Tobi Griffiths from the Army School of Transport read the poem 'This Place They Call Tobruk' which was written by Rat H B Patterson (son of the famous 'Banjo') and ROTA committee member Gayle Sherwell read the poem 'God's Acre at Tobruk' which had been selected by the Rats to be read at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary service in 1991.



ROTA President Paul Dipnall placed a poppy in the upturned helmet as a mark of symbolic recognition of those men who lost their lives during the siege of Tobruk.

Wreaths were laid by members of parliament, Consuls General from India, New Zealand, Poland, the Consul of the United Kingdom, the RSL, the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation CEO, and Port Phillip Council representatives, who have been long term supporters of this special annual event, and of

course, various descendants of Rats of Tobruk; all were accompanied by a lone piper from the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums.

It wouldn't be a Rats service without the involvement of the band, which is always a drawcard for Victoria Ave locals and passersby. Formed in the late 1950's at the instigation of the Rats, the band was seen as a living memorial and a way of keeping the story in the public eye.



*President Paul Dipnall placed a poppy in the helmet*



*Colonel Daniel Strack read The Ode*



*Musn. Andrew Gordon played the Last Post and the Rouse*



*Myfanwy Coghill sang the National Anthem*

The sound of the bugle playing the Last Post and Rouse anchored the solemnity of the occasion, followed by the singing of the national anthem by Myfanwy Coghill.

At the conclusion of the service everyone was invited to make a personal tribute by placing a poppy in the upturned helmet then all were invited back to Tobruk House for a light lunch and the opportunity to chat with our special guests.



*Our green fingered ex committee member Marlene Bingham presented Kathryn Sell from the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation with a young fig tree which she had been nurturing in preparation for it to be planted in a garden space at the hospital.*

(Editor note: we are indebted to Sergeant Dustin Anderson for the majority of the photographs used in this story.)

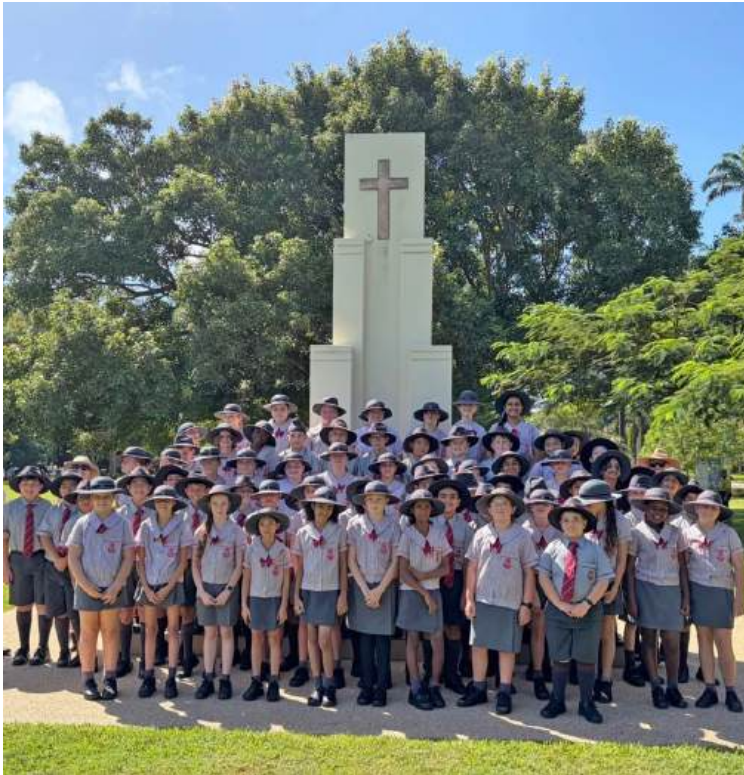
The Governor General joined us at Tobruk House and was very happy to speak with everyone present, not to mention pose for innumerable photos (a small selection is shown below), before being presented with a tote ('Ratbag') containing our newly published book. She in turn presented our president Paul Dipnall with a plaque for Tobruk House commemorating her visit.



Special thanks to the wonderful ROTA volunteers who provided the food, committee chair Stuart Tolliday, who acted as master of ceremonies for the service conducting proceedings with precision, and especially to our secretary Lachie Gaylard who spent many months organising this most successful afternoon.



