

## Australia's First Victoria Cross (VC) of WW2 won at Tobruk

### Corporal John Edmondson VC

NX17505, 2/17<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Rat of Tobruk

8<sup>th</sup> October 1914 – 14<sup>th</sup> April 1941, 26 years of age.



Cpl John Edmondson was awarded the VC for conspicuous courage in a night attack on enemy forces outside Tobruk on the night of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1941, when he received serious wounds.

On the night April 13 a party of German infantry broke through the wire defences of Tobruk and established itself with at least six machine guns, mortars and two small field pieces. It was decided to attack the enemy with bayonets. A party consisting of one officer Lieutenant Fred Mackell, Cpl Edmondson and five privates took part in the charge. During the counter-attack, Cpl Edmondson was severely wounded in the neck and stomach from machine gun fire, however hiding the severity of his wounds; he continued to advance under heavy fire and killed one enemy with his bayonet. Later his officer whilst bayoneting an enemy soldier was grasped about the leg by that soldier and another attacked the officer from behind with a pistol. Lieutenant Mackell called for help and Cpl Edmondson who was some yards away, immediately came to his assistance and the injured corporal killed both the enemy. This action undoubtedly saved his officer's life. Shortly after returning from this successful counter-attack, Cpl Edmondson died from his wounds.



On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1941, the British War Office advised the Australian Government, that King George 'has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Corporal John Hurst Edmondson'. This was the first of 20 VC's awarded to Australians in World War 11.

Cpl Edmondson was 26. He was born at Wagga, but moved to Liverpool as a child. He had red hair which earned him the nick name 'Meggsy'. Until he joined the militia shortly before the war began, he worked on his father's farm. He was a champion rifle shooter. He served in the militia until the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1940, when he joined the A.I.F., sailing for overseas on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October.

In 1961, Cpl Edmondson's mother Maude, presented his VC to the Australian War Memorial.

