

Charles Hendry Keable ROSS

1909 - 1982

NX21817 – Corporal, 2/17 Infantry Battalion, 2nd AIF

Wounded in Action, Tobruk, Libya.



Charles Ross's Medal Group & Badges



Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) Collar Badge



Australia AIF Shoulder Title Badge



1939-45
Star

Africa Star
8th Army Clasp

Defence
Medal

War Medal
1939-1945

Australian Service
Medal, 1939-45

Tobruk Siege
Medal (unofficial)



Rats of Tobruk
Assoc. Badge



Australian Returned from Active
Active Service Badge



The King's Badge
"The Wound Badge"

Pre - World War 2

Charles (Charlie) Hendry Keable Ross was born at Kent Park (near Glen Inness) NSW, On the 17th June, 1909. He was the eldest son of Charles Simpson Scott ROSS & Beatrice Charlotte ROSS (nee' Keable), and spent his younger years growing up on his Father's farm, at Kent Park.

Charlie attended the well regarded Toowoomba Grammar School, but around 1925 Charlie's father suffered a debilitating back injury, necessitating Charlie leaving school to assist running the family Carrying (cartage) business & orchard farm. There is a family story about this time concerning Charlie, driving the Model-T Ford (without a drivers' license) to make deliveries, and only just able to see over the steering wheel.

Unfortunately, and much to his disappointment, Charlie was never able to return to school however, whatever he might have lacked in formal education, he made up for it with outstanding energy, determination, and practical know-how.

After the family sold the Kent Park farm (approx. 1928) they moved North to the Bilambil region, where Charles (Senior) took a lease on a Banana farm. Charlie worked on both his Father's and other banana farms in the Bilambil area right up until 1940 whereupon, Charlie then enlisted in the Australian Army - 2nd A.I.F. 2/17th Infantry Battalion.

There is a very interesting 20th April 1933 'Tweed Daily' newspaper article mentioning Charlie and brother Don's involvement with an accidental arsenic poisoning that occurred on a banana farm in Bilambil.

According to the newspaper report, the poisoned worker (Ernest George Marsden) was using a backpack sprayer to control weeds. At some point the lid flew off Marsden's backpack sprayer, causing the liquid arsenic contents to spill all over his shoulders & back. It is also stated that when the sprayer blocked, Marsden was in the habit of putting the nozzle in his mouth to blow & clear the blockage.

Charlie & Don found Marsden very unwell in his room, and immediately arranged for him to be taken to hospital, where sadly, he passed away. Charlie & Don were later called as witnesses to the Coroner's Inquiry, and thus their mention in the newspaper.

It seems that a casual attitude to handling arsenic was fairly common practice by banana farm workers of that era, for children of Charlie Ross recall how after a day of work spraying arsenic, Charlie would sit down to roll a smoke, and clean grime out from under his fingernails using his teeth.

The history of the Bilambil & Carool areas are worth mentioning, in that after World War One, the Federal Government purchased large tracts of land in the area, for the purpose of giving returned soldiers the opportunity to purchase or lease parcels of land potentially suited to farming.

Sadly, whilst the Government's intent was good, it was soon found by many that the blocks were too small to sustain them and their families, and many men learned the hard way that either they were not cut out to be farmers, or that the land they received would not support them.

The result of this being that lots of the soldiers simply walked off their 'Soldier Settlement' farms or handed the land to other soldiers, to help them become viable and make a living.

Despite this, by the time Charlie & Don started working in the Bilambil Valley, there would no doubt have still been some WW1 veterans living & working in the area.

Between 1930 and 1939, Australia was in the grips of the world-wide "Great Depression" which saw life become very tough indeed for most people, which undoubtedly would have significantly affected the already struggling small-scale farmers in Bilambil.

Perhaps it was a combination of the economic situation and contact with some of the WW1 returned soldiers who still lived in the valley that resulted in Charlie and his youngest brother Hector, being so eager to sign-up for service when WW2 came around?

Another possible motivation is that there was a degree of social stigma assigned to men who did not see any service during WW1. When WW1 erupted in August 1914, Charlie's father (Charles Simpson Scott Ross), was nearing 50 years old, a married man with four young children, so would not have stood much chance at being accepted for service.

Whatever the reason, when WW2 rolled around for Australia, Charlie decided to answer the country's call for men to join the 2nd AIF.

Charlie was so keen to be accepted that he travelled to Sydney to enlist at the main recruiting depot, and even lied about his age, giving his birth year as 1913, (thus aged 27yo at time of enlistment) rather than his correct year of birth which would have made him 31 years old.....perhaps he thought or had been told by someone that any anyone over 30 years old would have less chance of being accepted?

Accordingly, on the 27th May 1940, Charlie enlisted in the 2nd AIF and was posted to the then newly raised 2/17th Infantry Battalion.

Post - World War Two

Following medical repatriation back to Australia, and after 857 days in uniform, due to the loss of his Right eye, Charlie was honourably discharged from the army on 25th August, 1942.

Ironically, as Charlie was arriving back home, his brother Hector was setting off to go overseas with the RAAF.

There is a newspaper article that appeared in the 21st March 1942 edition of the "Tweed Daily" with the heading "*Bilambil Honours Two Brothers – One Home from Tobruk; One now in the RAAF*".

The article mentions that as Charlie entered the Bilambil Hall, he was greeted by spontaneous cheers, and the gathering breaking into song with "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow".

In a speech by Mr. J. Smart, Secretary of the Terranora Branch of the Welfare Association, Hector was wished best of luck with his RAAF service, and presented with a wristlet watch, which was fastened on by his mother.

Charlie was presented with a silver cigarette case, with the best wishes of the community for his future, and for in some slight way, a token of appreciation for his service to the country.

Not too long after Charlie returned from the war he met & began courting Honora (Norrie) Ellard Reardon.

Charlie & Norrie married in 1944 and later that same year, their first child was born, Charles William Ross.

In 1948 Charlie & Norrie purchased the land they were to turn into the farm at Bilambil, and which they named Calrossie and during their years at the Calrossie farm, Charlie & Norrie raised a total of five children.

Being permanently blinded in one eye does not seem to have slowed Charlie down too much for, after discharge from the army he went straight back to a heavy farming workload.

The amount of work that Charlie physically did on his Calrossie property at Bilambil, was in a word, prodigious.

When the property was purchased all the low-laying flat area was Tea-Tree swamp. To make the farm viable, Charlie needed to re-claim this swampland.

Still able to be seen today are the master-drains which Charlie dug by hand using a No. 4 shovel, and a horse-drawn timber scoop.

One problem that Charlie encountered in the course of these works was that given the rise & fall of the involved land, the best way to achieve this was by putting in a drain which (just before emptying into Bilambil Creek) would need to cross a neighboring farm's swamp land for a short period.

Although the drainage ditch would have been of clear benefit to both parties, for reasons unknown the neighbor refused Charlie permission to carry out the proposed work.

Undeterred, Charlie constructed a deep draining ditch that ran just on the inside of his boundary, excavating straight through some high ground, which had the neighbor been more agreeable, could have been avoided by the short detour through the neighbor's property.

Charlie's efforts in reclaiming the swamp land were a resounding success, with the bottom flats being turned into prime grazing land, much admired by many other neighbors.

As there is a 12th November 1954 article from The Northern Star newspaper promoting an Open Field Day at Bilambil where Charlie Ross would show other interested farmers techniques for effective reclaiming of swamp land, it seems apparent that Charlie completed all these major works within six years of purchasing the property.

As if this work was not enough, during the same period Charlie cleared trees from the property by means of an axe, and pulled the stumps out with a draft horse, and using the felled timber to repair the old farm-house, and build a dairy.

Another example of one of Charlie's impressive manual earth-moving feats, is that once again single handedly and by means of the horse-drawn timber scoop, he cut & leveled a large building pad and access road on & across very steep sloping ground. The pad was used as a site for a dairy building, and the road is the one leading from the farm house to the now disused dairy.

Once the dairy was constructed, and to add to the income he was getting from banana trees planted on the property, Charlie was then able to establish a herd of dairy cows, which of course required thereafter, Charlie & Norrie getting up each and every morning before 4.00am to milk the cows, summer-winter-rain or shine.

In addition to being a seemingly tireless farmer, Charlies was a keen horseman & Polo Player, and took an active interest in helping to develop the sport & build facilities at Bilambil.

Demonstration of how well respected Charlie was by the Bilambil Community is that after his death in 1982, a special "Charles Ross Memorial Race" was introduced to the program of the annual Bilambil Cup race-day.

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WORLD WAR 2

Australian Army Militia, 41st Battalion 1939-1940

480447 Private Charles Hendry ROSS



Charlie's 1940 Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) enlistment papers show that at the time he signed up for the AIF, he was already serving as a Private in the Australian Militia (army reserve) in the 41st Battalion, which was later to become known as the Byron Scottish Regiment.

At present it is unknown when Charlie enlisted in the Militia, however as discussed in the following section on his AIF enlistment, it is suspected it was in late 1939.

During the Second World War, the battalion served in a garrison role within Australia and did not see active service overseas, even though it was gazetted as an AIF battalion after the majority of its members volunteered to do so.

41st battalion (Byron Regiment) Badge, 1930-1942

Charlie's AIF enlistment identification photograph shows him wearing 41st Battalion collar badges on his uniform.

In 1943, when the Australian Army began reallocating manpower resources, the battalion was amalgamated once more with the 2nd Battalion and they remained linked until 1946 when the demobilisation process began and the unit was disbanded.



In 1948, the Citizens Military Force was re-raised, albeit on a limited scale. The 41st Battalion was re-formed at this time, adopting the title 41st Infantry Battalion (The Byron Regiment), however, the following year its title was changed to The Byron Scottish Regiment.