## TOBRUK SUNDAY AT WHITSUNDAY ANGLICAN SCHOOL, MACKAY, QLD



The Year 6 students were honoured to attend the Biennial Rats of Tobruk Memorial Service at Queens Park, joining the Mackay community in remembering the courage and sacrifice of those who served.

Whitsunday remains one of four Mackay schools committed to ensuring the lives and legacy of these brave soldiers are always honoured. The service recognises the courage, tenacity and sacrifice of the Mackay men of the Australian 9<sup>th</sup> Division, Australian Imperial Force, who withstood the eight month siege of Tobruk during World War II.

Year 6 students represented the Junior School with great respect and pride. Aziel and Remy read from the Roll of Honour while Heidi and MacKenzie shared the scripture reading and prayer. Harry, Harper and Harley also took part in the laying of the wreaths.

## TOBRUK SUNDAY IN PERTH, WA

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March Christ Church Grammar School Army Cadets, Rats of Tobruk WA Remembrance Association and the 51 ACU Swan Regiment Drums and Pipes held the annual Tobruk Sunday Service at Kings Park Tobruk Memorial site.

It was wonderful to see the service so well attended by approximately 100 guests.

Major (AAC) Conrad Scott welcomed everyone to the ceremony and had guests upstanding to sing the Australian National Anthem before introducing the guest speaker, Cadet Under Officer Samuel Porter SSGSCU, who proudly gave a very moving tribute to those who served in Tobruk.

Samuel's presentation was followed by the laying of wreaths.

The service concluded with the Ode of Remembrance, the Last Post and Rouse.

After the service guests enjoyed a shared afternoon tea and fellowship under the shady trees near the Tobruk Memorial.



## TOBRUK SUNDAY IN THE ACT

We have been made aware by member John Hogan that a commemorative service for the siege of Tobruk was also held in the ACT on Tobruk Sunday at the Rats of Tobruk Memorial on Anzac Parade, the principal ceremonial and memorial avenue of Canberra.

The memorial is based on the Tobruk War Cemetery, built by Royal Australian Engineers during the siege, but after that memorial was destroyed, the original marble inscription stone was brought back to Australia after the war and is incorporated in the obelisk. It is worth noting that the Rats of Tobruk memorial is the only action-specific national memorial on Anzac Parade and much work went into securing it.

Many thanks to John who organised the service which also involved a number of local schools.



## THE POLISH CONSULATE COMMEMORATES THE 85<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

A special concert commemorating the 85th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk took place at the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney on April 15.

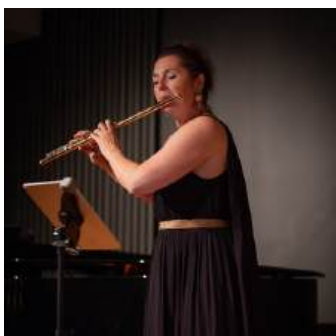
Honorary guests included Mrs. Karolina Cemka, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of Republic of Poland, President of NSW Legislative Council Hon. Ben Franklin and Hon. Mark Banasiak MLC as well as representatives of the Rats of Tobruk Association.



Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney, Piotr Rakowski gave an emotional introduction.

Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney, Piotr Rakowski, in his address, referred to the brotherhood in arms of Polish and Australian soldiers. In fact, a noted music enthusiast, he requested that the evening open with an instrumental performance of *Brothers in Arms* by Dire Straits. The piece was selected by the Consul to symbolise the comradeship forged during the Siege of Tobruk, a bond which endures to this day. Karolina Cemka recalled the most important stages of the Allied-Axis fighting near Tobruk, which lasted from April to December 1941. Addressing the audience, she emphasised the heroism and perseverance of the Allied soldiers, their courage and determination, which allowed them to endure long months in the harsh desert conditions.

Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Chamber, Ben Franklin, highlighted the extraordinary bond between the Allied participants in the siege, who called themselves the Rats of Tobruk. Their shared struggle on the African front, as well as their post-war experiences, were an example of brotherhood and mutual support. After the war, many Polish soldiers were able to settle and find their place on Australian soil thanks to the help of their Australian comrades-in-arms.



