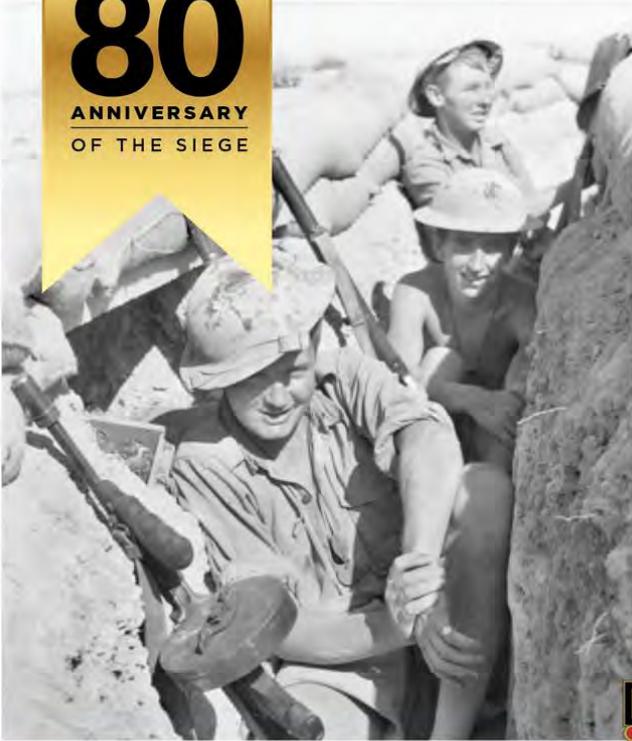


COMMEMORATING THE

80TH

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.

44 VICTORIA AVENUE, ALBERT PARK, VIC 3206

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PHONE No 0432 232 502

GENERAL MEETINGS NORMALLY START AT 10.30AM

(NO MEETINGS JANUARY, MAY, JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER)

THE DATES BELOW ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR MORE UP TO DATE INFORMATION REGARDING THE IMPACT OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT COVID RESTRICTIONS CALL 0432 232 502

Month / Date	Event Description
August 29	Tobruk House Open Day & Shrine of Remembrance Carpathian Brigade Commemorative Service
October 16	Tobruk House Open Day – Family Day
October 22	General Meeting
December 5	Christmas Lunch – Details TBA

Patron: Bill Gibbins

Committee of Management:

President – Graham Gibson

Vice President – Mike Kiernan

Secretary – Glenda Garde

Treasurer - Mike Kiernan

Other Committee Members –

Christine Mulvaney, Bob Horton,

Graeme Clifford, Tony Smith,

Heather Macfarlane, Ian Marr,

Karolina Sevcikova, Stuart Tolliday,

Lachlan Gaylard, Bruce Bingham

Tony Codd – Hall Keeper

TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

Deadlines

Editorial and Advertising

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DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 2

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Articles or letters with no contact details will not be published.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

The President and ROTA Inc. members wish to extend our condolences and deepest sympathy to the families and friends of our departed comrades:

CLARK, Dorothy (Dot) Affiliate Member, wife of VX44006 Robert Clark (2/24 Bn),
14 June 2021. 99yrs
STONE, Victor Edward "Ted", VX41342, Cpl, 2/5 Field Ambulance, 21 June 2021.
99yrs

RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

President's Report – August

In August, we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the relieving of the Australian 7th & 9th Division by the Polish Carpathian Brigade during the Siege of Tobruk in 1941. The Polish Independent Carpathian Brigade was formed in April 1940, comprising nearly 5000 men, under the command of General Stanislaw Kopanski.

On August 18, 1941, the first convoy of the brigade's units left Alexandria for the besieged town of Tobruk in Libya. Transported in seven convoys, between August 21 and August 28, they took over the westernmost perimeter relieving Australian troops in the process. Living in dugouts, caves and crevasses, the defenders of Tobruk did not surrender nor retreat. They earned a fearsome reputation by employing daring and aggressive defence tactics, to hold their positions, they were awarded the prestigious title of 'Tobruk Rats' by their Australian counterparts.

This year we are honoured to have again been asked to participate in the special Last Post Ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance SUNDAY AUGUST 29 @ 4.45pm
This service commemorates the date when the last of the convoys of the Polish Carpathian Brigade arrived in Tobruk. The service will be Live Streamed, please view details on <https://www.shrine.org.au/last-post-service-shrine> for more information.

As our veterans were relieved at Tobruk, some of our committee members, including all the current executive members, are stepping aside to take a break from their roles within the committee. Some have served you for 8 years or more. We are looking for ROTA members who would like to put their hand up to take on a role within the committee. There are several other positions such as the Membership Officer and Website Manager also available. Not all roles require a Melbourne presence. Please contact our Secretary Glenda Garde on 0432 232 502 if you would like to know more information about the roles and how you might be involved, and she will forward you an information package.

We were very saddened to learn that 'Ted' Stone 2/5th Field Ambulance passed away on the 21/06/2021 aged 100years. Ted was full of energy and enjoyed a good chat with those who wanted to learn more about Tobruk.

Finally, you will be pleased to know that our other veterans have fared very well during the pandemic, and we send them our best wishes for continued good health.

Thank you once again for your support.

Graham Gibson, President

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

A story in Jim Wilson's Drive radio program on 2GB (see below) made us wonder how many Rats of Tobruk memorials exist today and what condition they are in.



As with the Sydney memorial in this story, the Rats of Tobruk Reserve opposite Tobruk House in Albert Park is well respected and supported by our local council but it is clear that isn't always enough. We would like to know if you are aware of a Rats of Tobruk memorial in your area. If so, we'd very much appreciate a photograph and brief description.

Bureaucracy gone mad' as Transport for NSW tries to tear apart WW2 Memorial



A signpost may be one of the few parts of a WWII memorial walkway left behind under Sydney Metro's plans for Belmore-Campsie Park. The small patch of green space near Belmore train station is dedicated to the Rats of Tobruk. The inscription reads:

"The heroic defence of Tobruk in World War Two was a notable military achievement. From April to December 1941 Australian troops were the majority of the force defending the town of Tobruk in Libya, under siege by the Germans. They were cut off from the main British forces and were supplied by the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy. The German radio propagandist 'Lord Haw-Haw' William Joyce ridiculed the troops as the rats of Tobruk, a term proudly embraced as an iconic compliment. In August 1941 the Central Belmore Improvement League suggested that the approach to Belmore-Campsie Park from Burwood Road be named Tobruk Avenue."

Former Canterbury deputy mayor Barbara Coorey was furious after the time and money her council invested in the memorial walkway, Transport for NSW have proposed paving it and removing most of the trees.