This remained the state of affairs until 1960, when the battalion became 'E' (Byron Scottish) Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment. 1965 saw another re-organization of the CMF with the Byron Scottish Company, then becoming part of 41st Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment, currently headquartered at Lismore, with platoons located in Tweed Heads, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Port Macquarie and, Taree.



41st battalion RNSWR Badge , 1965-Current

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2nd Australian Imperial Force, 2/17th Battalion 1940-1942

On 27th May 1940, three weeks before his 31st birthday, Charles enlisted in the 2nd A.I.F. at Paddington, in Sydney.

Interestingly, on Charlie's AIF attestation form, his date of birth is recorded as 17th June 1913, when in reality it was 17th June 1909.

As Charlie switched from the Militia to the AIF, it is highly likely that the 1913 year of birth was given when Charlie first joined the Militia.

It therefore seems logical that Charlie joined the militia between September 1939 and May 1940, because, had he decided to join the Militia prior to the outbreak of WW2 on the 1st September 1939, there would have been little reason for him to down-play his age.

Whilst it may never be known for certain why Charlie stated he was born in 1913, it is probable that somewhere along the line, Charlie heard or otherwise believed that anyone over 30 years of age, would stand less chance of being accepted for service in a front-line infantry unit.

The change in birth year therefore made Charlie 26 going on 27yo, instead of the correct age of 30, going on 31yo.

If this explanation is accepted then it clearly demonstrates that Charlie was very keen indeed to maximise his chances of becoming a front-line infantry soldier.

Immediately after attesting into the 2nd AIF, Charlie was assigned to the 2/17th Infantry Battalion, and sent to Ingleburn, NSW (South of Sydney), where the Battalion was in the process of being formed.



2/17th B, unit shoulder colour patch 1940-1942

Initial (pre-embarkation) Training

Ingleburn & Bathurst Camps, NSW

May 1940 - Oct 1940

In 1940, Ingleburn army camp was a very basic facility, but it was here that men from all walks of life (bank employees, farm workers, solicitors, swaggies, accountants, shop assistants, clerks, drifters....you name it, they were there) came together for the first time to form the 2/17th.



Of note amongst the diverse group of soldiers to join the 2/17th was Private Evelyn Owen, who just before embarkation to the Middle East, managed to gain the interest of the Port Kembla plant of Lysaght's Newcastle Works in producing a sub-machine gun he had designed.

Without any technical education or background, Owen not only designed, but built a working prototype in his backyard workshop.

This was to become the famed Owen Sub-Machine Gun that won great favour as the weapon of choice by Australian forces fighting Japanese in the jungles of the Pacific theatre.



Living conditions at Ingleburn were austere, with 30 men groups (platoons) being housed in long unlined shutter windowed corrugated iron sheds, bare timber floors, and using straw-filled paillasses (large rough hessian bags) as mattresses, with just two blankets (no sheets) and using their haversacks as pillows.

Winter can be quite cold at Ingleburn, so it is certain that some of the new men initially found these conditions, and subsequent field training pretty tough.

It was here that Charlie was assigned to 13 Platoon of 'C' Company, and met men who were to become life-long friends, such as Ces Greenwood.

During this period it was just one long hard slog of heavy training and settling into army life, with just the occasional weekend leave-pass.

Training consisted of drill, manoeuvres, weapons training and long route marches from and back to camp. For example:

23rd July - Route march with full kit of 12 miles (19 Km) out to a place called Camden, where they camped overnight, and the following day marched back to Ingleburn camp.

25th July – Route march with full kit of 9 miles (15 Km), from and back to Ingleburn.

7th August – Route march with full kit of 19 miles (32km) out to Menangle Racecourse, where they camped overnight, and marched back to Ingleburn the following day.

25th August – The 2/17th arrived at Bathurst after a 12-day route march of 120 miles (193 Km), with overnight stops along the way at Wallacia, St Claire, Penrith, Springwood, Hazelbrook, Katoomba, Blackheath, Lithgow, Wallerawang, Meadow Flat, Walang, and finally, Bathurst.

In late September-early October 1940, men of the 2/17th were granted a period of pre-embarkation leave, with Charlie using this time to return home to Bilambil. There is an article from the "Tweed

Daily" newspaper, dated Thursday 10th October, describing a farewell & presentation function held in Charlie's honour at the Bilambil Hall, which was decorated with red, white & blue streamers, flags, and vases of gerberas & poppies. At this function Charlie was presented with a "wristlet watch", by Mr. W. Norville, Chairman of the Tweed District Defence Forces Welfare Association, and asked Charlie's mother to fasten the watch on her sons' wrist.

The 2/17th Battalion stayed at Bathurst conducting further training, until 19th October, when they left by train for Sydney, where on 20th October, they boarded the "Queen Mary", bound for the Middle east, and war.

In a diary written by a good 2/17th Bn friend of Charlie's (Ces Greenwood) there is an amusing account of an incident involving Charlie, that occurred at Katoomba on their last night before the 2/17th arrived in Sydney, in preparation for embarkation overseas.

The account of the Katoomba incident goes like this: *Ces Greenwood, Charlie and a number of other men from 13 Platoon went to a Katoomba pub, where they spent a number of hours drinking beer.*

"During the course of the evening, Charlie produced a mouth-organ from his pocket and played a few tunes.

After a while a stranger approached Charlie and asked if he could borrow the mouth-organ to play a few tunes, so Charlie loaned him the organ.

Many beers later Charlie went looking for this fellow to get his mouth-organ back, but found someone else had it, who stated that they had bought it from the 1st chap.

In his diary Ces Greenwood states he is not sure how the ensuing fracas stated but, all the 13 platoon chaps ended up on the footpath, much the worst for wear.

While they were staggering their way back to camp, Charlie came to the dreadful realization that he no longer had his false teeth.

They tried returning to the pub to recover Charlie's false teeth, but it was closed-up and they could not get back in.



2/17th marching out of Katoomba, October 1940

Recommencing their weaving & staggering return to camp, part-way on their journey, Charlie made the startling discovery that his teeth had been in his mouth all along.

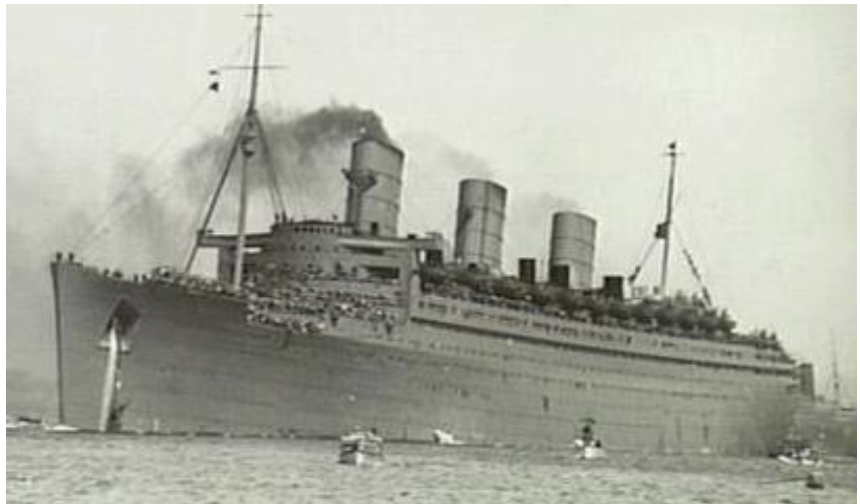
Ces Greenwood completed the entry about this incident by saying that there were some very hung-over troops that marched out of Katoomba the next morning.

Embarkation for Overseas Service

On 20th October 1940, Charlie along with the rest of the 2/17th and thousands of other members of the 9th Division 2nd AIF, boarded the large (81200 ton) pre-war luxury liner, the Queen Mary, which was being used as a troop-ship.

As the QM was departing Sydney harbour, it was surrounded by a vast array of small pleasure craft, with people on-board waving signs saying farewell to the troops.

The 9th Division men sailed on the Queen Mary, until the ship reached Bombay (India) in early November, where they were all off-loaded to await continuation of their journey to the Middle East in far smaller, slower & uncomfortable ships.



After about a two week stay onshore, the men of the 2/17th boarded the 8300 ton HMT Rohna, where unlike the Queen Mary, instead of troops being assigned cabins, they slept in hammocks, in large open-space multi deck areas.

Later in the war the Rohna was sunk by enemy aircraft, with the loss of over 1100 lives, mostly USA troops.

On the 26th November, HTS Rohna arrived at Suez, where they disembarked and boarded a train which took them to a place called Kilo 69 Gaza Ridge, in Palestine.

While in Palestine, the men of the 2/17th performed further training & carried out a wide range of guard duties.

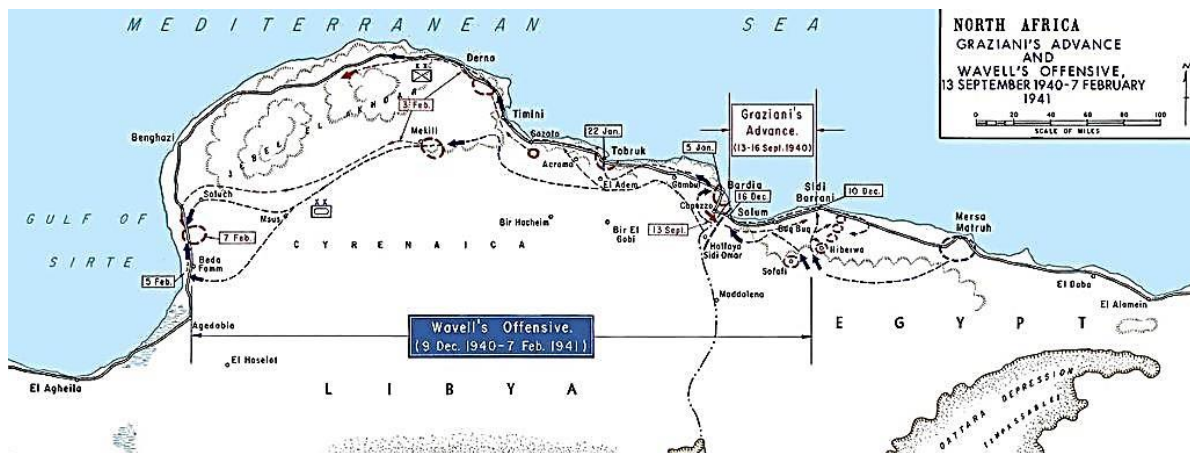
An interesting mention in Ces Greenwood's diary is that even while in camp at night, everyone had to chain their rifles to the main tent-pole, to prevent their rifles being stolen by the local Arabs, while they (2/17th troops) were asleep in the tent.

