



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

www.ratsoftobrukassociation.org.au

PHONE No 0432 232 502

GENERAL MEETINGS NORMALLY START AT 10.30AM

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

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

Month / Date	Event Description
April 3 2022	Tobruk Sunday
April 25	Anzac Day
June 24 2022	General Meeting

Patron: Bill Gibbins

Committee of Management:

President – Heather Macfarlane

Vice President – Bruce Bingham

Secretary – Lachlan Gaylard

Treasurer – Graeme Clifford

Other Committee Members –

Tony Smith, Ian Marr,
Karolina Sevcikova, Tony Codd,
Marlene Bingham, Kelly-Ann McKinnis
Stuart Tolliday,

TOBRUK HOUSE NEWS

Deadlines

Editorial and Advertising

NEXT ISSUE: JUNE 2022

DEADLINE: MAY 4

We welcome contributions from our community
but cannot guarantee publication.

Email is preferred with documents in Word and
pictures in jpeg format but not essential.

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will not be published.

Main writers: Mike Kiernan, Lachlan Gaylard

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.

SIMPSON, Donald Leonard (Don), VX42617, 2nd / 32nd Battalion, 13 January 2022, 103 yrs
CREELY Peter, Affiliate Member 3 December 2021
THARLE, Rodney (Rod) NASHO Affiliate Member, 11 February 2022

RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC.

President's Message – April 2022

Dear ROTA members and friends,

I am extremely proud and honoured to have been elected and taken on the role of President of this very special organisation.

All my life I have been a "Junior Rat".

My father, Trevor "Mac" Macfarlane served at Tobruk as an orderly with the 2nd 4th Australian General Hospital. Dad remained with 2/4 AGH for the duration of WW2 and beyond, finishing up at Redbank Repatriation Hospital in Qld. Dad was secretary/treasurer of ROTA from 1991 - 1995 then honoured with the role of President of ROTA in 1999 and 2000, and awarded life membership in 1996.

My mum Enid was also on the ROTA Ladies Auxiliary and had the honour of being #1 ROTA ticket holder, which she held with much pride.

Tobruk House has played an important role in the lives of many Rats and their families, especially our Victorian Rats, who, like so many others have said, "you get a very special feeling when you enter this hall".

My connection and memories of Tobruk House go way way back. My first outing, as a 6 week old, was to attend the "Rats Supper Dance" in February 1966. In the back corner of the hall I slept in a bassinet through the entire dance, including the Rats Pipes & Drums repertoire. I have continued to love and connect with the bagpipes and pipe band all my life.

I grew up attending these supper dances (which were held monthly) for many many years. Dad was the "MC", and I learned to dance and the love of dancing here. I witnessed the camaraderie and friendships, heard stories and much laughter, and experienced first-hand what this "Rats Hall" meant, and still means to so many. We often hear "if only these walls could talk" but sometimes I think it may be just as well that they remain mute! I also shared their sadness over the later years with the dwindling numbers of our wonderful Rats.

Like most of you, I was apprehensive about the future of ROTA. The ranks of veterans have thinned. We went through some very difficult years, and even some dark days, however, thanks to the efforts over the past ten years of a small but passionate committee, the dwindling fortunes were reversed, and it became clear that while the Rats themselves would eventually leave us, the memories and their legacy would be well protected by the Association they started.

I especially want to thank and commend those committee and executive members who have stood aside this year. They absolutely deserve a break! In my first role as President, it was my utmost pleasure at the AGM to award to our outgoing President Graham, Secretary Glenda and Treasurer Mike, ROTA Life memberships. These three, with the help of the past committee members, have left us in a wonderful position to ensure we remain viable for many years to come.

So in my role as ROTA President I want to continue to build on this rich heritage. I have confidence that in the 2022 ROTA committee we have the understanding, dedication and desire to work together, to ensure the "RATS' Legacy" not only lives on, but is also strengthened and enhanced with what we do, and what I do.

I look forward to welcoming new and old members alike and I invite all our members to join me in helping to perpetuate the wonderful legacy of the Rats of Tobruk.

Best wishes,

Heather Macfarlane
President

2021 PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To all our members and friends of ROTA Inc.,

During the year many special people were lost to us including: -

Veterans: - John CAMPBELL, Joe DARLEY, Gordon KIBBY, Bert Le MERTON, Mel McMILLAN, Adam MROZOWSKI, John POPE, Fred ROSE, Don SIMPSON, Ted STONE.

Affiliates: - Margaret BURCHALL, Dorothy CLARK, Burt GANNAWAY.

