

# *(Corporal) Patrick George Hallion*

*23 February 1913 – 17<sup>th</sup> November 1952*



*2022 Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize*

*Golden Grove High School*

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## PART A:

The Rats of Tobruk Association was an Australian-led cooperation of 14,000 soldiers. Throughout their service in the Libyan port of Tobruk against the Axis powers, they showed heroism, bravery, and pride for fellow Australians. While many could not tell their story and were lost in battle, survivors were able to pass on the legend. Patrick George Hallion is the next recognised story of 2022, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Rats of Tobruk.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1913, Patrick George Hallion was born at Balaklava Hospital to John James Hallion and Lucy Elizabeth Hallion. Patrick was the oldest of seven children and grew up with his family in Balaklava. As the eldest sibling in a large family, Patrick grew to understand the importance of family and simple values throughout his childhood as of his family religion, dedication to the Catholic faith, and determination.

Throughout his schooling at Balaklava, he was unsure of his future. He worked as a baker and dropped out of school to work his trade full time. However, he developed a love for poetry and writing. Patrick worked in this profession until the age of twenty when he decided to take a new direction by joining the Australian Army. His career was as a munition inspector also referred to as a commonwealth inspector in the 1930s. In addition to inspecting devices, he learned how to handle ammunition, grenades, and explosives. Which assisted him in his future endeavours in the Army and active duty.

Throughout his life spent in Balaklava, he attended many dance events country towns used to host, which were an act of socialising and finding love. Patrick soon became infatuated with Doreen Alice Smith, whom he met at a local ballroom dance. They then became a happy couple and were in a developing relationship.

As 1939 came closer, so did World War II. Patrick was a munition inspector in the Australian Army, he knew what he had to do if war broke out. He continued his Army obligation, he understood it was right for his country, and it was a purpose worth fighting for. On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany, and therefore Australia also declared war on Germany to support its allies. To fulfill their duty and serve their nation Australian soldiers were shipped to Europe and North Africa to fight against Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Nine months later, after the declaration of war, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1940, Patrick enlisted as a volunteer candidate for active duty in the war. Working as a munition inspector for seven years trained him to become a Corporal and lead army units. After training in Woodside and Keswick barracks, Patrick was sent to Egypt to protect Tobruk from the Axis powers. Patrick served in the 2nd 43rd AIF battalion in the 23rd Light Horse Regiment as a corporal. His brother, William, also joined the war to serve alongside in Egypt in the 2nd 10th battalion. Patrick shortly became known as a Rat of Tobruk, the name given to the worthy soldiers during this time.



*Figure 1: Patrick Hallion and unknown in front of the Sphinx in Cairo Egypt.*

Throughout his service, Patrick recorded his experiences through poems and writings. He would write poetic pieces, from the love he left at home to the grief and pain soldiers felt during the war.

*“where I have to hide my head for fear of bleeding sniper will fill me up with lead”* Quoted from Patrick’s journal.

*“Clouds of choking dust that blinds, droves of flies, and shattered minds/The Arabs have been soldiers’ hell, land of bastards from the well.”* Quoted from Patrick’s journal.

*“You all were really tired and needed rest, but you never grumbled, I know you did your best, you were well outnumbered you only had a few, you went in like heroes you had a job to do. Your courage was Australian your pluck we all admire, you had no chance against that deadly fire.”* Quoted from Patrick’s journal. This specific quote shows the friends and comrades he lost during battle and a specific event that was caused by a surprise attack when a unit was outnumbered.



Figure 3: Patrick Hallion in a hospital bed, during his recovery

Patrick George Hallion was shot in the eye on July 27th, 1941. He was taken to the hospital after his injury and given medical treatment, but this is not where his story ends. Surviving a wound to the eye was not easy, fortunately, due to immediate treatment, Patrick was saved from bleeding out. As a result, he lost his left eye and was in severe pain for several months. His eye was covered with an eye patch, and later on, replaced with a glass eye making it hard to tell he ever lost it. On March 6th, 1942, Patrick George Hallion was discharged from war. He was deemed unfit for service and sent home.



Figure 2: Injured soldiers/ nurses with Patrick in hospital.