Also during their time in Palestine, men of the 2/17th were granted short leave passes, which allowed them to visit exotic places such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Tel Aviv etc.

Move to Mersa Matruh

The Battalion remained in Palestine until 28th February 1941, whereupon, they were relocated to Mersa Matruh, 240 Km West of Alexandria on the Egyptian coast.

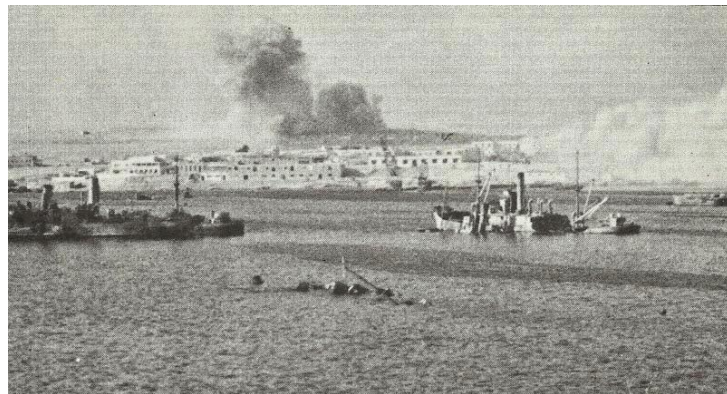
Mersa Matruh is an important land-mark for it marked the most Easterly point that the Italian Army reached in their September 1940 invasion of Egypt from Libya, before in January-February 1941 British forces (including Australian 6th Division) forced the Italians to retreat back across the Libyan border, and continued to push them a further many hundreds of miles/kilometers to El Agheila.



Following in the wake of the 6th Division men, the men of the 2/17th passed through smashed & battered towns which the whole world had already been reading about, such as Buq Buq, Fort Capuzza, Bardia, and with the road littered along the way by destroyed or discarded Italian trucks, guns, tanks & other war material.

By 4th March, the 2/17th was camped just outside Tobruk, where lying in the harbour could be seen the burnt hulks of the Italian Cruiser San Giorio, Italian Troop Ship Liguria, HMS Ladybird, and many more lighter craft.

Wrecked ships, Tobruk harbour 1941



Notes in Ces Greenwood's diary for the 5th March 1941 reads:

"on the hills there are dugout just as the dagos (sic: Italians) came out of them, rifles, bullets, groundsheets, hats, respirators, papers and letters lying everywhere.

Same day..Most of the boys are full of cognac, wine and rum, there's gallons and gallons everywhere.

They've been having grenade fights all the arvo, throwing dago grenades at each other, they're practically harmless."

The 2/17th did not stay long this time in Tobruk, and after a couple of overnight camps along the way at Derna & Brace, on 8th March the 2/17th passed through Benghazi and took over defensive positions from men of the 2/7th Bn (6th Division) near Marsa Brega (approx. 80km North-East of El Agheila). During the drive to Marsa Brega, the convoy came under attack by Italian aircraft, but as the Italian pilots did not seem particularly determined, only light damage resulted.

During March the whole of the 6th Division was removed from North Africa and sent to Greece to defend against an impending invasion of Greece by German forces, leaving the men of the 7th Division to replace their positions in Libya.

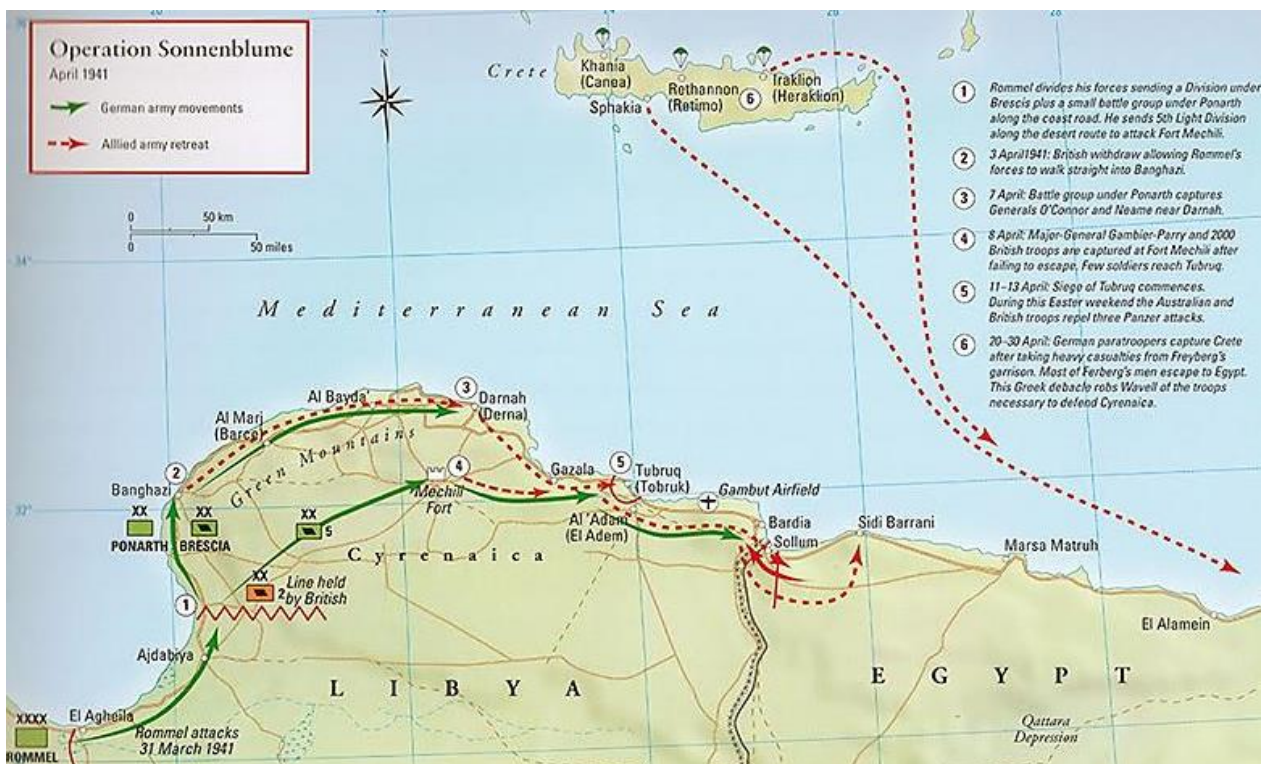
As German forces had by now arrived in North Africa to reinforce the Italians, the men of the 2/17th were now facing a combined Italian and German force, commanded by General Erwin Rommel, the famed “Desert Fox”.

On 24th March, the 2/17th departed Marsa Brega, and moved eastward to take up position outside Benghazi. During their time at Marsa Breg, the 2/17th came under air attack a number of times from Axis (german and/or Italian) bombers, but little damage or injuries were suffered from such, and the men of the 2/17th were still to come into contact with any enemy troops.

The Benghazi Handicap

On 4th April, and to the sound of army engineers blowing up installations in Benghazi, the 2/17th began a leap-frogging movement along the coast road, heading for Tobruk. During this time, 2/17th had no contact with the enemy, other than periodic strafing & bombing by Axis aircraft.

The reason for the British Army withdrawal being that on 31st March Rommel & the Afrika Korps had launched an offensive across the Cyrenaica desert, aimed at outflanking the British Army, and potentially trapping/capturing large numbers of British Troops.

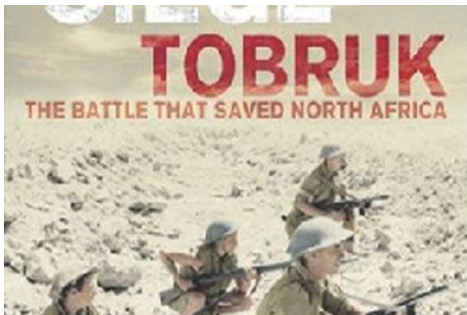


Although with the exception of Tobruk, the British Army managed to avoid being trapped, Rommel was able to press the Allies beyond Salum on the Egyptian border, effectively putting both sides back at their approximate positions that each held before the Italian invasion of Egypt.

