

## Private John Ernest CHATER NX26855 - 2/3 Tank Attack Regiment

### Biography:

John Ernest Charter was born on 6 Nov 1908 in Cumnock, the son of John Freeman and Elizabeth Mary Chater.

John Freeman Chater was born in 1876 in Southport, Lancashire, England. His father, also named John Chater, was a Congregational Minister in Lancashire when John Freeman Chater was 14 years old in 1891. John Freeman Chater, aged 24 years, came to Australia as an unassisted immigrant on the *SS Oruba*, arriving in Sydney on 12 Oct 1900.



John Freeman Chater, aged 30 years, married Elizabeth Mary Fleming, youngest daughter of James and Elizabeth Fleming, at "Rockdale," Dilga on 10 Oct 1906. Elizabeth died shortly afterwards, aged 66 years. James Fleming died, aged 81 years, in 1925. The couple are buried in the Cumnock Cemetery.

John Freeman and Elizabeth Chater had two children: Daisy Florence, born 1907 and John Ernest. The family lived at "Birkdale," Dilga. The family journeyed to England in March 1912 to spend time with John's family and returned to Australia by the *SS Suevic* in October 1912.

Daisy and John (known as Jack) attended the Birkdale Subsidised School which was established in 1915 on the Chater property, Birkdale, six miles out of town. The family lived at Dilga until around 1930, when they moved to live at Cumnock.

Elizabeth Chater died, aged 54 years, on 3 Jul 1933, at her home in Cumnock. She was buried in the Methodist portion of the Cumnock Cemetery.

*The Wellington Times* -13 Jun 1940, p4, reported:

*" Shooting on the local range on Sunday last, Mr Jack Chater registered a possible [Obtained the maximum score without dropping a shot]. Jack has applied for enlistment overseas, and his reputation as a consistent marksman should prove invaluable."*

Jack Chater enlisted in the Australian Army on 21 Jun 1940. He was 31 years old, single, his occupation was a Life Assurance Agent and his father was his next of kin. He was 5 feet 8 inches tall, had blue eyes, brown hair and a medium complexion. He was of the Methodist religious denomination.

Pte Chater was first assigned to the 9th Btn at Liverpool, but on the 30 Jul 1940, was transferred to the 2/3rd Anti Tank Regiment (2/3 A/T Reg.). Between 24 Aug - 4 Sep 1940, Pte Chater suffered from influenza and tonsillitis. He was admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital on 5 Sep, for a fractured finger. He spent recovery time at Cumnock before rejoining his unit on 19 Sep 1940.

*The Wellington Times* - 24 Oct 1940, p4, reported on a send-off to Gunner Jack Chater at the Picture Theatre in Cumnock. He was presented with a wallet by the chairman, Mr SR Reynolds, knitted goods by the Knitting Club, a toilet set in a case from the Dramatic Club, and a Testament, on behalf of the Methodist congregation.

As a member of the 2/3 A/T Reg., Gunner Chater embarked at Sydney on 14 November and disembarked at Haifa, northwestern Israel, on 18 Dec 1940. Gunner Chater attended Artillery Training in Palestine from the 12 Dec 1940 - 13 Jan 1941.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2/3rd\\_Anti-Tank\\_Regiment\\_\(Australia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2/3rd_Anti-Tank_Regiment_(Australia))

*In February – March 1941, the regiment joined the rest of the 9th Division; the regiment was sent to Amiriya in Egypt, where they were hastily issued with a mix of weapons including captured Solothurn anti-tank rifles, Italian 47 mm guns, and 37 mm Bofors guns. Amidst the chaos and confusion of the German offensive in Cyrenaica, the regiment was dispersed across several locations – the 9th Battery garrisoned the port of Tobruk, while the 12th remained on the Egyptian border. The 11th Battery, and regimental headquarters, was allocated to support the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade at Mechili, where they were heavily engaged over three days in early April. After the town was surrounded by German armoured forces, the force attempted to break out and withdraw back to Tobruk. Some was eventually captured; the regiment lost 91 men captured, as well as four others killed and seven wounded. The remnants of the regiment, then under the command of Major Henry Glover, concentrated around Tobruk where the 9th Battery joined them as the town fell under siege.*

