

Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Lieutenant Colonel Howard Gordon LOVEBAND, MM and Bar

(1896-1960)

Howard Loveband was born at Norwood, South Australia, on 22 June 1896, the second son of Thomas George Howard Loveband and Louisa Christine Caroline Loveband neé Waltke. He was educated at North Adelaide Public School. In 1913, at age 18 years Loveband enlisted in the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA) at Fort Largs for five years. His occupation was labourer and his height was 6 feet 1½ inches, hence the life-long nick-name of 'Lofty'. On 27 June 1914, he was posted to No 9 Company RAGA then located on Thursday Island.

Loveband enlisted in the AIF on 4 March 1915 disclosing that he was serving in the 9th Company RAGA located on Thursday Island and had two years service. He must have gone south to Brisbane for some reason and not told his unit that he was joining the AIF because a subsequent 9th Coy Routine Order declared him to have been 'struck off strength' as a deserter. Initially he was allotted to the 2nd reinforcements of the 2nd Battalion AIF.

Later he was allotted to the 1st Machine Gun Company (later battalion) and embarked for the Middle East on 13 March 1915. His enlistment procedure was completed aboard the HMAT (A48) *Seang Bee* where he had his medical examination and was sworn in as a member of the AIF. The location of his enlistment was shown as 'on the high seas'. After service on Gallipoli and in Egypt, he sailed for France aboard HMT *Grampian* on 22 March 1916 with his battalion and steadily rose through the ranks.

In 1918, he was a sergeant in charge of a section of Vickers machine guns in which capacity he showed outstanding courage, initiative and devotion to duty. During the operation near Chuignes on 24 August 1918, Sergeant Loveband displayed exceptional courage in getting his gun into action through an intense enemy barrage. As it was all important that the infantry received supporting fire, at the greatest risk he calmly advanced and was able to bring heavy fire on to enemy machine guns effectively silencing them and enabling the infantry to proceed. For this Loveband was awarded the Military Medal. Three weeks later he won a bar to his medal at Hargicourt on 16 September 1918, when he again overcame great difficulties with his depleted gun crews by 'sheer personal effort he succeeded in collecting his men, reorganizing, and pushed on in the advance. . .to render valuable assistance'.

Loveband returned to Australia on 23 April 1919 aboard the ss *Port Macquarie* and after discharge from the AIF on 21 July 1919, soldiered on temporarily in the Australian Instructional Corp (AIC) from 8 April 1920. His appointment as a provisional staff sergeant major was confirmed on 21 November 1920 following his attendance at No 2 Special School held at Liverpool to permit transfer to the AIC. Just prior to this, he married Leila Ethel Ferrett on 24 July 1920 at St Cuthberts Church, Prospect. There was one son born of this marriage who also became a regular soldier. Howard was promoted warrant officer class 2 when Quartermaster Sergeant of 13th Field Artillery Brigade, 4th Military District (Field Troops) in Adelaide.

He survived the down-sizing of the AIC and in 1932, as a crack shot, he was one of two warrant officers who coached the cadet shooting team from Prince Alfred College to win the Earl Roberts Shield in Australia-wide competition. He was selected to join the Coronation Contingent in 1937. A commanding figure, he was always in the leading file. In Adelaide he first became associated with his WWII Commanding Officer (CO), Thomas Eastick, an enthusiastic Militia officer, an association that flourished until his death.

Just prior to the outbreak of WWII, Loveband was posted to Queensland and 11th Field Artillery Brigade as Adjutant/Quartermaster and later became a Quartermaster Instructor for AIC cadres to qualify honorary lieutenant quartermasters in the AIC. In September he wired Eastick, by now CO of 13th Field Artillery Brigade and soon to be 2/7th Field Regiment, volunteering to 'serve under you in any capacity'. Eastick obliged and on 1 May 1940, Captain Loveband became Quartermaster of the 2/7th.

On 18 November, Loveband embarked for the Middle East aboard HMT *Stratheden* along with the 2/7th Field Regiment and other 2nd AIF units. He was promptly appointed 'Ship's Quartermaster' for the duration of the voyage which ended at Kantara one month later.

In the Middle East, generally known as a quartermaster's nightmare, Loveband's best qualities soon emerged. His unflappable demeanor, his cheerfulness and quiet efficiency impressed the gunners. In desert operations with 22nd Guards Brigade based on Mersa Matruh, Loveband was in charge of the whole of B Echelon of the 'Coastal Group'. Units of the group were replenished from dumps, and this required drivers to navigate in the desert 'cross country' from cairns, and/or on tracks. His instructions to his drivers were simple: 'You deliver your load even if you have to carry it'. He contrived to make sure his B Echelon vehicles were Fords, because these were faster than Chevrolets and gave his unit an advantage when the dump opened. In September 1941, he demonstrated his surfing prowess by rescuing a British soldier caught in treacherous surf at Mersa Matruh. This was not the first time that Loveband had saved a person from drowning because in 1930 at Port Elliot, he saved a person from that fate and was awarded a certificate from the Royal Humane Society.

When his regiment was Depot Regiment at Almaza, at the end of 1941, Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) acquired a magpie, Myrtle, naming it after the divisional commander's wife. Anyone approaching RHQ had to pay their respects to Myrtle, whom the Q staff had taught to warble the tune 'Scatterbrain'. Lofty would take Myrtle for her evening stroll, turning over stones in his search for 'dainties' (scorpions). 'Lofty', as he was known, was a popular officer. Master of any situation, he was one of the few AIC veterans of WW I who served a full tour in the desert. Even tempered and gregarious, he was fun loving and could give and take joke.

After El Alamein, Loveband returned to Australia with his regiment aboard the Dutch liner *Nieuw Amsterdam*, landing in Melbourne on 25 February 1943 and as a result of being medically downgraded, appointed Adjutant and Quartermaster of 4th Base Ordnance Depot at Keswick Barracks. Postwar he soldiered on as Adjutant and Quartermaster 6th BOD and was subsequently posted to AHQ in Melbourne as a major.

Lieutenant Colonel Howard Loveband, MM and Bar retired on 22 June 1951. He returned to Adelaide and in his retirement worked for Tom Eastick in his engineering business - as 'quartermaster'.

Loveband died on 18 April 1960 while a patient at the Repatriation General Hospital, Adelaide. Two days later, after a service at the Hospital Chapel he was cremated at the Centennial Park Cemetery. He was survived by his wife Leila and son Gordon who followed his father's footsteps as a gunner in 2/14th Field Regiment and later as a member of the Australian Regular Army in the Royal Australian Regiment.

Sources: British-Australasian Publishing Service, *The All Australian Memorial*, 1919; Military Order No 550 of 18th December 1920; The Army List 1950; AWM Awards Website; D Goodhart, *The History of the 2/7th Australian Field Regiment*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1952, pp. 3, 89, 119, 133-4, 175, 252; Department of Veterans Affairs Website; T Roberts, *Tom Roberts' War Diaries Will We Be Disappointed –After?* p. 265; Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Adelaide; CAG No 115 of 10th October 1919; WW1 Record of Service held in the NAA; WW2 Records of Service held in the NAA and CARO; CAG No 61 of 16th August 1951; *The Advertiser* 19th and 20th April 1960; Alan H Smith.