LEST WE FORGET

2021 EVENTS

TOBRUK SUNDAY

What a great success the 80th Anniversary of the beginning of the Siege of Tobruk (April 10th, 1941) was. Approximately 250 people attended the Commemorative Service in the Rats of Tobruk Reserve—Albert Park. The weather and COVID restrictions provided us with many challenges, but a bright ray of sunshine shone through just in time for our commemorative service.

We were extremely fortunate to have their Excellencies the Honourable David Hurley (Governor General of Australia) and his wife Linda Hurley accept our invitation. The Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums played for the first time in 15 months and 5 of our 7 Victorian veterans (John Campbell, Hautrie Crick, Geoffrey Pullman, Donald Simpson, and Ted Stone) attended our commemoration to remember those who fell during the Siege of Tobruk.

Following the service 120 ticketed (*Ed: special requirements due to COVID 19 regulations in force at the time*) guests came back to Tobruk House for afternoon tea. Their Excellencies mingled with the guests and enjoyed further renditions of pipe music from our band; they also joined with the veterans in cutting the cake.

A special thanks to Kerry Stokes for his generous donation to assist towards the 80th Anniversary costs and the Semple family Trust who supplied the marquee to protect our special guests during the service.

ANZAC DAY

Was a little different this year, with the uncertainty surrounding the March. We held an Open House and served a cuppa with an ANZAC biscuit, thanks to Carolina and her CWA team.

Many people took up the Front Gate Project (proposed by the RSL & supported by ROTA) others attended their local Dawn Service). The feedback was very positive.

80TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

Our exhibition commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk was on display at the National Anzac Centre and Princess Royal Fortress, in Albany Western Australia which was very well attended. The Bendigo Exhibition, jointly presented by the Bendigo RSL Subbranch and ROTA was well attended. In the leadup to Anzac Day, Gowings Shopping Centres hosted our exhibition at their Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie venues. Our Editor, Stuart Tolliday opened the exhibition on behalf of ROTA.

The exhibition travelled to Tasmania to be part of the 80th Anniversary Commemorative ceremony and Dinner which was held in late November. Unfortunately, COVID restrictions prevented interstate guests from attending this event.

SUPPORT FOR OUR ADF

ROTA Committee members and ROTMP&D Band attended a dinner in the Rats Of Tobruk Sergeants' Mess located in the Puckapunyal Military Base. It was a grand night with our veterans outlasting the committee into the wee hours of the morning.

ROTA supported the Marching Out Parade at the Kapooka Barracks on two occasions in 2021 of **15th Platoon 'The Rats of Tobruk' 1st Recruit Training Battalion**. Sgt Braedan Heverin (former Recruit Trainer – Kapooka) hopes to become more involved with ROTA following his transfer to Watsonia Military Base in 2022, and we look forward to Braedan joining our ranks.

OPEN DAYS

These were held in February and on Anzac Day and commanded a good crowd of approximately 200 on each occasion. It is great to see the interest in the story of the Siege of Tobruk from the local community. Many family members were also interested in finding out about their fathers', grandfathers', or uncles' time in Tobruk.

SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

Warrandyte Primary School's planned visit to Tobruk House was put on hold due to covid restrictions, however a series of video presentations were used to tell the story of Tobruk from the 2/4 AGH, 2/23 Bn, 2/5 Fld Amb and the 7th Div AASC. The students then wrote stories relating to the videos and Heather Macfarlane graded them and presented the awards at the school's end of year presentation.

Morwell Central Primary School was presented with a cheque for \$1000 which was divided and awarded to two students who demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity, and this helps them start their secondary schooling on a good footing.

THE ROTA NEUROSCIENCE FELLOWSHIP FUND

Due to COVID restrictions we were unable to visit the Royal Children's Hospital for the annual morning tea to present the ROTA Neuroscience Award. Instead, the award was presented at our AGM to this year's recipient, Doctor Sameer Dal, who will be the first Fellow focussed on Epilepsy. Doctor Dal was also granted honorary membership of ROTA. Congratulations and welcome to Sameer.

Following Bob Semple's original fundraising campaign we set an aim to raise \$100,000 to ensure the long term security and independence of the ROTA Neuroscience Fellowship. To date we have a little over \$2000 in direct donations. Thank-you to Stuart Tolliday for his continued work on behalf of ROTA with the RCH and the Foundation.

CHRISTMAS BREAKUP

Once the COVID restrictions were eased we managed to hold our annual Christmas party with 70 members attending and representatives from the Royal Children's Hospital. Veterans Tommy Pritchard and Hautrie Crick attended and were the life of the party. A very relaxed day was enjoyed by all. Thank you to everyone who help put this wonderful event together.

MERCHANDISE

This year a healthy profit of \$8806 was made from our merchandise sales of which \$7000 came from the sale of the 80th Anniversary Commemorative medal. Thanks to all involved in the merchandise program.

