



Army Museum of Western Australia



THE MAGAZINE



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Christmas 2012



The Battle for Singapore - one of the dramatic dioramas in the new World War 2 Gallery, which was opened by the Governor, Mr Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC, in October. More pictures in Pages 4 and 5



Left: The chairman of the Army Museum Of WA Foundation, Mr George Sulc, welcomes the Governor and Mrs McCusker to the opening of the new World War 2 Gallery. Below, members of the military history re-enactment group in authentic WW2 uniforms.



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REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS TWO-THIRDS COMPLETED AS NEW WW2 GALLERY IS OPENED

The opening of the new WWII gallery on October 15, somewhat delayed but none-the-less very welcome, marked the completion of the museum's Phase 2 redevelopment of the galleries with one more phase to go.

The two weeks leading up to the opening saw some late hour work by the curatorial staff for the gallery to be ready in time for the opening and all credit must go to them for an excellent job of installation.

The gallery was opened by our State Governor His Excellency Malcolm Mc Cusker AC CVO QC and was attended by the Foundations four patrons, Melissa Park MP, The Honorable Graham Edwards, The Honorable Bob Kucera, Michael Sutherland MLA and seventy other guests.

All those who attended were very impressed with what they saw and many comments were received on the quality of the work, imaginative and informative displays depicting

**By George Sulc
Chairman, AMWA Foundation**



the period from 1939 to 1945 of the conflict. The contribution of the reenactment group in their WWII uniforms, organised by Bob Wise, lent authenticity to the event. Their contribution to the evening is appreciated.

The new gallery was opened for viewing by all volunteers on October 21, followed by a sausage sizzle, and was opened to the public on October 31.

The Phase 3 development contract will be signed in November and work is expected to commence later in the month in four stages commencing with the WWI gallery followed by the POW gallery, then the Colonial gallery and lastly by the Heraldry gallery. The entire redevelopment is expected to be complete in early 2014.

The completion will be a milestone for the museum when it is complete having cost over \$2m thanks to Lotterywest and our many donors large and small and the work of many of our volunteers who had a hand in its upgrade.

Opening Day: World War 2 Gallery at the Army Museum of WA



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Museum Assistant Manager

Captain Wayne Gardiner

Museum Curator

Mr Robert Mitchell

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Editor, **THE MAGAZINE**

Graeme Hunt

Back to the Barracks: Dave Sabben a success

Two presentations by Vietnam Veteran Dave Sabben in July attracted 160 people.

Some travelled from country areas as far away as Kalgoorlie to here Dave speak.

All were complimentary and they had a chance to chat with Dave after the presentation.

A successful night which helped lift the profile of the museum.

More "Back To The Barracks" lectures are planned.



For more pictures of opening day, go to Page 6. Pictures by David Nicolson, museum volunteer.

MUSEUM STALWART RETURNS TO PNG FOR KOKODA'S 70TH



Long-serving museum volunteer Cyril Allender (above) was the oldest World War 2 veteran to return to Papua New Guinea for this year's 70th anniversary of Australia's victory in the Battle of Kokoda. Cyril, aged 93, was 23 when he was sent to PNG as a member of the 2/14th Battalion.

It was his second post-war visit to the area, where more than 600 Australians died between July and November 1942, preventing the Japanese from reaching Port Moresby, considered vital to the defence of Australia.

The anniversary visit was organised by the Department of Veterans Affairs for a group of selected veterans.

Another museum stalwart, Graham McEwan, was instrumental in having DVA invite Cyril to join the expedition. Graham gathered the documentation, setting out Cyril's eminent eligibility and steered his application through the approval process, ensuring Cyril was selected.

A year of achievement for Army Museum of WA: Manager

This has been a very busy and successful year for the museum. Great efforts were produced by all, but a special mention must be given this year to the leaders within the museum who have tirelessly worked to achieve the building and opening of the new World War Two gallery, the running of the annual band concert, the Anzac Day Len Hall Football Match and the constant, demanding job of getting more visitors to the museum through the newly formed Education section.

These have been great achievements.

We have also had difficulties during the year. The Defence budget has been reduced heavily and the knock-on effect has reached The Australian Army History Unit and in turn, the museum.

We must understand that if the Army had the funds it would distribute them as it has done in the past and our museum has had a good run of Army funding when it has been available.

Army needs us to help them achieve the difficult task of meeting a reduced budget and I will strive at all times to support their efforts.

The Foundation will be called upon to provide funding for areas which traditionally have been taken care of by Army.

While this may seem unfair, we must recognise that is part of the Foundation Constitution and Operating agreement with Army. Relations between the Army and the Foundation Board have never been better and I must congratulate George Sulc as Chairman of the Board and all Board members for their efforts through this busy year.

I look forward to working with them in the future.

A busy 2013

Next year is set to be another busy year as we start the third and final phase of gallery redevelopment. The budget for phase three will see \$540,000 spent on renewal of the World War One, Prisoner of War, Pre-

Federation/Colonial and Heraldry galleries. BKay Design has been the successful tenderer and work has already started, I wish Kim Kay and his team well. Finally I want to thank



Major Henry Fijolek
Manager

all museum volunteers, without whom this museum would not be able to open. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous and healthy 2013.