An amusing incident that took place during the **Benghazi Handicap**, in which as a member of Ces Greenwood's 13-Platoon Charlie Ross would certainly have been a participant, was recorded in Ces's diary as follows:- *"Had a very dusty trip here. We pulled up near a big food dump and the boys got at it, did they get some stuff. Our platoon truck is loaded to the top with cases of salmon, meat and vegs, pineapple and thousands and thousands of cigarettes. The boys had a royal feed. There's enough tucker to last us a month. They let us take it as the dump will be blown up in a few days."*

A later comment added to the diary by Ces Greenwood reads:- *"Food Dump.....We couldn't realize our good luck when our trucks pulled up alongside this giant food dump, there were just acres and acres of blocks of wooden boxes. We were told to get as much as we wanted while we were there until the trucks moved on again. The men took off in one big herd and shortly after came back with boxes on their shoulders and proceeded to load our platoon truck and also the one we were riding in. What I did not know and only found out later was that someone had secretly unloaded most of the ammunition from the platoon truck to make room for all this incoming stuff, including a case of tobacco and all those cigarettes. I only found out about this when we got to our defensive position in Tobruk and I had to distribute the ammo. Luckily there was no immediate crisis and we soon got some to make up for the deficiency."*

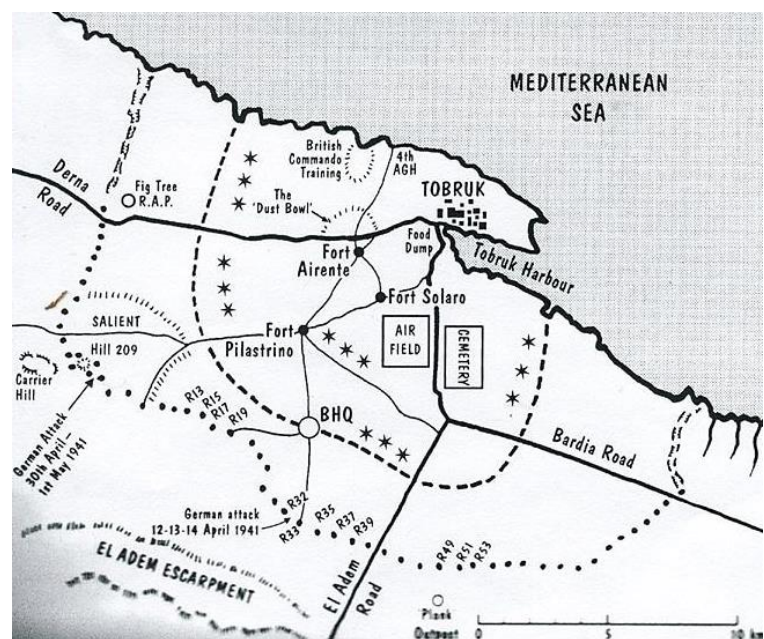
THE SIEGE of TOBRUK



The reason Allies did not simply abandon Tobruk to the Germans was that by leaving it garrisoned, they importantly deprived the Axis of a supply port close to the Egypt–Libya border with the next nearest comparable port being at Benghazi, 900 km west of the Egyptian frontier.

Thus, the Garrison defenders formed a semi-circular cordon to deny the enemy the harbour. Throughout the conflict, the Axis attackers had at least twice the manpower and had the advantage of strong air support, while the Tobruk garrison had little air support because of the remoteness from friendly air bases. This made the supply of the garrison, necessarily by sea, very difficult with ships having to arrive, unload and depart under the cover of darkness

The 2/17th arrived at Tobruk on the 11th of April 1941, with 13-Platoon initially taking up position in an abandoned Italian underground fort, complete with underground passageways, in-depth surrounding barbed-wire entanglements, and anti-tank traps.



Ces greenwood described the fort as a bonzer place, unfortunately however 13-Platoon was not to remain at this relatively comfortable position for long before being moved to another area, where their accommodation consisted of basic trenches, rifle pits and dug-outs.



The 2/17th spent 241 days under siege in Tobruk, during which time they were under constant bombardment from Axis artillery & Aircraft, and subject to a number of determined attacks by the Germans using infantry supported by tanks.



During the period 12-14th April men of the 2/17th repulsed a strong German attack in the area of R33 (refer map on preceding page) which saw the Germans suffer in the area covered by the 2/17th, the loss of 17x Tanks, 100+ men killed and a further 250+ men captured by the Australians.

2/17th troops with a destroyed German tank

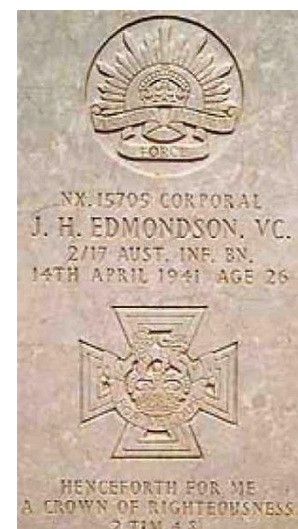
The British Prime Minister Winston Churchill writing to USA President Roosevelt (sic: about the action of 12-14th April) commented:-

“the repulse of German attacks – this small fierce fight, in which the enemy lost prisoners, killed and tanks, together with aircraft out of all proportion to our losses, is the first time they have tasted defeat”

For extreme gallantry during this action 2/17th Corporal Jack Edmondson was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, the first V.C. awarded to an Australian soldier of the 2nd AIF.

In addition to the ever present risk of enemy artillery shelling, bomber and ground attacks, was added the extremes of blistering heat during the day, freezing cold at night, flies in plague proportions, severe water rationing, poor food, and generally primitive & unhygienic living were amongst the hardships men of the 2/17th had to endure.

In addition to food & water deficiencies, the Garrison was also short of artillery & anti-aircraft defenses. Being determined to hold Tobruk, the Garrison troops used what was to hand, and thus put into service a range of captured weaponry.





As Australian troops are renowned for their “scrounging” prowess, and given Ces Greenwood’s diary accounts of 13 Platoons abilities, it is not surprising that the 2/17th soon had their own artillery and anti-aircraft defenses.

Captured Breda Model 35 20mm cannon, used men of the 2/17th for anti-aircraft defense.

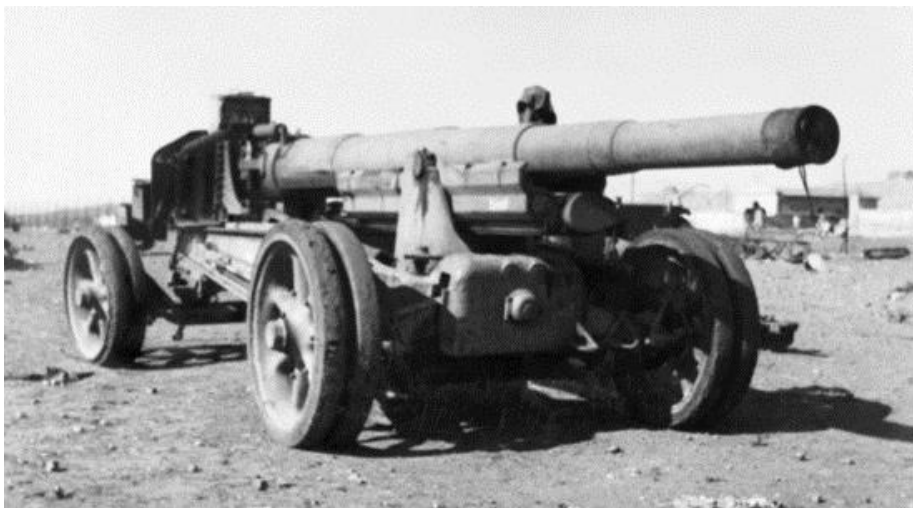
Australian troops at Tobruk were also known for quickly counterattacking, so as to gather equipment as soon as the enemy was routed, which as will be later seen, was one of the reasons for being derogatorily referred to as Rats by the Germans.

Despite the defenders beefed-up firepower, during daylight hours (especially in the forward positions) it was incredibly dangerous to move outside of trenches, as such usually attracted the quick attention of German machine guns, artillery fire, and/or aircraft.



2/17th men using a captured Italian 75mm Field Gun

A number of large pieces of Axis artillery that gave the men of the Tobruk Garrison a particularly difficult time were given colourful nick-names by the troops, such as nick-named “Bardia Bill”; “Dena Dick”; “Perimeter Pete”; “Long Lizzie”; “Salient Sue” and “Palestine Phyllis”.



Bardia Bill was a nickname originally given to a battery of Italian medium guns which fired on Australian positions near Salum before the capture of Bardia by the 6th Division. Later the same name was given to this 155mm Italian gun by Australian forces besieged in Tobruk.

As it was often simply too hazardous for men to move about in the open during daylight, men in the forward position were required to prepare and eat their own meals in their firing positions, could only obtain water resupply at night, and if wounded, wait till darkness before being able to be evacuated to a casualty clearing station.



Member of the 2/17th preparing a meal at the entrance to his dug-out. This man is not a cook, every man in each section took turns with a can-opener and a primus stove.

For much of the time Charlie Ross spent in the forward areas of Tobruk, he would have been manning observation and/or listening posts, and participating in night patrols beyond their protective mine fields, tank-traps & barbed-wire entanglements. Charlie clearly showed steadiness under fire and leadership qualities, because on 5th May, he was promoted to Lance-Corporal.

Observation posts often had the dual purpose of trying to see enemy movement, and if seen, calling in artillery fire on such.

As the name suggests, the purpose of listening posts was to try and hear enemy movement (especially enemy tanks) and thus gauge the enemy's intentions, or obtain early warning of an impending enemy attack.

Clearly Allied observation/listening posts were of significant irritation to German forces, and so the Germans often tried to eliminate such, often conducting grid-search night-time "hunts" for Allied observation/listening posts using tanks supported by infantry.

In demonstration of the dangerous nature of the cat-&-mouse game that the Allies & Germans played with observation/listening posts, is the following account recorded in a book written by 2/17th man H.D. Wells, titled "B Company, Second Seventeen Infantry", and which he details his (and others) experience manning a post nick-named "Plonk":-

"The next night my section (sic: 9-10 men group) was detailed for the job.....At 2.00a.m. we heard them. No doubt what they were. The clanking of caterpillar tracks had stirred everyone to full awareness as I quickly buzzed Company (sic. HQ) on the phone. 'Tanks, four, maybe six, no less. On our left flank. Can't see them but they're close.'

Received a message (sic: from Company HQ) to refrain from firing unless absolutely necessary.

Struth, I muttered. Did they think we would open up against tanks with just one Bren Gun and small arms?. Swiftly I passed the message not to fire even if infantry were between the tanks and assured in my mind the Section would not attract the 'crabs', waited to see if the tanks would discover our outpost.

