

CAPTAIN JOHN DOUGLAS BLACK

NX5629 - 6 Division Cavalry Regiment & 16 & 22 General Battalions

Biography

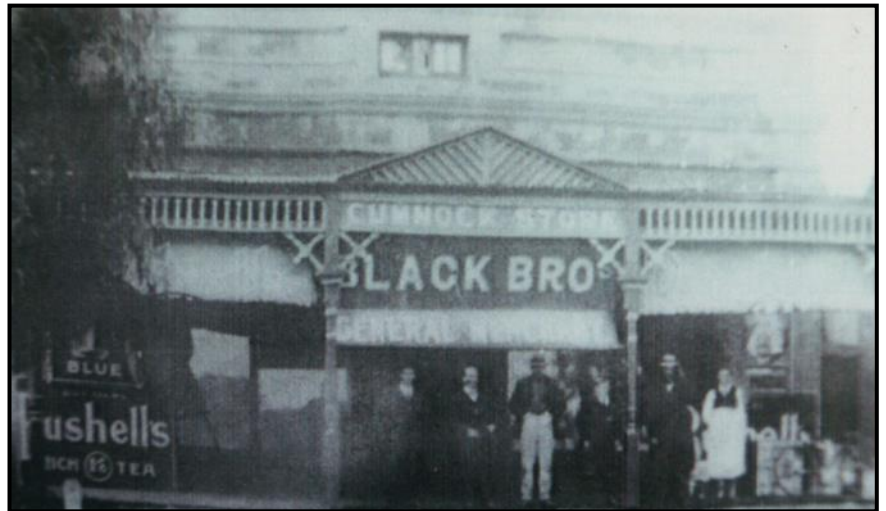
John Douglas Black was born on 30 Jun 1912 at Orange, a son of George and Grace Black.

John's grandfather, William Black was born in Dumfriesshires, Scotland, in 1851. He immigrated to Australia in the 1870s and married Susan Pearce in Bathurst in 1878. The couple moved to the Molong district before settling in Cumnock around 1882, and establishing the Cumnock Store. William and Susan had six children, one of whom was George John Black.



William Black was a driving force of the development of Cumnock, and the Cumnock Store is still being maintained as a General Store at the present time. William was, over some years, President of the Cumnock Pastoral and Agricultural Society, President of the Amaroo Shire Council and a Justice of the Peace. He handed over the Cumnock Store to his sons, George and Wallace, in Jan 1910, and the store then became named as the Black Bros. Store. William and Susan retired to their home, "Park House," in Cumnock. Susan died, aged 69 years, on 21 Jul 1928, at Sydney. William died, aged 77 years, on 28 Jul 1929, at Cumnock. Both Susan and William are buried in the Anglican section of the Cumnock Cemetery.

John's father, George Black, opened a store in Cargo in 1905. George married Grace Hamilton, daughter of Elizabeth and James Hamilton, of Cargo, on 16 Jul 1907 at the Church of England, Cargo. They had five children: Jean, John, Keith, Ruth and Margaret. The couple moved back to Cumnock in late 1909 and George and his brother Wallace took over their father's shop in January 1910, which then became known as Black Bros. Wallace managed the Yeoval Black Bros store 1915 - 1921.



George and Susan built a brick house, named "Notlimah" opposite his father's house in Black Street, in 1911. He was a good cricketer and played an important part in community organisations. George owned the property "Kabadah" around 1927. He sold the Black Bros store to Bruce Sparkes in 1961. Grace died, aged 79 years, in Molong on 2 Mar 1964. George died, aged 85 years, on 5 Sep 1967, in Sydney. They are both interred at the Christ Church Cathedral Columbarium & Memorial Garden, Newcastle.

John attended the Cumnock Public School for his primary school education and then attended the King's School, Parramatta, for his secondary school education, between 1926-30. During his years at King's School, he was: a Broughton House Monitor; Cadet; a member of the 1st X1 Cricket Team for 1928, 1929 and 1930; and a member of the 1930 1st Tennis Team. John had played cricket for Cumnock before he attended the King's School, and rejoined the Cumnock team in 1931. He was noted for his "brilliant" batting ability, and scored many centuries and even double centuries reported in cricket news reports and also played in Sydney and Molong against combined metropolitan first grade teams. He also played tennis for Cumnock, was a member of the Cumnock Swimming Club, and along with his father, George, played an important part in establishing the Cumnock Golf Club in 1935.

John Black lived in Cumnock from 1931-1940, working as a shop assistant at the Cumnock Black Bros. Store and also relieving the Manager of the Yeoval Branch of Black Bros when he took his annual holidays. He enlisted in the Australian Army in WW2 on 9 Nov 1939 at Bathurst. His father, George, was noted as his next of kin and he was of the Church of England religious denomination. He was appointed Sergeant on enlistment with the 6 Division Recce Regiment (later known as 6 Division Cavalry Regiment).