LIFE MEMBERS

This year the Honorary Life Members are Glenda Garde and Mike Kiernan (*and Graham Gibson – Ed*) in recognition of the many years of service in their roles as Secretary and Treasurer and President respectively.

Glenda for her role as Secretary and the co-ordination of many events and support provided in all facets of our association, especially to our veterans and members of ROTA & the regular and her invaluable contributions to the Tobruk House News.

Mike for his role as Treasurer, Membership Officer, Data Base & Website Manager & the regular and invaluable contributions to the Tobruk House News.

ROTA Inc is a viable and financially secure association thanks to Mike's accountancy knowledge and skills.

(Ed - Graham served 10 years on the ROTA Committee in the roles of President, Vice President, Secretary and Tobruk House News Editor over this time.)

We are truly indebted to you both.

THANKYOU

A very big thankyou to our committee and to those who have generously supported us over the year. We could not run this organisation without your generous support and time. A special thank-you to Glenda Garde, Mike Kiernan, Bob Horton and Christine Mulvaney as they step down from their roles within the ROTA Committee and especially for their valuable time and energy.

IN CONCLUSION

As I step down from my 10 years of serving on the ROTA Committee in the roles of President, Vice President, Secretary and Editor over this time, I am pleased to acknowledge the team who have worked tirelessly alongside me to ensure that the Rats of Tobruk Association is a viable and financially secure organisation. We have endeavoured to support our veterans and their wives over our time within the committee and have built up relationships and perpetuated ties with various like-minded associations including the Australian War Memorial, Shrine of Remembrance and the Victorian RSL to ensure that the story of Tobruk is never forgotten.

Our education program has been tried and tested during the COVID 19 pandemic. It helps us to preserve the memory and records of the Siege of Tobruk. The program is set out in easy to view modules which can be viewed by interested educators and their students.

During 2021 comprehensive documents detailing the day-to-day operations of ROTA were prepared; this was to enable prospective applicants for the various Executive positions to become familiar with the workload whilst working alongside the current Executive.

Glenda, Mike and I shall remain loyal members of the association, and willing to provide assistance and support as and when required by the new committee.

THANK-YOU, One and All.

Graham Gibson
President 2020-2021
Rats of Tobruk Inc.

2021 FINANCIAL REPORT TO MEMBERS

COVID-19 was with us again throughout the year. However, despite the challenges this through up, we were able to hold a number of functions including the very successful Tobruk Sunday event, when the 80th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk was commemorated.

Financially, it was an extraordinary year with a \$9,494 consolidated surplus being achieved (there was a \$1,631 surplus in 2020). This is the best result since I got involved with the finances of the association back in 2012.

Revenue from members fees was \$20,008, which is a 39% increase from the previous year (partly due to more members paying their 2022 annual subscription in advance). Merchandise sales were strong throughout the year, with revenue of just over \$14,000. Special thanks go to Kerry Stokes for his generous donation of \$5,000 to assist with the 80th Anniversary commemorations. Thanks also to the Semple Family Trust, who supplied the marquee that protected our special guests from the very inclement weather on Tobruk Sunday.

During the year, donations were made to:

- The Rats of Tobruk Association Neuroscience Fellowship Fund: \$2,000
- Morwell Central Primary School (formerly Tobruk Street Primary School) for the annual ROTA Achievement Awards: \$1,000
- The Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums: \$1,000

	Patriotic Building Fund	ROTA Inc	Consolidated
Receipts (Operations):	\$ 141	\$44,273	\$44,414
Receipts (Grants):		\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Expenditure:	\$9,012	\$26,908	\$35,920
Surplus/ (Deficit):	(\$8,871)	\$18,365	\$ 9,494
Cash Reserves:	\$54,850	\$76,534	

A total of 77 new Affiliate members signed up for the year. At the 31 December, there were 548 financial Affiliate members.

This is my last Financial Report as Treasurer of the association. Shortly after joining the association back in 2011, I noticed that from a financial perspective it was not performing very well. My main objectives when I got involved with the finances of the association, were to put it on a sound financial footing and to ensure that it survived whilst there were still Tobruk veterans who enjoyed their involvement, particularly those who regularly attended the monthly meetings and other function.

In 2018, I formerly took on the role as Treasurer.

I leave the Treasurer position satisfied that I have achieved my objectives. In 2012 we had consolidated cash reserves of \$116,000. This has grown to just over \$131,000 in 2021.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Committee members I have worked with over the years and in particular Graham Gibson (President) and Glenda Garde (Secretary).

I now hand over the finances of the association to the new Treasurer Graeme Clifford, and wish him all the best in this very important role.

