

THE SUPERB WW2 IMMEDIATE M.M. GROUP AWARDED TO SERGEANT, ROYAL NATAL CARABINEERS, FOR THE ASSAULT AND CAPTURE OF MONTE VIGESE, 6 OCTOBER 1944. IN DRIVING RAIN, HIS COMPANY PERFORMED THE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TASK OF DRIVING THE DEFENDERS OF THE FANATICAL 16TH SS PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION OFF THE PRECIPITOUS MOUNTAIN PEAK. DURING THE ACTION, THIS NCO PERSONALLY WIPED OUT A MACHINE-GUN POST WITH HIS TOMMY GUN



MILITARY MEDAL, G.V.I.R. '597V SGT. S. P. AUSTIN. 1. R.N.C.'; 1939-45 STAR; AFRICA STAR; ITALY STAR; DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS 1939-45; AFRICA SERVICE MEDAL, CAMPAIGN AWARDS ALL OFFICIALLY IMPRESSED '597 S. P. AUSTIN'

M.M. London Gazette 8 March 1945.

The original recommendations for an 'immediate' award states:

'On Friday morning, 6 October 1944, Sergeant Austin's platoon was ordered to attack and occupy part of the precipitous Monte Vigese, known to be occupied by S.S. troops. It was pouring with rain and visibility very limited.

Shortly before reaching the objective, this N.C.O. discovered a well-concealed German M.G. post. He immediately engaged the post at close range with his Tommy gun, killing one of the crew. The other two emerged from the position and attempted to fire on Sergeant Austin's platoon. Sergeant Austin, after demanding their surrender, closed in single-handed and cleaned up the post and enabled his platoon to move on to its final objective, without suffering any casualties.

His courage and leadership inspired his whole platoon.'

Stanley Philip Austin, a 24 year old factory superintendent from Pietermaritzburg, enlisted into the 1st

Battalion, Royal Natal Carbineers on 1 July 1939. Promoted Lance Corporal on 23 February 1942, Temporary Corporal on 28 November 1941 and Temporary Sergeant on 1 September 1943.

According to his service records he had the following active service during the war with the 1st Battalion, Royal Natal Carbineers:

East Africa, 27 April 1940 – 16 June 1941

And would have served during the advance through Italian Somaliland and Abyssinia, taking part in numerous actions, the Battle Honours being El Wak, The Juba, Kombolcha and Combolcia

Middle East, 16 June 1941 – 2 January 1943

Middle East, 1 October 1943 – 13 April 1944

And would have served at Sidi Rezegh, Taieb el Essem, Bir Sciafsciuf, Gazala, Point 204, El Alamein defence, Qattara and El Alamein

Italy, 13 April 1944 – 8 January 1945

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingobamakhosi_Carbineers

ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1944-5

The 1st Royal Natal Carbineers arrived in Italy on 20 April 1944 and took part in the final actions at Monto Cassio in May 1944. Over the next few months they would gain the Battle Honours; Paliano, Bagno Regio, Citta Delia Pieve, Florence, The Greve and Gothic Line, taking part in numerous smaller actions.

In October 1944, Sergeant Austin took part in an astonishing action, which would win him the Military Medal, namely the taking of Monte Vigese, a strategic, 3,000-foot mountain peak in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines of Italy. This became the site of a brutal, rain-drenched battle along the German Gothic Line. The peak was a vital stronghold defended by the fanatical 16th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Reichsführer-SS" (specifically the 36th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment). On 6 October, in driving rain and poor visibility, 'A' Company of the Royal Natal Carbineers, under Major Peter Francis, performed the virtually impossible task of driving the defenders off the mountain. 'Vigese was one of the hardest fought Carbineer engagements of the Italian campaign.'