We will follow this case with great interest and welcome any updates from local members.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

This article appeared in the December 2012 issue of the Tobruk House News. (We don't know when it was originally published.) While many of our members will be aware of the story behind the badge, it is possibly new information for our newer members.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR BADGE?

When the Association was first formed, naturally enough, quite a lot of thought was given to the production of a distinctive Badge and it was decided to call for a design from all members.



Some 14 or so designs were submitted, and after much consideration, the design submitted by Nick Woodward was chosen as the one most fitting for such a select band, to be known as the "Rats of Tobruk Association".

Strangely enough, it was the only one to use the 'T' as a main motif, background and shape, thus giving it that distinction which is not possible to be copied by any stretch of the imagination. And to quote Nick Woodward:

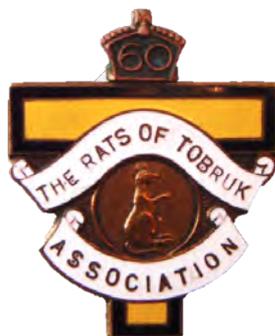
"This was my first thought in the designing of it. Next I had to decide on a colour scheme. To have used any unit colour serving in Tobruk would have been fatal, so what better than that the colour be as near as possible to the desert itself. Thus the dull yellow in the design and the black narrow band around it is a permanent reminder of those who lost their lives in that lonely desert and for others since joined up with that deathless army.

The Rat, of course, is each and every one of us; another reminder of the mocking voice who clean forgot what a dangerous animal the rat is when cornered. Thus did we raise a name of loathing to the heights of fame. Many times after the badge was first worn I was asked why I picked the 2/1st Machine Gunners' colour scheme, but that gallant company was not with us in Tobruk, a fact which did not escape my motive when deciding on the colour.

There then you have the story of your badge – a 'true symbol of courage, audacity and comradeship. A badge any man should be proud to wear. (I might add that the badge varies slightly in size in some States, but the design is the same.)"

A Badge that you should be very proud to wear and when it is worn, stop and think of those Rats who are no longer with us.

Originally the crown on the top of the badge was clipped on and carried a year number. It was replaced every year when the membership dues were paid. Descendants may remember their father carefully clipping the new year's crown in place. Each dated crown had a different background colour. The badge was changed to feature a permanent crown without a year number in 2002. All Veterans were granted free lifetime membership.



PETER WEGNER ARCHIBALD UPDATE

You may have read a story in our April 2021 THN edition which mentioned that artist Peter Wegner, with the assistance of committee member Lachie Gaylard, has recently been painting a number of our siege veterans to add to a collection of portraits he began about ten years ago.

We now have 19 portraits of our veterans painted by Peter, on permanent display at Tobruk House, thanks to committee member Ian Marr who sourced, stained and mounted the backing board on which the framed pictures are mounted.

Obviously, we were extremely excited when it was announced back in June that Peter had been awarded the prestigious 2021 Archibald Prize for his wonderful portrait of 100-year-old Guy Warren, also an artist.



Further to this story, there is another 'connection' which exists between Peter Wegner and ROTA. Member Sue Turner (wife of our songwriter John, whose story was in the June 2021 THN)) reliably informs me that Peter is a 'Tobruk'. By this, Sue means that he is a former pupil of Tobruk St Primary School in Morwell. Sue taught at the school and husband John was principal there for many years.

Unfortunately, the school (and its name) no longer exists, as a new school, Morwell Central, has been built in the last few years, but ROTA still provides an annual award, as shown below, for a student nominated by teachers. John who is now retired usually attends the school each year to tell the story of the Tobruk siege.

*This award is presented to a student who demonstrates resilience, both in their attitude to learning and through their general conduct.
The Rats of Tobruk showed great tenacity and resilience when fighting in the desert sands of Libya during the eight months of the siege of Tobruk from April to December 1941.
NEVER SURRENDER*

Finally, if you visit Tobruk House, make sure that you check out the recent installation of a collection of Peter's portraits. (See photo right side above. Not the originals unfortunately!)

And, of course, a big congratulations and a thank you to Peter.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to ROTA:

Matt Bolton Verna Esdaile Greg Stevens Robert Campbell
Catherine Davies Julie Dawson Paul Hamilton Steven Valentine
Ashley Richmond Nola Adams Jude McKinnis Sue Grund Max Grund



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

QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOUR AWARDED TO BILL GIBBINS



Bill Gibbins, our Patron, and Life Member has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours.

Bill was named a Member in the General Division (AM) "for significant service to horse racing, and to people with disability".

The founder of trucking company FCL which he sold some years ago to the LinFox group, Bill has been a committed philanthropist.

He won the hearts and minds of all Australians back in 2007 when he spent part of his fortune to outbid a Sydney developer to save the Albert Park headquarters of the surviving Rats of Tobruk – just when the old veterans thought age might finally weary them and the years condemn.

Bill assured the Rats that the premises where their association had met for more than 50 years was theirs to keep for as long as they wanted. As he told them at the time: "I thought I'd buy it and let you keep it going, because we owe you a debt

that can't possibly be repaid". He also said he would like it to continue to be used by other military organisations indefinitely. True to his word, the Association continues to have the use of Tobruk House, rent free. The Association, and in particular the surviving Rats are very appreciative of his generosity.

On Anzac Day 2013, Bill was awarded with Life Membership of ROTA for his services to the Rats of Tobruk Association.

At Warrnambool Racecourse in December 2018, Bill proudly oversaw the inaugural running of a race he founded, The Jericho Cup – a \$300,000 flat race which recreated that staged by Australia's mounted troops in Palestine in a brief lull in hostilities during the First World War.

The original race, involving members of the Australian Light Horse, was run over three miles through the desert sands. Dubbed 'The Jericho Cup', line honours went to a horse named Bill the Bastard, arguably Australia's greatest war horse.

Inspired by this story, in part because his wife Iolanda often jokingly referred to him as 'Bill the Bastard', Bill sought an opportunity to honour the courage and spirit of the mounted troops as the centenary of the event neared.

And so the Jericho Cup came into being - a race restricted to Australian and New Zealand horses to preserve the fighting spirit of the servicemen and their mounts, their sacrifices and bravery.

Congratulations to Bill, this is a well-deserved honour.

ROCKHAMPTON GIRLS GRAMMAR HONOURS THE RATS

For some years the Rats of Tobruk Assn. Central Queensland has engaged the Head Girls from Rockhampton Girls Grammar School to deliver an address at the local Anzac Day Service in Rockhampton. This service takes place at Jeffries Park, adjacent to the local Tobruk Memorial. The 2021 address was researched and delivered by Head Girls Hannah Goodwin and Brooke Adams. Both girls are from Central Queensland and are boarders at RGGG. Our Association sees students like Hannah and Brooke as being our "flag bearers" of the future.

