

Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Brigadier William Edward CREMOR, CBE, ED

(1897-1962)

William enlisted in the AIF on 11 December 1917, embarked for England in July 1918, served briefly in France with the 3rd (Army) Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) and was discharged in Melbourne on 8 November 1919. Cremor obtained a commission in the Militia in 1920 and in 1921-23 studied law, arts and education at the University of Melbourne (BA, 1945).

Continuing his Militia service, on 1 May 1936 Cremor was promoted lieutenant colonel and given command of the 10th FAB. He joined the AIF in October 1939 and sailed for the Middle East in April 1940 as CO, 2/2nd Field Artillery Regiment.

His regiment first saw action at the Battle of Bardia in January 1941 supporting 17th Brigade, 6th Division. He trained his gunners hard and for both the assaults on Bardia and Tobruk he concealed his worn howitzers from the enemy and misled them by constructing dummy gun positions from scrap metal. For his part in operations in the Western Desert from December 1940 to February 1941 he was appointed OBE.

Cremor led his regiment during the campaign in Greece and Crete (March-May 1941). In Greece, near Brallos, he ordered his guns to redeploy at night a further 1000 to 1500 yards to the rear but to leave their camouflage nets in place as a decoy for Luftwaffe bombers. Next day 125 enemy aircraft bombed the nets. In Crete he commanded Creforce, a group of Australian battalions and other arms (2,280 strong) defending Suda Bay, a vital port. He had 42 AA guns and coastal defences under his command. Cremor ordered the AA guns to put an 'umbrella' of fire over the vital jetty. As a result, no ship was hit. He oversaw the evacuation of troops from Sfakia on Crete's south coast in an orderly fashion, often brandishing his revolver to maintain good order and discipline at his control point.

He returned to Australia in August 1942 and was promoted temporary brigadier that month and was made CRA, 3rd Division. In the 1943 Federal election he stood for the seat of Fawkner as an Independent; advocating the formation of one army for service anywhere, he polled 22 percent of the vote.

Cremor held the headquarters' posts of CCRA I Corps (October 1943-May 1944) and II Corps (October 1944-April 1945), and BRA New Guinea Force (May-October 1944). Transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 12 April 1945, he was appointed CBE for his services in the South-West Pacific Area.

He died on 11 April 1962 in the Heidelberg Repatriation and General Hospital; following a Masonic service, he was cremated.

Sources: Neil Smith, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 13, pp. 531-2. G. Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria*, AWM, pp. 196-218; Editorial Committee 2/2nd Field Regiment Association, 1961, *Action Front*, 1963. pp. 3-4.; J. Whitelaw.

For more information follow this link: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cremor-william-edward-9862>