

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Robert George Donaldson

By Lieutenant Colonel N M Hayson, RFD, ED, (Retd)

George Donaldson was born in Yeppoon, Queensland on 26th August 1919. He was the third eldest of a family of three boys and five girls. George, as he preferred to be called, began his education in Blackall and progressed to Grade 6 in the depression ravaged economy of the 1930's.

After the death of his father, he began work in 1934 to assist in the upbringing of his family. At 14 years of age, he began working on a sheep-station called Listowel Downs, boarding there for a year while sending home his wages of five shillings a week, He continued this low-paid working life on various station properties in Queensland until the outbreak of the Second World War, when he enlisted in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force in 1940.

In 1941 he was sent to the Middle East as a 6th Division Artillery reinforcement. In 1942, he returned to Australia and after a short break, was sent to New Guinea, where he saw service at Milne Bay, Buna, Lae, Aitape and Wewak. He finally returned to Australia on 13th January 1946 and was discharged five days later.

He resumed his military career by joining the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) in 1948, and in the next eighteen years did a tremendous job training another generation of young Australians to be efficient artillerymen.

I first met George in 1951, when I enlisted in the CMF as a Gunner in 11th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, based at Kelvin Grove, Brisbane. At that time, he was the Battery Captain of P Battery in that Regiment, and I started training as a Technical Assistant under his supervision.

George did a marvellous job in his postings in those days and was very popular with the young blokes he was responsible for training. He served in the CMF from 1948 until 1966, when he retired with the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

He married Briggette Doreen Hogan in 1947 and settled in the Brisbane suburb of Everton Park. Together they had four children, Geoffrey, Lindsay, Dianne and Greg. In civilian life he found employment as a storeman at the Army Ordnance Section of 11 Supply Battalion at Gaythorne, where he worked for many years. He then took up management positions with several motor vehicle companies until his retirement in 1984. His wife Doreen passed away in 1992 after a long illness.

George remarried in October 1993 to an old friend, Olive Macklin from Tewantin, dividing their time for the next decade between Tewantin and Everton Park.

During his military career of six years in the 2nd AIF, and 18 years in the CMF, he was awarded the following medals and decoration:

- 1939-45 Star,
- Africa Star.
- Pacific Star,
- Defence Medal,
- 1939 – 1945 War Medal, and
- Efficiency Decoration.

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He also received the Queen Elizabeth Coronation medal for his services during the Royal Tour in 1954 as Guard Commander of the Royal Guard for the Queen during that visit.

His twenty-five-year career in the Army was one for which he should have been intensely proud. Those of us who served with him during his career are also intensely proud to have been involved with him. He departed this life on 2nd November 2004, aged 85 years.

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