

YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT - 29

TO THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY MUSEUM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



The Australian Army Museum of Western Australia is now open three days per week, Wednesday through Friday. A COVID-19 plan is in place with social distancing and limits on numbers in individual galleries. Sanitiser stations are available throughout the Museum together with an enhanced cleaning regime.

For those unable to visit at present, the Virtual Visit series will be continuing to present interesting features of the collection and their background stories.

Photo, Medal Group and ID Discs - Shaggy Ridge



High in the Finisterre Mountains in north-eastern New Guinea is a feature known as Shaggy Ridge. During September and October 1943, the Japanese were defeated in the Finschafen area and retreated northward. The 9th Division pursued the Japanese along the coast while the 7th Division advanced on the other side of the Finisterre Range preparing to assault Shaggy Ridge to join up with the 9th Div at Bogadjim.

The ridge was named after: SX3169 Captain Robert (Shaggy Bob) Clampett who served in the w 2/27th Battalion from 1940 to 1945.

For the men of Australia's 7th Division fighting the Japanese during the Second World War, this razor-backed ridge represented hell on earth. In the words of one veteran. *"Tobruk was a picnic" when compared with the battalion's experience on Shaggy Ridge.*

It was on Shaggy Ridge on 27 December 1942, that Corporal Merv Hall of 2/16th Battalion was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for fearless leadership and remarkable courage.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION



Troops of the 2/16th Australian Infantry Battalion, watch aircraft bombarding the Pimple prior to their uphill attack on Japanese positions there, 27 December 1943.



The Army Museum of Western Australia (AMWA) is most fortunate to hold Merv Hall's Distinguished Conduct Medal and four campaign medals in its collection, as his contribution as a Western Australian is significant to our military history and heritage.

Additionally, Hall's identity discs were also donated to the museum. These identity discs are clearly visible in the photograph (above).

The citation for the award of Merv Hall's Distinguished Conduct Medal reads::

During the attack on Shaggy Ridge on 27 December 43, Corporal Hall was almost entirely responsible for the success of the operation. The attack took place over precipitous ground, already made more difficult as a result of heavy bombing and shelling, which necessitated crawling on hands and knees to reach the first part of the objective - a strongly fortified pillbox occupied by five enemy with two machine guns.

Observing that his Sergeant - WX 4241 Sergeant McMahon who had crawled to within a few feet of the post - was in trouble, Corporal Hall advanced alone, in the face of a hail of grenades and machine gun fire, to the entrance of the pillbox and killed one of the occupants with a burst from his Owen Gun. A second Jap leapt out of the post with a knife at Corporal Hall but he battered the enemy with the butt of his Owen Gun and with grenades, quickly silenced the remaining occupants.

Although almost blinded by grenade wounds, Corporal Hall advanced ahead of his section to a second post one hundred yards along the one man track of the razor back and attacked with undiminishing dash and lack of regard for his safety. Only when his section were able to get forward and assist in the battle did he consent to go back for medical attention.

Corporal Hall's fearless leadership and remarkable courage against almost impossible odds enabled his platoon to consolidate on the nearly won ground and gain the objective.



Shaggy Ridge, New Guinea. 1943-12-27. WX14757 Corporal M Hall, DCM., of the 2/16th Australian Infantry Battalion, wounded by a Japanese grenade, can still smile on his arrival at the regimental aid post during the attack on the Japanese held "Pimple", one of several prominent features on Shaggy Ridge.

LINKS FOR FURTHER ENJOYMENT



Visit the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia web site

<https://armymuseumwa.com.au/>

Shaggy Ridge video from Australian War Memorial

<https://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/83/article-four>

<https://www.army.gov.au/our-heritage/history/history-focus/amwa-proud-custodians-merv-hall-dcm-collection>

<https://veteranssa.sa.gov.au/story/the-battle-for-shaggy-ridge/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=To5kQqOF2oo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02tWnD3RAv8>

<https://kokodahistorical.com.au/tours/shaggy-ridge-tour>

<https://www.wepidgeon.com/war-paintings-1943-1945/>



On Shaggy Ridge by William Edwin Pidgeon

On Shaggy Ridge (Reproduced: The Australian Women's Weekly, 10 Jun 1944, p40)