

**Bombardier/Corporal John Robert SULLIVAN
N279893 CMF, NX161219 - 2 Aust Heavy Artillery Battery**

Biography:

John Robert Sullivan was born in Orange on 4 Feb 1921. His parents were Robert and Christina (nee Hodges) who married in Orange in 1904. They had ten children: Frances Ann; Alice Margaret; Olive Eliza; Christina Mary (Kitty); Winifred Agnes (Winnie); Maria Veronica (Mick); John Robert (Jack); Michael Ernest (Ernie); Eric Lawrence (Bill); and Margaret Ann.

Robert and Christina were living in Cumnock in the early 1920s. Their children appear to have attended the Catholic Convent School, renamed St Ita's Convent School in 1929.

Robert was working at *Googodery* in 1932, and at *Wongalee*, Larras Lee, in 1938. Robert and Christina's 2nd eldest daughter Alice (married to Leslie Alexander, of Larras Lee in 1927) died in Molong Hospital on 28 Feb 1938. Her grieving family included her husband, and 5 young children, aged between 8 years and 3 days old. Her grieving family included her husband, and 5 young children, aged between 8 years and 3 days old.

John, known as Jack, enlisted in the Australian Army at Paddington on 3 Sep 1941. John was 20 years and 6 months old, his occupation was a labourer, and his father Robert Sullivan, of *Wongalee*. He was 6 feet tall, had hazel eyes, a fair complexion, brown hair and was of the Roman Catholic religious denomination.

After training at North Head and Ingleburn, Pte Sullivan was transferred to the 2nd Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft (AA) Battery, Darwin on 21 Nov 1941.

By late-1942 an extensive anti-aircraft defence organisation had been developed, with anti-aircraft batteries in place around all the major cities as well as the key towns in northern Australia. A total of two Heavy AA regiments, 32 static HAA batteries, 11 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) regiments, 16 independent LAA batteries, 3 anti-aircraft training regiments and one anti-aircraft training battery were formed. These units were equipped with a range of weapon systems including **3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns and 40 mm Bofors guns.** *(Seen Right)*



[The Bombing of Darwin | Australian War Memorial \(awm.gov.au\)](http://www.awm.gov.au)

"A few minutes before ten o'clock on 19 February 1942 a force of Japanese aircraft swept over Darwin to begin the first of two raids on that day. The first signs of the attack came when Zero fighters began strafing an auxiliary minesweeper, HMAS Gunbar, as it passed through the boom protecting the entrance to Darwin harbour. Soon, ships in the harbour and buildings and installations ashore came under attack.

Bombs killed at least 21 wharf labourers, some trapped on the open wharf when a section was destroyed. A bomb which hit the main Darwin post office killed the post-master and his family and six young women telegraphists sheltering in a slit-trench outside. The Residence of the Administrator of the Northern Territory was hit, killing a young Aboriginal woman who worked for the Administrator's family. For forty minutes the aircraft bombed and machine-gunned. They sank eight of the 47 ships in the harbour, including the motor vessel Neptuna. Its cargo included 200 depth charges which exploded as the ship lay beside the Darwin wharf. Darwin's defence was inadequate. The few anti-aircraft guns, though in constant action, were overwhelmed. Ten United States Kittyhawk fighters were all destroyed in the air or while taking off.

Eighty minutes later a second wave, this time of land-based bombers from Kendari in the Celebes, arrived to continue the attack, this time concentrating on the RAAF station inland. The raids cost the attackers no more than ten aircraft. The two raids killed about 250 people and injured 300 people in and around Darwin. The enemy attacked Darwin and the Top End on 64 occasions from 19 Feb 1942 to 12 Nov 1943."

Gunner Jack Sullivan's younger brother, Gunner Michael Ernest (known as Ernie) Sullivan - NX125438, had enlisted in the CMF on 3 Sep 1941 and was also serving with the 2nd Heavy AA Battery on 19 Feb 1942 in Darwin. Ernie and another gunner were both wounded by machine gun fire during the raid. Gunner M E Sullivan (21 yrs) received a Gun Shot Wound (GSW) to the right leg and returned to his unit some months later. Gunner Ronald Francis Conn N279808 (18 yrs) 2 Aust AA Battery from Arncliffe, NSW, received a GSW to his left upper arm and was discharged as medically unfit for duty on 8 Jul 1942.

On 5 June 1942, Jack was promoted to a Bombardier (Bdr) and on 18 June 1942, was transferred to the Australian Army. On 7 Oct 1942, Bdr Jack Sullivan, suffered accidental traumatic Synovitis of his left knee and was hospitalised on 10 Oct at the 121 Australian General Hospital (AGH), at Katherine. He rejoined his unit on 27 Nov 1942. He was next detached to Fortress Headquarters, Darwin.

Bdr Sullivan was admitted to the 119 AGH, Darwin, on 4 Feb 1943 and discharged on 28 Feb 1943. He had 2 further medical episodes - bruising of the acromioclavicular joint in March 1943 with cellulitis of right leg in June. He spent time with the 428 Aust Heavy AA Troop in December 1943 and January 1944.

Jack's parents, Robert and Christina Sullivan, moved to Molong to live by 1943. Jack returned to NSW to serve with the 102 Aust AA Regt in March 1944. In May 1944, Jack was hospitalised at the 113 AGH (Concord) with an Upper Respiratory Tract Infection.

In June 1944, Bdr Sullivan was transferred to the 102 Aust AA Regt in Western Australia. He was charged with the offence of "Conduct to the prejudice - impeding the Military Police" on 17 June, and was reprimanded by the Administration Commander. He returned by train from WA to NSW on 8 Dec 1944.

Jack Sullivan (23 yrs) married on 13 Jan 1945 at Annadale, Sydney, to Alice Rita Sullivan (20 yrs), daughter of Victoria Claxton and Lindsay Edward Watson, of Annadale. Alice had worked in printing for Smith & Merchant P/L before enlisting in the Australian Army on 26 Nov 1942. She had the rank of Gunner NF444317 - 5 Australian Base Ordnance Depot when she was discharged on 2 Aug 1945. The *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* reported in newspaper articles that the couple spent from 15 - 21 Jan staying with Jack's parents in Molong before returning to Sydney to spend a fortnight's holidays in Sydney and then returning to duty.



Bdr Jack Sullivan returned to his unit, 102 AA Regiment in NSW after his marriage and was discharged from the Army on 30 Nov 1945. He received the Active Service Badge, and is remembered on the WW2 plaque on the Cumnock Memorial Gates.

According to the Australian Electoral Rolls, Jack was working as a carpenter at Oatley, Lakemba in the 1949, 1963 and 1968. He and Alice had six children: Jane, Robert, Allan, Terry, Leanne and Janice.

John Robert Sullivan died, aged 47 years, at hospital, on 17 Aug 1968. A Requiem mass was celebrated at the Church of St Joseph, Oatley, and he was buried at the Woronora Catholic Lawn Cemetery.

Jack's parents, Christina Sullivan died aged 78 yrs, on 8 Oct 1962 in Molong and Robert Sullivan died aged 94 yrs, on 12 Nov 1973 in Molong. They are both buried in the Cumnock Cemetery. Alice Irene Sullivan died aged 99 years, on 3 Sep 2023, at Oatley, Sydney.

Thank you to Michael Downey and other family members for assistance with information for the Sullivan profiles.

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Below: Cumnock Memorial Gates & Memorial Plaque, Darwin, honouring 2 Aust. HVY AA Battery for their part in defending Darwin on 19 Feb 1942.