The concert program by flutist Ewa Kowalski and pianist Anna Szydłowski featured works by both Polish and Australian composers, highlighting the significance of this anniversary, which is important for both countries.

## JEEPERS CREEPERS!

ROTA member Dennis McCloskey told us recently about a jeep which participates in the Townsville ANZAC March each year. His friend, the local Catholic priest Father Dave, wanted to honour Dennis's father, Rat of Tobruk QX2384 James McCloskey in some way, and this is the result....



Father Dave has a very good sign writer mate who did the job very quickly.

He provided us with some background information on that particular vehicle. It is a restored combination of two vehicles, one sourced in Giru and the other in Ingham around 20 years ago.

It is a genuine Willys jeep modified under licence in Australia in the early 1950's as a right-hand drive variant.

The model is a CJ3B with a high bonnet to accommodate a more powerful "Hurricane" motor. The vehicle may have seen service in the Korean war as this model was being made in the early 1950's hence it would not have been present at the siege.

Last year, just prior to Anzac Day Father Dave blessed a fig tree at the Marian School in Townsville. This fig tree is a direct descendant of the iconic fig tree still growing inside the original Tobruk perimeter above a first aid post which became an iconic land-mark for the German gunners as well as the Australian defenders.

Surprisingly the tree survived, very much against the odds. And is today looking extremely healthy. This tree can be compared with the Lone Pine tree known from the Gallipoli campaign. Father Dave is a product of Ingham and is supposed to be retired. That is the tree that you can see behind him in this picture.



Editors note: There are now memorial fig trees nurtured from cuttings from the original Tobruk tree all over Australia. Some have been growing for many years and are quite majestic such as the one in this picture from Warrandyte Primary School. Others are very new such as the one just planted at the Royal Children's Hospital.

They all carry the same message of remembrance.

## ANZAC DAY AT TOBRUK HOUSE

What an amazing turn out for 2026 Anzac Day. Tobruk House opened at 9am and showed the Melbourne Anzac march on the big screen for those who weren't marching. Tea, coffee and biscuits greeted those who came. By lunch time the hall was abuzz with friends chatting and the smell of sausages and hamburgers sizzling suggested a tasty meal coming. Prior to the meal being served, the members of the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums put on a great performance as usual with a selection of known and not so well-known tunes. As always, the sound of the pipes enticed passers-by in Victoria Avenue to pop in and listen.



Many thanks to all who attended, with special thanks to our willing band of volunteers who ran the bar, kept the food coming and then helped to clean up afterwards. Another great day was had by all in attendance.

If you missed coming to Tobruk House this time, there's always next year or why not come along to another of our events listed on the website. You will always be made very welcome.

(We were also pleased that later in the day Australia's Governor General, the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, mentioned the Rats of Tobruk in her Anzac Day address. She had been with us two weeks prior for our Tobruk Sunday service, so we were no doubt fresh in her mind.)

## THE RATS TO INSPIRE MELBOURNE STORM (Story by Glenda Garde)

Melbourne Storm has proudly unveiled its commemorative 2026 ANZAC Round jersey. Officially launched at Tobruk House in Melbourne, the jersey pays tribute to Australia's legendary Rats of Tobruk and honours one of the most courageous chapters in the nation's military history.

The 2026 jersey carries the campaign theme *Honour Unites Us*, recognising the shared spirit of sacrifice, service and unity that ANZAC Day represents. The jersey design includes:

A custom chest and back pattern inspired by the rugged desert terrain where the 9th Division fought.  
Leslie Morshead's quote printed on the back of the white collar: "There is to be no surrender and no retreat"  
The Rats of Tobruk emblem featured on the lower right-hand corner of the jersey.  
The ANZAC Appeal logo displayed on the left-upper chest.

A framed jersey was presented to ROTA and will hang in Tobruk House. Melbourne Storm players proudly wore the commemorative jersey when they took the field on the ANZAC Day clash against the South Sydney Rabbitohs at AAMI Park, honouring those who served and those who continue to serve Australia and New Zealand. (Ed: Sadly it wasn't enough to procure a win.)



## 'TO WAR WITH A PEN' - WHAT ABOUT THE OFFICIAL WAR CORRESPONDENTS DURING THE SIEGE? (Story by Glenda Garde)

I'm sure we've all seen them on our television screens on a nightly basis; news reporters standing in front of a car crash or perhaps Parliament House or a weather map, microphones in hand and telling us about the day's happenings.

