

# John Keneally V.C.

**JOHN PATRICK KENNEALLY WAS BORN AS LESLIE JACKSON AT 104 ALEXANDRA ROAD, BALSALL HEATH, BIRMINGHAM. MAINTENANCE FROM HIS FATHER, NEVILLE BLOND**



**ENABLED JACKSON TO BE INITIALLY EDUCATED AT THE PRIVATELY RUN CALTHORPE COLLEGE. HE LATER ATTENDED TINDAL STREET JUNIOR COUNCIL SCHOOL AND THEN KING EDWARD VI FIVE WAYS. JACKSON JOINED THE HONOURABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY ON HIS 18TH BIRTHDAY. HE WAS ASSIGNED TO AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY AND OVERSTAYED A PERIOD OF LEAVE. HE WAS SENTENCED TO A PERIOD OF DETENTION AT WELLINGTON BARRACKS, RUN BY THE IRISH GUARDS. HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THEIR HIGH STANDARDS AND APPLIED FOR A TRANSFER BUT WAS REJECTED. JACKSON DESERTED AND JOINED A GROUP OF ITINERANT IRISH LABOURERS, EVENTUALLY MAKING HIS WAY TO GLASGOW. WHEN ONE OF THEM RETURNED TO IRELAND HE OBTAINED HIS IDENTITY CARD AND USED IT TO ENLIST IN THE IRISH GUARDS HE WAS A 22-YEAR-OLD LANCE-CORPORAL IN THE IRISH GUARDS WHEN THE FOLLOWING DEED TOOK PLACE FOR WHICH HE WAS AWARDED THE VC.**

**ON 28 APRIL 1943 AT DJEBEL BOU AZOUKAZ, TUNISIA, LANCE-CORPORAL KENNEALLY CHARGED ALONE DOWN THE BARE FORWARD SLOPE STRAIGHT INTO THE MAIN BODY OF THE ENEMY ABOUT TO MAKE AN ATTACK, FIRING HIS BREN GUN FROM THE HIP; THE ENEMY WERE SO SURPRISED THAT THEY BROKE UP IN DISORDER. THE LANCE-CORPORAL REPEATED HIS EXPLOIT ON 30 APRIL WHEN, ACCOMPANIED BY A SERGEANT, HE CHARGED THE ENEMY FORMING UP FOR ASSAULT, INFLECTING MANY CASUALTIES. EVEN WHEN WOUNDED HE REFUSED TO GIVE UP, BUT HOPPED FROM ONE FIRE POSITION TO ANOTHER, CARRYING HIS GUN IN ONE HAND AND SUPPORTING HIMSELF ON A COMRADE WITH THE OTHER KENNEALLY FINISHED HIS MILITARY CAREER IN THE NEWLY FORMED 1ST GUARDS PARACHUTE BATTALION AND LATER BOUGHT HIMSELF OUT OF THE ARMY IN JULY 1948 TO BE WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN. KENNEALLY WENT IN TO THE MOTOR TRADE AFTER THE ARMY AND REMAINED IN IT FOR THE REST OF HIS WORKING LIFE. HE BRIEFLY APPEARED IN THE NEWS AGAIN IN 2000 WHEN HE PUBLISHED HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND WROTE TO THE DAILY TELEGRAPH REBUKING PETER MANDELSON FOR CALLING THE IRISH GUARDS "CHINLESS WONDERS"**

