



ARMY HISTORY UNIT

PROTECTING ARMY HERITAGE
PROMOTING ARMY HISTORY

DESPATCHES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUSTRALIAN ARMY HISTORY UNIT

2021 VOL 2

Sunset spectacular from
the state of the setting sun

Blues vs Maroons -
Army's role in a sports
institution

South Africa and South
Australia: a connection to
an oft' forgotten war

Immersing in Aviation -
AAFM's treasures: up
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Cover image: A Matilda tank of 2nd/4th Armoured Regiment moving along Buin Road to the 2/24th Infantry Battalion on Egan's Ridge, Bougainville, 22 May 45

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FROM HEAD AAHU



In 2020, the Defence Secretary and Chief of Defence Force directed that Defence's COVID-19 response would be exemplar. With thanks to your initiative and continued patience you have well and truly met that expectation as our museums move between the different steps in our COVID-Safe matrix. As the saying goes, "after victory, tighten your helmet straps". So I ask for your continued patience, vigilance and adherence to the practices that have kept us safe while we work through the steps in the National COVID-19 Response Plan.

The continued focus on COVID-Safe operations does not mean we have been inattentive to other areas of safety. Even when museums have been closed, work continued on maintenance and inspection of the collections in our care. In particular, much of the good work done has been done across the Army Museum Network on explosive ordnance safety over the past twelve months. As this edition of *Despatches* shows, that has been a challenge since CEW Bean's Military History teams commenced formally collecting artefacts during the First World War.

In that same spirit, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew White (Commanding Officer of the 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers) has been temporarily attached to AAHU to deploy with Warrant Officer Class Two Daryl Stone to Al Minhad Air Base to finalise the repatriation of artefacts from the Middle East Region.



Andrew and Daryl are identifying, cataloguing and preparing for repatriation potential artefacts on behalf of AAHU's museums, the Australian War Memorial and our RAN and RAAF history and heritage counterparts. In-theatre collection remains an important part of ensuring Army's heritage collections are not limited to donations received after units and individuals have returned to Australia.

Closer to home, Leah Herdman has been appointed as the first Army Heritage Liaison Officer to the Australian War Memorial (AWM). Leah is coordinating Army's heritage support to the AWM's Development Project, as well as our ongoing business-as-usual with the AWM. Leah's experience as curator at the Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering has proved invaluable in ensuring that we balance the needs of the AWM's National Collection and Army's own heritage collections, and that Commonwealth-owned artefact transfers continue to be done safely and securely and in a fully auditable way. We are currently undertaking recruitment action to fill the Museum of Military Engineering curator position

More broadly, the Secretary and Chief of Defence Force have directed the formation of a Defence History and Heritage Board with representatives from Defence's Estate & Infrastructure, Finance, and People Groups, in addition to the RAN, Army and RAAF History and Heritage units. The Defence History and Heritage Board is tasked with ensuring a whole-of-Defence approach to the management of Defence-operated museums.

An example of that commitment is the completion of the initial design for the proposed Puckapunyal Combined Arms Heritage Learning Centre—CAHLC (see pic above) to house the RAAC and RAA heritage collections. If approved by Government, the CAHLC will be Army's fourth (after the Infantry, Engineers and Aviation Museums) – and largest – purpose-built, modern museum facility. I will keep you informed as we work with the Board to consolidate gains made over the past decade which have seen a more consistent investment in promoting Army's history and preserving Army's heritage.

Tim Gellert

Head - Australian Army History Unit

Major John Lavery, OAM retired from Army on 11 Dec 20 after serving 47 years, his last seven years as Manager of the Army Museum North Queensland (AMNQ); a position he embraced with gusto, passion and professionalism, and with mission-focus always his priority while valuing everyone's input as part of a combined team.

John's passion for military history is evident by the excellent artefacts, displays and local stories in which he has been involved and which have contributed to the proud military history of North Queensland making AMNQ one of the finest military museums within Army and a drawcard for the Garrison City of Townsville. A testament to the professionalism and eagerness of museum staff and volunteers which he fostered.

Below: In Rhodesia with the Ceasefire Monitoring Force. Right: Watching Army Chinooks being delivered by USAF C-5s in the MEAO.



John enlisted into the ARA on 19 Jun 73 and, after completing basic training at Kapooka, was allocated to the Royal Australian Artillery. He held various regimental and instructional appointments within RAA, including to the School of Artillery and ADFA.

His final posting as a member of RAA was as the SSM of AAAvn's 173 General Support Squadron at Oakey, QLD. John transferred to Army Aviation in 1990 and held various regimental appointments as an RSM followed by Aviation Corps' RSM culminating as RSM 11th Brigade.

In 2000 John took a commission as a captain and served within 5th Aviation Regiment in various appointments including 2IC of C Squadron which operates CH47 Chinook helicopters. His final appointment in aviation was as Regiment 2IC.

John has served on numerous deployments including the Ceasefire Monitoring Force in

Rhodesia in 1979-80, followed by service with the UN Mission In Support of East Timor in 2000-01, and again in 2003 with the Chinook's deployment to the Middle East. John then deployed with the UN on UNTSO as a Military Observer returning to take up a position with Combat Training Centre (CTC) providing realistic training for our troops prior to them deploying to Afghanistan and Iraq. John's last posting in ARA was as the Deputy Director of Army Personal Agency - Townsville.

John transferred to the Active Reserve in 2013 and spent a short time at 11 Bde prior to his final posting at AAHU.



John claims that the last 47 years in service have flown by and on reflection he wouldn't change a thing. *'The good times have always outweighed the bad,'* he said.

-WO2 Rob Hamilton
AMNQ

EASE SPRINGS: MICK FOWLER



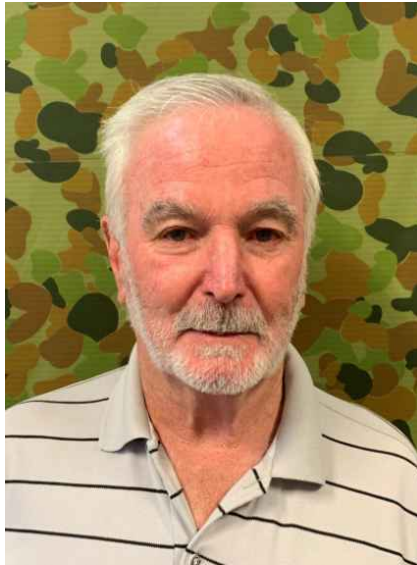
We are lucky to have many volunteers who give up their own time to work with the museums. WO1 Pete Laggan of Army Museum Bandiana interviewed one such volunteer who has, unfortunately, had to retire due to ill health. Here is Mick Fowler's story...

'I was born in 1947 at Morwell Victoria. My family moved to Tallangatta in north-east Victoria when I was five to New Tallangatta when the township was moved five miles west due to the expansion of Lake Hume which was going to flood the site of "Old Tallangatta". I attended school in both towns and left high school part way through Year 11 to work with the Postmaster Generals department.

'After two years in this position I transferred to a similar occupation at Khancoban NSW with the Snowy Mountains Authority. Whilst employed there I enlisted in the Citizen Military Force as a Sapper in 109 Construction Squadron, RAE. When I turned 20, I registered for National Service and was not called to serve. A short time later I applied to join the Regular Army and signed up for three years. After basic training and corps training at the Infantry Centre I was posted to 5th Battalion at Holsworthy.