Back in 1941 however, things were obviously very different. People relied on newspapers, radio reports and newsreels at the movies to garner information about what was going on in the world, and of course with their loved ones abroad. Letters were censored and so the war correspondents were the only 'link' between what was going on overseas and home. Photographers and film makers (featured in our April THN issue) also played a vital role and so what do we know of these correspondents and their work in Tobruk? Some of them you may have heard of, but others may not be familiar names at all. Following we present two correspondents of particular interest to this forum as both were in Tobruk during the siege.

### **Chester Wilmot** (21/6/1911 – 10/1/1954)



Chester Wilmot has been mentioned in quite a few articles which have appeared in the THN over the years, and his is certainly a well-known name amongst military aficionados, but who was he?

Chester Wilmot began work as a legal clerk in 1939, but after the outbreak of World War II, he was appointed as a correspondent with the A.B.C.'s field unit, and he sailed for the Middle East in September 1940. He quickly gained recognition as a fine correspondent covering the fighting in North Africa and was ensconced in Tobruk for several months during the siege.

He proved himself an outstanding broadcaster and reporter, providing masterly descriptions of action and brilliant analyses of strategy. Recognised as one of the best correspondents in the Middle East, he pioneered interviews at a time when a report read by an announcer was considered sufficient. Wilmot worked with the ABC's Mobile Recording Unit, operating from a converted truck carrying an unwieldy machine that cut sound recordings into acetate disks.

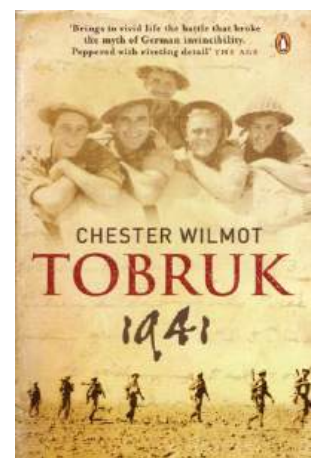
His articulate, powerfully spoken accounts of the soldiers' experiences were often accompanied by the sounds of battle behind his voice. In 1941, he covered the see-sawing campaigns in North Africa and the fighting in Greece and Syria.

His job was to record interviews with the troops and voice reports on their exploits, but Wilmot experimented with using the sounds of war in his reports and was soon bringing the reality of warfare into Australian lounge rooms. He was an on-the-spot reporter, unusual for its time.

Having made his name as a BBC war correspondent, after the war, Chester Wilmot decided to stay on in England as a BBC broadcaster where he even chaired the first live television coverage of a British General Election in 1950.

In 1953, he flew back to Australia for the BBC to take part in a special round-the-world Christmas Day Broadcast from Sydney. On the return flight in January 1954 the Comet airliner he was travelling on crashed into the Mediterranean killing all on board. He left a widow and three children.

His well-known book, 'Tobruk 1941' is an on-the-ground account of the siege, a landmark work of war writing and a must for anyone wishing to learn about the Rats of Tobruk. Considered by many Rats as the most accurate description of the siege, we use it as a reference on many aspects of the siege story.



The other less well-known correspondent who wrote about his time in Tobruk was Frank Legg.

**Frank Hooper Legg** (26/6/1906 – 30/3/1966)



Sergeant Frank Legg in Tobruk.  
He called himself Horace in his stories.

Frank Legg was born in England in 1906 but emigrated to Australia in 1927 and enlisted in the AIF serving with 2/48<sup>th</sup> as a sergeant and eventually a sergeant major. He was active in Tobruk and Egypt where he would write about the experiences of the soldiers for the ABC.

His articles, 'Tales of Tobruk' were published in the magazine *ABC Weekly*. In his broadcast 'The Worst Day', he gave an account of his experiences from the battle of El Alamein on 31 October 1942. He admitted an expectation that he would die during the battle and in this and future broadcasts, he would express his admiration for the fighting soldier. He revealed his admiration for and understanding of fighting men as he described their tears, death, and bravery.

He would gain the rank of Lieutenant in 1943 before being asked to be the ABC's war correspondent in the Pacific where he documented the experiences of Australian soldiers in New Guinea, Manila and Tokyo.

