

Gunner George Scott Dunn, Royal Horse Artillery of Church Stretton

Died 4 December 1941, Tobruk, Libya, aged 28



40 Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton

George was born in 1913 in Church Stretton, the younger son of George and Florence Annie Dunn of 40 Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton. George senior was a pharmacist occupying the site of the present day Lunts Pharmacy. George (snr) and Florence nee Jones were from near Rugeley in Staffordshire and had married in 1904.

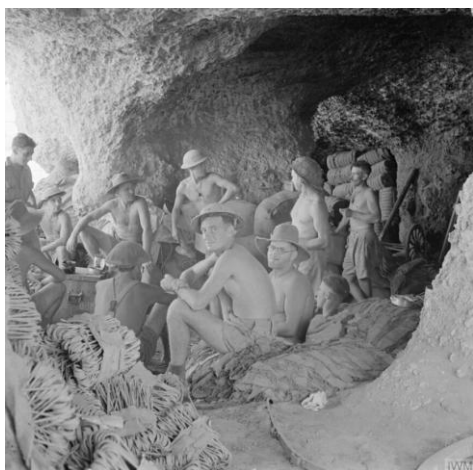
At the time of his death George was registered as living in Southend but newspaper records show that in 1939, he married Ada Jones of Craven Arms in Kington. Sadly, Florence did not survive to witness her son's wedding as she died on 18 March 1937 according to a notice in the Shrewsbury Chronicle. Of course, this meant she was spared the news of her son's death.

George joined the Royal Horse Artillery 104 (The Essex Yeomanry) Regiment and served in Palestine before serving in North Africa. He was killed on 4 December 1941 in Tobruk. The Axis siege of Tobruk took place between 10 April and 27 November 1941, during the Western Desert campaign (1940–1943) of the Second World War. An Allied force, consisting mostly of the 9th Australian Division, commanded by Lieutenant-General Leslie Morshead, was besieged in the Libyan port of Tobruk by German and Italian forces. The tenacious defenders became known as the Rats of Tobruk. After 231 days, they were finally relieved by the British Eighth Army.

In late 1940, the Allies had defeated the Italian 10th Army during Operation Compass (9 December 1940 – 9 February 1941) and trapped the remnants at Beda Fomm. On 22 January 1941, Tobruk's Italian garrison surrendered. But in early 1941, much of the British Western Desert Force was sent to the Greek and Syria–Lebanon campaigns, leaving only a skeleton force short of equipment and supplies. Hitler felt compelled to send reinforcements, commanded by Rommel, to rescue his beleaguered Italian ally.



Newspaper report of the death of Mrs Dunn, March 1937



Soldiers hiding in caves from the bombardment

Rommel launched Operation Sonnenblume (6 February – 25 May 1941), driving the Allies back across Libya to the Egyptian border. However, Tobruk held out, depriving Rommel of a supply port closer to the Egyptian–Libyan border than Benghazi, 560 miles west of the Egyptian frontier. The Axis siege of Tobruk began on 10 April and continued despite two failed Allied relief attempts: Operation Brevity (15–16 May) and Operation Battleaxe (15–17 June).

The garrison repulsed several Axis attacks. The port was frequently bombarded by artillery, dive-bombers and medium bombers, while the Royal Air Force flew defensive sorties from airfields far away in Egypt. Allied naval forces, such as the British Mediterranean Fleet (including the Inshore Squadron) ran the blockade, carrying reinforcements and supplies in and the wounded and prisoners out. Finally, Operation Crusader (18 November – 30 December) succeeded in raising the siege. George was among the 80 or so British soldiers from the 8th Army to perish.

Unfortunately, their efforts were to some extent in vain as German forces under Rommel eventually overran Tobruk the following year before British Forces under Montgomery finally pushed the Axis forces out of North Africa.

Stretton Man Killed in Action

Served in Tobruk

News has been received by Mr. George Dunn, chemist, Sandford Avenue, that his youngest son, L.C. George Scott Dunn, aged 27 years, has been killed in action.

L.C. Dunn joined the Essex Yeomanry previous to the outbreak of war and after serving for some time in Palestine he was at Tobruk from the commencement of the siege.

He was educated at Ludlow Grammar School and was prominent in all kinds of sport.

For some time he was goal keeper for Shrewsbury Hockey Club and was the originator of the Church Stretton Chess Club.

He was a member of the Congregational Church and for some years acted as organist.

George is buried in the Tobruk War Cemetery and commemorated on the Tobruk war memorial; he is also commemorated on the Church Stretton War Memorial and the Ludlow Grammar School roll of honour.



Tobruk War Cemetery