'During 1968 we trained for service in South Vietnam and I deployed in February 1969 as a rifleman. During my first six months I was employed as Forward Scout and promoted to Lance Corporal then Corporal as a Section Commander. I took my discharge shortly after arriving home in Australia and worked at various jobs then re-enlisted

into the Army and re-joined 5 RAR for a few months before receiving a posting to 6 RAR in Singapore. When National Service ceased, and the Army was reduced in size and postings to various units and locations were limited, I sought alternative employment and chose 176 Air Dispatch Squadron at Penrith. Subsequent training and postings saw me serve in a range of units within Royal Australian Corps of Transport, such as 5th Transport Squadron, 5th Army Recruiting Unit, 176 AD Sqn again, the



Army School of Transport and finally to Albury Transport Unit. Towards the end of my service, I took some long service leave and worked in security with Metropolitan Security Service (MSS) performing guard and patrol duties in Albury / Wodonga. By the time my discharge date was due I had successfully gained a position with State Emergency Service (SES) North-East Victoria as the Regional Assistant responsible for attending to emergency incidents that involved more than one unit.

'During this time, I was contacted by the manager of

MSS Albury and invited to interview with the MSS State Manager to take over as manager of the Albury business. I was successful and commenced that role soon after. Three years later I applied to take over the Albury operation as a contractor having formed my own business as Albury Guard Services. My bid was accepted and I continued to provide security for three years until I resigned my appointment and gained an opportunity to provide security guard services elsewhere in Albury.

'In 1989 health problems forced me to hand over the business to my son-in-law. I became active in the RSL and over a few years was appointed as a Committee Member of the City of Albury RSL, as Treasurer, as Vice President and later elected as Sub-Branch President. During this time I was also elected as a Vice President of the Far South Council of the RSL

'I became interested in the Army Museum Bandiana and commenced work there in April 2010 as a volunteer and was elected as President of the Foundation in 2016 and am active again as a volunteer.

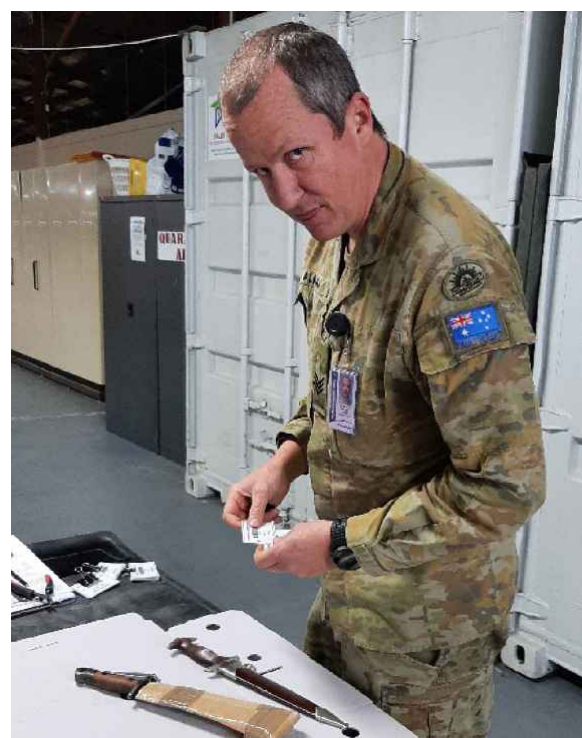
'During my involvement with the Museum, I stood for election to the Board of Directors of the Sailor's Soldier's and Airman's Club and was successful serving 10 years, one of those years as Vice President.'

Unfortunately, Mick has had to cease his involvement with the Foundation due to poor health.

Mick is active with Albury Thunder Rugby League team.



Above Left: PTE Gemma Ryder of AHR married last year then welcomed baby Rosalie Joy into the world in Apr and now has headed to Townsville where her partner, Mitch, has been posted. Above Right: PTE Andrena Berran commenced with AHR on an MOU with 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse and enjoyed it so much she requested a posting to AHR. It became effective 30 Mar 21. Below Right. Bringing his warehouse expertise from 5RAR where he was a Company Quartermaster Sergeant, SGT Joseph Alaban has transferred from ARA to ARES to take up a position as AHR warehouse supervisor. Bottom Left: SADFO Keswick Barracks, LTCOL John Daunt (CofS HQ 9 Brigade), presents a DGFLW coin to AMOSA Assistant Manager WO1 Maria Vallis, in acknowledgement of her outstanding achievements in WHS management.



HAILS, FAREWELLS & GOODONYAS



Above Left: Head Land Capability MAJGEN Simon Stuart (left) presents the Federation Star to CAPT Wayne Gardiner (ret'd) and, Above Right: HLC presents the Army Gold Class Commendation to MAJ Henry Fijolek, Manager, Army Museum of Western Australia. HLC and DGFLW, BRIG Ian Langford (not pictured) visited AMWA for the awards and to have morning tea with staff and volunteers. Below: Arthur Woodroffe (left) and Jack Su, the longest-serving and newest volunteers at AMSQ, cut the cake at the recent Volunteer's Week Morning Tea.

Last Wednesday as part of Volunteers' Week, the volunteers of Army Museum South Queensland were treated to a morning tea as a thank you for the many hours contributed to the museum.

During the celebration our newest volunteer Jack Su was presented with his AMSQ shirt and badge. Jack and our longest serving volunteer, Arthur Woodroffe, proceeded to cut the cake on behalf of everyone.

The morning tea was also taken as an opportunity to present awards to those who had given their time over a two-year and five-year period with the presentation of the AMSQ Badge.

Another surprise awaited the volunteers with a presentation from the Australian Army History Unit. The AAHU Award Badges reinforce recognition of the volunteers' contribution, both at AMSQ and across the national AAHU network

of 17 museums, with each museum helping to preserve Army history and heritage.

Bev Smith, AMSQ volunteer.



Over the period 17-21 May, Australian Army Museum Tasmania conducted an *Introduction to Museums Course*.

This course is normally run centrally but we sought and gained permission to run the course based on some specialised qualifications held in-house. We would normally qualify one or two staff members or volunteers in a normal course conducted by AAHU, but running the course locally meant we were able to

qualify eleven staff and volunteers. And with the uncertainty surrounding COVID and travel restrictions, this was definitely an advantage and provided greater certainty for our staff members.

The course was very well received by our people and now allows us scope to bid for positions on the advanced course.

—MAJ Chris Talbot
Manager, AAMT



Left and below: Normally Introduction to Museums courses are held centrally, but Army Museum Tasmania found that by getting authorisation to hold a course locally, it was able to qualify several more staff and volunteers than would otherwise be expected by a course run by HQ.



STATE OF ORIGIN



On the 16th September 1945 on a ground at Torokina, Bougainville a forgotten piece of military sports history took place.

Rugby League was usually played as an inter regimental or inter battalion competition with sides picked to represent their regiment or battalion irrespective of their birth place.

This competition was played by teams based on the soldier's place of enlistment, and as the battalions were made up of mainly Queensland and New South Wales personnel it was billed as "Interstate Rugby League Series, Bougainville".

The Queensland Team was:-
J Barnes
(Captain), J. Christopher, L. Ashmore, C. King, E. Lade, N. Hoare, R. Williamson, H. Bradshaw, M. Tresdon, T. Kraft, M. Thompson, (Vice Captain) K. Brennan & F. McLennan

The New South Wales Team was:-
H. Parkinson, W. Peachy, D. McRitchie, T. Briggs, H. Dhu, H. Majoribanks

(Captain), R. Miller, H. Taylor, V. Love, C. Smith, J. Hobson (Vice Captain), D. Sinclair, & H. Freeman.

Many of the players were A-Graders from Brisbane and Sydney. The games were broadcast to troops throughout the islands by Tom Pedrazzini.

Both games were won by Queensland- 10 – 9 & 20 – 13.

The Trophy is made from a 120mm Japanese Naval

shell casing with handles either side mounted on a 3 tiered wooden based secured by a large 6 sided bolt in the middle and is engraved with the following inscription :-

"Interstate Rugby League Series, Bougainville" September 1945, won by Queensland 10-9, 20-13 It is also engraved with the names of the players from the Queensland team.