Upon his return to Sydney after the conclusion of WW2, Legg attained a position at the ABC as a television and radio chairman and compere. In radio, he became known for his shows *Week-End Magazine* (1946–59), *Film Review* (1949–66) and *Any Questions* (1955–64) and his voice became one of the best known on A.B.C. radio.

Legg also participated in the first Australian television broadcast on 5 November 1956. He published several books about war correspondents, including books about photographers Damien Parer and Frank Hurley. Frank Legg died in hospital on 30 March 1966 in Sydney as a result of a traffic accident.

War correspondents played a crucial role in bringing the stories of Australians at war to the nation. Reporting from the front lines, they shared the highs and the lows, telling of the dangers experienced by the troops abroad. This allowed the families back home to hear the voices and stories shaped from the sounds of battle.

One of the first Australian correspondents was poet and journalist AB (Banjo) Paterson who covered the Boer War, whilst journalist Charles Bean was Australia's first official war correspondent. He accompanied soldiers on the battlefields of World War I and later was the driving force behind the establishment of the Australian War Memorial.

World War II, especially the war in the Pacific, brought conflict close to Australia's shores and correspondents suddenly found themselves interpreting a very real threat as it progressed towards Australian shores. A brand of "foxhole journalism" that favoured accounts close to the action developed in World War II, which saw a greater number of journalists killed than in World War I.

In recognition of their sacrifices, a memorial dedicated to war correspondents was unveiled at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in 2015. This memorial honours the courage of journalists who have lost their lives in conflict zones, emphasizing the importance of their role in democracy. It sits in the sculpture garden outside the Australian War Memorial building - alongside the military memorial - to reflect the position of journalists in a theatre of war. It has no names inscribed on it but is instead dedicated to all correspondents who have worked in conflict zones.



## THE RATS OF TOBRUK NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP MORNING TEA

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 Royal Children's Hospital (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 sixteen 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.



*The entrance to the Rats of Tobruk Cockatoo ward at the Royal Children's Hospital*

**The annual morning tea for the Rats of Tobruk Association members and their guests will be held on June 11 at 10.30am at the RCH Foundation.**

These 'behind the scenes' occasions are a unique opportunity to learn more about the amazing work being done by the doctors, nurses and scientists in the field of neurology, which the Rats of Tobruk Fellowship helps to support.

This year the visit will include a presentation on the vision for the future of neurology by the new Head of Neurology Gladys Navarro, and 2026 ROTA Fellow Justin Kuang. There will also be a walk to the hospital garden to see the location of the newly planted fig tree, followed by a tour of the Rats of Tobruk Cockatoo ward. **Booking is essential.** Please contact Kathryn Sell via phone or email (see below) to reserve your place.



To learn more about how you can contribute to this most worthy cause by adding a gift in your will, and most importantly, to let the Foundation know of your intention, please contact Kathryn Sell, Deputy Director, Fundraising, RCH Foundation (03 9345 5539 or email: [kathryn.sell@rch.org.au](mailto:kathryn.sell@rch.org.au))

## WHEN ONE OF OUR 'FLEETEST FORWARDS' BECAME ONE OF OUR FAMED RATS OF TOBRUK

*Story by David Grant, published in Football360.com.au April 22 2026. It has been edited for brevity.*

James Hinson was born in the UK on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1919. He emigrated to Australia as a child and grew up in a modest house on Winifred Avenue in the Adelaide suburb of Plympton. Known to his mates as "Spud", James had two brothers, Stanley and William, and he attended Black Forest School before entering the workforce as a vehicle upholsterer.



Hinson was also a talented football player, appearing mostly on the left wing for Birkalla Rovers alongside his brother Stanley. James was also good enough to be selected to represent the state of South Australia (SA) on several occasions. He first made the state squad in 1937, aged 18, when he was included as a "reserve forward" for a match at Adelaide Oval against the touring England Amateurs side.

The following year, 1938, he was picked to play for SA against India at Hindmarsh Oval, the site of present-day Hindmarsh Stadium (Coopers Stadium). Unfortunately, the SA state side were soundly beaten 6-1 but, at 3-0 down, Hinson did offer some hope when he rose to score for the home side with a header.

