

Kenneth (Ken) Alfred Longmore 1918 – 2021

Soldier Reg No. 20853, Captain, 15th Heavy Coast Bty (pre- WW2 1938 - 39),
7th Anti-Tank Regt and 6th Field Regt (Greece and North Africa), NZ Artillery, WW2



Attended Wellesley 1925 - 1931

Ken Longmore was born in Wellington on the 15th of May 1918 and grew up in Brougham St, Mt Victoria. He attended Wellesley, then on The Terrace, from 1925 – 1931.

A talented sportsman, Ken's name was featured frequently in athletics and tennis listings in early Wellesley newsletters. At Scots College, he went on to captain the 1st XI cricket team, play in the 1st XV rugby and captain the tennis team.

Before World War II, Ken served at Fort Dorset in Wellington as a junior territorial officer. As a lieutenant, he began his overseas war service with the third echelon, in August 1940, and first saw action in Greece in 1941. He spent time in Egypt and Libya where he was also part the epic escape from encircling German forces at Minqar Qaim. In 1942, he fought in the battle of El Alamein and after surviving alone in the desert, he became a prisoner of war. Charles Upham VC was taken prisoner in the same battle. Whilst together, as prisoners, in Germany, Upham made one of his famous bids for freedom and Ken was one of the soldiers that created a diversion to try and draw the guards' attention away from Upham. Tom Scott who in 2020 wrote a biography of Charles Upham '*Searching for Charlie*' interviewed Ken and believes he was the last surviving soldier that served with Upham.

After the War, Longmore settled in Eastbourne and returned to his pre-war clerical job at the Union Steamship Company. He met his future wife Beverley Burch at Eastbourne's Muritai Tennis club and they played tennis there well into their 80s.



Ken retained a strong connection with Wellesley. In 2012, he attended the opening of the new Wellesley Library and in 2014, as pictured, he planted the centenary tree, a northern rata, at Wellesley as part of the 100-year celebrations.

Well known in Eastbourne, he gained much pleasure in attending ANZAC Day ceremonies, and marched until he was 100. His daughter Mary describes her Dad as a stoic man who preferred not to talk about the war. "But he was funny, reliable, strong, stubborn, tough and loyal, particularly devoted to visiting his late wife when she had to go into care due to alzheimers disease.

Sadly, Ken passed away on the 18th of July 2021, aged 103 years. What a fine man – deeply admired and respected by the staff, boys, and wider Wellesley community. Our most sincere thoughts are with Ken's family.

Sources: *Mary Longmore, Wellesley College archives and Stuff Media*