The trophy was presented to the winning team by Major General W. Bridgeford CB, CBE, MC.

The trophy was handed over to Queensland Rugby League by the Army at half time in a 1946 Brisbane Club match. It was donated to the Army Museum South Queensland in November 1998.

—CAPT Adele Catts
Curator - AMSQ



Above: The first State of Origin cup, held by Army Museum South Queensland, represents the first organised Australian state of origin rugby league match, played at Torokina in Bougainville. It is made from a Japanese 120mm shell as part of a 'pigeon pair' with the other cup used for a cricket competition. The whereabouts of the other cup is unknown.



AWM LIAISON

In support of the Australian War Memorial's (AWM) Development Project, AAHU has raised a Liaison Officer (LO) position to assist in streamlining AWM contact with the Army and deliver effective and efficient support for the Project. The Liaison Officer position was officially raised in May 2021.

After being notified that the new position would be approved, it was a whirlwind move from my role as Curator of Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering. I was officially notified of the approval in late April. This left me a few weeks to wrap up some projects at AAMME (luckily I left the museum in very capable hands), throw together some handover notes, pack up whatever belongings I hadn't managed to sell, and move to Canberra ready for my start date on 17 May. Not to say that I was not pleased with the speedy turnaround – I had been anticipating the new position's final approval and hoping for an imminent start date as I was anxious to re-join my partner in Canberra, a feeling only exacerbated by the uncertainty produced by COVID19.

It has been an exciting couple of months since commencing in Canberra. The first few weeks were dominated by figuring out what, exactly, this work would entail and how the AAHU LO role differed from the existing RAAF and RAN LO's already working at the AWM. After lots of meetings both internally and with AWM, we puzzled out a rough guideline but were acutely aware of the need for flexibility in the many and varied situations which will inevitably arise in this role. At a



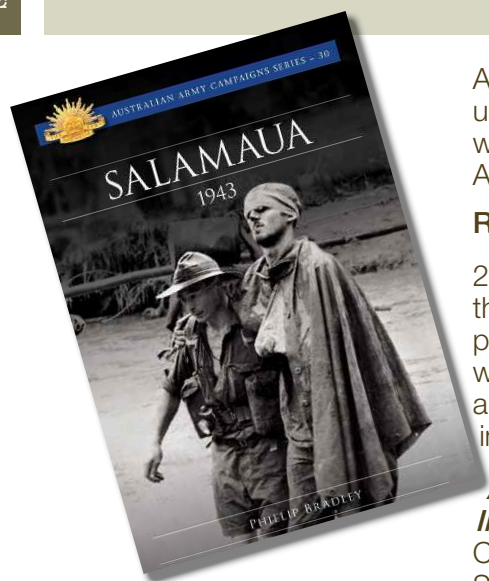
certain point, it became clear that the best way to learn was to do. And so the last few weeks have been largely that, with a few requests coming through already, as well as continued correspondence with AWM, Navy and Air Force about developments with the Field History Team who were deployed to Al Minhad Air Base. After officially starting at the AWM this week, there has been a significant increase in requests already. Moving forward, AAHU museums can

expect to hear from me for assistance on these requests as they begin to ramp up.

— Leah Herdman
Army Heritage Liaison Officer

*Above: Leah and MAJ Kim Willcox chat with 3CER Padre Chris Booth and PNGDF Kumul Force Contingent 17 Padre Benstead Bareta Kegana after a successful day collecting on OP Bushfire Assist in Victoria.
Below: Leah collecting items from Padre Booth.*





CEW Bean Prize

The AAHU runs an annual prize for the best honours and post graduate thesis written on the history of the Australian Army. Named the CEW Bean Prize for Military History, after the prominent Australian military historian Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean, this prize aims to support and encourage the study of Australian Army's history at the tertiary level. The 2021 CEW Bean Prize for Military History is now open and will be closing on 30 July. The AAHU seeks submissions from students who have completed their thesis in the past three years, and invites the Museum Network to share this information among their volunteers, colleagues and co-located schools. This prize is unique in Australia and those who win often go on to publish books in the AAHU's various series, present at conferences and assess the Army History Research Grants Scheme.

The winners of the 2019 and 2020 CEW Bean Prize will be attending the 2021 Chief of Army History Conference; a great opportunity for the

AAHU network to meet these up-and-coming academics who continue to promote Army's history.

Recent AAHU publications

2021 has been a busy year for the History Section and its publications program so far, with three books released and a further three to be released in the second half of this year.

Artillery at Anzac: Adaption, Innovation and Education by Chris Roberts and Paul Stevens was recently released by Big Sky Publishing. This book is a comprehensive study of the employment of artillery and naval gunfire support at Anzac. If any museums, ADF or Defence APS members are interested in a copy of this publication, please contact the History team.

Two new additions to the Australian Army Campaigns Series are also due for release and all museums in the AAHU Museum Network will be receiving copies for their library, and distribution to co-located schools.

Salamaua by Phillip Bradley is the 30th book in the Australian Army Campaigns Series and tells the story of the fight for the ridges around Salamaua, between the end of the Kokoda Campaign and the start of the New Guinea offensives. The author skilfully depicts and analyses the campaign as it grew from a platoon-level engagement through to brigade-level operations fighting for control

of the region. Phillip Bradley is also the author of *Wau 1942-1943*.

Mine Warfare in Vietnam: 1st Australian Task Force's Struggle for South Vietnam

by Dr Andrew Ross is an in-depth analysis of the 1st Australian Task Force's (1ATF) operations in South Vietnam and the lessons learned in combating the enemy's mine warfare techniques. Drawing on statistical analysis of operational research data, this book explores the complex

Above Left: Salamaua by Phillip Bradley. Below: Viet Cong laying a mine in Vietnam.



tactics adopted by 1ATF, their effect on the Viet Cong and Australia's role in Phuoc Tuy Province. The Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering and School of Military Engineering provided feedback and provided the author with artefacts to help make this book even more relevant and useful to Army today.

- Sophie Jerapetritis
Historian, History Section



There's a lot more to taking photographs than just pointing and shooting a camera. One has to consider composition, framing, lighting, backgrounds, and a myriad of other things and that is even before you commence the photo editing in post production.

Leading Aircraftsman Marcus Fillinger is one of the few remaining ADF photo-

graphers who was trained formally as part of the photographers mustering, a category that is now defunct.

Working for the AAHU on a memorandum of understanding with Air Force, he captures digitally some of the remarkable items in Army's collection. For example, these AK-47s held by the Australian Army Museum Duntroon.

As a new segment in *Despatches*, we will be choosing an interesting item from Army's collection each edition and taking a closer look at it; its provenance; and its significance.

If you have something in your Museum that you think should be looked at in more detail, please let us know.

The *Автомат Калашникова* (Avtomat Kalashnikova) model 1947, or more commonly, the 'AK-47' or 'Kalishikov', is a simple-to-operate, reliable and cheap-to-produce automatic assault rifle named after its inventor: Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, and accepted by the Soviet government in 1947. The Germans realised during WWII that most contacts occurred in under 400 metres and that conventional bolt-action rifles were over-powered for such encounters and lacked a suitable rate of fire. Their *Sturmgewehr 44* developed in 1944 used an intermediate round that was lighter, had shorter range, and provided more controllability in automatic fire mode. The Soviets' experience against German troops armed with the StG 44 saw them often out-gunned. This influenced the design greatly, as did the American M1 Garand. The AKS folding stock version below is a Chinese-manufactured example (Type 56-1) and was captured



in Afghanistan by members of Mentoring Task Force 2 which was based around 5RAR. The tape on the grip and paint blotches on the magazine were a common way of individuals identifying their weapons. It will soon be a part of the Australian Army Infantry Museum's collection in Singo. The provenance of the above AK-47 is unknown, unfortunately.