### **Soccer Team To Play Palestine**

The State selectors of the S.A. Soccer Football Association (Messrs. P. Johnson, J. A. Croger and J. Wallis) have chosen the following 16 players to train for the matches against the Palestine team in August:—A. Curliiss (Oltose), C. Gray (Sturt), B. Walker (West Torrens), Rab Smith (Port Thistle), C. Fraser (Port Thistle), I. Evans (University), J. Topperwein (Northumberland and Durham), R. Richardson (Birkalla Rovers), A. White (Kingswood), J. Blight (Birkalla Rovers), H. McRostie (Northumberland and Durham), J. Taylor (Birkalla Rovers), A. Billinger (Park Albion), H. Elgood (West Torrens), J. Hinson (Birkalla Rovers). Mr. Frank Draper will be coach.

Inexplicably, the selectors must have been unimpressed overall though because Hinson was not selected the following week to play for SA versus Tasmania. Then, in August 1939, the touring Palestine side were in Australia to play a series of international games against Australia as well as lower-profile games with state sides. They arrived in Adelaide for a two-match series with South Australia

The first, at Hindmarsh, ended in a 4-2 win for the tourists so the selectors made several changes ahead of the second game, four days later, which included the introduction of Jim Hinson to the starting XI.

This return match was played at Adelaide Oval and in these days before adequate floodlighting, the game was played on a Wednesday afternoon; the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1939.

The Palestine side was 5-0 up by half time and no newspaper of the day thereafter actually printed the final score although an unverified account states that the outcome was an 8-0 victory for the visitors.

The Palestine players then continued onward to Perth before embarking on a disrupted and delayed trip home as World War II broke out.

He finished the 1940 season listed among Birkalla's best players for the year. He was third on the club's goalscorers list for the year and perhaps only lacked being capped for Australia due to the national team playing all its games at this time in Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle or Melbourne and using players based in those cities.

But Hinson had enlisted in July of 1940, aged just 21. He'd undertaken his training at Woodside, in the Adelaide Hills, and shortly after the two Cup finals, he was on his way, by ship, to the Middle East. There are records of him playing whilst stationed overseas, including a game for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) against Palestine in 1941, but his service now was to his country. He wasn't forgotten at home though. A newspaper piece in March 1941 states that at Birkalla Rovers' AGM, the club had extended full honorary membership to those who were serving for the duration of the war and up to six months after.

Hinson was promoted to Lance Corporal before 1940 was finished and in early 1941 his battalion moved into Cyrenica, in eastern Libya, to complete training. Then, on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1941, he was part of the Allied force defending Tobruk. His infantry battalion, the renowned 2/48<sup>th</sup>, were deployed to hold the Libyan port city against Italian and German troops for the next eight months.

Hinson was promoted to Acting Corporal shortly after but was evacuated, sick, for several months before rejoining his unit towards the end of 1941.

By July 1942, Axis forces had reached El Alamein in Egypt and the 9<sup>th</sup> Division was hurried across from Syria to assist the British Eighth Army. Hinson's brigade was ordered to capture a ridge called Tel el Eisa. The battle became known as the 'First Battle of El Alamein' and it was here, for his "*inspiration of leadership and courage*", on 10<sup>th</sup> July that James Hinson was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM).

More troops and equipment were brought into the area as the Allies sought to oust the Axis forces from North Africa and on the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942, a massive Allied artillery barrage signalled the start of the 'Second Battle of El Alamein' with Australian forces involved in intensive combat as they sought to win ground against well-defended enemy positions.

It was during this fight, on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1942, that Corporal James Hinson was killed in action. He was just 23 years old and the player that 'The Advertiser' newspaper described, just two years earlier, as "*the fleetest forward in the league*", was gone in a gun-flash.

In addition to Hinson, over forty South Australian soldiers were killed in one night, including Private Harry Davis, who'd barely turned 18 and Sergeant William 'Bill' Kibby who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions that very day.

James Hinson was buried in the field by the enemy but later, when the ground was retaken, he was re-interred at El Alamein War Cemetery on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, some 260 kilometres west of Cairo.

As for the West Torrens and the Birkalla football clubs, their rivalry continued on until 1979 when they folded and merged to form the single new club, West Torrens Birkalla.