Two months later, on May 9th, 1942, Patrick married Doreen Alice Smith at St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral. Not long after, Patrick and Doreen had their first child, Helen, born on February 22nd, 1943, and passed away on July 21st, 1943, at only a few months old. She suffered from pneumonia, a serious condition, especially for someone young and developing. This unexpected tragedy was undeserving of such worthy people.

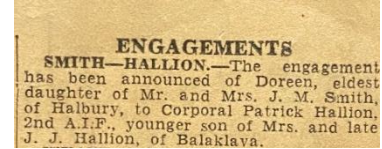


Figure 4: Engagement notice from a newspaper clipping



Figure 5: Physical copy of discharge notice

After time spent at home following his discharge from the hospital, his injury did not stop him from achieving his full potential in the war. While going through mixed emotions despite the loss of his first child, the trauma from the war, and leaving his wife behind, he went back to finish what he started. Though the Tobruk campaign was successful, he continued to serve his country in ending the war. His brother Sgt. William Hallion was still serving and on January 20th, 1943, he died in action in Port Moresby. Patrick did not receive this news until he returned home, so, clueless about his brother's death he continued to

serve. A few months later, Patrick George Hallion was wounded in the back by a grenade when fragments of shrapnel flew into his back. He went through a similar process to the hospital, where the shrapnel was pulled out of his body. With this injury, Patrick was unable to continue his service and was sent home for good.



Figure 6: Sgt. William Hallion's grave

Upon his return, Patrick received the information about his brother. His family and friends were aware of the trauma and brutality he experienced during the war. Patrick did not talk about his experiences, as he tried to forget the past exposure to the deaths of good friends and especially his beloved brother, William. He turned to alcohol as an escape from reality but quickly became attached to the feeling of forgetting. During the war throughout his journal entries, his handwriting slowly became messier and harder to read (see figure 7). His poems and writing were a way he coped with the events going on around him and his struggles returning home.

BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY OF A BRITAN NARRATOR UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK, BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY 11<sup>th</sup> NOV 1918 IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V. HIS MINISTERS OF STATE THE CHIEF OF HIS FORCES AND ANAST COMORSE OF THE NATION. THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT WAR 1914-18 GAVE THE MOST MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF FOR GOD FOR KING AND COUNTRY, FOR LOVE OF HIS HOME AND EMPIRE, FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD

When the gases are over  
And our planes are up in the air  
The first thing the Aussie do is  
But it's big gas on the air  
When we think we shot a gun  
And down comes another  
When the Aussie are on the ground  
And the bombs are flying round  
The gas go up to give them a nudge  
No gas left in the sky  
Keep your planes up high  
Keep your planes up high  
The RAF is small  
The Navy doing well  
England will win with allies  
But your pilots in the sky  
The British engineers  
And the women volunteers  
Will show them we don't Dilly Dilly

25<sup>th</sup> Day begins still, rain  
moose, and leave, golden  
But many meet  
26<sup>th</sup> first gas of war  
with Batt team, but my leg  
had to pull out.  
27<sup>th</sup> break in, with I had  
many all day  
28<sup>th</sup> No duties, leg, some  
washing, but marked it  
29<sup>th</sup> Good leg, no duties out  
of line, still, some of  
30<sup>th</sup> Visit by the King to  
inspect position, talk of  
Batt & Bom, present on  
Road block, weeper clean  
31<sup>st</sup> Carry day, leg nearly better  
after writing.

Figure 7: Patrick's journal entries, which show his change of handwriting throughout the war.



*Figure 8: Patrick Hallion's War Medals.*

Patrick obtained five medals in total after his service in the war (see figure 8) These were the 1939/45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal, war medal, and Australia Service Medal. All these medals showed dedication and commitment he had towards his service.

Patrick created a family with Doreen upon his return, despite their firstborn's death. On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1944, William John Hallion was born. William was Patrick and Doreen's second child and was named after Patrick's brother who died in battle. He then had two more children after William named Sharon and Patrick.

Patrick George Hallion passed away on November 17th, 1952, making it 70 years since his death, due to acute myeloid leukemia. This cancer has been linked to high exposure to toxic metals such as lead, cadmium, and arsenic which he was exposed to through shrapnel in his back and a bullet in his eye. The build-up of lead and the long periods spent in his body was an inevitable cause of his death. Although the process of the lead passing through him was slow, he passed away suddenly after the knowledge that he had leukemia. Doreen had to manage three children after his passing, at the ages of nine, five, and three. But she would tell stories about the brave hero he was to her children and beyond.