Mike Kiernan
Treasurer, 2018 – 2021
Proud Son of a Rat

2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



2021 President Graham Gibson opened the meeting.

were then declared vacant and ROTA associate member Alastair Davison took over the meeting as chair to conduct the vote for new positions.

The AGM took place at Tobruk House with minimal restrictions. Apart from wearing masks when not eating or drinking, it was a surprisingly normal affair. Graham Gibson, as President, opened the meeting with an acknowledgment of country followed by the recitation of the Ode.

The minutes of the previous AGM were approved, and the President's and Treasurer's reports were tabled and accepted. (These reports appear on pages 5 – 7) All committee positions



Newly elected president Heather Macfarlane with a picture of her father (and past president of ROTA) Trevor "Mac" Macfarlane.

All those who stood for positions on the committee were elected unopposed. See page 10 for a full list of the 2022 ROTA committee.

Heather Macfarlane then took over the meeting as the new President. Heather referred to her own long history with the hall and promised to maintain the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk to the best of her ability, calling for all members to be involved.

Heather was very pleased as her first official duty to announce three new ROTA Life Memberships, to immediate past President Graham Gibson, immediate past Treasurer Mike Kiernan and immediate past Secretary Glenda Garde, for their tireless individual and collective work for the organisation in their official capacities as well as many often-underappreciated areas over the years.

Certificates of appreciation were awarded to Christine Mulvaney and Bob Horton for their contributions as past committee members and to Tony Codd for his work in his role as Hall Keeper.



Special guests from the Royal Children's Hospital (L-R) Jessica Freane, Dr Sameer Daal, Dr Simon Harvey and Ally Pekin) are signed in to the meeting by Ian Marr.



Myra Schiel with her birthday cake and flowers

Long term member and regular attendee at all ROTA events Myra Schiele, celebrated her 90th birthday in March and this milestone was acknowledged with a special cake, flowers, and a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday".



President Heather Macfarlane congratulates 2022 Rats of Tobruk Epilepsy Fellowship holder Dr Sameer Daal, with Doctor Simon Harvey, Director, Children's Epilepsy Program.

Heather then introduced Doctor Simon Harvey, Director, Children's Epilepsy Program, Dept of Neurology at the Royal Children's Hospital, who spoke of the value and international importance of the Rats of Tobruk Neurology Fellowship to the development of medical solutions for the problems of epilepsy in children – in fact the most common childhood disease. He said that the ROTA involvement in this critically important program had made a huge difference as it meant that the fellowship had been able to be offered every year since it began.

Heather Macfarlane then made the presentation of the special ROTA Fellowship medallion to Doctor Sameer Daal, the 2022



recipient and welcomed him as a new honorary ROTA associate member. Dr Daal spoke of his appreciation for being selected for this special honour and his passion for his work in the area of children's epilepsy.

This being the end of official business, the meeting was formally closed and the members and guests were able to share a delicious lunch prepared by our catering team.

We extend a very big thankyou to those members who attended. Sadly, it may have been the first association AGM at which there were no veterans present. It is vitally important that members step up and we look forward to seeing some of you at other meetings and events throughout the year. There is much to look forward to and you will be made most welcome.

2022 Rats of Tobruk Epilepsy Fellowship holder Dr Sameer Daal proudly holding his special medallion with Doctor Simon Harvey, Director, Children's Epilepsy Program.



A happy group of ROTA members – (clockwise from the back), past President and new Life Member Graham Gibson, past Treasurer and new Life Member Mike Kiernan, past Secretary and new Life Member Glenda Garde, 'birthday girl' Myra Schiele and ex committee member Christie Mulvaney.

YOUR NEW COMMITTEE FOR 2022

Following the Annual General Meeting we are pleased to announce the 2022 committee members and, where relevant, their connection to the Rats of Tobruk. There is still a very strong connection to the original members and a total commitment by all of the committee to promoting the legacy of the Rats of Tobruk.



President
Heather
Macfarlane



VX 20684 Alfred Trevor
(Mac) Macfarlane
2/4 AGH



Vice-President
Bruce
Bingham



QX2116 Benjamin
Bingham
2/13 Fd. Coy.



Secretary
Lachlan
Gaylard



Treasurer &
Merchandise
Controller
Graeme Clifford



VX40843 Robert James
Knox (Bob) Semple,
2/12 Field Regiment



Tony Codd



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



Ian Marr



VX17749
Norman Marr
2/4 AGH.



Marlene
Bingham



QX2116 Benjamin
Bingham
2/13 Fd. Coy.



Tony Smith



NX16749
Robert Ernest Smith,
2/4 Fd Coy



Karolina
Sevcikova



VX44418
Donald George Wells,
2/4 AGH



Kelly-Ann
McKinnis



VX 25425
George Welsh,
2/23 Battalion



THN Editor
Stuart Tolliday



VX25453
William (Bill) Tolliday,
2/32 Battalion.