*New 2-pounder guns were issued, and the regiment assumed command of several infantry anti-tank companies (the 20th and 24th). They were heavily engaged over Easter, as the Germans launched a heavy armoured assault against the perimeter. Meanwhile, the 12th Battery was cut off from the regiment, and was assigned to the 22nd Guards Brigade carrying out defensive actions around the frontier, before being transferred to support the 7th Armoured Division. In August, the battery deployed to Mersa Matruh, rejoining the Australian 9th Division. The rest of the regiment remained in Tobruk until September, taking part in the defence of the town before being relieved by a British unit, and withdrawn by sea back to Palestine. Its losses during the siege amounted to 11 killed, 39 wounded and 96 captured.*

*The Wellington Times - 28 Aug 1941, p2, reported:*

*Writing to his father from Tobruk, Driver John Chater describes the place as being very uninviting, and said for a time things as tobacco being particularly scare, so much so that he offered 25/- for a 2 oz tin of tobacco. However, the troops are now receiving parcels, etc., regularly and appreciate them very much.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2/3rd\\_Anti-Tank\\_Regiment\\_\(Australia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2/3rd_Anti-Tank_Regiment_(Australia))

*Following withdrawal from Tobruk, the regiment was reformed at Hill 95 before moving to Qastina Camp to rejoin the rest of the 9th Division. It was expanded to a 64-gun regiment, and absorbed several anti-tank companies at this time. They deployed to Syria in January 1942, undertaking defensive duties around Tripoli as part of the Allied occupation force, remaining there until June 1942 when they were recalled to Egypt after the Germans launched an offensive... Detaching a battery to support each of the 9th Division's three infantry brigades, over the course of several months the regiment took part in defensive fighting during the First Battle of El Alamein. Casualties throughout July amounted to 23 killed, 80 wounded and 46 captured. Later, during October and November, the regiment supported the offensive actions of the Second Battle of El Alamein, during which the 9th Division carried out attacks towards the coast, before the Allied breakthrough in early November. The 2/3rd Anti-Tank Regiment fired 1,276 rounds during 13 days of heavy fighting, during which 36 guns were destroyed.*

On 6 Oct 1942, Jack Chater was promoted to a Group 3 Driver Mechanic. Due to ill health, his father, John Freeman Chater decided to sell his farm in Cumnock and with his daughter, Daisy, move to Parkes. He was given a farewell at Cumnock in early November 1942 in which the President of the Amaroo Shire, Mr SR Reynolds, made a presentation on behalf of the gathering. He spoke of Mr Chater as a friend and neighbour of many years who had always taken part in many matters that were of material benefit to Cumnock, and taken prominent parts in the activities of the Cumnock P.A.H. Association, Cumnock Dramatic Club, Farmers and Settlers' Association, and School of Arts.

In December 1942, the regiment was withdrawn back to Palestine, at which time preparations began for the 9th Division to return to Australia, where they were to join the other 2nd AIF divisions fighting the Japanese. Embarking in January 1943, the regiment returned to Australia by sea, and disembarked at Sydney on 28 Feb 1943. A period of leave followed, before the regiment was reconstituted at Kairi, North Queensland; around this time it was re-designated the 2/3rd Tank Attack Regiment.

Pte Chater and other soldiers were welcomed back to Cumnock in the Picture Theatre on 18 Mar 1943. Jack spent all of 1944 training in various camps and had two further episodes of Tonsillitis in September 1944 and March 1945. His father, John Chater snr, died aged 69 years, in Parkes in early January 1945. Jack Chater had a further bout of Tonsillitis in March 1945 and was hospitalised.

On 15 May 1945, Pte Chater embarked at Cairns and disembarked at Morotai on 26 May. Here the regiment undertook labouring duties loading ships to support the 26th Brigade's operation to retake Tarakan. They also performed ordinary infantry duties. Pte Chater arrived back in Brisbane on 16 Oct 1945 and was discharged from the Army on 30 Oct 1945. He was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the Africa Star, the Pacific Star, the Defence Medal and the Australia Service Medal 1939-1945. He is honoured on the Cumnock Memorial Gates WW2 Honour Plaque.

Between 1949- 1954, Jack was working in NSW as a station hand at "Karoopa," Crowther, in 1958 at Halcoyn Park, Tabbita, in the Riverina district. By 1968, both Jack and his sister, Daisy were living on his property "Dunroamin," Tumorrana, via Tumut. In 1977 they had moved to Tumut, where Jack's occupation was listed as a salesman.

Daisy Florence Chater died in Tumut in 1988, and John Ernest Chater died, aged 81 years, in Tumut on 23 March 1989.

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