Today I would like to pause and pay our respects to:

34381 Spr Roland Murray **Abel**

Before enlisting in the military, Roland lived at 10 Rimu Road, Kelburn, Wellington.

He was engaged as an architectural draughtsman, a profession that reflected his meticulous nature and attention to detail. He was single during this period, focusing on his career and his service to the community.

During his military service, Roland's mother, Mrs. F.J.C. Abel, was listed as his next of kin, with her residency listed as the police station in Christchurch.

With the outbreak of World War II, Roland enlisted in the New Zealand Army. He served as a Spr in the 18th (N.Z.) Army Troops Company, part of the New Zealand Engineers, 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2 NZEF). Demonstrating exceptional skills and leadership, Roland rose through the ranks and was promoted to Sergeant (Sgt), eventually serving in the Headquarters of the 3rd New Zealand Division, 2 NZEF.

This company, 18th (N.Z.) Army Troops Company was raised when 8th Field Company, which was raised in May 1940, was split to form 18th and 19th Army Troops Companies. The company was held back from the Middle East with the intention of sending it to Fiji. From 23 July to 11 August the Brigade Commander and the officer commanding ‘B’ Force engineers visited Fiji. 18th Army Troops Company embarked for Fiji on 9 October 1940 and landed at Suva. It then returned to New Zealand in January 1941, on replacement by 20th Field Company, and departed from New Zealand on 1 February 1941. It moved to Bombay, India and remained in Deolali Transit Camp, Bombay for six weeks. It left India on 11 March 1941. It arrived at Port Tewfik on 23 March and moved to Maadi Camp in Egypt. After one month of training at Maadi, the company was spread section by section across the Western Desert and was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the desert water supply. The E&M Section was in Alexandria, Company HQ was at Mex Camp, No. 2 Section was at Amiriya with a detachment at Burg el Arab, No. 1 Section was at Paha, No. 3 Section was at Burbeita Oasis and No. 4 Section was at Matruh.

The E&M Section was in Alexandria, Company HQ was at Mex Camp, No. 2 Section was at Amiriya with a detachment at Burg el Arab, No. 1 Section was at Paha, No. 3 Section was at Burbeita Oasis and No. 4 Section was at Matruh. HQ moved from Mex Camp to Rue Sidi Metwalli, Alexandria on 1 June 1941 and the detachments still worked the pipeline. From mid-November 1941 until the end of the year, the company worked on the Western Desert pipeline and pumping plant. It was given duties on the pipeline from the Delta to Garawala in February 1942. No. 4 Section moved to Sidi Bishr near Alexandria on 10 February. The company added pipeline duty from Abd el Qadir to Daba on 1 March. No. 2 Detachment moved out to Burbeita Oasis on 27 June but reported back to Company HQ at Alexandria on 30 June. No. 1 Detachment left Daba two days after the evacuation of Burbeita, while No. 4 Section constructed Braithwaite tank towers for the railway at Alamein until 30 June, then it moved to Sidi Bishr. No. 3 Section pumped water and filled drums. During the confusion of the advance on Egypt by the Germans, the company and sections were given orders and counter-orders from Sidi Bishr. By 22 July, all of the company except those on pipeline and pumping duty were back at Burg el Arab. In September 1942, the company moved to Ismailia on the Suez for work. When the work was completed, the company was to return to water pipeline duties. On 23 October, the company had HQ Detachment, Workshop Detachment and water barges and crews at Alexandria. No. 1 Detachment was located on the pipelines from Hamman to Alamein, No. 2 Detachment at the oil facilities at Chevalier Island, No. 3 Detachment at the pumps from Nabariya to Hamman and No. 4 Detachment at the fuel and water storage facilities from Alamein to Hamman. During the advance after Alamein, the company took over the water pipeline through 4 January 1943, when Tripoli became the water source. It then returned to the Delta to train and ceased to exist at Maadi Camp on 24 July 1943.

Roland passed away on March 5, 1981, at the age of 64.

Although his final resting place remains unidentified, his legacy of service and sacrifice endures.

Though detailed records of Roland Murray Abel's life before and after his military service are scarce, what we do know paints a portrait of a dedicated and honourable man.

RIP Roland

Thank you for your service

E kore warewaretia

Will never forget