

GOOD LUCK TO ALL THE LADS

The Wartime Story of Brian Cox 1939–43

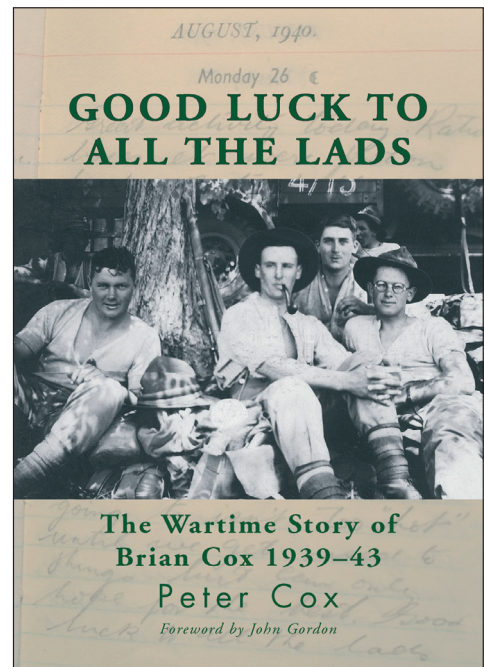
Peter Cox

Foreword by John Gordon

'Good luck to all the lads.' Brian Cox wrote those words in his diary on 26 August 1940, just before he and his mates from 9 Platoon of 27 (Machine Gun) Battalion experienced enemy action for the first time in the Western Desert. A Nelson College old boy, working in his father's business, Brian enlisted to do his duty and to take part in 'a great adventure'. But when he came home, like so many of his mates, he seldom spoke of his experiences. It was only a chance question, some 25 years after Brian's death, that triggered his son Peter's search to discover what his father had done during the Second World War. Brian's personal diaries and the photographs he had brought home were a good start, but much more was needed: material from the official war histories, archival documents and, best of all, memories from men who had fought alongside Brian.

And in 2007 Peter Cox, and his wife Robin, retraced Brian's war journey in Egypt, Libya and Greece. They visited the battlefield at Sidi Rezegh in the Libyan Desert, where the platoon, in the words of the official war history, 'paid for its devotion in losses tragically heavy for such a small band'. They travelled the length of Greece, following the route the New Zealand Division took, and stood on the hillside where Brian and his mates had been dive-bombed and machine-gunned. In each place they visited the graves of the New Zealanders who died.

What emerged was the story not only of Brian Cox



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but also of his schoolmates from Nelson College and of 9 Platoon of 27 (Machine Gun) Battalion during the Second World War. This moving and fascinating book covers the men's time with the First Echelon training in New Zealand and Egypt, and the action they saw in Greece, Libya and the Western Desert. The battle at Sidi Rezegh in 1941, often overshadowed by El Alamein, loomed large in the platoon's history; Peter Cox tells the terrible story of that conflict, to which his father had once alluded to but never elaborated on.

Good Luck to All the Lads is more than one man's tribute to his father. It is an important addition to New Zealand's military history and a fitting memorial to the young men, many of them from Nelson College, who bravely served, and sometimes died, so far from home.

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