We thank Deanne Johnston, RGGG Principal, for the photographs and are very pleased to include the girls' excellent speeches here.



Head girls Brooke and Hannah with ROTA member Robert Lang on ANZAC Day at the Tobruk memorial in Rockhampton

Brooke

Good morning all, Hannah and I are incredibly honoured to have been given this opportunity by the Rats of Tobruk Association, to tell this tale marked in history.

Today, we remember and honour the bravery and sacrifices made by our country's personnel over 100 years ago, beginning with the men who served at Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915. Though an unsuccessful battle, the Gallipoli campaign solidified what we know as the Spirit of the Anzac. This spirit passed through the generations and was seen again by the young men who fought in the Siege of Tobruk.

The Siege of Tobruk officially began on April 11th, 1941, beginning what was about to become one of the harshest and cruelest battles of the Second World War. Over 35,000 allied forces fought for the recapture of the Port of Tobruk, and to hold that port against the Italian and German attacks of the 35,000 allies; 14,000 were Australians, the rest Commonwealth members.

14,000 young Australian men were at war, but more than 14,000 friends, family and loved ones were at home, awaiting their return.

The conditions in Libya at this time were cruel. In summer and spring, the heat was stifling, reaching 46 degrees throughout the days, but the nights were frigidly cold. Food and water were scarce. At points, the men were rationed to roughly 3 litres of water per day, and when your job is to patrol a desert, that's not a lot. The men serving in the 9th Division signed up to defend their state and country, unknowing of the dangers and hardships that would lie ahead.

The Siege of Tobruk began before conscription was introduced in Australia in 1942, meaning the young men who travelled across seas, away from their loved ones in a completely foreign country, did so voluntarily. Coming out of the Great Depression, wishing to make a name for themselves and their families, bright-eyed boys faked their age and set off to defend their country. Some as young as 15 and 16 fought and died at Tobruk, still children themselves, their sense of honour and pride evident in the sacrifice they made.

Hannah

The Siege of Tobruk lasted from March until December of 1941. They spent 241 days in the open, under constant air and land attack, with sickness and disease spreading with vengeance. But the Rats weren't done when the siege was over. After being withdrawn, the 9th Division was redeployed to Syria. It was not until January 1943, nearly 700 days after being initially deployed, that the 9th Division returned home.

700 days without seeing their loved ones. 700 days in fear. 700 days in war. Those 700 days were cruel, claiming the lives of over 1,000 Australian men.

But this did not shake the spirit of the Rats of Tobruk. The voyage back to Australia by most of the 9th on the Queen Mary saw the unwavering 'larrikin' spirit of the ANZACs in full play. There the poor ship was taken for all its worth, with the troops taking small pieces of the ship with them, from the cutlery to the napery.

When the 9th division returned to Australia, they were granted three weeks' leave, before re-forming and retraining to prepare for the jungle warfare that was the New Guinea campaign in later in 1943.

The New Guinea campaign was a counterattack against the Empire of Japan, as they believed the war was not over. Those who had invaded the Australian-mandated territories of New Guinea, were unaware of the dangers and hardships that awaited them in the jungle lands. The 9th Division fought there for over a year, before returning to Australia. The 9th division then reembarked for Borneo, where they remained until the end of the war. The fighting 9th was officially disbanded in February of 1946.



RGGGS prefects on ANZAC Day at the Tobruk memorial in Rockhampton, which is modelled on the original memorial in Tobruk

Today, we stand by this monument to remember our Rats of Tobruk, the men whose valor and dedication show us so clearly what the spirit of the ANZACS is about. From the cove of Gallipoli to the siege of Tobruk, the unwavering spirit of courage, endurance and mateship is felt by all. We honour their name and legacy today, The Rats of Tobruk

Lest we forget.

ROTA member Robert Lang tells us that the girls at RGGGS have become avid readers of the Tobruk House News. Head girl Hannah Goodwin is pictured here catching up on a recent issue.



AFTER 25 YEARS OF WORK, LES DRELICH CAN FINALLY SHARE HIS FATHER'S STORY

Mieczyslaw Drelich raised his family in Moonah in Hobart's northern suburbs. Many Polish families still live in Moonah.

"He said that he wanted people in 200 years' time to know where the name Drelich came from in Tasmania," said Leszek Drelich about his father Mieczyslaw.

Now, alongside the name, an improbable love story and a personal account of the difficult conditions building Tasmania's hydroelectricity scheme have been made accessible to English speakers. Mr Drelich has finished translating his father's memoir from Polish to English, a project that he began in 1996, when he knew little written Polish. The translation has just been published by the Polish Museum and Archives in Australia and is called *On The Rough Waves of Life*.

Leszek Drelich translated his father's book from Polish into English, despite only having low Polish literacy

"It was really difficult for me, because my Polish literacy is very low," he said

"I'd say that I was at a level of a four year old in literacy, and that's probably praising myself.

I am a Polish speaker, but I can't read Polish very well."

He started the process in 1996, with a Polish English dictionary.

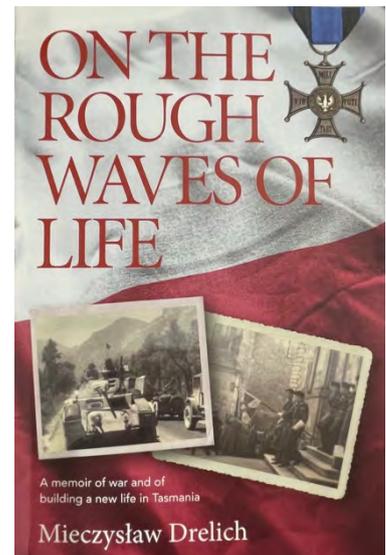
"Then it just became too difficult, it started to gather dust."

Recently, with more time and technology, Mr Drelich went back to the book.

"I thought if I don't do it now, my children and my grandchildren will not be able to read my father's story, it will disappear."

Mieczyslaw came to Tasmania in 1947 where he began work on the hydroelectricity scheme that now powers the state.

In 1991 it was Mieczyslaw who suggested installing a plaque at the Polish club in Hobart marking 50 years since the siege at Tobruk.



In April 1940, the Polish Independent Carpathian Brigade, comprising over 4000 men, was sent to Palestine under the command of the British, and in August 1941 the brigade was sent to relieve some of the exhausted Australian troops defending Tobruk. The Poles were welcomed by Australian troops who were keen to be rid of the heat, sandstorms and constant German bombardment. Chester Wilmot in his book 'Tobruk 1941' takes up the story of their arrival....



