

YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT - 59 TO THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY MUSEUM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Throughout 2021, the Virtual Visit series will be continuing to present interesting features from the collection and their background stories. The Australian Army Museum of Western Australia is now open four days per week, Wednesday through Friday plus Sunday. Current COVID19 protocols including contact tracing will apply.

Coronation Contingents

There have been only 4 coronations of Australian monarchs / heads of state since Federation: Edward VII, 9 August 1902; George V, 22 June 1911, George VI, 12 May 1937; and **Elizabeth II, 2 June 1953**.



After the death of King George VI in February 1952, planning for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth began. Tradition demanded a procession of all the Queen's troops be present and so plans were put in place to form an Australian contingent. Some 250 official representatives from the armed forces marched in the Coronation Procession on 2 June 1953. These official delegates, along with their New Zealand counterparts formed the Coronation Contingent.

On its way to England, the Coronation Contingent, aboard HMAS Sydney and HMNZ Black Prince, stopped at Tobruk for a memorial service at the Tobruk War Cemetery. There were four Australian and one New Zealand Victoria Cross recipients present in the Contingent: Private F. J. Partridge VC, Private E. Kenna VC, Sergeant J. D. Hinton VC (New Zealand), Private R. Kelliher VC and Sergeant R. R. Rattey VC.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Five Victoria Cross recipients stand behind the grave of Corporal J. H. Edmondson who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in 1941.



Australian Coronation Contingent marching past Trafalgar Square on a wet Coronation Day on 2 June 1953.



On Monday the 15th of June, before heading back to Australia, HMAS Sydney and HMNZ Black Prince were involved in the Spithead Review, the first post-war review of the fleet. There were 280 warships representing every navy in the world. Each ship was dressed and gave 3 cheers as the Queen went past in HMS Surprise.

1953 Spithead Review - Last great naval review

Sixteen years earlier an Australian Contingent had travelled to England, via Egypt, for the 1937 Coronation of King George VI. Members of the Contingent were issued a stylish green blazer with emblems of the three services. On 10/11 May, for the first time, an Australian Guard was mounted at Buckingham Palace. On 12 May 1937, Australian soldiers and sailors of the Coronation Contingent assembled and marched along the Royal Route to the Hyde Park Gate and out to Hyde Park Corner to take part in the Coronation. Nearly 67 years later some of those same soldiers returned to Hyde Park Corner for the dedication of the Australian War Memorial.



<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/41302834/3711162>

https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/publications/commemorations-war-graves/P01114_oawg_london_memorial_brochure.pdf

A member of the 1937 Coronation Contingent, Gunner AP Sullivan VC died as a result of an accident. His body was taken with full military honours, from Wellington Barracks to Golders Green Cemetery for cremation on 13 April 1937.

He was the only VC in the 1937 Australian Contingent, and a blank file was created in the parade formation as a particular mark of respect. A Memorial Plaque was erected outside Wellington Barracks at the site of his death.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C339998>

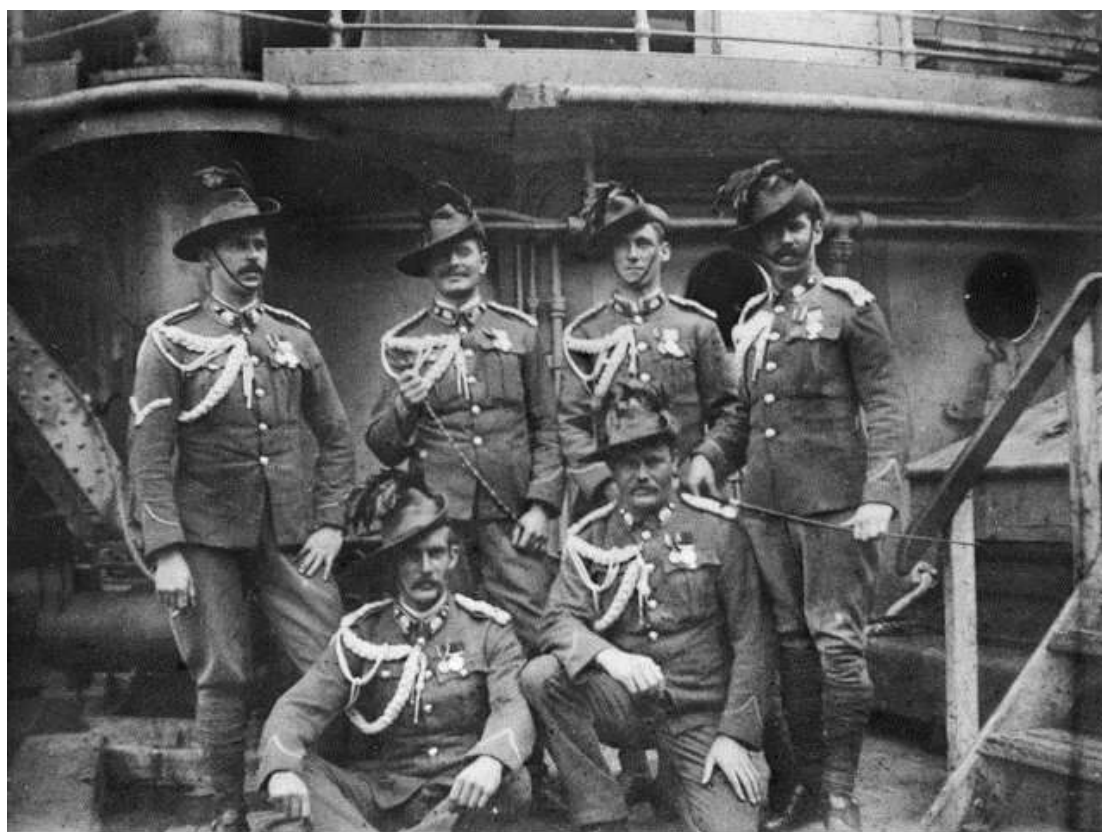


Many newsreels and films of the Coronations have

glimpses of Australian mounted and marching contingents. Scrolling through can be rewarding to catch segments featuring Australian participants.

Colonial Exotica

In reviewing the accoutrements and uniforms of the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee, King Edward VII and King George V Coronation Contingents on display in the Pre 1914 Gallery at the Army Museum, one is left with the impression that there was considerable embellishment undertaken at the time, to present, if not a more exotic, certainly a more differentiated Australian appearance. Plumes, shoulder boards and aiguillettes proliferated.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Members of the 1902 Australian Coronation Contingent for King Edward VII



Visit the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia web site
<https://armymuseumwa.com.au/>