
THE HOBAN TREE
by
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In the lower administrative area of Fort Wallace, Stockton, (on the Northern side of Newcastle harbour) stands a very fine Norfolk Island pine tree. The tree is a memorial, and at its base is a plaque which reads -

'This Tree was planted by
the gunners of Newcastle District 2 C.A. Bty
in memory of
2/45816 Gnr. Mervyn Hoban
who Died of Injuries
Received Whilst on Duty 30.3.1949.'

This happened as the result of an accident during maintenance on one of the two 9.2-inch B.L/ guns which had been installed in 1939/40 and were being kept in working condition after the war.

Gunner Hoban and another man were checking the performance of the five power-operated units of each gun; one of these units was the traversing, when about 150 tons of metal would be moving. This action was controlled from the upper gun floor by Hoban's mate.

It appears Hoban, working in the lower gun floor, was not aware his mate was about to traverse the gun and was standing between the gun and the concrete wall, he was crushed to death when the gun traversed.

A recent check of the Newcastle Morning Herald of 31st March, 1949 carried an understandably different story, as an Enquiry, taking several days, would have been involved. Under the heading GUNNER FATALLY INJURED IN FALL the article reads "Mervyn Hoban, 38, a gunner attached to Fort Wallace, was fatally injured when he fell about eight feet from a gun emplacement at the fort yesterday.

Injured internally, he died in a Newcastle Ambulance waggon on the way to hospital."

The 130 Signal Squadron, currently occupying the Fort, observes a minute's silence each year on 30th, March.