A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM



On Friday & Saturday 16 - 17 April the Australian Army Museum of WA (AMWA) held *A Night at the Museum*.

The event was the brainchild of the Foundation Chairman, Mr Graeme Smith with the intent to raise the AMWA's profile by opening the Museum during the evening on the last weekend of Easter school holidays. In addition to the organic vehicles and arte-facts held by the AMWA, the event included:

- Historical vehicles from the Military Section of the Veteran Car Club of WA
- Members of the WA Great War Living History Association Inc.
- A Bushmaster IIMV from 13 Bde with 2 x ARES soldiers
- The Australian Army Band – Perth, and 25 ACU Drums and Pipes
- Military Police support to assist with security, and
- A Coffee and Ice Cream Truck and Sausage Sizzle manned by AMWA Foundation Staff.

A popular drawcard was the Australian Army Band – Perth, under the leadership of Musical Director CAPT Ben Bonney, and the Drums and Pipes from

25 Army Cadet Unit. Many patrons came just for the music, and some were even observed dancing on the parade ground!

Above: A mild Perth evening saw locals enjoying what AMWA has to offer, along with entertainment from Army and Cadet bands. Below: With the sun setting over the Indian Ocean, evenings can become quite spectacular as visitors tour the historic military vehicles on display.

All of the Museum's galleries were open and the new VC Gallery debuted with three original Victoria Cross medals on display. This proved very popular. In addition to the normal gallery displays we had a bell tent and field kitchen set by the WA Great War Living History Association Inc., and the vehicles on display included two Model T Fords: one





a scout car and the other an ambulance.

The event attracted around 500 visitors each night, with around 25 volunteers per night to man all activities. Our volunteers did a wonderful job and there were many comments from visitors about the professionalism and dedication of the staff. Many volunteers helped set up Friday, worked both nights in the galleries and displays, and then came back on the Sunday to help clean up! Altogether a monumental effort.

A Night at the Museum was an enormous success and showed that with minimal set up and little financial outlay, the profits and benefits to



reputation and patronage can be significant. The AMWA will continue to conduct *A Night at the Museum* at least once each year, building on our initial success.

— CAPT Steve Muir
Asst Manager, AMWA

Top: Drums and Pipes of 25 Army Cadet Unit are always a hit. Above: Crowds view the museum's displays. Bottom: Vintage military vehicles including an ambulance and scout variants of the famous Model T Ford



A PERSON OF INTEREST



They say that people are immortalised in bronze or marble, but if you really want to hang around for centuries, get immortalised in plastic. Such is the case with our person of interest this edition: WO2 Ian Thomson, Assistant Curator at the Australian Army Infantry Museum, Singleton and Falklands War veteran.

I was born in Sydney in 1958. My dad was in the th Army 2/13 Battalion: Tobruk, El Alamein, South West Pacific Area.

‘When I left school I did an apprenticeship with Qantas as an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer. I joined the CMF (Citizen’s Military Forces)* as an Infantryman. I always thought that if I was going to join the Regular Army, then it’d be the British Army. At least you might have a chance of going somewhere.

‘My grandfather was in the Royal Field Artillery before emigrating to Australia in 1912 and becoming a stockman near Dubbo, but when WWI started he “returned to colours” and served at Gallipoli at “V” Beach (Cape Helles) with the 29th Division.

In September 1977 I went to London with my parents. I went out for a drink by myself at a local pub. It was almost empty except for a couple sitting in the corner. The gentleman called me over to join them. Talk about “Sliding Doors”. He was WO1 Jack Frost of the Royal Signals Corps and an airborne signaller. We got to talking about the Army and I told him I had thought about joining the Royal Marines or the British



Above: PTE Ian ‘Aussie’ Thompson (right) of The Parachute Regiment

Army. Jack said to meet him the next day and he’d take me to lunch. Well he took me to the London District Sergeant’s Mess and he knew all the RSMs there and all the RSMs knew him.

‘I headed back to Sydney to finish my apprenticeship. I kept in touch with Jack Frost. I quit Qantas, sold my car, and headed back to the UK.

‘We had a family friend in London: Elma. She had been the secretary to David Stirling, the founder of the SAS. I stayed with her while I went through the recruiting process.

‘In 1980 when I went through the recruit exit centre, a Green Jackets Major pulled me aside and asked me why I didn’t want to go to the Army Air Corps with my AME qualification where I could be a corporal on the second highest pay grade. I told him I didn’t want to fix another aeroplane and wanted to be a Para. When I did my basic training they made me do it

three times even though I never failed anything. I later found out that they were testing me because I was an Australian, to make sure I really wanted to be there, and they hoped I would self-scrub and get out of the Paras and go to Army Air Corps where they were desperately short of aircraft engineers!

‘I got posted to C Company, 3 Para. My OC was a US exchange officer from the 82nd Airborne, a big Texan— Major (later General) William “Buck” Kernan—a veteran of three tours of Vietnam. He was a great bloke.

‘A few weeks later I was told to report to the CSM. I thought I was in trouble, but there were two “suits” in the office who wanted to interview me. They asked me a bunch of questions and if I liked to travel. They were interested in hearing my Australian accent. They asked me if I still had my Australian passport and told me that they’d be in touch through my CSM with an exciting opportunity. When they left I asked my CSM “What was that about?” He told me to steer clear of them.

They were COPs - Close Observation Patrols - and they wanted me for jobs in Northern Ireland. They were looking for operatives who could pose as foreign tourists. My CSM warned me against it. "People who go there just disappear," he said.

'Our battalion was at that time the "Spearhead" battalion which meant we were on short notice. We were doing our support weapons training and I jagged a sniper course because I was a good shot. We were down at the range when this truck comes up honking its horn. The driver tells us all to get back to the barracks and we were locked down. The Argentinians had commenced hostilities in the Falklands and the CO decided to get us ready in anticipation of being deployed. Sure enough we were. A week later we were on the SS *Canberra* sailing for the South Atlantic.

'They had tradies on board doing modifications while we were sailing. They made two helidecks and sealed up the portholes on the lower decks where we were. We could hear the sea lapping at the port-holes we were so overloaded. We stopped at Sierra Leone to offload the tradies and we headed to Ascension Island.

'The Argies had some modified WWII-era US subs and German Type 209 subs which had acoustic torpedoes, so we trailed some acoustic noise makers as decoys.

'One of my mates who became my number 2 on the section gun, used to work as a cook on the *Canberra* which used to do the England to Australia cruises, so he knew all the cooks and we got extra rations. They'd only take stores on in Britain or Australia because of the reliability of supplies and their quality so all the beer was Australian! I went to war on a cruise ship drinking VB in the Alice Springs bar!

land us. When I was on *Intrepid*, where D Squadron 22 SAS were, all the SAS patrol commanders were called to a briefing on HMS *Hermes*, so they all headed off on a Sea King helicopter. That night, when it was on its way back, it hit an albatross and went into the drink not far from the *Intrepid*. The call came out for anyone with night vision gear to go onto the deck to look for survivors. I had a starlight scope on my rifle so I headed up and I saw the helicopter in the water lying on its side. Only one bloke got out. When they brought him on board wrapped in blanket they were

taking him past us. He told us: "Don't go for a dip tonight, fellas. It's freezing." That's when I thought "This is for real."

'On 21 May we landed by landing craft at Green Beach near Port St Carlos and we stayed there for a week at

Windy Gap. That's

when the air raids started. We'd watch the Skyhawks and Daggers trying to bomb and strafe the ships in Falklands Sound. We'd have 30mm rounds hitting the ground around us. There was a Rapier missile system that had a generator powering it day and night. It was a bloody nuisance, but it needed to keep its gimbals powered. A 'Technological Miracle'. On the next air raid, the Rapier was



Above: Immortalised in plastic

'In the South Atlantic it got bloody cold. They decided to fatten us up because we were heading into the southern winter. The seas got too rough so no more PT was held. They decided to transfer us to the *HMS Intrepid* because they thought that *Canberra* couldn't

A PERSON OF INTEREST



spinning around and going crazy tracking enemy aircraft. When they finally launched a missile we watched it go straight up and then straight down into A Company's position. No deaths, luckily.