Slowly they loomed into sight then stopped. One tank detached itself from the main body and moved forward in a semi-circle.

It was obvious they were searching for 'Plonk' but their movement was cautious as if expecting a mine-field around the outpost.

The scouting tank rumbled away towards its own lines, the remaining tanks following now in single file were soon swallowed-up by the darkness.

It grew quiet again but a soft murmur in the Section, when the noise of the tanks began to recede, was clearly audible as the men relaxed.

Another report to Company on withdrawal of tanks, then a long wait till dawn.

Quietly we picked our way back through a maze of tangled wire and mines, thankful that our nights' duty was finished knowing that soon, very soon, the tanks would overrun the outpost and its occupants.

Two nights later an outpost, now manned by a Platoon (sic: approx. 30 men), was overrun by tanks, only two soldiers escaping. The fate of the remainder was unknown."

In Ces Greenwood's diary, there is mention of a Listening Post incident involving Charlie Ross, and reads as:

"27th June.....We are now in the front line. Left our old position at night and marched about six miles or so it seemed like it and crept into trenches. The enemy is at one place about 150 yards from us so we have to keep well down as he has a sniper out. A machine gun had a crack at me yesterday. We are in rotten dugouts, originally a Hun trench. The feeding system is crook as we have to crawl about on our hands and knees and share it out all over the place.

Took some boys out on a listening post last night. Charlie showed me, came across a dead Aussie. This morning we waited till first light and a few of us had our rifles ready for a shot, just when we were settled blow me but a Hun hopped out of his trench and stood up. We all had a crack, even the A/T rifle, but I don't think we got him.

Rum issue is on, good too. This war is getting worse, I'll go crackers if I'm up here for long.

I have never seen anything like it for flies, everything is black with them."



The 2/17th Bn was equipped with Bren Gun Carriers, which the Bn. used to do quick raids and scouting operations in no-man's land, the area between the Allied & German lines. The Bren Gun Carrier was very lightly armored and armed tracked vehicle, capable of carrying four men, and had a maximum speed of just 50kph.

Clearly Bren Gun Carriers were no match for the more heavily armoured & gunned German tanks, and so, were only sent out into no-man's land when it was fairly certain there were no German tanks in the vicinity.

In addition to the physical hardships faced by the Allied troops under siege at Tobruk, they also had to endure attempts by the Germans at psychological warfare, by means of propaganda leaflet drops and radio broadcasts.

The most famous of Nazi propaganda broadcasters was Lord Haw-Haw, which was a nickname applied to an Irish-American by the name of William Joyce. His broadcasts always opened with the phrase "*Germany calling, Germany calling*", spoken in an affected upper-class English accent.



In what proved to be a propaganda backfire, Lord Haw-Haw derisively referred to the garrison as "poor desert rats caught in the trap" during radio broadcasts. This was probably mostly due to two factors:

1. The Australians tended to counterattack to gather equipment as soon as the enemy was routed.
2. The defenders dug extensive tunnel networks and shelters to supplement their trenches—and were not afraid to use them when bombarded.



Australians quickly claimed the name "Rats of Tobruk" as a badge of pride, even going so far as to strike their own unofficial medal bearing the likeness of a rat.

The metal used to make the medals came from a German bomber that the Rats had shot down using captured guns.



A later (post-war) Tobruk Siege medal was struck, commonly referred to as the Tobruk 'T' Medal which although unofficial is often seen in Tobruk medal groups.

Given the distance from the front-lines to Tobruk Harbour was approximately a mere 10Km, life for the troops when in reserve or rear-area was still hazardous. A reserve area incident that occurred which involved Charlie Ross, and which was recorded in Ces Greenwood's diary amply demonstrates this:-

"22nd July.....Very quiet until today, we had to go on a working party this afternoon to the docks.....this particular affair could have been much worse.....as, after we finished our work on the ship most of us went for a bit of a swim beside the wharf just to clean ourselves up a bit. When we were in the water a big shell landed in the harbour a few hundred metres away. This was our message to get out and get going away from the vicinity. The large shell came from a German howitzer which had been fired from behind their lines miles and miles away, the gun was known as 'Bardia Bill' and it put down these 8" shells randomly in the harbour and in the town itself. Well we all got dressed and had to go up to our truck at the other end of the wharf, some of the blokes had started to walk to the truck when I shouted out to them to come back and wait till Charlie Ross had put his boots on, and we could all go back together. They came back and waited for Charlie which took less than a minute and then we all started off. It was then that the second shell landed on the wharf right where the fellows in the first place would have been if they had not come back. Many of the fellows were blown off the wharf into the water, I was the only one still standing on my feet, don't know why as we were all in one group. The ambulances came down fairly quickly and collected the injured, there was no more shelling, the Jerries couldn't actually see where their shells were landing. Got about eight of them, some bad, some slight. From 13-Platoon there was Brock, Welch, Culey, McCarthy. I vividly recall Donnie Welch just standing there waiting his turn to get into the ambulance, his nose and upper jaw were completely missing, just one big gaping hole. I was shaken up a bit so went to the RAP, and had a drink of whisky. The shell blast stopped my watch."

As has been mentioned previously, in the forward areas, it was unwise to move about outside trenches, and thus expose oneself during the hours of daylight. The following account from Ces Greenwood's diary gives a good idea of such conditions. *"The background to the events of this period was that the enemy had made a heavy attack on one section of the perimeter of Tobruk and had made considerable gains in driving a wedge into the land held by our forces. My battalion was not in the area when this happened, we could all hear the firing and shelling, subsequently some of our other battalions had to try and push them back which they did a bit. We came into the picture at the stage where the Germans were dug into a defensive position and we took over from a battalion who were also dug into holes in the ground. This area was known as 'The Salient' with the point position less than 200 metres from them.*

The very forward section was No. 2 and we occupied a German trench system which they has been pushed out of, there were sandbagged holes about one and a half metres deep connected by small trenches less than a metre deep and these allowed us to move from one hole to another. The two other sections were about fifty metres further back from us with platoon headquarters (13th platoon) in with them.

During the day it was not possible to show oneself above the trench system as the Jerries had quite a few machine guns concentrated over our pits, we found out later that they were the 5th Machine Gun Regiment, hence their superior firepower.

We did have small peep holes made by just arranging the sandbags to show a small slit between the bags with an empty sandbag draped on our side of the bag, in this way we could gently move the loose bag and have a peep.

This was during the day of course and at night everything was OK, we could get out and about as long as we stayed away from where the machine guns had been sited to fire along certain lines. They usually used tracer bullets to show themselves where they were firing which in turn helped us to know where to crawl under this whizzing stream of illuminated bullets which were usually flying about a metre above the ground.....before we came to this position we were told all the circumstances of it and that if anyone were to be wounded it would be impossible to get them out in daylight and nothing could be done until dark.

And so the seemingly endless grind of going out on patrols, being shelled by enemy artillery, manning observation posts, being bombed by enemy aircraft, manning listening posts, being harassed by enemy machine gun fire, short 'rests' & working parties in reserve areas before again going back into the front-line.

On 16th September, in apparent further recognition of his intelligence & steadiness under fire, Charlie Ross was again promoted and now being a Corporal, was responsible for leading men on patrols into no-mans-land.

Charlie is Wounded - 29th September, 1941

On the night of 28th September, 'C' company took-over a frontline position from Polish troops. The following night, Charlie Ross and other 13th Platoon members were injured by a mine. Below are extracts from Ces Greenwood's diary concerning that night.

The history behind this event is that when we vacated Post R37 on 4th September, we showed them (sic: relieving Polish troops) where all the mines & booby traps were around the Post. It was vital to do this as to get from the Post out into no-mans-land we had a very small path which had a small hardly defined track leading through the barbed-wire surrounding the post about fifteen to twenty feet thick.

A person had to stick to this barley seen track otherwise he would get caught in the barbed-wire and besides the rest of it contained mines. Naturally it was vital for us to know where all the danger spots were for us to be OK on this small track.

I might add that they (sic: Polish Troops) took over from us during daylight hours and as they didn't speak much English they had a good look at everything.

When we came back to the same Post (sic: to relieve the Poles) it was night time and the Poles couldn't show us anything, but they made it as clear as they could that everything was the same as it was before.

After they (Poles) had moved out it was necessary for me to send out a patrol, which was known as the "Shallow Patrol" as against a "Deep Patrol or a "Fighting Patrol".

This patrol had to go through our wire and through the tank ditch (which went practically all the way around the outside of Tobruk) and then quietly patrol about a quarter mile in front of our Post out in no-mans-land.

I put Charlie Ross in charge, and then there was Baron and another bloke Charlie Whitechurch.