Three officers in freshly ironed shirts and shorts and pith helmets got out at the control post and headed up the road towards 9th Div H.Q. The traffic cop turned to the driver of their car and said, "Struth, who are the blokes with the flash lids on?"

"Don't you know?" said the driver. "They're the Poles. We're all gonna be relieved. The boss was talkin' about it yesterday. Won't be long now."

"We ain't never goin' to be relieved, we're here for the duration." said the M.P.

The traffic cop then looked up the road at the receding Poles. "You'll be sorry", he said, as he waved the next car through.

The Poles, in relieving the men of the 18th Brigade, arrived in Tobruk shortly after this and soon earned a fearsome reputation, holding onto their positions from September to December 1941.

Post war, the Rats of Tobruk lobbied the federal government to bring these men to Australia because at war's end these Polish armed forces found themselves homeless. As a result, in 1947 and 1948, over 1500 former members of the Polish military forces, including many who had served with the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade in Tobruk, migrated to Australia, where they were warmly welcomed by their Australian mates.

A sizeable number worked on the Hydro-Electric Scheme in Tasmania and many others were sent to various parts of Australia to work on various projects.

'...an improbable love story and a personal account of the difficult conditions building Tasmania's hydroelectricity scheme have been made accessible to English speakers.'

The book, 'On the Rough Waves of Life', was launched at Tobruk House on Sunday 23 May and was very well attended. Mr Andrzej Soszinski, Honorary Consul General for the Republic of Poland officially launched the book and the Polish Ambassador, Mr Michał Kołodziejcki, also dropped by.



On speaking about his father, Les recounted that his dad would rarely leave the house without his 'Rats' badge on.

We always look forward to catching up with our Polish friends and it is also great to see Tobruk House being used by other associated groups. Our next opportunity for a Polish Australian get-together will be on August 29, when we will again be meeting at the hall before heading to the Shrine for the Carpathian Commemorative Last Post service.



Leszek Drelich talking about the task of translating his father's memoirs at the Tobruk House book launch

WHAT SHOULD OUR FUTURE LOOK LIKE?



We have had a number of responses to this question and will continue to collate the thoughts and suggestions, to be presented to the wider membership later in the year. We would like as many people as possible to provide input so please put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboards) with your thoughts.

RATS OF TOBRUK EXHIBITION TOUR

The 80th anniversary Rats of Tobruk Exhibition (sponsored by a Victorian Government grant) has been a great success, especially on our open days where visitors have taken the time to read every panel and absorb the whole story of the siege.



We have been approached by many RSL clubs for permission to host the exhibition and are pleased to say that it can now be viewed in venues across the country, including Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

And, of course, you can also see it on line on our website.



MUCH MORE TO THE DARNLEY DIXALINE STORY by Max Gill in Farm Weekly June 1 2021

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The story of the Darnley Dixie first appeared in the xxx issue of the THN but was reported more recently in Ripe Magazine within Farm Weekly. This follow-up to that story adds another dimension and a puzzle. If readers can assist, please contact the ROTA Secretary.)



Retired Yelbeni farmer John Marchant with two photographs his father, Private William Alfred 'Bill' Marchant of the 2/28th Infantry Battalion signals platoon, sent back to Western Australia from the Western Desert campaign of World War II. His father's medals are in the wooden box.

THE day Ripe magazine hit the streets in the Farm Weekly last month with a story about World War II Rats of Tobruk and the battlefield-created Darnley Dixaline banjo, John Marchant's phone started ringing.

It was old Central Wheatbelt farmer mates calling up the retired Yelbeni wheat and sheep farmer - he and wife Di now live in Edgewater, Perth - to tell him a picture of his father was in Ripe. "There must have been eight or 10 calls and (a week later) when I went to a funeral (of a farming acquaintance) more people tapped me on the shoulder to tell me there was a picture of my father in Ripe", Mr Marchant, 75, said.

His father was Private William Alfred Marchant, known as Bill, a signaller in the 2/28th Infantry Battalion signals platoon, one of the revered Rats of Tobruk and best mate of Dixaline creator Pte Walter John 'Jack' Darnley, also of the 2/28th signals platoon. Bill Marchant was one of 29 members of the platoon to sign the front of his mate's Dixaline during the 241-day siege of Tobruk in 1941, when mainly Australian infantry held out against the superior-in-numbers and better armed Afrika Korps to prevent the small but strategic Libyan port falling into enemy hands.

Made from an army mess tin, a drum skin and pieces of wood scrounged from the Tobruk battlefield, with strings sent from Australia, the Dixaline survived not only the Tobruk siege, but the New Guinea and Borneo campaigns of the later Pacific theatre the 2/28th fought in. Now very fragile, it is on display in the Geraldton City RSL's Birdwood House Military Museum, having been donated with other items by Pte Darnley's family.

His son John, 80, from Geraldton had recalled for Ripe last month how his father's mates and co-conspirators in a number of high-jinks escapades while in Libya, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon during the 1940-43 Western Desert Campaign, were Bill Marchant and Pte Ken Lucas. It is more than likely Bill Marchant had a hand in helping Pte Darnley pinch a crate of beer from the officers' mess then shared it around the signals platoon.

Also highly likely is his joining his best mate in posing as conductors on a Cairo tram and collecting 'fares' from passengers to pay for drinks later, while on leave in Egypt. There is certainly photographic evidence both Bill Marchant and Pte Lucas joined Pte Darnley on 'French leave' - the troops' nickname for unauthorised leave, technically being absent without leave and a serious offence - in Beirut, Lebanon, in February, 1942.

According to John Darnley, his father told a story of the three of them "borrowing" an unattended light aircraft to fly to Beirut, but they left it behind and "made other arrangements" to return to their platoon after the unauthorised sojourn.

Mr Darnley said his father had learned to fly and obtained his pilot's licence while a member of an aero club at Wiluna, where he worked as an electrician at a gold mine before enlisting in July 1940. He said his father had hoped to join the air force, but was rejected because he lacked requisite formal mathematics qualifications, so enlisted instead in the infantry.

A nickname on the front of the Darnley Dixaline and a World War II photograph of Western Australia signalmen from the 2/28th Infantry Battalion on leave in Tel Aviv, beg the question: who was 'Sticky' Stewart?

Among the 29 signatures on the front of the Dixaline is a name clearly printed in capital letters "STICKY STEWART", a member of the 2/28th signals platoon along with Privates 'Jack' Darnley and 'Bill' Marchant at Tobruk. On the back of a photograph sent by Bill Marchant back to his mother in Maylands from Tel Aviv, a pencilled note lists the surnames of the five members of the 2/28th enjoying a beer while on leave, as "White, Marchant, Tredrea, Delf, Stewart".