The museum's surplus-to-requirements Bren carrier has taken pride of place outside the Lancelin branch of the RSL. It was bought by the Shire of Gingin and the RSL, which plans to have a plaque explaining its history in place by ANZAC Day. The vehicle has the two color patches of the 2/28th Battalion on the body next to the gun port.

No resting on laurels, with planning for Phase 3 of museum development under way



By Robert Mitchell
Curator

The World War Two Gallery is Phase Two of a comprehensive redevelopment of the Museum's galleries first initiated by the Army Museum of Western Australia Foundation in 2009.

The redevelopment program has been made possible through fundraising by the Foundation, generous public donations and ongoing support from Lotterywest. Phase One, the Post 1945 Gallery, opened in August 2010 and the Entrance Gallery and Shop funded by the Foundation and Army opened in early 2011.

Planning for Phase 3, the World War One, Prisoners of War, Heraldry and Colonial Galleries, is already well advanced.

Funding secured

Lotterywest funding has been secured, Foundation funding is in place, the scope of works developed and contracts are being finalised. When completed in 2014, the entire program will be the largest undertaken by a Regional Museum within the Australian Army History Unit and the largest volunteer based Museum redevelopment in Australia in recent times.

The World War Two Gallery remains consistent with the overall corporate style of the Army Museum but has a distinctly different feel to the open and modern feeling of the Post 1945

Gallery. Entry is through a transitional domestic kitchen space to position the visitor in 1939. A newspaper lined orientation hall introduces the Gallery. The ferocity of the fighting, the threat of bombardment and air attack and the short range fighting in the African and Pacific theatres is conveyed through a more contained and closed in feeling in the main Gallery areas.

Beams, unfinished timber, rough signage and ammunition box inspired display cases will reinforce the overall effect. Moving from the desert colors of the Mediterranean theatre (Cyrenaica, Greece, Crete, Tobruk, Syria, El Alamein), the Gallery transitions to the Australian home front featuring an Anderson shelter

surrender of Japan in 1945. The conditions of fighting in Malaya and the South West Pacific theatres are highlighted by a floor to ceiling diorama of the Kokoda Track. The intent is to provide concise text and overview maps and allow the displays (artefacts, weapons, uniformed mannequins) to speak for themselves. A major challenge was moving and mounting of the Z Force "Sleeping Beauty" in a constrained display area.

The end of the war, VE and VP Days and repatriation will be presented through another newspaper wall before a transition panel featuring the preamble to the United Nations' Charter as a lead in to the Post 1945 Gallery. The World War Two Gallery



and domestic living spaces. The stories of 3 Aust Corps and home units, both military and civil, are told before an abrupt transition to jungle green in the second large portion of the Gallery covering Malaya in 1941 through to the

represents tremendous team effort by the Army Museum of Western Australia. It will become a must visit site for schools, locals and interstate visitors. More pictures: next page.



In the new gallery

Clockwise, from top right: President J.J.J. Wade (left) and committee man Peter Salmon, both of whom fought in the Middle East; museum veteran volunteer Cyril Allender, who was 20 when he fought in Papua New Guinea; the Tobruk diorama; the recreation of a suburban bomb shelter. Pictures: Ian Menzies and Graeme Hunt.



Opening Day: WW2 Gallery



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Mr Graham McEwan



Defence budget cuts mean hard times ahead for military museums

by Roger Lee, Head, Army History Unit

2012 will be remembered for many reasons, not all of them good. However AAHU, and especially the Army Museum Network, stands out as having kicked a number of great goals this year.

First, we had the opening of the new Infantry Museum at Singleton by the Chief of the Defence Force. This long overdue event – delayed by weather and project issues beyond the Museum



Picture: John Holland Group

itself – was a great success. CDF said a number of good words about Army's heritage and the need to preserve it. He also made some pertinent and astute observations on the valued role and contribution of the Network's tireless volunteers. Unlike AMWA, the Infantry Museum has a much smaller dedicated band of volunteers and the task they faced working with the small AAHU staff in developing a world class museum were enormous. Happily, they succeeded and if anyone is ever in the Singleton area, a visit to the Infantry Museum should be first on the 'to do' list.

The other big news from the east is the Engineer Museum at Moorebank. The Commonwealth Government is planning to build a large container handling and transfer facility on the site of the current Moorebank Military area. Consequently, the Army Units present – the School of Military Engineering and the Engineer Museum – have been given notice to relocate to the Holsworthy Military camp, just down the road. The good news for our Engineer heritage is that there was no suitable facility in the new location to house the extensive collection. As a result, an agreement has been reached to build a new \$30 million facility at Holsworthy. The plans have been drawn and work has started. This time next year, a magnificent addition to the Army Museum network should be visible on the skyline of western Sydney with an anticipated opening date of September 2014.

The third big notable event was the opening of the new World War Two gallery at the Army Museum of Western Australia. As readers of this magazine, you will no doubt all be very familiar with what is an outstanding exhibition. As a professional historian, I know well the difficulties of rendering complex stories into understandable scales and of reducing complexity to simple explanations. The same challenges exist for Museum exhibitions when presenting a complex story like the history of Australia (especially WA) in WWII. The designers have done a superb job to tell this story in an interesting and informative way.

