

Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Major General Basil Moorhouse MORRIS, CBE, DSO

(1888-1975)

Basil Morris was commissioned in the Royal Australian Artillery on 1 December 1910 and served in coast defence establishments.

In May 1915, Morris was appointed lieutenant, AIF, and posted to the 36th (Australian) Heavy Artillery Group (HAG). It had two batteries, the 54th and the 55th; Morris joined the latter. He served on the Western Front from February 1916 and was transferred in November 1917 to HQRAA 5th Division as a staff captain. Promoted major, he took command of the 114th Howitzer Battery in September 1918. The 114th fought at Hargicourt and Bellicourt, and in the advance to the Hindenburg line (September-October).

Returning to Australia in 1919, Morris transferred to the Staff Corps and, in 1937, was appointed Director of Supplies, Transport, Movements and Quartering, Army Headquarters, Melbourne.

In November 1939, he was promoted colonel and appointed to command the Australian Overseas Base in the Middle East. In December, he was seconded to the AIF as temporary brigadier. Arriving in Palestine in January 1940, he established the base at Jerusalem and remained there until June.

He was appointed Australian Military Liaison Officer, Bombay, India in August and established cordial relations with military authorities in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

In May 1941, Morris became commandant of the 8th Military District, with headquarters at Port Moresby and was promoted temporary major general in January 1942. Although provided with inadequate supplies and raw young troops, he continued to oppose the Japanese until August when Lieutenant General Sydney Rowell arrived to take over a greatly augmented New Guinea Force.

Morris was transferred to command the New Guinea Lines of Communication Area and from December he also directed the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), a body he had been prominent in establishing. Before the civil administration had been suspended on 14 February 1942, he drafted a plan to continue most of its functions in a military organisation. He subsequently posted many of the conscripted officers of the Papuan and New Guinean public services to ANGAU.

Morris retired from the army on 19 October 1946.

For more information follow this link: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/morris-basil-moorhouse-11169>