

BRITISH IMPERIAL DECORATIONS

JAMES, William Brian, Lieutenant (3/35036), 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, 1952

On the night of 7/8 November 1952, Lieutenant James was in command of a fighting patrol of two non-commissioned officers and ten men. His task was to occupy the Calgary feature with the object of killing or capturing any enemy encountered. The approach to the feature was made without contact but, as the patrol commenced to move onto the enemy, movement was detected further ahead. Lieutenant James quickly ordered the patrol to deploy and at the same time started forward in an assault in the area where the enemy was heard. However, within a short distance of the enemy, there was a heavy explosion in the midst of the patrol, which resulted in the immediate wounding of five of the thirteen members including Lieutenant James and his two non-commissioned officers. In spite of the fact that he himself was severely wounded, having had his left foot completely blown off and his right leg broken and mangled, Lieutenant James refused to relinquish command of his patrol. Realising that it was not possible to continue with his task, he set about organising an evacuation of the other wounded, all of whom were less seriously wounded than he was. This was a lengthy business as the patrol had only one stretcher. As a result he waited in great pain for over thirty minutes after he had evacuated the last of the wounded before the stretcher party returned for him. Only then did he allow himself to be taken to the rear. Throughout this difficult time he cheered and encouraged the members of the patrol who remained with him and directed other members of the party who were not concerned with the immediate evacuation of casualties to engage a party of the enemy who came forward to reconnoitre. The example set by Lieutenant James and his leadership, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice and extreme fortitude when in great personal distress was an inspiration to members of his battalion.