'One day a Dagger fighter was flying low and slow looking at our OP. We could see the pilot watching us, when all of a sudden there was a bloody big "Whoosh!" One of the guys grabbed a Milan anti-tank missile and let it fly against the fighter. It almost got him! The CO and his tac party came storming up the hill, antennas waving everywhere, demanding to know who fired it. He told him that that's not what the Milan is for, but if he'd shot him down he would have given him a bloody medal!

'We were then told to head off across the island to Port Stanley where the Argies were dug in. They told us "No large packs. We'll bring all your gear later by chopper." Well we fell for that, didn't we. We tabbed* across the island and didn't see our packs or any rations. The Atlantic Conveyor was sunk with all our rations and all but one of the Chinook helicopters. So we had very little food except we did get a lot of Mars bars!

'The enemy could see us coming so we didn't use field signals. We just shouted to each other. Anyone who used field signals was obviously a commander and was likely to be targeted. It's like in the Aussie Army, All the time the commanders want to grab the radio. When I did my sniper course they told us "Look for the guy who grabs the radio from the signaller. That's the guy you want to shoot."

'Everyone started to get trenchfoot. It was dreadful. Your feet felt like they were on fire but when you felt them they were stone cold. Some guys lost toes. We had to leave them behind with the medics 'til they could get casevaced, then the medics would have to run to catch up with us. They were bloody terrific!

'It was 70 miles across the island. As we got closer to Port Stanley we approached Mt Longdon. At that stage we'd been surviving on Mars bars. They were the only thing that didn't go down on the Atlantic Conveyor. I saw SGT Mackay who was in 4 Platoon, B Coy. "You look fighting fit!" I said to him. He'd lost a lot of weight, but hadn't we all. "I'm bloody starving, Tommo!" he said to me. That was the last time I saw him. It was then that 3 Para was told to attack the Argentinian positions on Mt Longdon. He got a posthumous VC for that action. It was terrible to lose such a great guy.

'We occupied Mt Longdon which was the vital ground and sat there for two days while we were being shelled with airburst 105mm and 155mm arty.

'Soon after we got into Port Stanley when the Argies surrendered. C Company was pretty much at full strength so we were used to take the POWs back to Argentina. We offloaded them at Puerta Madryn. First the ambulances arrived for the wounded, then a whole bunch of limousines for the officers. Buses arrived for the NCOs, but for the soldiers, well they got carted off in open trucks. That's what

they thought of their diggers.

'We sailed for Ascension Island and I flew by RAF VC-10 back to the UK. I became a bus driver for a while, then was a railway copper which led me to be a detective with NSW Police. I then went back to the railways as a train driver. I was hassled to re-join my old ARES battalion, which was 4/3 RNSWR, and had to do my IETs again (*Paul Mitrovich, Manager AAMD was one of his instructors - Ed*). I was called by Colonel Fleeton at Army Personnel Agency who said: "Have I got a job for you! It's the Army History Unit."

That was 2009. I was at Victoria Barracks at Paddington at AMNSW, but then I had a house fire and lost everything. If there's one piece of advice I can give everyone, it's to make sure you're not under-insured. We lost everything. But I'd always liked Singleton and I was keen to get a position at the Infantry museum. Neil (Dailey) got me a position and here I am... very happy!

—WO2 Ian Thompson
AAIM

It seems that great minds think alike. Dr Brendan Nelson, former Director of the War Memorial, came up with the idea of hosting dinners under the extremely rare Avro Lancaster heavy bomber *G for George*. Meanwhile, the team at the Australian Army Flying Museum (AAFM) commenced the same activity almost 12 months ago not knowing what the AWM was up to. Regardless, it's a great location for functions, as Scotty Downs writes:

'As part of the Commandant, Army Aviation Training Centre's community engagement plan, AAFM staff hosted the Oakey business community to launch a new identity logo on 27 May.'



Top: The AWM hosts functions amongst its displays. Right: What the AAFM has that the AWM doesn't is an airfield allowing guests to take advantage of balmy Queensland evenings. Bottom: Amongst Army and Air Force aircraft the AAFM has hosted some spectacular functions.



*Image of Australian War Memorial from Flickr and used under licence. Image cropped.

DINING IN HISTORY



their first visit to the museum, with several state and local political figures in attendance.

'Many were surprised at the comprehensive collection of Australian Army aircraft. The interactive audio and light experience in the CH-47D Chinook was particularly popular. WO1 Tony Clark remarked "Many of those who were unfamiliar with the museum were pleasantly surprised with the quality and number of exhibits on display, and the knowledge and passion of the staff".

'The museum staff assisted with the planning and conduct of the function, with Museum Manager, MAJ Ryan, welcoming the guests and introducing the chair of the Oakey Chamber of Commerce, MS Rebecca (Bec) Meacham.

'The evening included a guided tour of the museum exhibition space by Scotty Downs and for many it was

'Being unable to attend due to other responsibilities, the Commandant Aviation Training Centre was represented by his C of S, LTCOL Stockley, and declared the evening everything that had been hoped for. "We're trying to build ties with our local communities, particularly Oakey and Toowoomba," he said, "and the Australian Army



Top Left: AAFM Manager MAJ Niall Ryan welcomes members of the Oakey Chamber of Commerce. Above: Scotty Downs takes guests through the 'immersive audio' experience inside the CH-47D Chinook and, Left: Scotty conducts a tour of the exhibitions for members of the Chamber of Commerce.

Flying Museum is a force multiplier."

'AAFM staff were delighted with the results of the evening, as they strive to make the museum a larger player in the local tourism landscape. "The night was great for the museum. We made contacts, improved networks and put the museum into the minds of local business and government leaders," said MAJ Ryan.

The Logo Launch is one of several large functions hosted by the AAFM recently, which have included RAEME Birthday celebrations and several mess functions. The AAFM Staff continues to improve the systems they have in place for this kind of activity and looks forward to hosting other similar events in the future.

- MR Scott Downs - AAFM



Medals are an account of one's service to the Nation while in uniform. A quick glance can identify how long a person has provided that service and perhaps where that service has taken him or her. A rosette or two on a 'Parramatta medal', or a couple of clasps on an AASM, and service and sacrifice become a talking point.

But as MAJ Chris Talbot of the Australian Army Museum Tasmania points out, sometimes a veteran's medals can be an emotional and rending issue, not just for the family of the veteran, but also for the museums. Major Talbot writes-

'For many years we have grappled with the issue of medals in the museum's collection. They are highly collectible and generate immense interest in our visitors.



Above and Below Left: Well designed display drawers allow for medal sets to be stored and displayed while framed stories allow for visitors to learn the fascinating history behind them.

'However, they are often a source of friction and conflict in families torn between keeping them with one relative or another, or donating them to institutions only to see them stored away out of sight.

'In 2018 a concept was developed by one of our volunteers, Chris Tassell, who was also a museum professional. His idea was to design display cases that would allow us to display our entire medal collection. We received a grant from local government and financial support from the AAHU and the concept became a reality.

'Now we have four high-quality display cabinets with feature display areas on top and sealed

drawer systems below. A tablet linked to a server displays images and short stories about the medal recipients and where the medals can be located. This system has allowed us to display every medal group in our collection.

'For prospective donors this is very appealing because they can be assured that everyone has the opportunity to see their treasured family mementoes at any time. The project has been extremely successful for it has resolved many of the issues around donation and ownership and has meant that we have seen a significant uptake in medal donations.

