

Today we remember and pay tribute to Trooper Kenneth Norman Goodliffe.

Kenneth Goodliffe was born on the 1st of July 1922 in Paisley, Scotland. Although his parents, Norman and Ina, were both living in Australia, Ina returned to Scotland while pregnant to give birth to her first child.

Ina and Kenneth returned to Australia in December 1922, and returned to living in Melbourne. Over the next few years, Ina gave birth to two more sons: Arnold and Donald.

The family remained living in Melbourne throughout Ken's childhood. He attended Kew State Primary School for his early education, before completing his junior technical certificate and merit certificate at Prahran Technical School and Swinburne Technical College between 1935 and 1936.

Ken worked as a labourer on farms and at Macpherson's Nut and Bolt Factory in Burnley, before commencing an apprenticeship with Charles Ruwolt Pty Ld as a moulder.

In early March 1941, Ken joined the Royal Australian Air Force Reserve at Number 1 Recruiting Centre in Melbourne. It was his third attempt at joining the air force.

Ken was posted to Laverton in Victoria, where he began training as a trainee wireless telegraph operator.

After only a few weeks, Ken was discharged from the air force to return to his apprenticeship with Charles Ruwolt.

On the 25th of August 1941, Ken enlisted in the Second Australian Imperial Force in Melbourne.

Knowing that volunteers under the age of twenty one were required to gain parental consent to enlist, Ken lied about his age, stating he had been born in 1920 and was therefore 21 rather than 19. Upon returning home, he threw his uniform hat into the house as he entered as a way to let his parents know what he had done.

Over the next twelve months, Ken trained at army camps throughout Victoria, including undertaking armourers courses and working in workshops as a moulder in Dandenong, Gippsland, and Bendigo. During this time, Ken was promoted to Acting Corporal.

In September 1942, Ken was transferred to the reinforcements for Independent Companies – the Army's commando squadrons, and began training at Foster near Wilsons Promontory in Victoria. His rank reverted to private at his own request in early 1943, and he continued to train with the independent companies before travelling to Townsville in Queensland to prepare to embark for overseas service.

Ken, now holding the rank of trooper, departed from Townsville in the troopship *Katoomba* on the 17th of February 1943, and arrived at Port Moresby in New Guinea three days later.

After arriving in New Guinea, he joined the 2/7th Independent Company, and moved to Bena Bena to join Bena Force in fighting against the Japanese. Throughout September and October, the company carried out numerous long-range patrols in the Ramu Valley.

Writing home to his family in September 1943, Ken reassured them that

“I would write more often but lately I have been out in the bush a great deal and have not had the opportunity or writing materials to do the deed, but rest assured Mum, I am in the best of health.”

After spending late October patrolling the Faria, Logi, and Evapia rivers, the company was relieved by the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Squadron in early November. By Christmas of 1943, the company had returned to Townsville, and spent the summer training on the Atherton Tablelands under the new name the 2/7th Commando Squadron.

Ken remained in Australia with his squadron throughout most of 1944, and was frequently admitted to hospital suffering from malaria.

On the 7th of November 1944, the squadron left Cairns to return to New Guinea, disembarking at Aitape on the 12th of November.

Three days later, he penned what would be his last letter home.

In it, he urged his parents to draw on his savings to help modernise their home, and enquired after his brothers, one of whom was also serving overseas.

Finishing his four page letter, Ken wrote

“I will close here, till later then, so cheerio for now ... Keeping smiling. Your loving son, Ken”.

Having arrived in Aitape, the Squadron joined the 6th Division to serve in the Aitape-Wewak Campaign.

From the recaptured city of Aitape, Allied forces advanced east towards Wewak, hoping to destroy the remnants of the Japanese 18th Army in the region. After initial patrolling the Australian advance began in December 1944. The operations were characterised by prolonged, small-scale patrolling in arduous conditions.

At 0700 on the morning of December 1st, Squadron Headquarters along with B and C Troops left Babiang, marching towards Yakamul.

A Troop marched from Nialu to occupy Yasuar Mission.

They arrived and took possession of it soon after midday and began digging in and erecting huts. Around 1500 that afternoon, enemy fire suddenly broke out from the jungle. Sergeant Horne was killed and troop commander, Captain Fleming wounded. A patrol was sent out to investigate but an hour later, another burst of fire found its mark.

Back at the mission, occupying one of the recently-dug weapon pits, Trooper Ken Goodliffe was hit and killed.

He was 22 years old.

For years after his death, Ken's family published commemorative notices in their local newspapers in his honour.

Ken's remains were initially buried at Yassuar Mission, before being moved to Aitape War Cemetery in January 1945.

Following the end of fighting in the Pacific, Ken's body was exhumed and reinterred at Lae War Cemetery, beneath a Commonwealth War Graves Headstone bearing the inscription selected by his grieving family back home:

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember."

His name is also listed on the Roll of Honour on my left, among almost 40,000 Australians who died while serving in the Second World War.

His photograph is displayed today by the Pool of Reflection.

This is but one of the many stories of service and sacrifice told here at the Australian War Memorial. We now remember Trooper Kenneth Norman Goodliffe, who gave his life for us, for our freedoms, and in the hope of a better world.