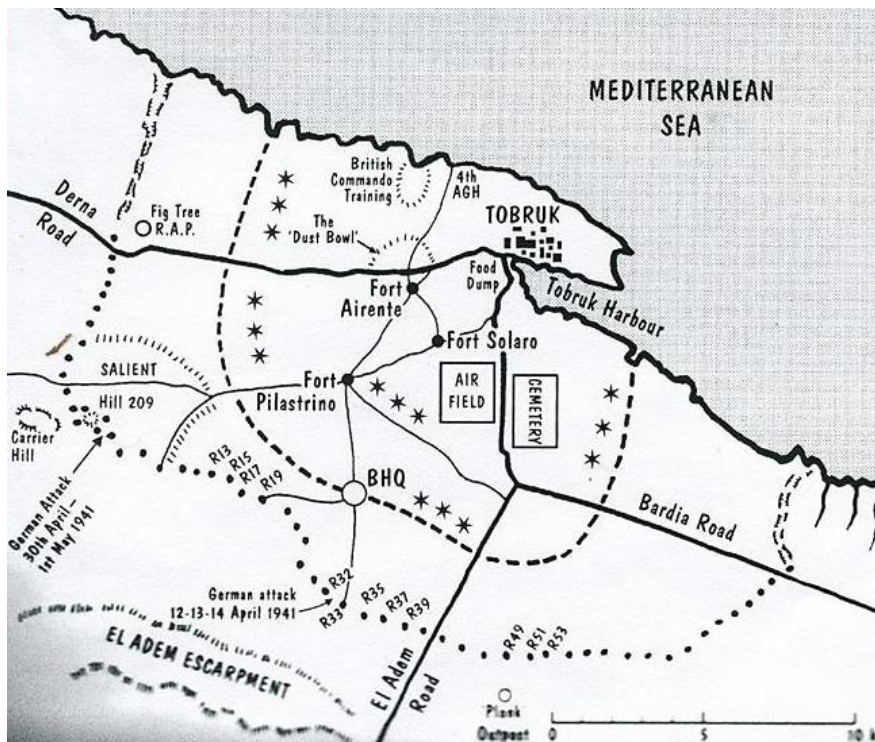
Well they set off, Charlie knew the way quite OK as he'd been along the track when we were here last. I watched them go and they went along this usual path through the wire and were getting towards the tank ditch when there was a hell of an explosion. Some of the boys and I raced along this path and found the patrol strewn everywhere, Mick had stood on a mine even though he was on the path.

The next day there was a big conference with the Poles, one of them was brought back to explain everything and it appears they had made a new track for themselves and planted mines in the old one.

The lack of communication between us both led to the tragedy, Charlie Ross lost his eye, Mick Donohue who had been married shortly before he left Australia did not live to return home."



Post R39 showing flat featureless terrain, trench systems, barbed-wire entanglements & tank trap. Post R37 where Charlie was wounded (which would have had a similar layout to R39), can be seen marked in top right of this photo.



Sketch showing the location of Post R35 on the Tobruk perimeter, and the 4th Australian General Hospital (4th AGH) to which he was evacuated following initial treatment at the 2/17th El Adem Sector Regt. Aid Post



Wounded Australian soldier being carried into the underground Regt. Aid Post of the 2/17th Bn in the advanced area 30th Sept, 1941.

Australian soldier being treated inside the 2/17th Bn's underground Regt. Aid Post located in the El Adem Sector, 30th Sept. 1941.....as this RAP would have been very close to where was Charlie wounded, there is a high probability this is where he was initially taken for treatment. →



Charlie's casualty record shows that after he would have had his wounds dressed at the 2/17th Bn's Regt. Aid Post located in the El Adem Sector, on 30th of September he was evacuated to the 4th Australian General Hospital (located near Tobruk Harbour) where his wounds would have received more definitive medical treatment.

On presentation to the 4th AGH, Charlie's wounds were recorded as being:-

Shrapnel Wounds to Right Forearm, Right Elbow, Right Thigh and, Right Eye.



4th Australian General Hospital at Tobruk showing the scars of bomb damage, and a field ambulance.

On 2nd of October, Charlie was transferred by ship to the 64th British General Hospital, located at Alexandria (Egypt) for yet further treatment.

Eventually Charlie was placed on a ship bound for Australia and disembarked at Sydney on 10/3/42, and following a short period of convalescence, arrived home to Bilambil on 11th March 1942.

BILAMBIL MAN HOME

WOUNDED AT TOBRUK

Lance-Corporal Charles Ross, of the A.I.F., arrived in Murwillumbah last evening, invalided home after being wounded in fighting in the Middle East.

Leaving Australia 16 months ago, Lance-Corporal Ross saw severe fighting in Tobruk, and a wound involved loss of an eye.

By coincidence, news of his arrival came after Bilambil residents had arranged a social to his brother Jack, of the R.A.A.F., and a combined social and welcome will be held in Bilambil Hall to-night.

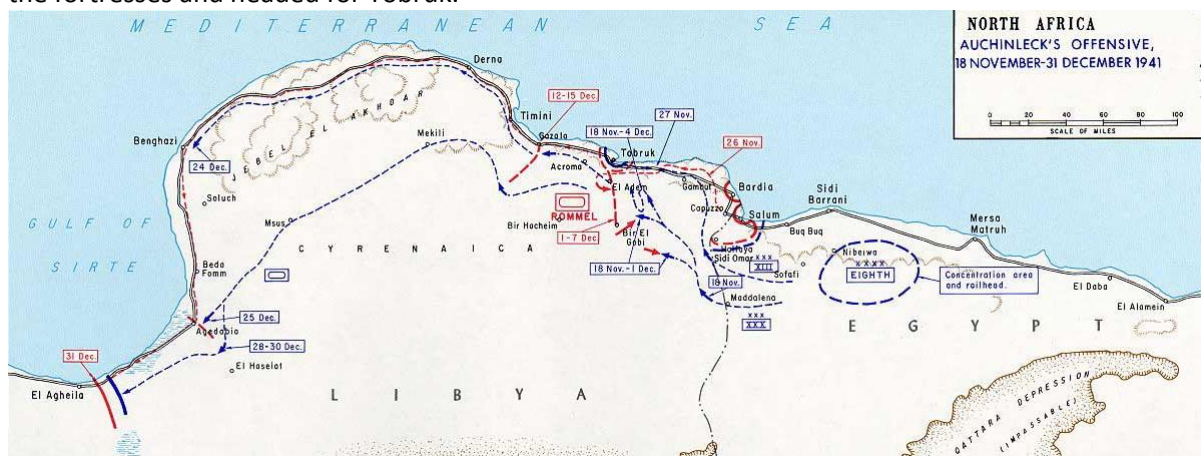
Operation Crusader, and the Relief of Tobruk

In November 1941 an Allied offensive called Operation Crusader was launched, which was to relieve the Siege of Tobruk.

The Eighth Army initially tried to destroy the Axis armoured force before advancing its infantry.

The plan failed when, after a number of inconclusive engagements, with the British 7th Armoured Division being defeated by the Afrika Korps at Sidi Rezegh.

Lieutenant General Erwin Rommel ordered German armoured divisions to the Axis fortress positions on the Egyptian border but failed to find the main body of the Allied infantry, which had bypassed the fortresses and headed for Tobruk.

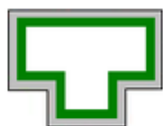


Although he had achieved some tactical success the fighting had been costly, thus in-order to preserve his forces from total destruction, Rommel was forced to withdraw his army back to the defensive line at Gazala, west of Tobruk and then, all the way back to El Agheila.

The result of Operation Crusader was that on 27th November 1941, the Siege of Tobruk was lifted, in almost all of the territory recently acquired by Rommel was recaptured. It was the first victory over the German ground forces by British forces in the war.

-ooOoo-

Additional Note



In recognition of their outstanding actions during the Siege of Tobruk, in 1942 the Australian Army formally changed the 2/17th Battalion unit shoulder patch from the previous black-green-grey diamond shape, to this 'T' shaped white-green-grey patch.

The approx. 14,000 Australian troops who served at Tobruk were justifiably proud of their achievements, and wishing to maintain the bonds of comradeship forged in that furnace, and to ensure any who in need were supported, in 1944 the "Rats of Tobruk Association, NSW" was establishedThis is the Associations lapel badge.



Vale
Charlie Ross 1909– 1982
INSERT
Painting of Charlie Ross

CHECKED	DATE	INIT
D. 1	11/6/40	RK
Mob. 2		
Mob. 3	11/6/40	RK
B 103		
B 103 Copy		
Index Card		

DISCHARGED

A.A. Form A.200.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

ATTESTATION FORM

FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.

Army No. AX 21814
 Surname Ross (BLOCK CAPITALS) Other Names Charles Hendry Keable
 Unit 2/17 Bn 7 Div
 Enlisted for service at Rutherford (Place)
N.S.W. (State) 16-5-40 (Date)

A

Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. What is your name? ... | 1. Surname <u>Ross</u>
(BLOCK LETTERS) |
| 2. Where were you born? ... | Other names <u>Charles Hendry Keable</u> |
| 3. Are you a natural born or a naturalized British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced ... | 2. In or near the town of <u>Glen Innes</u>
in the state or country of <u>N.S. Wales</u> |
| 4. What is your age and date of birth? ... | 3. <u>Natural born</u> |
| 5. What is your trade or occupation? ... | 4. Age <u>27</u>
Date of Birth <u>17th June 1913</u> |
| 6. Are you married, single or widower? ... | 5. <u>Banana Grower</u> |
| 7. Give details of previous military service— | 6. <u>Single</u> |
| 8. If now serving, give particulars— | 7. A.M.F.
No. Rank Unit
Other military service
No. Rank Unit |
| 9. Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship:—wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister) ... | 8. Unit <u>41st Bat</u>
No. <u>480467</u> Rank <u>Private</u> |
| 10. What is your permanent address? ... | 9. Name <u>Chas Simpson Ross</u>
Address <u>Bilambil</u>
<u>Iwac R</u>
Relationship <u>Father</u> |
| 11. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so) ... | 10. <u>Bilambil</u>
<u>Iwac R</u> |
| | 11. <u>Presbyterian</u> |

I, Charles Hendry Keable Ross do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to serve in the Australian Military Forces within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.
 Witnessed by H. Ferguson (Signature of Attesting or Witnessing Officer) C. K. Ross Signature.

*The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.
 Defence Print, Sydney.

NX 21817
ROSS Charles Henry Keable
B

MEDICAL EXAMINATION

I have made full and careful examination of the abovenamed person in accordance with the instructions contained in the Standing Orders for Australian Army Medical Services. In my opinion he is—*

- 1. Fit for Class I.
- 2. Temporarily unfit for Class I†
- 3. Unfit for military service†

Place Rullpa Date 16.5.40
Signature of Examining Medical Officer P. Houdelet

* Classifications which are inapplicable to be struck out.

† Reasons for unfitness to be stated.