'The exhibition has become a flagship for us with many visitors coming to see what is probably the largest collection of medals permanently on display nationally. We have nearly 200 individual medals and medal groups dating back to the beginnings of the colony! Certainly this is the largest known display of medals awarded to Tasmanians.'

-MAJ Chris Talbot
Museum Manager



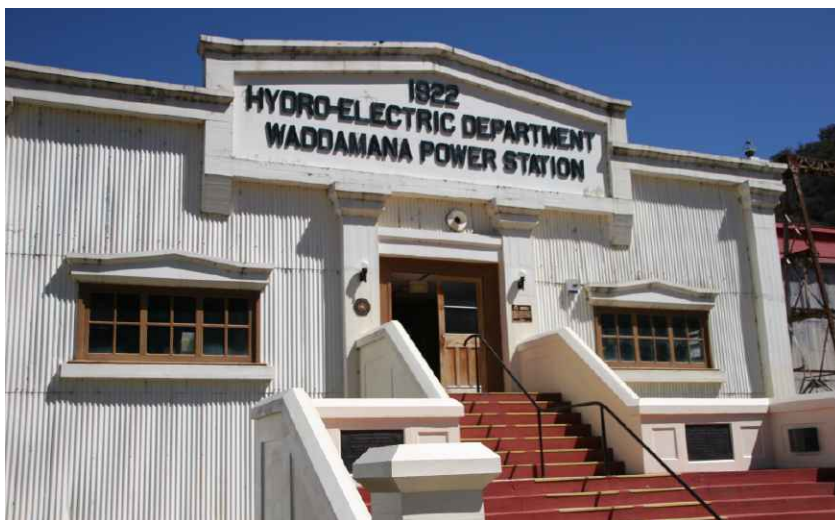
CURRENT VIEWING

AAMT



During April staff and volunteers of the Australian Army Museum Tasmania visited the Waddamana Power Station Heritage Site in the Tasmanian highlands as part of the museum's professional education program. Waddamana was Australia's first major hydro-electric power station providing base load power.

Built between 1912 and 1922 in a remote part of central Tasmania, the station operated as part of Hydro Tasmania's network from 1916 to 1964. It was converted to a heritage site in 1988 and has had a major visitor and exhibition upgrade in recent years. The site is one of the very few



exhibition planning and development. As a smaller, focussed museum, Waddamana is comparable to Australian Army Museum

Tasmania and offers similar management challenges.

- MAJ Brett Reeves
2IC AAMT



Above: Waddamana Power Station heritage site was the location of an AAMT education program visit to compare museums. Left: Some early electric 'mod cons' made available to Tasmanians with the advent of reliable power. Below: The generator room. At first only one generator was built to power about 300 homes in Hobart but with increasing demand came more generators.

original base-load hydro stations still in existence in the world. At the time it was leading edge technology and it kicked off the development of the Tasmania hydro-electric power schemes and the Tasmanian state electricity grid.

AAMT staff and volunteers enjoyed a detailed tour by Mr Chris Tassell, AM who provided valuable insights into the



With regard to Army heritage the Australian Army History Unit and the Australian War Memorial (AWM) have maintained a close affiliation, and rightly so given both institutions benefit from such close cooperation. It is with such shared professional passion that between 1991 and 2021 AAHU has deployed 54 Field History Teams (FHT) overseas and domestically. Of these, 19 FHTs have deployed to the Middle Eastern Region (MER) and 13 of those teams had one or more AWM staff members as part of the team.

With the ongoing drawdown of Australian forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, a considerable amount of what had been identified by the FHTs over the years was finally centralised at the Force Support Element (FSE) warehouse (Al Minhad Air Base – UAE) during 2020 and consigned to the AHU's Repository in Bandiana for sorting, placing in inventory

and eventual distribution within the unit's Army Museum Network (AMN) and the AWM.

For the purposes of the task it was vital that those who had participated on the various FHTs conduct the handling in order to speed-up the identification and distribution

Danielle Cassar (Senior Curator and Concept Developer, Middle East Galleries and FHT 2016) and Melissa Cadden (Senior Curator and Concept Developer, Peacekeeping and East Timor Galleries and FHT 2017). Repository staff - Daryl Stone (Manager - Army



processes. However, attempts to meet-up collectively to sort the consignment were delayed by the AWM's busy schedule and the COVID-induced border restrictions. It was not until the end of March this year that a chance finally presented itself as limitations eased.

With that in mind Neil Dailey (Manager, Army Heritage and FHT 2002), Paul Mitrovich (Curator – Army Museum Duntroon and FHT 2015 and 2016) and myself (Collection Manager – Army Museum Duntroon and FHT 2017 and 2019) represented AHU's interests. Acting on behalf of the AWM were Nick Fletcher (Head of Military History & Technology and FHT 2015),

Heritage Repository) and SGT Joseph Alaban (Warehouse Sergeant) also greatly assisted.

It's worth noting that AHU and the AWM are not the only participants on such historical collection tours as Air Force's History and Heritage Branch and Navy's Sea Power Centre have also provided personnel with similar aims on occasion.

The reunion of the FHTs not only reaffirmed our joint association but provided the opportunity for all of us to reminisce about our time in-theatre together by way of regaling stories and by seeing objects that we had previously identified for collection, although we were surprised by



Left: AWM rep Mel Cadden takes a photo of a RAEME item (personalised warehouse doors, no less) for collection later. Above: The FHT members from AWM and AAHU with the RAEME artefact, sectioned for transport home.

RE:COLLECTIONS

AAMD



the number of objects that had come back that weren't identified during deployment. This increased the size of the consignment substantially; no doubt due to the teardown process for return to Australia.

Packed in an assortment of wooden pallets, purpose-built shipping crates and transport boxes, the consignment sorting required a process-line approach whereby each object was unwrapped, numbered, measured, photographed and recorded before being re-wrapped and re-packed. Nearly three days was spent (29 Mar –1 Apr) with the bulk of the objects inventoried except for a large number of framed photographs and giftware to be sorted another time. The pallets contained several pieces of artwork by various RAEME rotations representing their imaginative skill sets, most of which was applied to plywood board and indicative of the operation's long duration.

One of the largest pieces that returned with this consignment was a go-kart built around a Soviet-era motor-cycle sidecar by RAEME personnel at the Australian base at Qargha for a multi-national racing event at the camp.

Captured enemy equipment was hard to come by with the biggest donation coming from

the Special Operations Logistics Node (SOL-N) based at AMAB to the 2017 MER FHT, the last of which contentiously came back with this consignment and consisted of locally manufactured ISIS camouflage uniforms, ski masks and load carrying belts.

Where the objects reside required a more discerning approach with prime consid-

eration given to the AWM's collection needs unless the donor specifically requested otherwise. In some cases members requested that an artefact go to one of the Corps museums managed by the AAHU within the Army Museum Network. It was with that in mind that during the 2019 MER FHT I made a concerted effort to find an object for each of the AMN's Corps museums to help bolster their contemporary exhibits.

The number of objects collected by the combined MER FHTs over the years number in the thousands, and though this recent consignment marks a culmination point, our collection tasks in Iraq and Afghanistan continue as, at the time of writing, Daryl

Stone prepares to fly out to AMAB as a one-man FHT to identify objects around Camp Baird ensuring evidence of Australia's presence there is brought home.

-WO2 Steve Medforth
Collection Manager -
AAMD

Above: Once back in Australia each artefact is carefully unpacked, inspected, placed on inventory and readied for distribution. Below: Some unusual items collected: An AK-47, a replica Enfield pistol purchased from a market, reminiscent of the Britain's time in Afghanistan during the 19th Century, and an 'indirect fire' warning bell made from a shell casing and used prior to the base-wide alarm system being installed.