*"Goodbye my Pioneer comrades you did not die in vain, we will tell the story when we get home again. So, I leave you, Pioneers, with a pang of regret, but you are Australian heroes we'll never forget"* Quoted by Patrick's diary.

In Patrick's experience of perseverance and mateship, his war life is at the forefront. He joined the Australian Army before active service in World War II and showed mateship when he and his brother fought in Egypt as well as all the comrades he made in service. Throughout his time as a Rat of Tobruk, he went through stressful events and losses of soldiers in his unit. He not only lost his peers but other significant parts of his life: his first child and brother, who died in the same year. A lot of grief and depression was felt by Patrick at this stage when he returned home, while on top of this he was healing from a lost eye. With all these happenings he went back to war when he had every reason not to as He "did his bit" to serve his country. In his second part of service, he had another injury, this time in his back. After another discharge, he was sent home and created a family with Doreen. *"A kind, loving Father and Husband"* quoted by Nicole Bannon, Patrick's granddaughter, on the stories her mother and grandmother would tell. As a result of war, he suffered the loss of friends and family and lost an eye, an injured back, and an early death. But still continued his determination and love beyond the war.

**Word Count: 1360**



*Figure 9: Patrick with William and Sharon (Patrick isn't born yet)*

## **PART B:**

Patrick George Hallion was a relative to my family, in fact, he is my Great Grandpa on my father's side.

To gather evidence for Patrick's life I had to dig deep into many sources of evidence and references from my family. Fortunately, being able to have my family's help I was able to find many sources. However, there were rough patches and dead ends in finding my evidence, as few records were shown on the internet, and therefore most of this project was done based on primary sources from family archives. My father was never able to meet his grandfather, and unfortunately not many others due to his early passing. Even his children only had the memories when they were young. But Doreen lived on to tell her children and grandchildren who Patrick was. My grandmother would have been Patrick's daughter-in-law, and she lived with Doreen for a few years. She connected with her, and knew a lot about their family, as she quotes *"They were my family too"*.

Patrick's diary was written in cursive, and I was fascinated to read what he wrote. Unfortunately, I cannot read cursive. So, I brought his diary to my grandmother and asked if she could decipher his cursive. With the help of my grandmother, we were able to analyse his diary. We spent months writing out each page and saving it as evidence for my project. Translating this with my nanna created new memories and interesting findings about our family. This project has not only been interesting in finding my ancestors past, but also new connections made in my family and getting closer to the ones I love.

I also had the ability to have possession of some of his belongings that provided evidence such as his diary, medals, certificates, workbooks, gun, photos, and newspaper clippings. Fortunately, Patrick wanted to keep his souvenirs from the war as part of pride and historical information for the future.

Although there wasn't a great amount of information on the internet for Patrick, I was able to access some online archives to conduct genealogy research through [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and [myheritage.com](https://www.myheritage.com). I also contacted the Barossa Light Horse of historical information, which is an organisation on historical information based on South Australian ANZACS. I was able to clarify some information on his battalions, Light Horse Regiment, and a few other sections of information to piece the story together.

I also contacted Patrick's granddaughter, which is my father's cousin. I was on a call with her to tell me who Patrick was as a general person and the stories her grandmother would tell her. I was able to connect with a family member I have never spoken to before and got to realise more about Patrick to develop my writing.

Family names were also passed down throughout generations. Patrick named his son after his brother, who is my grandfather. He then passed the name down again through my father's middle name and Patrick, was put into my brother's name.

**Word Count: 499**

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**Unknown, "Patrick with nurses and soldiers In hospital" unknown date, photograph**

**Unknown, "Patrick In Hospital bed with recovering eye" unknown date, photograph**

**Unknown, "Newspaper clipping of engagement notice" unknown date, photograph**

**Unknown, "2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Imperial force official discharge certificate" 1942, photograph**

***Unknown, "William Hallions grave" unknown date, photograph***

***Hallion, P.G, (no date) "personal diary of Patrick George Hallion" unpublished South Australia***

***Hallion T, "Patricks medals" 2022, photograph***

***Unknown, "Patrick with two of his children" unknown date, photograph***