A "Pink" White signed the front of the Dixaline and was probably Pte Lyall Leslie White (WX 6701) whose military record shows he signed up at Southern Cross on July 20, 1940 and was discharged on September 15, 1945 after being a prisoner of war. The second man has been identified by his son John as Pte WA (Bill) Marchant (WX4947) who enlisted at Maylands on July 23, 1940, with his date of discharge listed in his service record as October 1, 1944. He also signed the Dixaline.

No one with the surname Tredrea signed the Dixaline, but there was a John Henry Tredrea (WX8396) from WA in the 2/28th Infantry Battalion. According to Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) records, he would have been aged about 41 in 1942 when the photograph was possibly taken. He enlisted at Northam on October 4, 1940 and was discharged with the rank of sergeant on January 12, 1944. In the picture he is the only one wearing a lanyard on the right shoulder of his dress uniform signifying a rank above private but not an officer.

A "Yackem" Delfs also signed the Dixaline was probably Pte William Grenville Delfs (WX 6702) who signed up at Southern Cross on July 20, 1940 - the same day and location Pte White signed up - and was discharged on October 30, 1945, after being a prisoner of war. All were members of the 2/28th.

But trying to establish whether Stewart, the fifth soldier in the photograph, is 'Sticky' who signed the Dixaline is more difficult. Barry Stinson, president of Birdwood Military Museum, Geraldton City RSL president and a national serviceman who went to Malaya, attempted some years ago to identify all of the soldiers named on the Dixaline from their DVA service records. But he drew a blank on 'Sticky' Stewart.

There appears to have been 12 members of the 2/28th with the surname Stewart and possibly seven of them came from WA. Of those, research by State Library of Western Australia librarian Peter Edwards, seems to eliminate two as potential 'Sticky' Stewarts.

The State Library holds the Ray Stewart collection - a World War II collection as unique as Birdwood Military Museum's Darnley collection with its Dixaline. It consists of nine diaries - one written in pencil on a roll of toilet paper - surreptitiously kept by Lieutenant Raymond (Ray)



Stanley Stewart (WX7302) of the 2/28th during almost three years in prisoner of war camps in North Africa, Italy and eventually at Offizierslager (Officer Camp) Stalag V-A at Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart in south-eastern Germany. Lt Stewart had signed on in Northam in 1940 and was captured, along with 489 other members of the 2/28th, in the disastrous assault on Ruin Ridge in the first Battle of El Alamein, Egypt, on July 27, 1942.

His daughter transcribed the diaries which were donated to the State Library in 1999 and digitised transcripts are available free to read online through the State Library catalogue.

But they make no mention of the nickname 'Sticky' and a photo of Lt Stewart as a German prisoner of war (PoW) does not look like the soldier in the Tel Aviv photograph, even allowing for significant weight loss during his time in PoW camps - Ray Stewart's diaries often complain about the poor quality of the food and how little of it there was.

Soldier Stewart in the Tel Aviv photograph also has plain epaulets on his uniform, a lieutenant would

have had braided epaulets.

Mr Edwards' research also uncovered a Les Stewart who played a brass instrument in the 2/28th battalion band. He was Leslie Stewart (WX7525) who was aged 39 when he enlisted in August 1940 at Subiaco and was also a PoW.

But his enlistment photographs show he looked nothing like the soldier in the Tel Aviv photograph and his May, 1945, discharge papers state he had the index finger of his right hand missing. The Tel Aviv photo clearly shows soldier Stewart has four fingers and a thumb holding his drink.

A third member of the 2/28th, Leslie Norman Stewart (W62368) would have been 47 when he enlisted at Victoria Park in April 1942 and is unlikely to be 'Sticky', given his age and relatively late enlistment.

So the four most likely to be 'Sticky' are:

- George Ian Balfour Stewart (WX5703), who was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1905, but signed up in Harvey, WA, in June 1940 and was a PoW before his discharge in March 1946.
- George Walter Stewart (WX19496) who was born in East Fremantle in 1916, signed up at Beaconsfield in February 1942 and was discharged with the rank of corporal in February, 1946.
- John Dougall Stewart (WX6736) who was born in 1914 in Sunderland, England, but enlisted at Moorine Rock, WA, in July, 1940 and was discharged as a "signalman" in March, 1944 - the only Stewart to have his rank specifically listed by the DVA as signalman.
- Morris Vernon Stewart (WX4039) who was born at York in 1902, enlisted at Victoria Park in May, 1940 and was discharged in September, 1945, with the rank of sergeant.

TED STONE'S STORY by Lachlan Gaylard

Victor 'Ted' Edward Stone was born on the 28th Nov 1920 to Vic and Rose Stone in Derrinallum, Victoria. Victor Snr had served in the first world war and was awarded the military medal for 'conscious bravery' whilst in France. Ted finished school one week after his thirteenth birthday. He sat for his Merit Certificate at the Derrinallum state school and passed, in Dec 1933.

Ted began working around the district, firstly on a dairy farm, then on a sheep station as a rabbitier, and then as a station hand. He worked there until 1937 when he applied for a position as a lad labourer in the Victorian Railways and was lucky enough to be accepted. He boarded with his mother's sister in Hawthorn. As soon as he turned 18. Ted joined the Militia, with the 39th Battalion. They had their drill hall and headquarters in Burwood Rd Hawthorn.

1939 saw the outbreak of the Second World War. Ted, with the 39th Battalion was called up for internment camp duties so he spent the next month guarding what were called enemy aliens at Wirth's Park, situated in St Kilda Rd, where the National Gallery stands today. The Battalion did another month training at Trawool. During this time, Ted did not spend very much time at work.

In June Ted and four of his friends decided to join up. Ted was too young, so he had to put his age up by a year to be accepted. They were originally posted to the Eight Div. AASC, but because the Seventh Div. AASC were in need of reinforcements, they were transferred over to Puckapunyal and after a couple of months Ted's company was attached to the 2/5th, Field Ambulance.



They sailed for the Middle East on Caulfield Cup Day, 1940. They arrived in Bombay and were put on a train and sent about 100 miles north to a British staging camp at a village called Deolali. They left the staging camp on the 9th of Nov. and disembarked at Kantara. On the 25th they boarded the train that was to take them across the Sinai Desert to Palestine and were taken to their camp site at Julis. Ted celebrated his 20th birthday three days after arriving in Palestine.

The next month was spent training and getting acclimatised. In December they were ordered to prepare for a move to Egypt. The 2/5th. moved out on the 4th January. By this time, the unit had received their full quota of vehicles, so they were completely mobile. On 27th Jan, they made it up to Mersa Matruah and saw their first evidence of war - bombed buildings and the desert littered by burnt out vehicles.