The *Wellington Times* - 4 Jan 1940, p4, reported that Sgt John Black and Pte Ray Veney (NX9015 William Raymond Veney - 2/1 Field Regiment) were given a farewell evening at Leary's Hall, Cumnock, on 28 Dec 1939, before departing overseas, and presented with fountain pens.

Sgt Black embarked on HMT "U3" at Sydney on 10 Jan 1940, disembarking at Kantara, Egypt on 13 Feb 1940. During the voyage, the ship stopped at Colombo and the *Ceylon Observer* - 10 Feb 1940, reported: *"On the Colombo cricket ground yesterday a combined eleven of European and Ceylonese cricketers met an Army eleven in a game that provided very interesting cricket. SJ Campbell, of the CCC [Colombo Cricket Club], led the local eleven, which included five CCC players and two Wesley College cricketers. A feature of the match was the solid, stylish innings played by John D Black for the Army team. He opened with R Robinson (the Test Cricketer) and scored 72 not out. In style he is very much like the Test cricketer, Babcock; Robinson was out to a good catch by Murray before he had scored. After an exciting finish the home team beat the army."*

The 6 Division Cavalry Regiment trained in Palestine using machine-gun carriers and, from October, six old Vickers light tanks. John was promoted to Lieutenant on 1 Jul 1940 and received training in Driver, Mechanic & Motor Maintenance in Palestine, attended courses in using Gas and a Junior Officers Course in the Middle East throughout 1940 and 1941.

The Sun, Sydney - 17 Sep 1940, p11, reported:

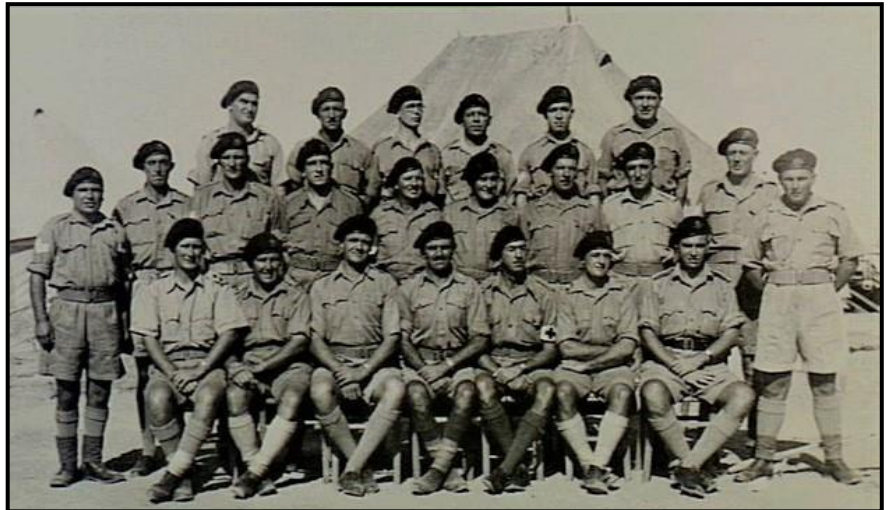
"By a coincidence, Lieut. John Black and his sister, Nurse [sic Masseur] Jean Black, of the AIF in Palestine, have always managed to be together when parcels arrive for them from their home at Cumnock, NSW. They have written to their parents saying that mail is often delivered at night and under black-out conditions, they have great fun opening their parcels."

Wellington Times - 6 Feb 1941, p4:

"During the week Mr & Mrs Black received from Lieut. John Black a parcel containing some interesting curios, including coins, notes, etc. During the screening of a newsreel on Saturday last at the local picture theatre, a very fine shot of Lieut. Black was shown leading his men. As soon as he was recognised the audience heartily applauded."

On 3 Jan 1941 the 6 Division attacked and captured the Italian fort of Bardia. Tobruk was the next Italian fort to be captured, with the regiment again in support and covering the 19th Brigade's advance. The regiment, though, was under-equipped and without its full complement of vehicles, using only machine gun carriers. To compensate for this, "A" Squadron was parity re-equipped with captured Italian light tanks, which had large kangaroos painted on the hulls and turrets to distinguish them from enemy vehicles. After Tobruk, the regiment was used as part of the advance guard in the capture of Derna and then Benghazi.

