Today I would like to celebrate the life of and pay our respects to 2458 2Lt Thomas James **Higginson MM.**

Thomas Higginson was born on the 17 October 1916 to Charles Clinton Higginson and Margaret Stanway Higginson at Nurse Vincent's, Amesbury Street, Palmerston North.

Prior to enlisting, Thomas was living with his parents in Waikanae and working as a sheep farmer in the area.

Records show he enlisted as a Sapper with 5 Field Park Company New Zealand Engineers 2nd NZEF 1st Echelon.

5 Field Park Company was raised on the 5th Oct 1939 at Hopu Hopu Military Camp. The role of Field Park Company during WW2 was to provide the workshop and stores elements of the engineer provision for an infantry division. Thomas moved to Waiouru during the first week of Dec 1939 and embarked at Wellington with the first echelon on the 5th Jan 1940.

He arrived at Port Tewfik, Egypt on the 12th Feb 1940 and trained to Maadi Camp where he remained until the company left Maadi on the 4th Sept 1940 to a camp near Baggush.

During the first desert campaign, Thomas and the company moved to Sidi Barrani on the 30th Dec 1940 and then onto Sollum on the 31st Dec 1940. On the 5th Jan 1941 he moved to Bardia at El Habhoiur then onto Tobruk on the 25th Jan 1941, before moving onto Dern and then onto the Barce area.

Thomas left there on the 15th Feb 1941 for a seven-day trip to Cairo and onto Greece where it arrived under 2nd NZ Division on 20th Mar 1941 and served in the campaign there until it embarked on the 27 Apr 1941. It moved from Greece to Suda Bay, Crete and served on Crete until 31st May when it left for Alexandria, Egypt.

The company arrived at Alexandria on 1st Jun 1941 and moved at once to Helwan. At the end of the month the Thomas moved to Isamilia on the Canal and remained there until Mid Sept 1941. He then moved with the Division to the Western Desert at Sidi Haneish in the Baggush Box.

It was during this time that Thomas was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for his actions on the night of 24/25 Oct.

*“On the night 24/25 Oct 1942 Cpl. (L/Sgt) Higginson displayed outstanding initiative perseverance and courage in clearing lanes through fields of enemy “booby” traps and anti-tank mines for the recovery of six tanks from MITEIRIYA RIDGE. This was an all-night task and he and his small party worked almost continuously under sharp machine-gun and accurate mortar fire.*

*Cpl. (L/Sgt) HIGGINSON made the reconnaissance for the lane for each tank and at the same time dismantled numerous types of “booby” traps including and aerial bomb of approximately 500 lbs. fitted with trip mechanism. This proved difficult work in the dark and on two occasions Cpl. (L/Sgt) HIGGINSON was blown over by exploding “booby” traps which he had failed to detect. He operated a mine detector, lifted mines and at the same time encouraged and directed his party in the clearing and marking of the lanes. His was most gallant conduct and due almost entirely to his efforts six tanks were recovered some of which at least would probably have been destroyed or set on fire by enemy gunfire in the daylight of the next day.”*

Thomas and the company remained with the division for the remainder of the North African campaign.

Following this campaign Thomas assembled at Maadi Camp once again, during the last days of May and first days of June 1943 before been deployed to the Italian campaign, arriving on the 6 Oct 1943. During this period Cpl Higginson was commissioned as 2Lt.

It was during the Italian campaign that 2Lt Higginson was killed and was laid to rest Cassino War Cemetery, Italy VI. J. 21.

RIP Thomas

Thank you for your service.

E kore warewaretia

Will never forget