The 18th Brig, including the 2/5th, stayed in the Tobruk area until early March, when they were relieved by the newly formed 9th Div. They were then ordered to return to Amriyah, a camp just outside of Alexandria in Egypt.

They were able to take leave into Alexandria, and were under notice to prepare for being shipped to Greece with the rest of the 6th Div. But then, at 8pm on the 4th April, the day before they were due to leave for Greece, a parade was called to tell the troops that there was a change of plan, and that they, with the rest of the 18th Brig, were on their way back to the desert. Ted arrived in Tobruk on Good Friday 1941 where he remained for almost four months.

On the 21st of August, a Polish Brigade arrived by sea to relieve the 18th Brigade and so a couple of days later Ted went out on the British Destroyer Havoc. It is worth recording that in the first 90 days of the siege there were over 1000 air raids' on Tobruk.

They were disembarked at Alexandria and the next day they boarded a train for Palestine. When Ted disembarked, he found his father Vic waiting to greet him. It was the first contact that they'd had since the previous August.

The 2/5th had three weeks in Palestine getting reequipped and having leave, before they were ordered up to Homms in Syria and then on to Aleppo, close to the Turkish border. Ted returned to Aleppo, where he celebrated his 21st, birthday.

The 2/5th were embarked on the Nieu Amsterdam on the 11th February, heading to Bombay. In Bombay, a decision was made that the 2/5th would sail for Burma, but Burma fell before they arrived, so they then headed for Java. They were in sight of land when word was received that Java had also been overrun by the enemy. On the 22nd March, they sailed for Adelaide.

From here Ted and the 2/5th hopped all around the eastern coast of Australia to different training camps, finally arriving in Milne Bay on the 15th, right in the middle of the wet season. They did not have to wait too long to get to grips with the Japanese, landing on the 25th August. For the next three weeks a very savage battle took place. By the middle of September, the enemy had been forced to withdraw and from then, until they were relieved in March, the unit was engaged in so called mopping-up operations on the various islands and up the coast as far as Buna. Ted also celebrated another birthday, this time his 22nd. On the 5th March they headed to Townsville, from where they were taken up to Ravenshoe, on the Atherton tablelands. On the 29th March 1943, they left for their first home leave since sailing in Oct 1940.

After three years in the services, with no home leave, Ted found out that he did not have a lot in common with the folks at home. So he was not too upset when the time came to head back up north. They spent the next three months training in jungle warfare, until the middle of August, when the unit was shipped up to Port Moresby. While in here, Ted celebrated his 23rd birthday, his fourth away from Australia. In the middle of January, the rest of the unit was airlifted over the ranges to Dumpu in the Ramu Valley, where they took part in what became known as the Shaggy Ridge campaign. Ted and most of the transport section were acting as stretcher bearers.

The unit was air lifted out and taken to Lae, where they headed back to Australia. They arrived back at Townsville on the 20th January and they were all given two weeks' home leave. Ted arrived home to find that his father was a patient in the Heidelberg Hospital, awaiting surgery. Ted visited and received a phone call two days later that he had apparently blacked out, fallen and hit his head. He did not recover and was buried at the Springvale Cemetery, with full Military Honours.

Two days after the funeral Ted re-joined his unit just outside of Brisbane. The unit was moved up to the Atherton Tablelands again then were taken down to Cairns and embarked onto landing barges to practice assault landing. The unit stayed on the Tablelands until May 1945, Ted having his first birthday, and the unit's first Xmas, on Aussie soil for five years.

Then in May the unit took part in the amphibious landing at Balikpapan in Borneo. The war came to a sudden end, with the dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Japan, in August. Married men got first priority discharge, so Ted spent his sixth birthday in the army, in Borneo, and was not discharged until December 46.

On discharge the troops were offered trade training and Ted applied to do a joinery course at the Brunswick Tech College. After completing his course, he was given employment at Burwood Timber Mills.

Ted married Valerie Allshorn at Hawthorn on the 6th May 1950. Shortly after, Ted purchased a small electroplating company. Ted and Val moved to Ivanhoe in 1952, where they had two sons, Victor and Charles. Charles joined him in the business and by 1975 Ted started the business transition from father to son. Ted retired in April 84, and after son Victor's death in 1985 they shifted to Endeavour Hills, where they lived until they moved into the Meadowvale Retirement Village in 1992. In retirement Ted and Val did a lot of traveling around Australia and abroad.

Val died on Ted's 99th birthday aged 90. Ted stoically carried on and reconnected with the Rats of Tobruk Association, of which he had been a member since 1947.

Ted died on the 21st of June 2021 in his 101st year, Ted will be remembered as a true gentleman and a man who did not let his age get in the way of anything he did.

Ted is survived by son Charles, grandchildren Daniel and Kristy, their partners Erin and Sam. And great grandchildren Tahlia, Liam and Archie.



Ted Stone with the Governor General David Hurley at the 80th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk service in April 2021

DINNER AT TOBRUK BARRACKS

Recently veteran Hautrie Crick (in his 103rd year) alongside Members of the committee and their partners attended the Tobruk Sergeants mess 'dining-in' night at Puckapunyal. The night was a great opportunity for members to engage with current serving defence personal and perpetuate the ties of the Rats of Tobruk. The dinner was accompanied by several performances from five members of the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums. It should be noted that while the night stretched into the early hours of the morning Haurtrie Crick still saw many people off to bed before eventually retiring himself at 12am. That didn't stop him rising early for breakfast the next morning!

We give special thanks to Warrant Officer Andy Watt for facilitating the night and we look forward to future interactions.



Pictures: Above – Veteran Hautrie Crick with Warrant Officer Andy Watt. Top Right – ROTA representatives L to R - Ian Marr, Karolina Sevcikova, Ann Marr, Lachlan Gaylard, Marlene Bingham, Bruce Bingham. Above - ROTAP&D member Martin Bull giving a drumstick twirling lesson to a member of the Tobruk Barracks. Below - ROTAP&D representatives L to R Brian Roche, Martin Bull, Kristen Kirsch, Robert Bennett, Mick Ryan





ROTA MERCHANDISE

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



LADIES SUMMER POPPY SCARF \$15



ROTA ROSEWOOD PLAQUE
with 'No Surrender' scroll
\$95



ROTA FACEMASK
Comfortable soft cotton, 3-layer
protection. One size fits all
\$12