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

Hi,

I was wondering if anyone in the association can add to the story of this medallion. The hand-me-down family story is that the battalion made these by carving up a 2-shilling piece to send back to their parents or wives for Christmas. This one originates from Cpl Clarence Young, 2/15 Bn (my grand uncle)

Steve Downey



Ed: The two-shilling piece was also known as a florin. There were many changes to the image on each side of the coin and that allows us to date those used as most likely from 1938, when the new Australian coat of arms featuring the kangaroo and emu was introduced. The 1939 florin was not produced in large quantity and the 1940 florin would barely have been in circulation when troops left for the Middle East. If you have one of these beautifully crafted and most unusual 'florin' medallions, or know anything about them, please contact ROTA by email (ratsoftobruk41@gmail.com) or call 0432 232 502



AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Each year thousands of hard working and deserving Australians are recognised for their efforts in the Australia Day honours list and this year was no exception, with one of our Rats veterans being recognised for the work he did contributing to the community. See the June 2021 issue of the THN for story of Bert's amazing fundraising efforts in support of his 'Soldier On' campaign for ADF veterans.

Albert (Bert) Leslie Le-Merton, 2/13th Battalion was posthumously awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to veterans and the community.



VALE – DONALD LEONARD (DON) SIMPSON (The following is an extract from Don's eulogy by Lachlan Gaylard)



It is said 'Cometh the hour cometh the man', and in this case, Don Simpson was just that man, joining the militia just four months after the start of the war in January 1940. He initially trained as an engineer, learning bridge building techniques, although Don assured me this was largely theory-based work, and he would've been in some trouble if he ever had to put his training to use.

By the first of July things had heated up and Paris had fallen to the Nazis. This prompted Don to volunteer for active service and shift into the 2nd Australian Imperial Force. He was taken to Caulfield and by September was training in Wangaratta with the 2/14th infantry battalion. From there he went to Darley in February of 1941 where he was passed around to three separate infantry units before finally it was decided he would help form the reinforcements of the 2/32nd battalion, who by this stage were already in the Middle East. Don left Sydney on the 8th of April 1941 bound for the Middle East, and arrived just under a month later. Shortly after arrival he, with the rest of the reinforcements, were shifted to Tobruk by destroyer.

Don was sitting on the ground not far from Tobruk Harbour with the rest of the troops, waiting for orders, when Lieutenant Eddie Richards walked over and asked if Don would be his Platoon Runner. Don was a nervous young private and explained he didn't think he was up to the job, to which Eddie replied "Don't worry mate I've got confidence in you." This show of kindness was something Don valued his whole life.

As platoon runner Don was the link between all the sections of the battalion, which meant running messages between groups of men, often completely in the open and under fire. Don noted there was many a time he felt a crack just over his head, for which he thanked whoever it was that was looking out for him. Although Don was not always running between the sections, he was regularly forced to acquire a rifle from one of his killed mates and protect himself from enemy advances.

The conditions during the siege were horrible, hunger immense, bombardments constant but the morale and comradeship strengthened the bond between these men and urging one another to, in Don's words, 'keep on keeping on'.

Don and the 2/32nd were evacuated from Tobruk in the dead of night on the 23rd of September. They headed for Alexandria, before Palestine and being given leave in Lebanon. Over the next couple of months' Don found himself in and out of hospital with an injured back and had recovered just in time before he was again to be thrust into battle.

The war in North Africa had become critical by July 1942; Germans and Italians had reached El Alamein, and the 2/32nd was rushed to the area. Their first major attack occurred at 2:30 in the morning on July 17th. In one day of fighting half of the battalion had been killed or wounded and 200 men taken prisoner. On the 4th of August Don and the battalion were moved back down the line for rest before the second big push.

It was one month into the second push that Don found himself in trouble. His platoon charged forward over a ridge to find themselves severely outnumbered by the Germans. After taking heavy fire, the call was put out to return to the ridge and gain cover. Before Don could return he was shot, a bullet entering his upper thigh and severing his sciatic nerve. Don lay on the sand and called to Eddie Richards "Eddie I've been hit", to which Eddie replied "Hang on Don, I'll be back" Don thought he was a goner, that his life was to come to a painful end in the sands of a country far from home aged just 23.

But true to his word, around fifteen minutes later Eddie Richards and a Sargent crawled out under fire and carried Don back to Australian lines. Don was placed on a Bren gun carrier and taken to a Regimental aid post where he remained before being transferred 7th Australian general hospital where he had an operation to make him safe to travel further. Three months' later Don was still in the Middle East hospital with an unhealed wound and bedridden. He finally was put onto a hospital ship bound for Melbourne.

