

Name: Alexander Mitcheal Newland Macdonald

	Service No: 61363
	Armed Force: Artillery Reinforcements
	Attested 6 August 1940
	Enlistment At/Date: Dunedin 1941
	Training: Entered camp 3 January 1941
	Embarkations: Embarked 4 April 1941
	Disembarked Egypt 15 May 1941
	Rank/s: Gunner
	Service: Wounded in the field 27 June 1942, discharged hospital 4 July 1942
	Returned to NZ 3 January 1945
	Discharged 18 April 1945

CIVILIAN LIFE	
Address before Enlistment:	Queenstown
Next of Kin on Embarkation:	Mr. MacDonald, Haast Pass, Otago (father)
Relationship Status:	
Occupation:	Gold miner
Single/Married:	Single

PRISONER OF WAR	
Capture Details:	N/A
POW Serial Number:	N/A

MILITARY DECORATIONS	
Medals and Awards:	

OTHER DETAILS	
Date of Birth & Place:	16 May 1899 Dunedin
Date of Death & Place:	6 Oct 1997 Queenstown
Cause of Death:	
Burial/Cremation:	Queenstown
Age:	98
Memorial:	

MILITARY SERVICE BIOGRAPHY: Gunner Alexander Mitchell Macdonald Next of kin:

- **Mr Alex Macdonald, father, 9 Public Works Camp, Randwick Rd, Lower Hutt**
- **Haast Pass, Otago**
- **32A Browne St, Timaru**

- **Mrs Winifred Nellie Macdonald , wife, Box 88, Queenstown**

Description on enlistment:

- **Date of birth 16 August 1900, Dunedin**
- **Age 40 years 330 days**
- **Height 5ft 8¼ in, hair fair, eyes grey, complexion fair**
- **Presbyterian, single, gold miner, self-employed; enlisted in Dunedin**

Alex's battalion joined the NZ Division in Egypt in May 1941. The German paratroopers had gained the upper hand over the Allied forces in the Battle of Crete and it was decided to evacuate the division from the island, again without its heavy weapons. This evacuation was to Egypt, with the forces landing in Alexandria in June, a month after Alex's arrival. The unit's ability to help itself to enemy - and Allied - heavy weapons and transport led to it being nicknamed "Freyberg's Forty Thousand Thieves".

Following the disasters in Europe, the division was then integrated into the regular order of battle of the British Eighth Army. It fought in many of the critical battles in the North African Campaign over the next year and a half. On 18 November 1941, the division took part in Operation Crusader. Originally known as the 'New Zealand Division', the division became known as 2nd New Zealand Division from June 1942 onward as part of the Operation Cascade deception scheme and the 'formation' of Maadi Camp, the division's base area in Egypt, as "6th NZ Division".

After the Eighth Army's defeat in the Gazala battles fresh forces were brought up to check the Axis forces in their drive into Egypt. The 2nd New Zealand Division was transported from Syria to Mersa Matruh. In the ensuing battle the division's retreat was cut off on 27 June when the 21st Panzer Division got to the east of the division. That night the division's 4th Brigade broke through the German positions, and the division retired to El Alamein. Alex was wounded the night the retreat was cut off and he was admitted to a hospital behind the lines. The hospital discharged him on 4 July and he spent the next two months convalescing.

The division played a prominent role in both Battles of El Alamein, although Alex missed the First Battle owing to his injury. During the Second Battle of El Alamein, the division broke through the German positions and got behind Rommel's flank, helping to secure victory. Following the victory at Alamein the Eighth Army advanced west through Libya to El Agheila where they again played a pivotal role. When leading elements of Eighth Army entered Tripoli in the early morning of 23 January 1943 its defenders had left.

The Eighth Army arrived on the Mareth defensive line on the border with Tunisia shortly after the fall of Tripoli and the NZ Division took part in a flanking operation which helped ensure the Axis withdrawal by March. Following the Axis surrender in Tunisia the 2nd New Zealand Division was withdrawn to refit and therefore took no part in the Allied invasion of Sicily. Operation Crusader was an overall success for the British, and New Zealand troops withdrew to Syria to recover. The Operation Crusader campaign was the costliest the 2nd New Zealand Division fought during the Second World War, with 879 men killed, and 1700 wounded. The refit included the conversion of the 4th Infantry Brigade into the 4th Armoured Brigade. The division returned to battle in the

Italian Campaign in late 1943, rejoining the Eighth Army. The division came into the front line in November and took part in the advance across the Sangro at the end of the month. During December the division was involved in very heavy fighting during the Moro River Campaign at Orsogna before conditions forced a winter lull.

By the end of January 1944, the US Fifth Army's attacks against Cassino had ground to a halt and the Battle for Rome had stalled. The 2nd NZ Division, Alex Macdonald included, were sent as reinforcements. The New Zealanders failed as part of the second and third battles of Cassino, despite fierce fighting. Following the two assaults at Monte Cassino, the New Zealand Division was withdrawn and when redeployed found itself in the high Apennine sector north east of Cassino under the British Eighth Army's X Corps. When in May 1944 the Allies launched their final and successful offensive on the Cassino front, X Corps was employed in a holding role making diversionary feints and anchoring the right flank of the Eighth Army attack. As the main attack advanced, X Corps with the New Zealand Division moved forward to maintain protection of Eighth Army's right flank. After the fall of Rome in early June X Corps formed a pursuit force comprising 2nd New Zealand and 8th and 10th Indian Infantry Divisions. In July The New Zealand Division's capture of the eastern crests of the Pian dei Cerri hills at the start of August was the turning point of the battle for Florence. In the autumn of 1944 the division fought as part of I Canadian Corps during Operation Olive, the offensive on the Gothic Line, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's last major line of defence along the summits of Italy's Apennine Mountains. With one armoured and two infantry brigades, the division was well organised for mobile warfare as experienced in North Africa. In the mountainous terrain and difficult conditions underfoot found in Italy, however, tank mobility was very restricted and the division always found itself short of infantry. During the winter of 1944-45 cavalry, motor and machine-gun battalions were converted to infantry to prepare for the race for Trieste, but it was at this time that Alexander Macdonald was sent back to New Zealand. He landed in New Zealand on 3 January 1945 and was discharged on 18 April to return to Queenstown. He married Win Scott, a widow 12 years older than himself with two grown-up daughters, later that year. Meanwhile, the 2nd NZ Division crossed the Isonzo River on 1 May and reached Trieste the next day just as the German forces in Italy surrendered unconditionally. After their exhilarating final charge covering over 220km in less than a week, the New Zealanders arrived just in time to share in the city's liberation with local partisans and units of Josip Tito's Fourth Yugoslav Army.

WAR SERVICE IMAGES

None at present

USEFUL WEB LINKS FOR REFERENCE:

1. [Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph](#)
 - A comprehensive database of New Zealand service personnel.
2. [New Zealand War Graves Project](#)
 - Contains images and information about New Zealand war graves and memorials around the world.
3. [New Zealand History - NZ Wars and Conflicts](#)
 - Provides detailed accounts and images of New Zealand's involvement in various wars, including WW1 and WW2.
4. [Archives New Zealand - War History](#)
 - Access to war-related records and images held by Archives New Zealand.
5. [Te Papa Tongarewa - Collections Online](#)

Features war-related collections, including personal stories and photographs of New Zealand soldiers

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- Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph
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