80th ANNIVERSARY TWO-UP SET
Includes kip and two 1941 pennies
\$17



ROTA 'BASEBALL' CAP
\$20



ROTA BADGE CAR
WINDOW STICKER
Sticks to inside of window
\$10



80th ANNIVERSARY
SIEGE MEDAL \$50



ROTA 80th ANNIVERSARY
RUGBY TOP
\$45



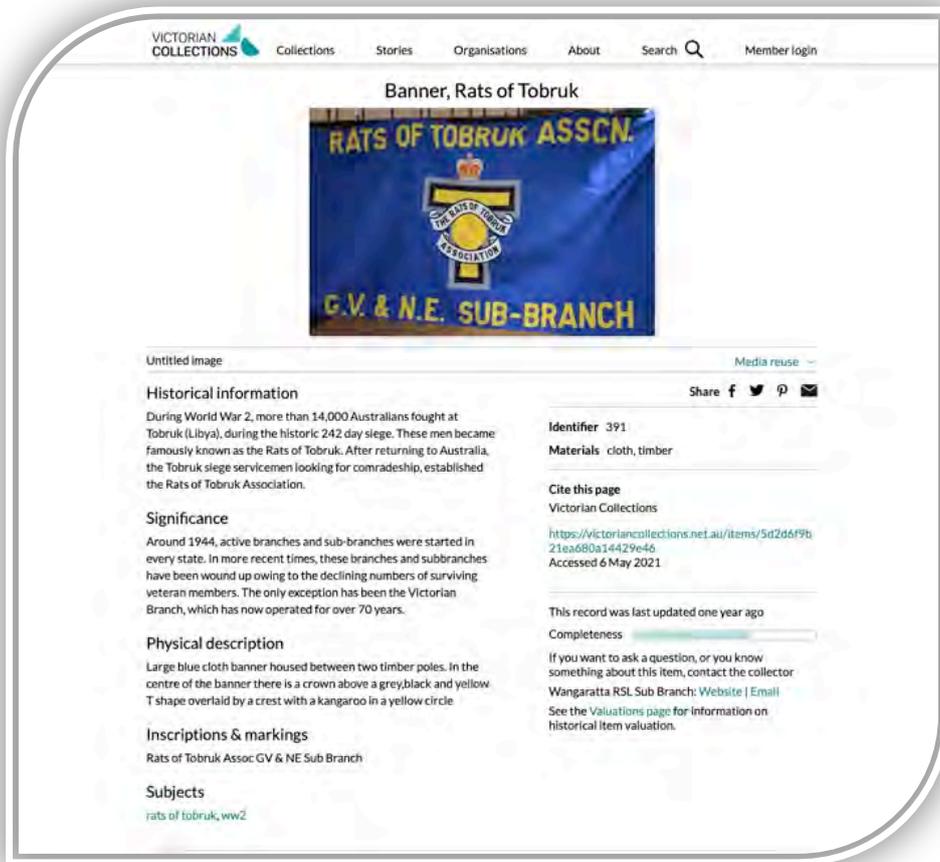
ROTA 80th ANNIVERSARY
POLO SHIRT
\$40



STUBBY HOLDER
Features selected verses
from a poem written during
the siege.
\$9

MUSEUMS VICTORIA ADDS A ROTA BANNER TO THEIR COLLECTION

As the ROTA sub-branches folded during the past 30 years there is no doubt the much of the memorabilia has been lost, so it's good to see that Museums Victoria has chosen to record some of it, this banner below being a good example.



BIRTHDAY RATS

We are very pleased to note the following birthdays:

Derek Holyoake	8 June	98
Dennis Davis	14 June	101
John Fleming	29 June	102
Syd Kinsman	2 July	100
Fred Rose	4 July	102
Dick Burgess	9 July	101
Tom Pritchard	24 August	100

Sydney Kingsman is pictured here with his celebration cakes and balloons.

Congratulations to all!



RATS OF TOBRUK NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND

In the February edition of the Tobruk House News, the launch of the 80th Anniversary appeal was announced. The aim is to raise during 2021, \$100,000 that will go into the 'Rats of Tobruk Association Neuroscience Fellowship Fund', which has become a 'virtual' monument to the mighty Rats of Tobruk.



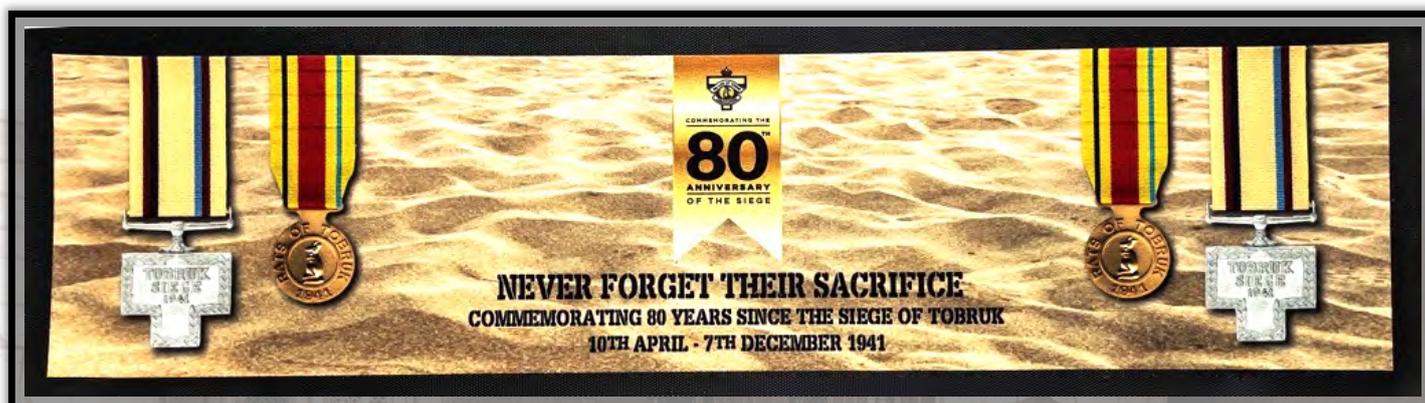
Since the fellowship fund was established by the surviving veteran's, an annual Fellowship has been awarded to a young doctor so that he or she can undertake studies associated with paediatric neuroscience. The Fellowship has had an inspirational track record of success and achievement. It is a sought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

The initial response to the appeal has been good with just over \$2,500 being raised to date. Thank you to all those who have contributed. Nevertheless, there is a considerable way to go. There is no better way to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the siege than by donating to the appeal. With the support of all descendants and others, the ambitious target will be achieved.