C

OATH OF ENLISTMENT †

I, Charles Henry Keable Ross swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord, the King, in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia until the cessation of the present time of war and twelve months thereafter or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed or removed, and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So Help Me God,

Signature of Person Enlisted C. H. Ross

Subscribed at Perth in the State of W. S. Wales
this 27th day of May 1940

Before me—

Signature of Attesting Officer William Geph

†Persons who object to take an oath may make an affirmation in accordance with the Third Schedule of the Defence Act. In such case the above form will be amended accordingly and initialed by the Attesting Officer.



DECEASED

Copy

A.F. B.103-1 (Adapted)

SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM

Army No. **IX 31317**

Unit **8/17 Bn 7th Div.**

Christian **CHARLES HENDRY KEABLE.**

Surname **ROSS**

(Block Capitals)

Rank **Alpl.**

Date of Enlistment **27/5/40**

Place **PADDINGTON**

Date of Birth **17/6/1913**

Place of Birth **GLAM LINES, N.S.W.**

Trade or Occupation **BANANA GROWER**

Religion **PRESBY**

Marital Condition **SINGLE.**

Next of Kin **CHARLES SIMPSON ROSS.**

Address of Next of Kin **BILAMBIL**

TWEED RIVER, N.S.W.

Relationship **FATHER.**

P.

Medical Classification—**Class I.**
(On Enlistment) **Class H.**

Identification—Colour of Hair **Fair** Eyes **Blue**
Distinctive Marks

REPORT

Date From whom received

Record of all casualties regarding promotions (acting, temporary, local or substantive), appointments, transfers, postings, attachments, etc., forfeiture of pay, wounds, accidents, and other events, including date of discharge, date of return to service, date of disembarkation and embarkation from a theatre of war (including through, sea).

8.6.40 **9/17 Bn**

Taken on strength

Do 11/6/27 546

9 OCT 1940

EMBARKED

10/29 OCT 1940

25 NOV 1940

DIS-EMBARKED

NOV 1940

28.2.41 1 REGH

Embarked to - URTI

11/25

8.3.41

Discharged

27.2.41

29.3.41

Rejoined Unit

29.3.41

31.5.41

Appointed 1/Cpl.

28.5.41

6.10.41

Promoted A/Cpl

26.9.41

66 For O 1c District R 00's Force Eastern Command

Authority W 3011, B 2009, or other Document
Signature of Officer Certifying Correctness of Entries
Place of Casualty
Date of Casualty
Authority Agency. A206.
W3034
W3011
W3011

D-434/53B-C-1700

DECEASED

CX 3163

OB

184

NX 21817 Ros.

181

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS SPACE.

REPORT		Record of all casualties regarding promotions (acting, temporary, local or substantive), appointments, transfers, postings, attachments, etc., forfeiture of pay, wounds, accidents, admission to and discharge from Hospital, Casualty Clearing Stations, etc., Date of disembarkation and embarkation from a theatre of war (including Enbridge, &c.).	Date of Casualty	Place of Casualty	Authority W.3011, B.2009, or other Document	Signature of Officer Certifying Correctness of Entries
Date	From whom received					
16.10.41	Co Sec. 269	Battle Comrades wounded Action. B.W. punishment 6 x List	30.7.41	M.E.	W.3014	[Signature]
30.9.41	4 A.9.41	Specialist to Coast Gun Shop & Transport Co. x List	10.41			[Signature]
1.10.41		S.W. R. 11600, Transport Co. F.R. R. 92 P.W. (B) 62/2360	1.10.41			[Signature]
13.10.41	6-4 B.1.9.41	Specialist to Coast Gun Shop 6 2/8 and 7th Am. 52/12-78	1.10.41		W.3014	[Signature]
9.11.41	20.1.78	Specialist to British Gun Shop 6 4 British Gun Shop. 52/1324	13.10.41			[Signature]
9.11.41		Specialist to British Gun Shop 6 4 British Gun Shop 20. Am. (Comm. 12) 59/1034	8.11.41		W.3011	[Signature]
6.12.41		Marched in from 64 British Gun Shop	5.12.41			[Signature]
17.12.41	Depot	Marched out to 1 Depot Depot Am	5.12.41		W.3012	[Signature]
7.1.42	D.M.S	N. E Finance. Advise further entries.	30/12.41		Med 32	[Signature]
7.2.42	Depot B	Med. Class: - temporarily unfit for service for a period greater than 6 months. 1/265	7.2.42		103011	[Signature]
14.1.42	Co. Camp	Marched out to clearing camp	18.2.42			[Signature]
		in from 1 Depot Depot B				
	02E	Emberked in Middle East for return to Australia as Medically Unfit		BE	MO	
10.3.42	0.1/0 D.F.C. E/C	for OFFICER IN CHARGE 2nd ECHELON A. I. E.	10.3.42	SYDNEY	R56/57/1	J.C.G.

D.1501/5.39-C.4796

How drawn by hand (to) return to Co. 64

SHEET # 217 COPY.
SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM

Continuation Sheet to A.F. B.103-1.

MX21817 A/Cpl ROSS C.H.E.

REPORT		Record of all casualties regarding promotions (acting, temporary, local or substantive), appointments, transfers, postings, attachments, etc., forfeiture of pay, wounds, accidents, admission to and discharge from Hospital, Camp, Clearing Stations, etc., Date of disembarkation and embarkation from a ship or shore (including furlough, etc.).	Date of Casualty	Place of Casualty	Authority W.3011, B.2069, or other Document	Signature of Officer Certifying Correctness of Entries
Date	From whom received					
22.10.41	Ech tele	GOPIED FROM ORIGINAL.	✓	ABROAD	R117/11/2489	
16.10.41	AMW.3014 D.C. list	Wounded in Action Ech tele No E2489 B.W. Penetrating right eye. Auth. A.F.W.3011 Received from unit	✓ 30.9.41 6.10.41	"	E53739 M.L. C/L No 269 N12761 M.L.	
13.3.42	9 G.A.A	<u>COPIED FROM ORIGINAL</u> <u>MARCHED OUT OF GENERAL DETAILS DEPOI</u>				<i>23.12.42 Sydney</i>
14.12.42	Medical	Adm. Comm. L'W'hurst same	✓ 15.2.42	"		
15.3.42	Medical	Adm. Comm. 2875. 1/2 empty 1/2 full	✓ 20.3.42	"		
17.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 2.4.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		
18.4.42	10 L.H.H.C	March to body of 1000 men	✓ 25.3.42	"		

RECEIVED

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

I CERTIFY THAT THIS IS A TRUE COPY OF THE ORIGINAL OF WHICH IT PURPORTS TO BE A COPY, AND THAT I AM THE OFFICER HAVING THE CUSTODY OF THE ORIGINAL.

District Records Office,
 Eastern Command

D.1114/530 - C.1736

SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM

Continuation Sheet to A.F. B.103-1.

REPORT		Date of Casualty	Place of Casualty	Authority W. 5011, B. 2069, or other Document	Signatures of Officers Certifying Correctness of Entries
Date	From whom received				
25-5-49	MAN Rear Affin	25-8-42	MM	R 56/67/62 R 67/4888	
<p>DISCHARGED AMR & O 253 (A) (1) (D) BEING MEDICALLY UNFIT FOR FURTHER MILITARY SERVICE D A G (1 x RS) 63272</p> <p>DECEASED 11/8/82 Report NSW list of 12/18/82</p>					

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS SPACE.

(PRO FORMA P.15)

A 209

PARTICULARS OF DISCHARGE PROCEEDING.

AUTH. No. 63272 DATE OF LUTH. 22. 4. 1942

ARMY NO. NX 21817 RANK A/2 pl.

NAME Charles Hendry Keable ROSS

UNIT 2/17 BN.

BORN AT Glen Innes IN THE STATE OR COUNTRY

OF N.S. Wales ON 17. 6. 1913

ENLISTED AT Paddington N.S.W. ON 27. 5. 1940

FOR THE A.I.F. REGIMENT OR CORPS

HE IS DISCHARGED IN CONSEQUENCE OF

M.M.

PERIOD OF SERVICE 1 YEARS 364 DAYS

MEDALS & DECORATIONS

ACTIVE SERVICE 1 YEARS 143 DAYS

DISCHARGE AUTHORIZED BY G.O.C., EASTERN COMMAND DAAG(1RS) 63272

AND CONFIRMED BY OFFICER IN CHARGE RECORDS, EASTERN COMMAND

TO TAKE EFFECT ON 25th May 1942 AT SYDNEY

AGE 28 yrs HEIGHT 5' 5" WEIGHT 153 lbs

COMPLEXION Fair EYES Blue HAIR Fair

DISTINCTIVE MARKS OR SCARS Strapped wounds Rt forearm + Rt thigh
Lent of R. Eye TRADE Banana Grower

RELIGION Presb MARRIED FATHER Charles Simpson Ross
SINGLE, NEXT/KIN

ADDRESS N/K Bilambil Tweed River NSW

PHOTOGRAPH No. 31 F. DATE May 1940

Particulars extracted from Basic Documents and B.103

CHECKED BY Thomas

DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE No. 34580 (A.A.F. A 209) TO BE CONFIRMED BY O.i/c, D.R.O.

D/C CHECKED BY 4/6 ENTERED REGISTER 20. 4. 1942

COMPLIMENTARY CARD PREPARED CHECKED

POSTAL ADDRESS Bilambil Tweed River NSW

(PRO FORMA P.15)

PARTICULARS OF DISCHARGE PROCEEDINGS.

AUTHORITY No.....

DATE OF AUTHORITY.....

ARMY NO.....RANK.....

NAME.....

UNIT.....

BORN AT.....IN THE STATE OR COUNTRY

OF.....ON.../.../.....

ENLISTED AT.....ON.../.../.....

FOR THE.....REGIMENT OR CORPS

HE IS DISCHARGED IN CONSEQUENCE OF.....