When the ship full of wounded men pulled into Melbourne the wharfies were on strike and refused to unload any of them, so the ship made a detour to New Zealand. No sooner had they arrived and re stocked they received word to come back to Melbourne as the strike was over. Don was transferred to the 115th Military Hospital now know as the Heidelberg Repat, where he had to learn to walk again. One part of Don's treatment was a doctor coming along every couple of days with a hat pin, stabbing his leg until it hurt and mapping out how the nerves were relinking.

Don was discharged from the army on the 29th of November 1943, whilst still a patient at the Repat. After a while he was allowed home on crutches, with regular medical appointments, before he upgraded to a walking stick and by the late 1940's he had almost totality recovered.

Don was a quiet man regarding his war service; he never joined the RSL because he was not allowed to on his return from the Middle East. He didn't involve himself in battalion reunions or the Rats association and when I asked Don why this was the case, he gave a simple answer.

'Almost all my mates were killed, and the battalion went on to New Guinea and continued fighting for three years without me; I slipped through the cracks.'

What better way to understand how Don felt than through the words of another 2/32nd member who served with Don in Tobruk and El Alamein: "the wildness had grown in my mind, we lived like dogs, every day had been a dangerous day, every shadow a possible predator, we survived on instinct and suddenly we were back in the real world."

Donald Leonard Simpson sadly passed away on the 13th of January 2022 Aged 103. He is survived by daughter Cathy and son in-law Joe, granddaughters Sharon and Lisa, nephews Peter and Robin, and friend Dianne.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to ROTA:

Robert Hall Karen Knox Jordan Hales

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



TOBRUK SUNDAY 2022

APRIL 3

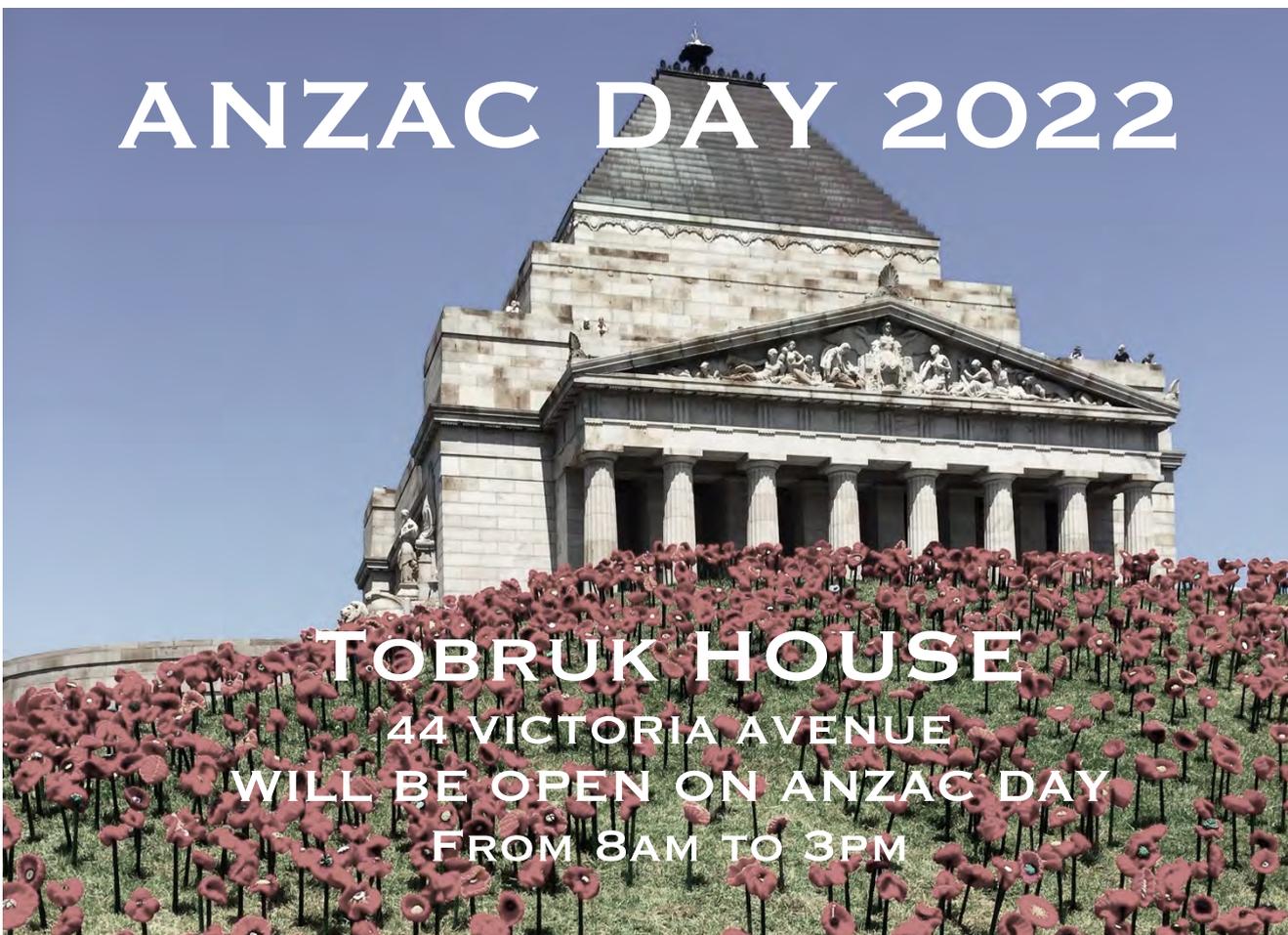
**THIS YEAR THE SERVICE WILL BE HELD AT 2PM IN THE
SCHOOLYARD IN MOUBRAY ST, AROUND THE CORNER
FROM TOBRUK HOUSE**

