

TOBRUK HOUSE TRUTH

Issue #12



A special communication from Tobruk House during exceptional times.

The name 'Tobruk' was a symbol of endurance and defiance even before the siege was over, and the Australian troops were always a large part of the story, especially from the viewpoint of the Axis forces. However it should not be forgotten that other troops served with distinction alongside the Australians in the Tobruk garrison.

We're All In This Together

It may come as a surprise to learn that in April 1941, British troops actually outnumbered the Aussies- 18,292 British and 14,817 AIF. By June, however, the numbers had significantly altered with 7,979 British and 14,326 AIF being present. These British forces also included about 500 troops of the 18th Indian Cavalry Regiment.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

041852

5 Nationalities: Polish British Indian Aussie Czech

In mid- August, soldiers of the [Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade](#) arrived by ship from Alexandria and replaced the 18th Brigade of the 7th Division, lifting the spirits of the Australians. The Polish troops earned a fearsome reputation by employing daring and aggressive tactics.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

009588

A group of Indian troops pause for a meal in their trench.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

041845

Polish troops line up for a meal at a mobile canteen.

In October, after being involved earlier in the allied invasion of Lebanon and Syria, the Czechoslovak 11th Infantry Battalion also joined the Poles in Tobruk and served for 158 days, including 51 in combat.



Members of the Czech 11th Infantry Battalion



British soldiers with a captured German tank

Together, these troops helped to turn the tide of the war in the Middle East, and, despite the very difficult conditions, an extraordinary mateship developed between these men of different nations. This was demonstrated by the Australian Rats when they fought successfully for the right of their Polish mates to emigrate to Australia after the war.

ROTA ACTIVITIES

Sadly, there will be no physical meetings at Tobruk House for the foreseeable future. As soon as it is safe to do so, we will look forward to welcoming people back, but we cannot, at this stage, guess when that will be.

We trust that you enjoyed reading last week's issue of the Truth, which retold the story of the original Tobruk medal. The association has been inundated with requests for our replica medal since an order form appeared in the August THN. You will also be pleased to know that a complimentary medal has now been sent to each of our remaining veterans and checking on their postal addresses has provided a great opportunity to check on their welfare. We are happy to report that all 18 veterans we have heard from during this process are faring very well and they much appreciated their medals.

The weekend of the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2 certainly threw a spotlight on the Rats of Tobruk and, as well as the many newspaper articles which appeared, veteran Derek Holyoake from NSW attended the official commemoration at the War Memorial in Canberra.

THE POPPY SCARF

These stylish ladies' 'poppy' scarves won't stop a virus, but they add a touch of spring to any outfit. They are available in four colours and at only \$15 each there's no need to choose just one; the \$8 postage will cover one scarf but \$15 will cover up to four (to the same address). Despite the lockdown we are still able to fulfil merchandise orders. Please contact Graeme Clifford, our Merchandise Officer on 0418882 323.



To all of the wonderful people on the front line we say Thank you.
To everyone else we say **Stay at home, wash your hands and if you go out, wear a mask!**