During the taking of Monte Vigese, Sergeant Stan Austin is confirmed as serving as a Sergeant in a Platoon under command of Lieutenant Kendall Brooke of Major Francis's 'A' Company.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE CAPTURE OF MONTE VIGESE BY 'A' COMPANY

Italy's Sorrow; A Year Of War 1944-45 by Hames Holland, contains an account of the 'A' Companies capture of Monte Vigese by the Carbineers:

"...On 2 October, the Royal Natal Carbineers moved into position in the rain and mist to the village of Camugnano. By the following morning, the mist had cleared and as dawn broke, Lieutenant Kendall Brooke looked out from his foxhole and saw the towering mass of Monte Vigese directly in front of them. 'It looked like the Matterhorn,' says Kendall, 'a bloody great soaring mountain that was clearly to be our next objective.' And so it was, although not before the Imperial Light Horse had attacked and captured the small villages and settlements lying immediately around its base. On the 6th, the Carbineers passed through the Imperial Light Horse and prepared to take Vigese. A Company was to lead the attack, and the CO, Major Peter Francis, ordered them to advance in three platoons, each taking a different route - one through the village of Vigo, one straight up to the summit, and the third, commanded by Kendall, heading halfway up the mountain, and over a series of cliff tops, with a promontory on which German troops were dug in as their objective.



BEHIND THIS TANK CAN BE SEEN PRECIPITOUS MOUNTAIN PEAK OF MONTE VIGESE

Kendall and his men moved forward in absolute silence, with anything that could clang together or make a noise either tied or removed. Within a hundred yards of the German positions Kendall could hear the men of the 16th Waffen-SS's 36th Panzer Regiment talking to each other. There they waited until the darkness of the night had thinned and the very first hint of dawn gave them enough light to be able to see what was in front of them. As the rain continued to pour down, Kendall led them up a narrow winding track. Ahead of them was a machine-gun nest, based around a cave dug into the side of the mountain. Spotting a groundsheet hanging down from the front of the cave, Kendall opened fire with his Tommy gun, killing one man. Another German emerged looking startled and with his hands up, but a third also came out from behind the groundsheet fiddling with the safety catch on his Luger. To his horror, Kendall realised he had already emptied his magazine. 'I had the uncomfortable experience,' says Kendall, 'of grabbing this chap who was surrendering and holding him between myself and the guy with the Luger.' It all happened in a moment, but by now Kendall had been joined by a number of his men. His sergeant, Stan Austin, was urging the man with the Luger to surrender, but the German, in his dazed panic, kept fumbling with the pistol. Another of Kendall's men said, 'Kill him, Stan.' 'And the next moment,' says Kendall, 'Stan had fired three shots and the guy was stone dead before he hit the ground. He was a youngster.'

They then took their objective, as did the other two platoons, and captured a number of prisoners including the German captain commanding all the positions on Monte Vigese. The operation had been a complete success. 'It was all over pretty quickly,' says Kendall, 'primarily because we were creeping through the misery of the heavy rain and mist with no artillery preparation at all. The key was taking these guys by surprise in the grey of dawn before their eyes had hardly opened.'

Just a few days later, he was in action again as the Carbineers tried to capture the next peak along the ridge, Monte Stanco. At first light on 10 October, two companies, B and D, attacked, with A Company in reserve. The D Company men took the summit, but suffered high casualties and so Kendall's platoon was ordered forward to the village of Stanco, nestling directly beneath the summit, as support. By now, however, the Germans were hammering the South African positions from the far side of the summit, and shells were landing in the mountain valley that lay below the village - and over which Kendall and his men had to cross. However, he soon realised that the shells were arriving in batches of eight with a pause in between. Waiting for the last of a salvo of eight to scream over, Kendall shouted, 'Now!' and they all ran across the narrow valley and had almost reached the village by the time the next round of shells started exploding behind them...."

In Italy, the 1st Battalion, Royal Natal Carbineers, formed part of the 11th South African Armoured Brigade, a component of the 6th South African Division. They were attached to IV U.S. Corps, at the time of the Monte Vigese.

Sergeant Austin was discharged from the army on 24 August 1945



Condition generally GVF and mounted for display. Sold with Copy service records, recommendation and other research (all digital). Austin's service papers confirm all awards but additionally entitled to the 8th Army clasp

A fine and scarce Natal Carbineers M.M. with a superb fighting citation