.....

PERIOD)YEARS.....DAYS

OF)MEDALS

SERVICE)&

INCLUDINGDECORATIONS

ACTIVE SERVICE.....YEARS.....DAYS.....

DISCHARGE AUTHORISED BY G.O.C., EASTERN COMMAND.....

AND CONFIRMED BY.....

TO TAKE EFFECT ON.....

PLACE.....

AGE.....HEIGHT.....

COMPLEXION.....EYES.....HAIR.....

DISTINCTIVE MARKS OR SCARS.....

.....

TRADE.....

Particulars extracted from

Basic Documents and B.103

CHECKED BY.....

DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE No.....(A.A.F. A.).....

TO BE CONFIRMED BY O.i/c., D.R.O.

D/C CHECKED BY.....

ISSUED ON.....

PARTICULARS OF ARTICLE

Registered Article (1) *R.U.P.*
 Envoi recommandé

Posted at *26/3/42*
 Déposé au bureau de poste à

On *26/3/42* 19 No. *56-67-62*
 Le *26/3/42* Sous le No.

Sent by *M.C.H.K. Ross*
 Expédié par

Addressed to *Bulambit*
 Adressé à

1) Insert "Letter," "Printed Matter," "Parcel," etc., as the case may be. If an unregistered parcel, strike out "Registered," and insert "Ordinary."

Particulars of the article, and the name and address on right, are to be inserted by the sender.

Form R.15 (C.5)

Postmark of office
 Timbre du bureau
 returning advice.
 renvoyant l'avis.


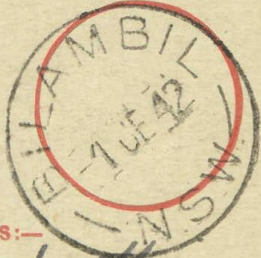
44013

ON POSTAL SERVICE
SERVICE DES POSTES

SENDER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:—
 M *2 M.D. Records Office*
 (Name) *mw. 2 of 2 Area*

DISTRICT RECORDS OFFICE
 (Street and number or P.O. Box No.)
EASTERN COMMAND
Sydney
 (City or town)

56 67 62
 (State)
AUSTRALIA

PARTICULARS OF ARTICLE

Registered Article (1) *L.G.*
 Envoi recommandé

Posted at *28 APR 1942*
 Déposé au bureau de poste à

On *28 APR 1942* 19 No. *56 67 62*
 Le *28 APR 1942* Sous le No.

Sent by *R.A.S.*
 Expédié par

Addressed to *21817 Ross B.A.K.*
 Adressé à *Sweed River*

1) Insert "Letter," "Printed Matter," "Parcel," etc., as the case may be. If an unregistered parcel, strike out "Registered," and insert "Ordinary."



Particulars of the article, and the name and address on right, are to be inserted by the sender.

Form R.15 (C.5)

Postmark of office
 Timbre du bureau
 returning advice.
 renvoyant l'avis.

ON POSTAL SERVICE
SERVICE DES POSTES

SENDER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:—
 M *District Records Office*
 (Name) *Eastern Command*
Eastern Showground
45 Reservoir St., Sydney
 (Street and number or P.O. Box No.)
District Records Office
Eastern Command
 (City or town)
R.A. Showground
 (State)
AUSTRALIA

ADVICE OF DELIVERY
(AVIS DE RECEPTION)

FOR USE AT OFFICES IN AUSTRALIA

The undersigned acknowledges the receipt on

1-5 1942 of the article described
on the other side of this card.

Lt Col. E. M. Ross. 1120587
(Signature of addressee)

H. Thomas

(Signature of officer by whom delivery is made)

To be forwarded to sender by first mail after delivery.

NOTE.—An A.R. article posted in the Commonwealth for delivery therein is delivered to the addressee only. In other countries, delivery is effected in accordance with their own regulations. In some countries, it is the practice for the A.R. card to be signed by an official at the delivering office and not by the addressee.

FOR USE ONLY AT OFFICES OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA

The undersigned states that the article described
Le soussigné déclare que l'envoi mentionné

on the other side was duly delivered on
d'autre part a été dûment livré le

_____ 19 _____

1) _____
(Signature of addressee)
(Signature du destinataire)

1) _____
(Signature of official at delivery office)
(Signature de l'agent du bureau destinataire)

1) This advice must be signed by the addressee, or, if the
Cet avis doit être signé par le destinataire, ou si les
regulations of the country of destination so provide, by
règlements du pays de destination le comportent, par
the official of the delivery office, and returned by the
l'agent du bureau destinataire et renvoyé par le
first mail to the sender.

premier courrier directement à l'expéditeur.

**ADVICE OF DELIVERY
(AVIS DE RECEPTION)**

FOR USE AT OFFICES IN AUSTRALIA

The undersigned acknowledges the receipt on
30th May 1942 of the article described
on the other side of this card.

G. H. K. Ross.

(Signature of addressee)

K. Thomas

(Signature of officer by whom delivery is made)

To be forwarded to sender by first mail after delivery.

NOTE.—An A.R. article posted in the Commonwealth for delivery therein is delivered to the addressee only. In other countries, delivery is effected in accordance with their own regulations. In some countries, it is the practice for the A.R. card to be signed by an official at the delivering office and not by the addressee.

**FOR USE ONLY AT OFFICES OUTSIDE
AUSTRALIA**

The undersigned states that the article described
Le soussigné déclare que l'envoi mentionné

on the other side was duly delivered on
d'autre part a été dûment livré le

_____ 19____

1) _____

(Signature of addressee)
(Signature du destinataire)

1) _____

(Signature of official at delivery office)
(Signature de l'agent du bureau destinataire)

1) This advice must be signed by the addressee, or, if the
Cet avis doit être signé par le destinataire, ou si les
regulations of the country of destination so provide, by
règlements du pays de destination le comportent, par
the official of the delivery office, and returned by
l'agent du bureau destinataire et renvoyé par le
first mail to the sender.

premier courrier directement à l'expéditeur.



Explanation of Charlie's Medals, Badges & Ribbon Colours

1939-1945 Star



The 1939–1945 Star was awarded for specified periods of operational service overseas between 3 September 1939 and either 8 May 1945 in Europe or 2 September 1945 in the Far East theatre. Army personnel had to complete 180 days of service in an operational command, between these dates.

The ribbon has three vertical stripes of dark blue, red and light blue. The dark blue stripe represents the Naval Forces and the Merchant Navy, the red stripe the Armies and the light blue stripe the Air Forces.

Africa Star



The Africa Star was granted for operational service in North Africa from the date of the entry of Italy into the war on 10 June 1940, up to the date of the cessation of operations against the enemy in North Africa on 12 May 1943. The Africa Star may also be awarded for operational service as a member of the Australian Defence Force during the Syrian Campaign in the period from 8 June 1941 to 11 July 1941. The Africa Star is awarded for a minimum of one days operational service in North Africa, west of the Suez Canal between 10 June 1940 and 12 May 1943 and in Syria between 8 June 1941 and 11 July 1941.

The ribbon colours represent the desert and the service of the Armies, Naval Forces, Merchant Navy and the Air Forces.

Defence Medal



The Defence Medal is awarded for six months service in a prescribed non-operational area subject to enemy air attack or closely threatened, in Australia and overseas, or for 12 months service in non-prescribed non-operational areas.

The ribbon is orange with green outer stripes, each green stripe having a black pin-stripe running down the centre. The green represents the Islands of the United Kingdom, the orange represents enemy attacks, and the black represents the black outs.

War Medal 1939-45



The War Medal 1939-45 was awarded for 28 days full-time service in the Armed Forces between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. Operational and non-operational service may be counted, providing that it was of 28 days or more duration.

The ribbon has a wide khaki central stripe, flanked by two narrow red stripes, which are in turn flanked by two outer stripes, one of dark blue and the other of light blue. The khaki represents the Australian Army, and the red, dark blue and light blue represent the Merchant Navy, Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force respectively.

Explanation of Charlie's Medals, Badges & Ribbon Colours

Australian Service Medal 1939-45



The Australia Service Medal 1939-1945 was instituted in 1949 to recognise the service of members of the Australian Armed Forces and the Australian Mercantile Marine during World War II. The medal was originally awarded to those who served at home or overseas for at least 18 month full-time service, or three years part-time service, between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.

The ribbon has a wide khaki central stripe, flanked by two narrow red stripes, which are in turn flanked by two outer stripes, one of dark blue and the other of light blue. The khaki represents the Australian Army, and the red, dark blue and light blue represent the Merchant Navy, Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force respectively.

Tobruk Siege Medal



Within Australia the area is the Northern Territory, north of 14 degrees 30 minutes south, and the Torres Strait Islands between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.

The ribbon is khaki representing the desert, narrow red stripes for army, dark blue for navy, and light blue for the airforce.

Australian Returned from Active Service Badge



The purpose of the Returned from Active Service Badge (RASB) is to recognise Australian Defence Force members who have returned from active or warlike service during military campaigns in operational areas.

Plain Metal - Bronze

The King's Badge (British)



The King's Badge is a large silver lapel badge authorised in the early part of the Second World War and initially issued to servicemen who, as a result of their injuries, had been discharged from active service. It was to be worn only on civilian clothing.

Plain Metal - Silver

Australian Rising Sun Badge



The Rising Sun badge, also known as the General Service Badge or the Australian Army Badge. The badge was worn by soldiers of both the 1st Australian Imperial Force in World War I and the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF) in World War II, being used on both the slouch hat and the tunic,

Plain Metal - Brass

Rats of Tobruk Association Badge



Issued by the Rats of Tobruk Association, to members.

Brass, with black, red, white, yellow and gold enamelling

AIF Shoulder Title



Issued by the Australian Army and worn on on both shoulder of the uniform.

Plain Metal - Brass

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