

# YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT - 77

## 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.*

### The Story of Two Flags

#### 8 Battery, 3 Field Brigade

At the outbreak of WW1, Mr. James Fredericks, a Perth Citizen, presented a Blue Ensign to Colonel Kyngdon, Commandant 5<sup>th</sup> Military District, requesting that he, in turn, present it to an Officer Commanding a West Australian Unit about to embark for service overseas. Colonel Kyngdon presented the ensign to Major AJ Bessell-Browne, DSO who commanded 8 Battery 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Brigade Australian Field Artillery. It was gratefully accepted and became the Battery Banner.

The Banner was first flown at Blackboy Camp during preliminary training. Then, at Mena Camp Egypt during intensive training, in the field at ANZAC Cove Gallipoli, and later taken to France and flown on the Somme in 1916 and early 1917 in the Ypres Salient. It was then safely stored until the end of the War.



After demobilization, it was decided to deposit the Banner in St. Matthews Church Guildford for safe keeping following the custom in Garrison Churches in England. Guildford, prior to and after WW1, was the Remount Depot for Artillery and Light Horse Units. On Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1919, the Banner was laid up in St. Matthews Garrison Church by the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery's first Officer Commanding, Brigadier General A. J. Bessell-Browne, CB, CMG, DSO, VD. In 1928, the Artillery Comrades' Association (today's RAA Association – WA) proposed, with the cooperation of the Church and the Municipality of Guildford, to hold the first ceremony of Gunners' Day on the nearest Sunday to 8<sup>th</sup> August – the date in 1918 when Australian Forces broke the line at Villers Bretonneux.

Apart from the WW2 interval, Gunners' Day has been celebrated annually at St. Matthews Church since 1928, more recently on the first Sunday in November.

By 1992, the Banner had disintegrated and was removed from the Church and handed to the RAA Association - WA for safe keeping. Following another Gunner tradition, the remnants of the Banner were “consumed by fire” on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1992, the ashes being consecrated by Army Chaplain Bianchini in the presence of Ian Bessell-Browne, (Patron RAA Historical Society WA), son of the Brigadier General and, John Talbot Hobbs, (then President RAAA-WA) grandson of Lieutenant General Sir J. J. Talbot Hobbs, and representatives of the RAA Historical Society of WA.

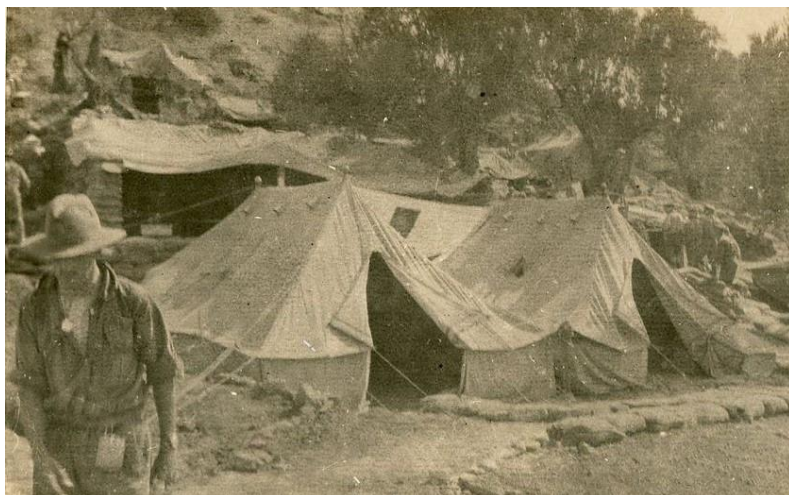


The ashes were sealed in the brass Urn and for twenty-eight years displayed at Leighton Battery Heritage Site, testimony to all Gunners who have, and are serving the Nation and for those who paid the supreme sacrifice. In a symbolic gesture, the RAA Association Australia – WA Branch has offered the Urn to St. Matthews Parish Council to be suitably displayed within the Church, recognizing the exceptional link between the Garrison Church and the local Gunner Fraternity.



*“Gunner” Memorial Gates at Guildford*

## 7 Field Ambulance



*7 Field Ambulance on Gallipoli*

Another Australian flag presented to a local unit saw even more extensive service during both World War 1 and 2 and forms a link between generations of soldiers. The battered standard of 7 Field Ambulance was first flown on the beaches of Gallipoli and after the Armistice in 1918 was retained as an honoured reminder of service by members of the Association. With the formation of the 2/7 Field Ambulance, the flag was passed to the new unit and proceeded overseas and accompanied the unit through three campaigns. It only just made it to the evacuation from Greece wrapped around the waist of the Commanding Officer, Leslie LeSouef. On Crete, many of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, including the CO became prisoners of war choosing to remain with the wounded or unable to be evacuated. The flag did make it off the island and remained with the unit thereafter.



As an indication of the strong emotional connection between the unit and the flag, its history was summarised in the first issue of the *2/7 Australian Field Ambulance "Advertiser"* published on 20 July 1941 just weeks after the surrender of Allied forces in Crete. At home in Perth, the safety of the flag was reported in the Daily News of 18 February 1942. Further details of the flag's history are recorded in the Minute Book of the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance of their reunion in Adelaide in June 1948 noting that Wilfred Price of Beverley had made the presentation on behalf of his World War 1 comrades to 2/7 Field Ambulance.

To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Crete in 1991, three serving members of 7 Field Ambulance, attending the commemorations, were united with the flag and three members of 2/7 Field Ambulance who had been captured on Crete, Ted Randolph, Leslie LeSouef, and Hal Finkelstein.

The 7 Field Ambulance flag is today carefully conserved in the collection of the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia. It is periodically displayed at the Museum and on external ceremonial occasions. The extensive LeSouef Collection may be found in the Museum's Archives.

## LINKS FOR FURTHER ENJOYMENT

Visit the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia web site

<https://armymuseumwa.com.au>

<https://www.stmatthewschurch.org.au/history>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28568857>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/212549022?searchTerm=Fredericks>

*The likely donor of the 8 Battery flag was James Fredericks a flag and tent maker in High Street, Fremantle but there was also a James Frederick, sail and tentmaker in Hay Street, Perth.*

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/units/341>

<http://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/articles/shores-gallipoli-new-museum>



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00046.035

*Informal portrait of 2058 Sergeant (later Air Commodore) Raymond James Brownell, 9th Battery, 3rd Field Artillery Brigade (3FAB), and his brother Captain Herbert Percival (Val) Brownell DSO, 7th Field Ambulance, standing outside a dugout, 13 September 1915 AWM P00046.035*

*The **Fray Bentos** brand is linked to tinned corned beef in the United Kingdom, other European countries, and Australia. Created in the latter half of the 19th century, the name is derived from Fay Bentos, a port in Uruguay, where the products were originally processed and packaged. The canned meats crate in this photo shows, that to meet wartime demand, “bully beef” was sourced from other countries such as Canada.*