What would James "Spud" Hinson, one of the famed "Rats of Tobruk", make of his club, Birkalla Rovers, and it's bitterest rival, West Torrens, competing as one? And what would he make of that club, West Torrens Birkalla, sitting top of the South Australian top tier, the NPLSA, on ANZAC Day, 2026?

One would expect he'd be disbelieving of the first and proud of the second.

# RATS EXHIBITION OPENS IN KONJONUP WA (Story by Jill Watkin)

As indicated in the April THN, at the Kojonup Heritage and Experience Centre, the fascinating exhibition "A Tale of Ordinary Men and Their Extraordinary Achievement" was opened on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May by Perth based Anne LeFevre, President of the Rats of Tobruk WA Remembrance Association. Eight members braved the seven-hour round trip from Perth to join many other relatives of former 'Rats' who travelled from across SW Australia to the official opening ceremony.



Anne LeFevre, President of the Rats of Tobruk WA Remembrance Association at the entrance to the Exhibition space

After the formalities, Anne spoke fondly about her father, expressing the humour and camaraderie that existed between the men who went to get 'the job done' and ultimately changed the outcome of WWII.

With Anne's three sisters in the audience, Anne spoke of the extraordinary achievements of these ordinary, but extraordinarily brave and tenacious Aussies, whose stories are highlighted in this fantastic exhibition.

Our guests were treated to a buffet luncheon before heading home after a heart-warming afternoon of reminiscences and the exchange of stories about their loved ones, renewed friendships and the forging of new ones.

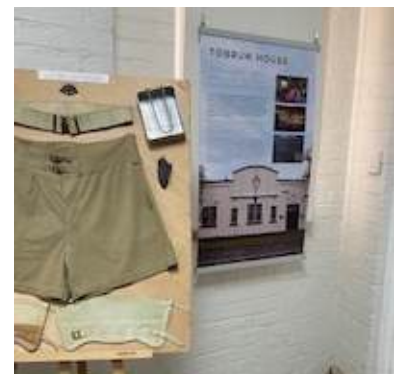


Robert Sexton, deputy President of the Konjonup RSL addressed the group

We will invite students to visit the exhibition as part of their curriculum as we feel the story of The Rats of Tobruk should be highlighted to the younger generation. It represented a turning point for Allied Forces in the second world war, enabling them to defeat the German war machine and was one the longest sieges in British military history requiring great endurance and bravery by the men involved and does not garner the recognition it deserves.



We are hoping that after the exhibition run ends after a spell at the Princess Louise Barracks Military Museum in Albany, it will be exhibited in Perth in 2027 as many people who were unable to make the journey south have expressed a wish to see the exhibition.



Editor's note: This exhibition is currently also on display at Tobruk House, and the book of the exhibition is available for purchase at both venues.



## HAVE YOU PAID YOUR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2026?

It's not too late! Our organisation depends on members' subscription to maintain the Rats' legacy. Income from subscriptions allows us to continue with all of our charitable operations. It contributes to our RCH Fellowship, the Schools program, special commemorative services, the production of the Tobruk House News and the general running costs of the organisation.

To assist members in ensuring that their subscription doesn't lapse, an automatic payment system was introduced at the AGM this year. If this is of interest to you please contact us to set it up. It's a simple and safe process and means you will continue your membership without having to think about it. And it can of course be cancelled at any time.

## NEW '85 for 85' ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION AT TOBRUK HOUSE

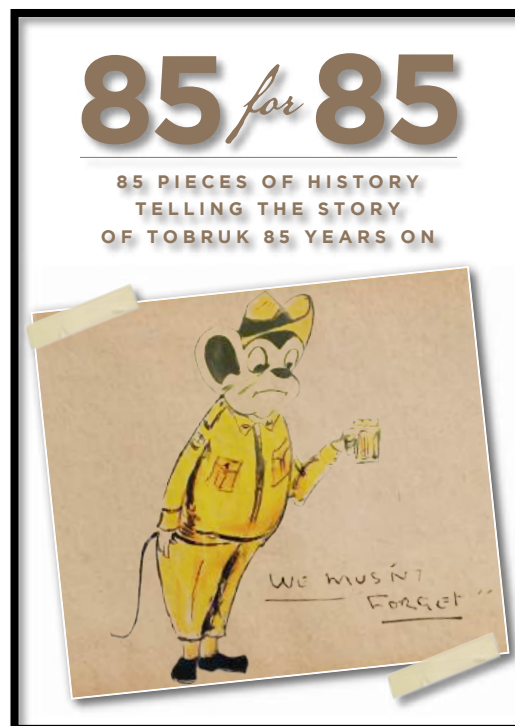
Anyone who has visited Tobruk House would no doubt have looked at some of the memorabilia scattered around the hall. If you found that to be of interest, then you are in for a treat.

