

## **Historical Officers Report From the Pages of the Camden Advertiser June 1941**

### **5<sup>th</sup> June Cyprus reinforced by Australian troops**



#### **CAMDENS SOLDIER'S DEATH** On Active Service Private Ernest McGrath

By the death of Private Ernest McGrath, on active service abroad, Camden has lost an outstanding young citizen and a beloved friend to many residents. The sad news of the district's first fatal casualty in this war came by cable late on Monday afternoon to Ernest's wife, who was spending a few days with his people at Camden. The official message stated that NX54836 Private E. H. McGrath had died of injuries accidentally received on May 26. No other details were given in the cable. According to air-mail letters written earlier in May and received by his wife and parents, Ernest was in Egypt with a recovery section of an A.I.F. workshops' unit. He had experienced some enemy aerial activity at that time. He mentioned that he was delighted at having received his first parcels from home. One contained a woollen jumper, hand-knitted by his sister (Patty). Another was from the Camden Centre of the Women's Voluntary Services.

**Motorists are advised by the N.R.M.A.** that it is useless at this stage to appeal against the arbitrary cut in petrol allowances. The Liquid Fuel Control Board has advised the Association that the cut for June must be made, and that no consideration will be given to appeals for additional allowances for that month. Appellants should wait until they answer the questionnaire being sent to them by the Board.

**Corporal H. G. Cullen, of Narellan, was safely evacuated from Greece.** His wife and children received this good news in a cable and a following airmail letter. Corporal Cullen, who left Australia with the first contingent in January, 1940, also participated in the earlier battles at Bardia, Tobruk and Benghazi.

#### **CITY WATER SUPPLY: GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE**

Snowy River Mentioned. **The Premier (Mr. McKell) said on Thursday Inst that the Government intended to investigate the water supply question immediately so that action could be taken to prevent a repetition of the serious position then facing the city. Among the schemes to be considered, Mr. McKell stated, was the one in which the waters of the Snowy River would be used to augment the Sydney supply and to generate hydroelectric power. "This scheme envisages hydro-electric power for the South Coast, and the increasing of the water supply in the Murrumbidgee River for irrigation purposes, Mr. McKell said. "It also provides for a supply of water for towns between the Snowy River and the city." Mr. McKell pointed out that the scheme was**

different from the one that had been considered by the previous Minister for Works (Mr. Martin). That scheme had provided for the generation of more hydro-electricity, but, after having been used for that purpose the water would have to run to waste in the sea.

### **8<sup>th</sup> June 7th Division and No. 3 Squadron (RAAF) attack Vichy French forces in Syria.**

### **12<sup>th</sup> June**

#### **LOCAL CRICKETER PILOTS BOMBER FROM CANADA TO ENGLAND**

Camden Park cricketer, James Clark, has gained his commission in the Royal Australian Air Force and recently piloted a bomber from Canada to England. This message was kindly conveyed to us on Tuesday by Mr. F. R. Sutton, secretary of Camden Park Estate Ltd., where Jim was employed as a clerk prior to his enlistment. Pilot-Officer Clark's rapid promotion in the R.A.A.F. will not occasion any surprise to his many friends. He is a young man of outstanding ability, a great sportsman, and one who is keenly enthusiastic about his job in the Air Force. Jim admitted that he knew little about aeroplanes when he enlisted last year, after undergoing several months' preliminary training in Australia; he sailed for Canada in December last, with the rank of leading-aircraftman. His parents reside at 16 John-street, Hurstville. Jim was hon. secretary of both Camden Park Cricket and Recreation Clubs before he joined the R.A.A.F. On behalf of the district we extend heartiest congratulations to Pilot-Officer Clark and wish him happy landings.

**The new road from Wollongong Mount Keira to Wilton is now open to traffic, reports the N.R.M.A.,** a length of about 13 miles of bituminous surface having just been finished, commencing from a point about two miles west of Mount Keira. Of the full distance between Wollongong and Wilton via this route, there remains only between four and five miles of gravel surface, the balance being bituminous. The new road forms a direct link between Picton and the south coast in the vicinity of Wollongong. Motorists using this road are warned by the Association to exercise care, as a fairly heavy covering of metal screenings has been used in parts.

