



A story from the history of Australian Artillery:
Commemorating 150 years – 1871-2021

**N108358/NX149078 Gunner Wilbert Thomas 'Darkie'
Hudson, MM**

**2nd Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery
'The Naked Gunner'**



Wilbert Hudson was born on the 17th of December 1920. On leaving school, he was employed as a textile worker, and with the onset of the Second World War, he enlisted in the Militia Forces on the 5th of April 1940.

Posted to the 2nd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, Hudson was deployed with his unit to Darwin in November 1941, as part of the town's defences. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Darwin took on an urgent war footing, and prepared for possible attack.

With the combination of the harsh tropical sun of the Northern Territory and his normally dark olive complexion, Hudson was soon given the nickname of 'Darkie' by his mates.

Based at Berrimah, Hudson was showering when the first air raid sirens sounded just before 10.00 hours on Thursday, the 19th of February 1942. With the drone of the enemy aircraft increasing, Darkie had no time to dress and ran to man his 'battle station' dressed in nothing more than his helmet, boots and a towel wrapped around his waist.

With the angle of approach by the attacking aircraft, 'Darkie' and his number two could not get an accurate bead to effectively engage the planes with their Lewis Light Machine Gun. The team immediately redeployed into the open paddock and set up with 'Darkie' doing the firing and the gun supported on the shoulder of his mate. As an enemy Zero bore in on the pair, they stood their ground and poured a steady stream of fire into the fighter, sending it spiralling off in flames. During the action 'Darkie' realised that he'd unfortunately lost his towel and his modesty.

For his courage and determination that day, Gunner Wilbert 'Darkie' Hudson was awarded with the Military Medal, which was one of the first to be awarded for action on Australian soil. His citation stating - 'he handled his Lewis Gun with great skill and tenacity'.

Sources:

Australian War Memorial, [Collection](#), accessed July 2021

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Daily Telegraph, [Family of naked gunner ensures brave act in Darwin is not forgotten](#), 2 March 2017, accessed 18 August 2021

National Archives of Australia: *B883, WW2 Service Records, NX149078 (N108358) Gunner W.T. Hudson*, accessed July 2021

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