ROTA is pleased to announce that on **Sunday May 24** at 10.30am will be the launch of an expanded exhibition displaying 85 individual pieces of memorabilia with descriptions and short biographies of a number of Rats of Tobruk, as well as information about their units.

We have gathered a wide variety of items from many different sources – private loans, museum loans as well as our own collection and we look forward to sharing this unique exhibition with you.

This display will include the expanded panel series (which is now available in book form) and will be open to the public on an increased number of open days throughout this special 85<sup>th</sup> siege anniversary year.

See the calendar of events on page 2 for dates.



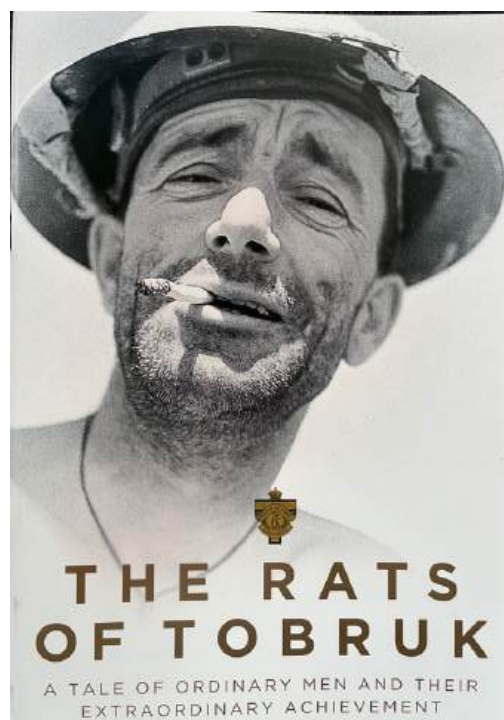
## THE EXHIBITION BOOK

From the earliest days of the launch of the large panel exhibition in 2020 we wondered how members and interested people outside Melbourne could experience it. With the addition of 8 new panels late last year came the answer. We could make a book.

The end result is a high quality 48-page comprehensive explanation of the siege. Our wonderful graphic designer Lisa created the layout, and great friend of the Rats, past Governor General Peter Cosgrove, kindly agreed to review the book and write a forward.

He concludes his forward with "This is a great and timely book to provide a fresh face on one of the greatest episodes in Australia's military history. My sincere compliments to the authors, editors and production staff – you have marvellously honoured the memory."

The first printing sold out in days, and new stocks have now arrived. You can order your copy using the order form in this issue of the THN.





# ROTA MERCHANDISE

See Order Form on page 22 for postage costs and other details.



LADIES SUMMER POPPY SCARF  
Light Blue, Dark Blue, White, 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**



ROTA TOTE BAG  
40cm x 35cm  
**\$16.50**



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'  
STUBBIE HOLDER  
**\$10**



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'  
BALLPOINT PEN  
**\$5**



'HEROES OF TOBRUK'  
MUG  
**\$15**



RATS OF TOBRUK  
EXHIBITION BOOK  
**\$20**



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



## RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

(PRICES VALID JAN 2026 – AUGUST 2026)

Item	Cost per Item	Quantity	Size (Refer page 17)	Postage Yes/No	Postage (Ordinary Mail)	Total	Comments
Rats of Tobruk Exhibition book	\$20				\$10		Postage for 2 books to the same address \$15
ROTA badge car window sticker	\$10				\$4		Postage for up to 5 stickers 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 (RATBAG)	\$16.50				\$11.50		Launch special offer – 2 for \$30 (+ post)
Heroes Of Tobruk Mug	\$15				\$11.65		
Heroes of Tobruk pen	\$5				\$4		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](mailto:ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com)

**All enquiries to the Merchandise Officer**

email: [ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com](mailto: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



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



Discover 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. 24