Everyone associated with the new Gallery is to be congratulated.

Overall, the Unit has had a testing – indeed trying – year. Our budget for this year and the next few following years has been savaged. We have had a 92% reduction on what we spent last year, which means a number of our core activities have ceased. We have only a small publishing program and this year's Chief of Army's Military History Conference was cancelled. The good news is we anticipate there will be a history conference next year. The net effect though has been to put practically everything we have been doing, including essential training courses such as our two museum courses, on hold. We are still part of the Modernisation and Strategic Planning Division, the second half of Army Headquarters. Our old headquarters, Land Warfare Development Centre (which was based in Puckapunyal) has been reorganised resulting in it effectively ceasing to exist in its current form. Life is never boring in the history/heritage game in Army!

As you will appreciate, 2014 ushers in a few years of intensive commemoration and remembrance of the cataclysmic events of 100 years ago. The History Unit, and especially the Museum network, will play a key role in Army's involvement with the Centenary of Anzac commemorations. I am aware that the network's very able managers and curators are already

giving thought to how each museum can mark the various anniversaries and occasions and I am certain that we will field many last-minute requests for more efforts with particular aspects of the commemoration activities.

One initiative I am pushing with each of the Museums is for you to identify, scan, catalogue and copy your extensive image collections. Photographs, particularly of WWI, are going to be in high demand for exhibitions, books, TV productions and so on for the next few years and I am keen for the Network to be on the front foot. While each Museum probably has a good knowledge of its collection, there is not a good understanding of the entire collection. So, for instance, if AMWA was planning a special exhibition and the Army Museum of North Queensland just happened to have a photograph relevant to the story, at present it is highly unlikely that AMWA would know and be



able to benefit from it. I know the Museums have a veritable treasure-trove of never-before seen images but before anyone can ask the Museum for permission to use the image, they need to know it exists. Hence my enthusiasm for a centralised holding of all the images in the Museum Network. It also offers security in that a second copy exists off site. Of course no image would be used without the permission of the Museum in question and due acknowledgement made. Finally, I thank every member of the AMWA community for their hard work and dedication throughout the year and wish you all the very best for the Festive Season. Have a good break and recharge the batteries as the challenges awaiting us all next year are not getting any smaller!

Remnants of the "American War" tell the story in Ho Chi Minh City

Story and pictures by Ian Menzies, Museum Volunteer

Vo Van Tran street in Ho Chi Minh City's District 3 would have to be one of the busiest in that city. At No. 28 you will find the entry to the "War Remnants Museum" provided you can battle your way past the pedicabs, taxis, private cars and buses.

The museum's five-storey marble and polished marble monolith welcomes more than 8,500 visitors each day with exhibits that range from a US fighter aircraft in the forecourt to hundreds of photographs taken by war correspondents.

Before my first visit to the museum

population.

I was photographing a large map of Vietnam and taking notes for my research, when I was approached by an Indonesian man and his Malaysian wife. They asked if I had served in Vietnam and when I answered 'yes' they followed up with a request to outline the Australian commitment. Within minutes I was surrounded by a motley group of foreigners all keen to hear of Australia's involvement. I noticed a young Vietnamese man standing nearby furiously scribbling in a notebook.

I decided to wrap up the impromptu military history lesson and move on,

but the young man politely intercepted me. In near perfect English he explained that he was a tour guide for international visitors and wanted to improve his knowledge of the "American war".

We spent almost half an hour sitting on a marble bench while I outlined the length and depth of Australia's commitment, after which he politely thanked me and departed.



Courtyard weapons display

in 2010 I was warned by a fellow Vietnam Veteran that I would experience a completely new slant on what is now known in Vietnam as "The American War". He was right. They say history is "written by the victors". The various exhibits and displays echo that sentiment and tell Vietnam's version of the war. Plainly evident was the focus on war crimes, ranging from the My Lai massacre to the use of the defoliant Agent Orange by the Americans, with horrific pictures of the disfigurement and disabilities still being passed down through two generations vividly portrayed. Six months later I was back to spend a further three months in Vietnam researching the war and assessing and assisting various humanitarian aid projects being undertaken by veteran-based aid organisations. The exhibits had changed to a number of major exhibitions by war photographers (mainly Japanese) of those Vietnamese who fought and the impact on the civilian



Typical propaganda art

The younger generation in Vietnam know very little about the war. During the fifteen years that Vietnam closed itself off from the outside world from 1975 to 1990 the history of the "American war" was re-written. Tour guides everywhere need in-depth knowledge and above average communication skills if they are to deliver educational, interpretive and memorable experiences for their visitors. Vietnamese guides are no exception.

ALL HANDS ON DECK FOR SCHOOL VISIT

Twenty-five museum volunteers turned out for extra duty to help when a group of 145 students from All Saints' College, Bull Creek, came for a special tour. Naomi Warriner, Head of Studies of Society and Environment, organised the visit and made the following pictures.

