



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER No.: 95 / 195

PREPARED & PRESENTED BY: D.G. Davis

DATE: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011

Wor. Bro. Lieutenant Colonel MAXWELL DERBYSHIRE M.C. & Bar.  
(1915 - 1980)

Max Derbyshire was born in Launceston, Tasmania on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1915. The family moved to Wagga Wagga when he was still a boy.

When his schooling ended, he worked as a car and coach trimmer. From 1933 to 1939 he served in the 56<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Militia and rose to lieutenant.

Transferring to the A.I.F. on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1940, Max joined 2/2nd Battalion in Egypt in October that year. During the offensive in the Western Desert in January 1941 he saw action in the battle of Bardia and the capture of Tobruk.

His unit was sent to Greece where it disembarked on 22<sup>nd</sup> March and took up defensive positions in the north. On the 16<sup>th</sup> April the Battalion withdrew to the Pinios Gorge and engaged the Germans in fierce fighting. Driven from their positions, the Australians made their way south in small groups but some, including Derbyshire, were taken prisoner. After two attempts, he escaped on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1941.

Befriended by Greeks, Derbyshire joined their underground movement and he became an almost legendary figure. He took part in acts of sabotage and set 'a striking example of tenacity and cool courage' for which he was awarded the Military Cross. His exploits became known to the Gestapo and he was forced to change locations often.

In December 1942 he joined nine others who planned to leave Greece. For three days and two nights he marched on bleeding feet through mud and snow to a rendezvous north of Athens. Having been rowed (by two drunken boatmen) across the strait to Euboea, he embarked in a small caique. Although the enemy saw them twice, his party reached Turkey and then Egypt.

He returned to Australia in January 1943.

Rejoining the 2/2nd in North Queensland in June, Max Derbyshire was promoted to Captain on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1944 and arrived with the Battalion in New Guinea in December.

He led 'A' Company through the Aitape-Wewak campaign from February to August 1945, winning a Bar to his Military Cross for his bravery and resourcefulness. From October to December his Company was in Merauke, Dutch New Guinea, to counter anticipated trouble from Indonesian nationalists.



Derbyshire decided to remain in the Army after the war. In 1946, he married Belle Edney, who pre-deceased him. He served in training units in Australia as an observer with the Far East Land Forces in Malaya from 1950 to 1952, and with the First Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in Japan and Korea in 1955 and 1956.

He ended his service at Ingleburn, N.S.W., where he was briefly officer commanding. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1962 he was placed on the Retired List as Lieutenant Colonel.

Settling at Lurnea, south of Sydney, Derbyshire ran a cleaning business before working for a real estate company.

He died at Liverpool on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1980 and was cremated with full Masonic Honours.

His second wife, June survived him, as did two sons from his first marriage.

---

#### MASONIC HISTORY:

Maxwell Derbyshire was Initiated in Lodge Ubique No. 900 on the 3rd January 1959. He was passed Fellowcraft on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1959 and Raised a Master Mason on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1959.

After passing through the offices of the Lodge, he was finally Installed as Worshipful Master on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1967.

He became a foundation member of Lodge Harry Maas No. 949 at Mortdale in 1962.



Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell Derbyshire, Military Cross and Bar.