

Name	DOWNEY, KENNETH PATRICK
Service	Australian Army
Service Number	NX129090 (N235649)
Date of Birth	07 Nov 1921
Place of Birth	CASINO, NSW
Date of Enlistment	11 Oct 1942
Locality on Enlistment	CUMNOCK, NSW
Place of Enlistment	FRENCHS FOREST, NSW
Next of Kin	DOWNEY, THOMAS
Date of Discharge	15 Feb 1945
Rank	Private
Posting at Discharge	AUST TRG CENTRE J W
Prisoner of War	No



## Brief Biography

Kenneth was born on 7 Nov 1921 at Casino, the youngest son of Thomas and Ida Downey.

Thomas Joseph Downey was born in Molong in 1881. He was living at Fern Hill, Molong, in 1908 when he married Ida Durr at Cumnock. Ida was the eldest daughter of William and Bridget Durr of "Burnsdale", Cumnock. Thomas and Ida Downey had seven children, all born when they were living at Casino, NSW: Thomas George 1909-1955; Marjorie Clair 1911-2005; Eileen Alicia 1913-1956; Arnold Keith 1915-1979; Lawrence Arthur 1917-1949; Raymond Martin 1919-1993; and Kenneth Patrick 1921-1977.

In 1924 the family moved to Cumnock to live where Thomas worked as a fettler with NSW Railways. Thomas Downey retired from NSW Railways in May 1946. He died on 2 Dec 1965 at Molong, aged 84yrs. Ida Downey died on 6 Oct 1962 at Orange, aged 84yrs. They are buried at the Cumnock Cemetery.

Ken attended St. Ita's Convent School, Cumnock, for his primary school education and enlisted with the Australian Army on 2 Oct 1941, aged 19 years and 7 months. He listed his occupation as a sales assistant. Ken served as a private, N255649, with the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Australia and was ill in 1942 and 1943 for short periods, the latter events related to Respiratory infections and pleurisy. He returned home for leave during these periods.

On 16 Oct 1942 he was transferred to the Australian Infantry Force and allotted an army number. He embarked at Cairns on 19 May 1944 and disembarked at Lae, Papua New Guinea, on 25 May 1944. Ken again reported sick on 26 Jul 1944 with a chronic skin condition known as Lichen Planus. He was evacuated from Lae by *AHS Manunda* on 18 Aug 1944 and disembarked at Sydney on 26 August. Local news reports in September 1944 state that Mrs Downey visited Ken at a Military Hospital in Sydney. He was discharged as medically unfit for further military service on 15 Feb 1945.

The Molong Express and Western District Advertiser - 4 Apr 1947, p9, reported:

*"Mr Ken Downey, who was placed third in the Amateur Hour programme has received many congratulatory telegram from various parts of the State."*

'Australian Amateur Hour' was a talent quest radio programme originally made in Sydney. It was later broadcast from all major cities and ran for 18 years from 1940 to 1958. Ten talented acts were chosen to perform on the show which was taped each Thursday. After the show, listeners voted for their most popular performer either by phone or letters.

Ken moved to Orange to live by 1949 and worked as a refrigeration mechanic. He died on 1 Dec 1977 in Orange, aged 63 years.

*Thank you to the Downey family, Cumnock, for photos and information of the 4 Downey WW2 soldiers.*