For some years now the Army Museum of South Australia (AMOSA) has collaborated with the South Australian Boer War Association (SABWA). We have hosted events and their team of dedicated researchers, along with assiduous networking, has brought substantial benefit to both parties. Our Boer War collections, especially the primary research materials, are greatly enhanced and this historically important, yet often forgotten, conflict is now much more familiar to local enthusiasts and historians.

Each year, on the closest Sunday to 31 May (the date on which, in 1902, the war ended by treaty), AMOSA and SABWA jointly host 'Friends and Descendants Day' as a part of History Month. This year we firstly ran a simple

service for descendants of men who served in the conflict, followed by presentations and seminars which saw a 'Show and Tell' section on artefacts and curios of the era, and several talks on the military and political history of the conflict. Attending the day's activities were three loyal SABWA members who are direct (ie. first generation) descendants of men who fought at the turn of the century. To have two sons and one daughter of Boer War veterans with us was a great honour, and it was difficult to get one's mind around the fact that their fathers were veterans of a war that ended well over a century ago!

This year the wreath at the service was laid by Walter Beale, OAM and Ron Clark, first generation descendants whose fathers, Walter Beale

senior and Alfred Clark, both served in the 5th South Australian Imperial Bushmen. 5SAIB was raised in Adelaide in Jan 1901 and took part in some of the toughest fighting in the war as their columns engaged Boer fighters on the veldt and around scattered farms. In a war of relentless patrolling and skirmishing, the contingent proudly boasted that it was never in one place for more than three nights.

Walter Beale Snr, 23, was a plumber born in Mt Gambier where he lived most of his life. He would have known LT John Powell, 1st South Australian Mounted Rifles (SAMR), the first South Australian to fall in South Africa, and many other Mt Gambier boys who volunteered. A fine photograph dating from 1899 shows Beale (back row, second left) and other young men around the



TALES OF THE SOUTH



He was 21 but not a tall or heavy man, perhaps a good thing with horses already encumbered by kit. He survived a fiercely contested action at Grootvallei farm on 2 Aug 01. It was half an hour before dawn—he told his parents in Broken Hill—when 200 South Australians attacked a farmhouse where an unsuspecting Boer commando rested.

‘They never heard us until we were 50 yards off,’ Clark wrote. ‘Then they

opened fire, and the flashes of their rifles I’ll never forget. I thought one was through me, but my poor old horse got it instead... It was an explosive

bullet, and just missed my leg. I spurred him on another 20 yards, and as I dismounted he fell back dead. I then lay in a little trench and continued firing whenever I saw a flash. The chap just behind me was shot through the lungs.’

With Beale, he arrived back in Adelaide in April ‘02. Clark returned to South Africa where he worked in the mines of Johannesburg for some years.

These fine SABWA members make history come alive for us and it is, each year, our pleasure to welcome them, and first generation daughter Betty Lindsay, to the Army Museum of South Australia.

MAJ Christopher Roe
Museum Manager
& Dr Tony Stimson President
SABWA

father-like figure of James McGillivray who, after serving as a corporal with 1 SAMR, returned to South Africa as 5 SAIB’s RSM. Beale came through the war unscathed.

Born in Beachport, not far from Mt Gambier, Alfred Clark gave his occupation as ‘prospector’ when he enlisted.

Previous Page: A photo of 5th South Australian Imperial Bushmen clustered around James McGillivray (with bandolier). Walter Beale (Snr) is standing 2nd from left with hand resting on belt. Above: Alfred Clark greeting Edward, Prince of Wales, during His Royal Highness’ tour of the Commonwealth in 1920 during which he made it known that he wanted to meet as many veterans as possible. A few days before this picture was taken the train on which he was travelling derailed in WA. Right: Walter Beale Jnr and Ron Clark after laying the wreath at Keswick Barracks on 30 May 21.





TRACKS AND THINGS

After the turmoil from the forced closure of the Australian Army Tank Museum (AATM) due to the pandemic over the last 14 months, it was decided to host a museum open day to celebrate the easing of restrictions and promote the back-to-business status of the museum and collection.

The theme of the open day was to showcase the extensive M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier collection. The M113 exhibits are the only complete technical collection available world-wide able to demonstrate the entire family of vehicles and the technical evolution in Australian service of the platform, from the first petrol trial vehicle dating back to 1964, up to the last configuration from its last operational tour in East Timor in 2006. The M113 display consisted of 14 vehicles and represents the thousands of stories of the crews who trained and operated this workhorse.



Above and Below: The Australian Army Tank Museum holds the most comprehensive collection of the M113 APC. The recent open-day was used as an opportunity to showcase the collection and the many variants used in Army service. Of course, some of the other favourites were given an airing also, such as the Leopard and Centurion.

The open day was also used to highlight the many improvements made to the collection during the shutdown and to bring out the old favourites such as Centurion Gun Tank 005, Swedish S

Tank and the Leopard. The event was well attended with over 400 visitors who provided very positive feedback on the day with many commenting on the improvements made to the collection with the manu-



TRACKS AND THINGS



facture of missing parts and the repainting and marking of much of the collection.

The open day would not be possible without the support of the following museum staff and volunteers who committed to weeks of detailed preparation to ensure the day was a success. The Museum Manger, Major Craig Montgomery, and the Curator, Mr Graeme Woodham, who provided guidance for the preparation, assisted by Army Reserve staff of WO1 Tony Crook, WO2 Darren Werry, WO2 Peter Ballinger, WO2 Jason Turk, SGT Andrew Hill, CPL Dave Maher and PTE Caity Allen. The Museum Volunteer Team members consisting of John Brooker, Ian Smith, Peter Coutts, John Blackwell, Paul Cracknel, and Ken Brown. A contributing factor to the success of the day was the dynamic catering team provided by Team Woodham with Rachael, Maddison, Brooklyn and Bradley flipping burgers and cooking over 300 snags and 5 kg of onions!

Another positive for the day was Mr Paul Handel who travelled down from Sydney



Above: A young visitor to the AATM poses in front of an M113 in UN white livery. Below: The Leopard Bridgelayar is a crowd favourite.

for the open day. Paul spoke to many of the visitors and passed his extensive knowledge of Australian AFV history and development, this with the interaction from the museum staff and volunteers provided an educational and rewarding experience on the history, design and development of Australian armour.

If that wasn't enough, the AATM hosted 250 staff cadets from RMC-Duntroon

on 26 May conducting a 'bullring' activity of various armoured fighting vehicles. As the Army Museum Network continues to expand its reach and popularity, the benefits of the soon-to-be built Combined Arms Learning Centre at Puckapunyal to house and





TRACKS AND THINGS

display Australian armour and artillery will likely be very popular with uniformed and civilian visitors.

—From the Staff of the AATM

Top to Bottom: RMC cadets are provided briefs on the Leopard dozer and bridge-layer variants, as well as the Centurion, by WO2 Pet Ballinger and volunteer John (Tubby) Brooker along with crews from from B Squadron 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment during the RMC 'bullring' activity in May.



HONOURING AVIATION

AAFM

On 18 May, MAJ Niall Ryan, Manager of the Australian Army Flying Museum (AAFM), on behalf of AAHU, presented Commander 16th Brigade with a TASHCO coffee table exhibition cabinet to be displayed in the Brigade HQ.

"The cabinet represents the AAFM's commitment to engaging the soldiers and officers of the aviation capability with their history and heritage. The coffee table is a great example of AAHU facilitating this engagement," MAJ Ryan explained.

COMD 16 Bde, BRIG Dave Hafner, was delighted to receive the exhibition.

"It's vital that we remember these early pioneers, and that their efforts are recognised and remembered," said BRIG Hafner during the handover ceremony at the Brigade HQ.