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL OCCASION AND
ENJOY AFTERNOON TEA AFTERWARDS
AT TOBRUK HOUSE**



VOLUNTEERS WANTED TO ASSIST WITH THESE EVENTS— PLEASE CALL 0432 232 502

ANZAC DAY 2022



TOBRUK HOUSE
44 VICTORIA AVENUE
WILL BE OPEN ON ANZAC DAY
FROM 8AM TO 3PM

50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE PORT Story by Mike Kiernan

Walking through my Cellar a few days ago, I came across a special bottle of port, given to me by my father back in 1991. It is a miracle that it has survived for 30 years.

The port was commissioned by the Tobruk Barracks, Puckapunyal to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk. The port was produced by the MT Aitken Vineyard, Gisborne.

It must have been presented to my father at a parade held at the barracks on the 7 April 1991. Each bottle produced was uniquely numbered, this one has the number 154. I wonder how many bottles were produced and how many survive today? If you know of any other survivors or can provide more information re this story, please let us know.

From The Editor – On receiving this story I recalled receiving a 50th Anniversary port from my father (below). It doesn't appear to be quite as "special" as the one Mike inherited but it makes us wonder how many different Commemorative Ports were produced for this occasion.



HOW The 2/13TH BATALLION WERE LEFT BEHIND

This story from a British based blog named The Crusader Project was sent in by Mike Kiernan

HMS Latona was an Abdiel-class minelaying cruiser, one of the most modern ships in the Royal Navy. She was only commissioned in April 1941 and spent her short service life entirely on assignment to the Mediterranean, where the Abdiel-class acted in a variety of roles, often as fast transports to supply the besieged port of Tobruk, and the island of Malta.



On 25 October, as part of Operation CULTIVATE, a series of troop transport movements to replace the Australian garrison of Tobruk, HMS Latona, escorted by destroyers HMS Encounter, HMS Hero and HMS Hotspur, departed Alexandria with stores and 38 army personnel on board for the tenth and final movement under CULTIVATE, and her thirteenth run to Tobruk.

On her return HMS Latona was to bring out the last Australian troops in Tobruk, about 1,000 men, mostly the infantry men of 2/13 Battalion who had been assembled at the port for a night-time embarkation. Following her sinking however, the extraction of this unit was cancelled, and they remained as the only Australian contingent in Tobruk, contributing greatly to the fighting in the breakout salient at the end of November. They finally left the fortress by the land route.



ROTA MERCHANDISE

See Order Form on page 27 for postage costs and other details.



LADIES SUMMER POPPY SCARF
Light Blue, Dark Blue, White,
Grey, Black
\$15



80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIEGE BAR MAT
(Limited stock)
\$40



ROTA RUGBY TOP
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL
XXXL, XXXXL, XXXXXL
\$45



ROTA 'BASEBALL' CAP
One size fits all
\$20



ROTA POLO SHIRT
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL
XXXL, XXXXL, XXXXXL
\$40



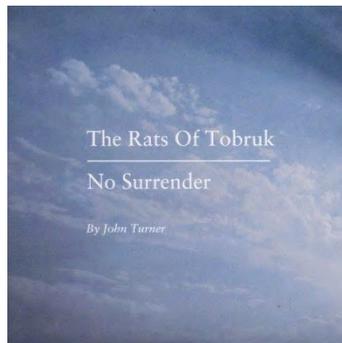
ROTA BADGE CAR
WINDOW STICKER
7cm x 8.5cm approx
Sticks to inside of window
\$10