The link to this appeal is <https://www.mycase.com.au/page/241888/siege-of-tobruk-80th-anniversary-appeal>

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 Jessica Frean, Planned Giving, RCH Foundation (03 9345 6389 or email: jessica.frean@rch.org.au)



THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY BAR MAT \$40

The Rats of Tobruk 80th Anniversary Bar Mat is now available to order. Measuring 890mm x 240mm it is produced on high quality poly-felt with a non-slip rubber backing. See the Merchandise Order form on page 23 to order



**RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC
MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM**

ITEM	Cost per Item	Quantity	Size S,M,L, XL,XX	Postage Yes/No	Postage *	Total	Comments
80 th Anniversary Medal	\$50				\$10		Postage for up to two badges to same address.
80 th Anniversary Mug	\$18				\$10		Postage for up to four mugs to same address.
80 th Anniversary Rugby Top	\$45				\$10		
80 th Anniversary Polo Shirt	\$40				\$10		
80 th Anniversary Two-Up Set	\$17				Inc postage		
ROTA "baseball" style cap	\$20				\$10		
ROTA Face Mask	\$12				\$2		\$50 for five masks plus \$6 postage.
ROTA Bar Mat	\$40				\$10		
Badge Car Window Sticker	\$10				Inc Postage		20% discount for more than one.
ROTA Stubby Holder	\$9				\$6		\$10 postage for up to six.
ROTA Rosewood Plaque	\$95				\$10		
			Colour				
Ladies Poppy Scarf (light weight)	\$15				\$6		
*\$10 TOTAL 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 Details: Account Name: Rats of Tobruk Association BSB: 013 223
Account No: 2102 51748

Payment can also be made by Credit or Debit Card. To arrange this please ring our Merchandising Officer, Graeme Clifford: 0418 882 323

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

Email Address: _____@_____

Delivery Address: _____

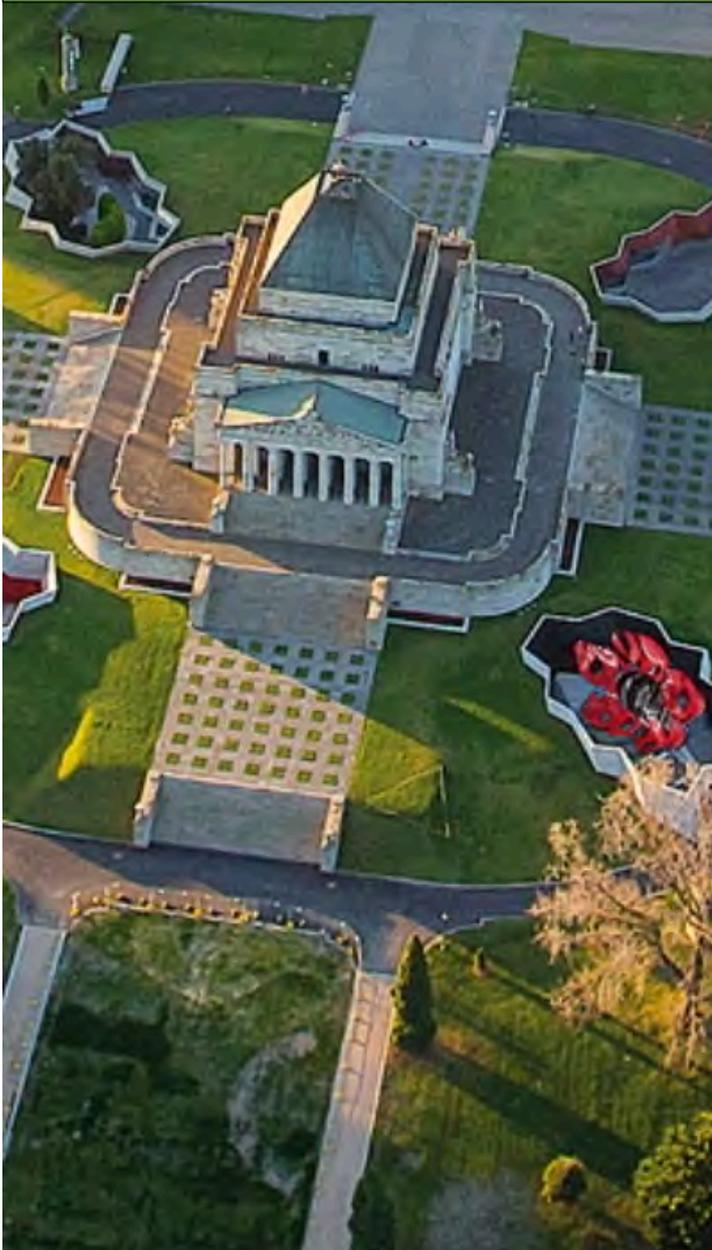
Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

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 (Graeme Clifford)
email: ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com Phone: 0418 882 323

What's on at The Shrine in 2021

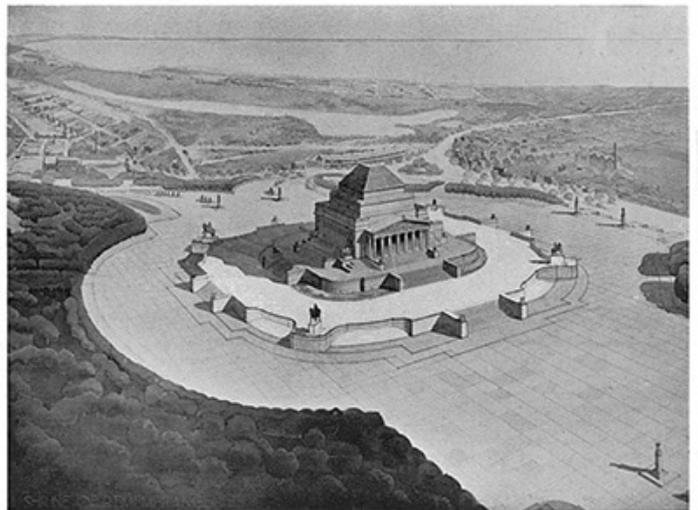


IMAGINING CENTAUR



The tragic story of the Australian Hospital Ship Centaur, sunk on 14 May 1943. A series of charcoal drawings by celebrated artist Dean Bowen to commemorate the 268 innocent souls lost and the 64 brave individuals who survived.

THE HISTORY OF THE SHRINE



Learn why the Shrine was built. Who built it and what inspired its design? Follow a timeline of the Shrine's history and view a gallery of historical photos.

CHANGED FOREVER Images of Conflict



Stories of migrants who have resettled in Australia from war-torn countries are presented beside those of recent veterans of overseas service in the Australian Defence Force. All have been redefined by the emotional and physical dislocation of war and seek to reconcile this with their new lives. Their personal stories reflect the range and depth of experiences in conflict and post-war. This moving exhibition explores the impacts of global and civil conflict in changing lives and shaping contemporary Australia.

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.