AAFM Curator Scotty Downs will keep the display updated. "We intend to rotate the exhibition every six months or so," he said. "We have a cabinet mock-up at the museum which will be used to model new displays, so each display rotation should be relatively seamless"

The subject chosen for the first cabinet display is MAJ Peter Benjamin. MAJ Benjamin was a



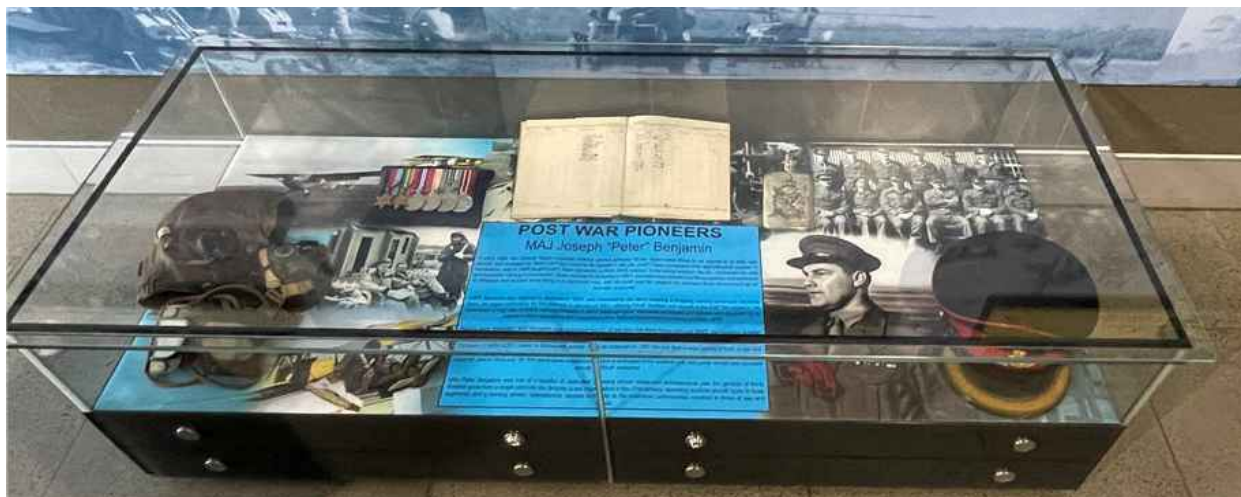
Above: CPL Jason Erbacher and MAJ Niall Ryan (left) with COMD 16 Avn Bde and Bde RSM BRIG David Hafner and WO1 Trudy Casey (right) at the presentation of the TASHCO display cabinet (below) which will display aviation history commencing with pioneer Army aviator, MAJ Peter Benjamin's story and the start of Army's aviation capability.

driving force in the creation of modern Army Aviation, being trained in the late '40s as both a pilot and instructor in the UK, and returning to Australia to begin training Army pilots at Canberra. He trained between three and six members a year for several years, creating the early cohort of Army flyers who would be the basis of the Army aviation capability. MAJ Benjamin was appointed the first OC of what was the first Army flying unit after the Great War: the 1st Army Aviation Company. Based at Bankstown in Sydney, and flying leased aircraft, 1 AVN

COY provided light aircraft support to Army throughout the late '50s. When Army was directed to form a dedicated aviation unit flying Army-owned and operated aircraft, the 16th Light Aircraft Squadron was formed in December of 1960, largely due to the efforts of MAJ Benjamin.

MAJ Benjamin holds a special place in the foundation of the modern Army aviation capability.

MAJ Niall Ryan
Manager - AAFM





EO AND HERITAGE

SECTION

There are several items which are found in every military museum collection – small arms, medals uniforms and inert explosive ordnance (inert EO). Inert EO can be mostly found either in its original form but with all accelerant removed or as some form of trench art. Collecting, inspecting, managing and displaying inert EO brings with it a substantial overhead in work attention to detail and diligence. As this edition of *Despatches* is released, AAHU has a Field History Team in the Middle East Region collecting artefacts for use in all service museums and the AWM. Some of the items collected by this team include inert EO and this is a process which we can trace back to our predecessors in WWI. Since that time many thousands of items of inert EO have been collected from battlefields across the globe and returned to museums in Australia without incident. However, one member of the first history field team in WWI was not so lucky.

On 17 May 1918, CPL Ernest Bailey was tragically killed while preparing a German 17 cm trench mortar bomb, which he believed had been rendered safe, for transport from France to Australia to form part of the collection of the proposed Australian War Museum (eventually the Australian War Memorial). CPL Bailey was the only member of the Australian War Records Section (AWRS), which was undertaking this work, to be killed during WWI.

Bailey's role with the AWRS was to visit the Australian units

on the Western Front to identify and collect weapons and equipment that would have value in telling the story of Australia's war experience in the proposed AWM. He was a particularly prolific collector with a real skill in identifying artefacts that would be valuable in telling that story. CEW Bean is quoted as having said of Bailey, 'more than any man I know he was responsible for the founding of this Australian War Museum with such a splendid series of exhibits'. His diary for early 1918 shows how busy he was in collecting artefacts and the vast distances he covered in undertaking this role, including a tongue-in-cheek comment about having added 40 kilometres to his trip one day having followed the directions of a Canadian soldier to a 'short cut'.

The AWRS had an established process for ensuring munitions collected were safe for packing and transportation,

that included sending them to the 4th Field Coy, Australian Engineers for 'de-detonating', which involved the removal of the fuse and making it safe but leaving the explosives within the casing. The engineers would then provide AWRS with a certificate that the shell had been rendered safe. It appears that the practice of the AWRS team was to then soak the shells in water for long periods, two days in the case of the mortar bomb that killed Bailey, and then remove the explosives with a chisel. It was believed it was the use of the chisel that detonated the explosives killing Bailey.

It is clear from correspondence amongst the officers of AWRS that this shocking accident led to a reconsideration of what 'rendering safe' actually meant. It raised a number of concerns about past practices, including the sending of previously considered 'safe' shells—

Below: PTE Ernest Bailey preparing ordnance for collection. Bailey was later killed when a shell from which he was removing explosives, and which had been prepared for making inert, exploded.



EO AND HERITAGE



which still contained explosives—back to the UK and Australia. One officer questioned the need to collect such ‘trophy’ and whether the risk to the men in collecting and handling them outweighed the value of them as artefacts. It was also recommended that all ammunition already held in storage by AWRS, and those to be collected in the future, be re-evaluated and only considered safe if de-detonated and all explosives removed.

The issue of rendering safe and displaying explosive ordnance has been an ongoing issue for the AWM as evidenced by the story a former Director of the AWM tells of a visitor picking up a mortar bomb on display and then dropping it into a nearby tube which ignited the propellant charge it still contained resulting in the bomb being propelled into the ceiling above.

A little closer to home, 2020 saw the Infantry Museum at Singleton request an inspection of EO by an Ammunition Technical Officer (ATO). Some of the items had been certified inert many years ago and the staff thought it wise to have some re-inspected. One item, a WWII-era Japanese beach mine was inspected and found to contain 1.8kg of explosive. While this is well short of the 70kg it originally contained, it was enough to be a real risk to the staff and visitors. The ATO declared the remaining accelerant too unstable to remove so the decision was made to destroy the mine.

Fortunately, no damage was done but it did prove that inspections carried out many decades ago may not have been done as diligently as we might think.

AAHU will shortly release an updated Inert EO Directive. While it won’t direct all inert EO to be re-inspected, it might be a good opportunity to undertake a review of when some items were originally declared inert and consider a re-inspection.

The accidental death of CPL Bailey, and the incident at the AWM and the Infantry Museum demonstrates that what was considered a rendered-safe piece of ordnance by the best practice and standard of the day may, in fact, still be a hazard to those who handle it.

Neil Dailey
Manager - Army Museum
Network

Paul McAlanon
Manager - History Section