The regiment experienced its heaviest fighting during the Syrian campaign, which began on 7 Jun 1941. Always willing or needing to improvise during the campaign, "A" and "B" Squadrons both operated three captured French R35 Renault light tanks, while "C" Squadron provided personnel for a horse troop, quickly nicknamed the "Kelly Gang", to patrol the high, rugged hills near the Mardjayoun-Banis Road. The regiment remained in Syria as part of the occupation force and returned to Australia in March 1942. www.awm.gov.au/collection/U54268



Above: Palestine, 25 Dec 1940, 6 Aus. Div. Cavalry Regiment, Officers & Senior NCOs. Lt Black is front row, 2nd from left. AWM PO2269

Below: Italian Tanks taken over by the AIF and manned by 6 Aus. Div. Cavalry Regiment, with painted kangaroos on them.



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Lieut. Black was hospitalised with dysentery in the 1 Australian General Hospital, Gaza, Palestine, on 15 Aug 1941, and convalesced at the Officers' Hostel from 28 Aug to 6 Sep, re-joining his unit on 7 Sep 1941. He embarked on the Motor Vessel *Duke of Athens* on 18 Mar 1942 and disembarked at Sydney on 22 Apr 1942.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser - 16 May 1942, p8, reported that Lieut. John Black and Pte Tim Carpenter (Sapper Charles W Carpenter NX10863 - Royal Aust. Engineers) were given a "Welcome Home" at the Cumnock Theatre by district residents.

John was appointed Temporary Captain on 30 July and Captain on 1 Sept 1942. He attended the No. 1 Company Commander's Course from 2 Nov - 13 Nov 1942. Captain Black transferred from the 2/6 Aust. Cavalry Regiment to the 4 Aust. Motor Regiment in May 1943. In August 1943 he was admitted to the 110 Aust. General Hospital at Concord, with pes planus (flat foot) and afterwards spent time at Cumnock.

In 1944, Captain Black spent time with the 16 Garrison (Grn) Btn - internment camps 6, 7 and 8 at Hay, of Italian Prisoners of War, and with the 22 Garrison Btn - the Japanese interment camp at Cowra. It does not appear that Captain Black was present at Cowra during the 9 days Japanese outbreak from the camp starting on 5 Aug 1944. A total of 231 Japanese POW's were killed and 108 wounded. One Australian Officer and 3 other ranks were killed, while four others were wounded. Captain Black had returned from 16 Grn Btn to 22 Grn Btn on 30 Aug 1944. The Cowra Camp also contained Italian prisoners of war.

On 18 Jan 1945 while driving a civilian car from Cowra to Sydney, Captain Black crashed into a tree. His Air Force passenger, LAC A Haines, suffered a fractured ankle and Captain Black sustained fractures of the upper jaw, nose, left malar (involves the zygomatic bone) and left talus (ankle bone). Captain Black was treated at the 113 Aust. General Hospital, Concord.

Captain Black was discharged from the army on 9 Mar 1945 and transferred to Reserve of Officers. He received the Africa Star, the Pacific Star, the Australia Service Medal 1939-45, and the Returned from Active Service medals. He is honoured on the WW2 plaque of the Cumnock Memorial Gates, the Yeoval WW2 Honour Board and on the WW2 Honour Board at King's School, Parramatta.

John's elder sister, Jean, served as a Lieutenant, NX315, in the Australian Army Nursing Service in WW2 as a masseuse in Palestine. His younger brother, 261132 Wing Commander Keith Black, served in Australia and New Guinea in the RAAF.

After his discharge from the Army, John took over the management of the Yeoval branch of Black Bros. store. He became engaged to Lieut. Pauline Matchett, NX125937 - Australian Army Nursing Service, in July 1945. Pauline was the daughter of headmaster Henry Matchett and mother Adelaide Matchett. Pauline completed her nursing training at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, in 1938. She enlisted on 9 Oct 1942 and was discharged on 7 Dec 1945. John and Pauline were married on 5 Sep 1945 at Sydney. John's brother Keith was his best man. The couple had 2 daughters, Deidre and Gillian.

John and Pauline became very involved with local community organisations in Yeoval. John was Patron of the Parents and Citizens Assn., the Cricket Club, and the Rugby Union Football Club; Auditor of the Yeoval Hospital; President of the Golf Club; and a committee member of the Town Advisory Council, the Yeoval branch of the Liberal Party, the Pastoral and Horticultural Society and the Masonic Lodge.

John and his family left Yeoval between 1958 and 1960. In the 1968 Electoral Roll (ER) for Bennelong/Lane Cove, John was working as an insurance consultant. The 1972 & 1977 ERs list John and Pauline as living in Neutral Bay and John's occupation was an Insurance Broker. By 1980 the couple had moved to Wollstonecraft in North Sydney.

John Douglas Black died, aged 86 years, on 13 Feb 1999. Pauline Black died, aged 91 years, on 9 Dec 2007. They are both interred in the Northern Suburbs Memorial Gardens, North Ryde.



*Black Bros. Store, Yeoval, 1934.
FL1679472 State Library of NSW.*