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



80TH ANNIVERSARY SIEGE
MEDAL
(Limited Stock remaining)
\$50



'NO SURRENDER' CD
Written and sung by
John Turner
\$15



RATS OF TOBRUK 1941
LAPEL BADGE
\$15



RATS OF TOBRUK ASSOCIATION INC MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

Item	Cost per Item	Quantity	Size (Small to 4XL)	Postage Yes/No	Postage	Total	Comments
Rats of Tobruk, 1941, Lapel Badge – butterfly /clutch fitting	\$15				Inc postage		
Rats of Tobruk, 1941, Lapel Badge – stick pin fitting	\$15				Inc postage		
80 th Anniversary Medal	\$50				\$10		Postage for up to 2 badges to same address.
ROTA Rugby Top	\$45				\$10		
ROTA Polo Shirt	\$40				\$10		
Two-Up Set	\$17				Inc postage		
ROTA "baseball" style cap	\$20				\$10		
ROTA Bar Mat Runner	\$40				\$10		
Badge Car Window Sticker <small>(Sticks to inside of window)</small>	\$10				Inc Postage		20% discount for more than one sticker.
ROTA Stubby Holder	\$9				\$6		\$10 postage for up to 6.
'No Surrender' CD	\$15				\$4		
			Colour				
Ladies Poppy Scarf (light weight)	\$15				\$6		
\$10 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: 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:

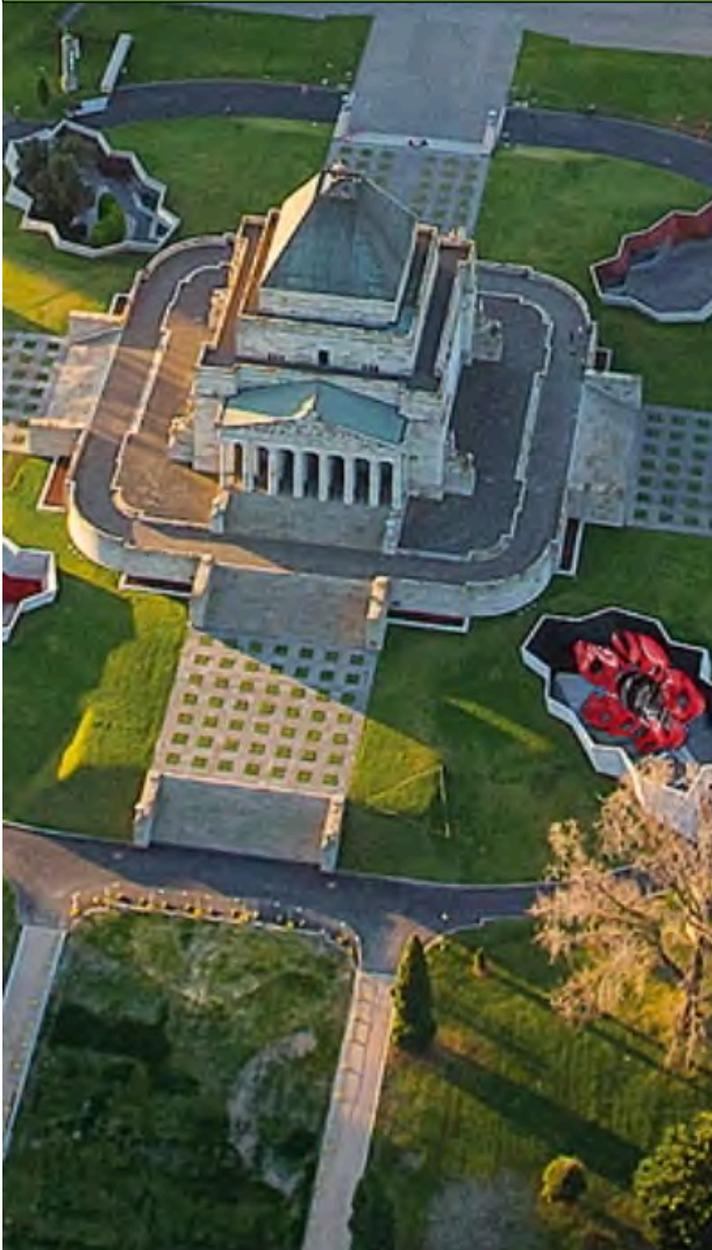
'Merchandise Officer, ROTA, 44 Victoria Av, Albert Park, Vic, 3206.'

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



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.

LUST LOVE LOSS



The complex issues surrounding matters of love and sex profoundly affect people everywhere, every day. Wartime is no exception. Indeed, the disruptive nature of war and the extraordinary situations it brings about magnifies human experience in these areas.

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.