



DAVIES, CLIFFORD MALDWYN

Lance Bombardier

Royal Horse Artillery 11 (Honourable Artillery Coy.) Regt.

Age: 21

Date of Death: 29/05/1942

Service No: 886220

Additional information: Son of Thomas George Stanley Davies and Elizabeth Maud Davies; husband of Brenda Eileen Lillian Davies, of Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Essex.



A 25 pounder of the Royal Horse Artillery at Tobruk 1941

*The **Siege of Tobruk** took place in the Western Desert of North Africa in 1941 at the height of the Second World War. The German Afrika Corps under the command of General Erwin Rommel had commenced the offensive which drove the British forces eastwards across the desert to the Egyptian frontier. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Wavell, instructed that the seaport town of Tobruk was to be held, if possible, for two months in order to give time for the assembly of reinforcements, especially of armoured troops for the defence of Egypt. On*

8th April 1941 the garrison of Tobruk consisting of the 9th Division, the 18th Brigade of the 7th Division with British and Indian Troops, came under siege which was to last for 242 days. The German forces made two serious attempts to capture Tobruk using "blitzkrieg" tactics of a deep armoured thrust through defences followed up by infantry. Up until this point in the war these "blitzkrieg" tactics had never failed. Numerous attempts to relieve Tobruk by land failed and the garrison was supplied by ships of the British and Australian Navies, across seaways dominated by a hostile air force. Because of the almost daily enemy air attacks, arrivals and departures of the ships were conducted under cover of darkness. Between April and the end of August, the garrison was subjected to 593 enemy air raids. The relief of the 18th Brigade commenced in August and by October the Australians with the exception of 2/13 Battalion were relieved by the Polish Carpathian Brigade and British Troops. The 2/13th remained to fight its way out in December when the garrison broke out to join up with the British Eighth Army which effected the relief of Tobruk on 10th December 1941.

It cannot be claimed that Tobruk stopped Rommel and his Africa Corps but it cannot be overlooked that the siege had an important effect on the war for another reason. Here the Germans had suffered a serious reverse and the Tobruk garrison had demonstrated that the hitherto successful "blitzkrieg" tactics could be defeated by resolute infantry who held their ground, by defence in depth and by individual courage. During the siege, German radio propagandists directed a constant stream of derision at the defenders, likening them to rats. Far from weakening morale the term was enthusiastically adopted by the troops who thenceforth called themselves "The Rats of Tobruk". reference (1) <http://www.rotmpd.org.au/seige.html>;



1939-1945 STAR; AFRICA STAR; 1939-1945 WAR MEDAL; DEFENCE MEDAL



Casualty Type: Commonwealth
War Dead Grave/Memorial
Reference: 10. H. 13. Cemetery:
KNIGHTSBRIDGE WAR
CEMETERY, ACROMA

The defence against Rommel's drive across Cyrenaica towards Suez consisted of a number of irregularly spaced strong points or 'boxes' linked by deep minefields. Those nearest the Axis forces were held by infantry, while those further back served as reserve static positions and as bases from which the armour could operate. The chief 'box', known as Knightsbridge, was round a junction of tracks about 20 kilometres west of Tobruk and 16 kilometres south

of Acroma, commanding all the tracks by which supplies came up to the front. The Eighth Army's advance fuelling stations and airfields were at Acroma, El Adem, El Duda, Sidi Rezegh and Gambut, while by February 1941, Gazala aerodrome, taken from the Italians early in the campaign, housed two Commonwealth squadrons. Knightsbridge was thus a key position, and the pivot on which the armour manoeuvred during the heavy fighting which commenced in late May 1942. Fierce actions were fought at all these places, and a battlefield cemetery was created at each for the burial of the dead. The graves of many of those who gave their lives during the campaign in Libya were later gathered into Knightsbridge War Cemetery from the battlefield burial grounds and from scattered desert sites. The men who fought and died with them, but have no known grave, are commemorated on The Alamein Memorial which stands in El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt. There are now 3,651 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War buried or commemorated in Knightsbridge War Cemetery. 993 of the burials are unidentified and special memorials commemorate a number of casualties known or believed to be buried among them. No. of Identified Casualties: 2676