#### **THREE LEFT IN SECTION: PRIVATE FRED WOOLLAMS' ESCAPE FROM GREECE:**

Harrowing stories of the Australians' evacuation from Greece are contained in letters now being received by their people at home. Writing to his wife at Rossmore; Private Fred. Woollams reported his safe return to Palestine from Greece. In common with most others he lost everything except his Rifle in the retreat. "We have had a pretty horrible time, and were all scattered to the winds. Bill Carmichael, Frank Blake and I are all that are left of our section, and Leo (the writer's brother) is the only one of those missing that we have any real hope of seeing again," he wrote. "Leo was seen coming down to the beach with a Victorian battalion, so I feel sure he got through," he added. Outlining his nightmare journey from the mountains to the beach, Private Fred Woollams stated that he and his comrades had nothing to eat for 28 hours. The fast was broken when they received half-a-tin of bully-beef and a few hard biscuits. It was raining and cold. "We started off after our meal and tramped over the mountains till 1 a.m.; then we found we had to tramp back for four miles to pick up the trucks. That was the last straw; I don't know how I ever made it. Leo and Bill stayed behind and helped me along," he continued. We got into different trucks and we got bombed and split up the next day. Only about twenty of the Company reached our intended destination. "The people of Greece gave us a wonderful welcome from the moment we arrived until the last minute before we left."

#### **WHEN GERMANS BROKE THROUGH**

After having landed at a Greek port, about ten miles south of Athens, Corporal H. C. (Bert) May, of Turramurra, travelled 500 miles in three days with his unit. "We passed through many small and large towns, where the people lined the streets, giving us flowers and cheering us on," he related.

When his unit eventually reached its destination, it was learned that the Germans had broken through. The Australians in this area were ordered to move back. They hid by day, German planes swooped overhead, and travelled fast by night. "God with us and we reached the extreme south of Greece . . . The good old British Navy came in and picked us up . . .," he added. German' planes attacked the convoy and hit one ship on the journey from Greece to Alexandria. The Navy got the men off the stricken vessel. A message received by his Camden brother (Mr. Earl May) states that Corporal May is in perfect health.

#### **Local Recruits Wanted:**

**250 vulnerable-point troops are required by the Volunteer Defence Corps in the districts of Camden,** Campbelltown and Picton. Their duties will principally comprise the protection of the Sydney water supply in the case of a national emergency. Captain E. H. K. Downes of Brownlow Hill, has been invited to undertake the command of the districts officially known as Sub-Area S.4. Recruits are wanted between the ages of 35 and 60 years. They will receive drill instruction and interesting lectures on various types of machine guns, and will be taught map-reading. Parades are held at 8 o'clock each Tuesday night at the Camden Agricultural Hall.

#### **19<sup>th</sup> June**

Sid King, elder son of Mr. and Mrs. S. King, of Chellaston street Camden, who was successful in his preliminary R.A.A.F. examination, will enter the service within the next fortnight as wireless telegraphy operator-trainee Ballarat, Victoria. Sid was the assistant cubmaster at Camden, and studied Morse code as part of his scouting duties. He held the rank of lance corporal in the Camden Militia Troop.

#### **CAMOUFLAGE NETS: C.W.A. TO FORM LOCAL CLASSES**

The making of camouflage nets is to be commenced at Camden next week, in response to the Defence Department's request for 100,000 to be supplied within the next six months. Members of the Country Women's Association have become proficient in the work. The Camden branch will make a special effort to supply a good quota of nets. Mrs. R.C. Tucker (president) and Mrs. A. D. Swan will attend the Camden C.W.A. Rest Rooms at 2.30pm to-morrow (Friday) and again at the same time on Tuesday next to demonstrate the making of the nets. Any resident wishing to learn is invited attend. Two stands for net-making have been donated to the branch.

#### **30 June HMAS Waterhen sunk on Tobruk run**



Ray Herbert  
Historical Officer  
0417 223 263