

YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT - 79 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.

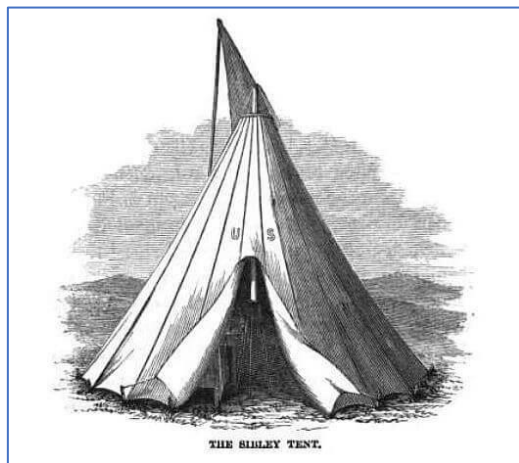
The Australian Army Museum of Western Australia is now open four days per week, Wednesday through Friday plus Sunday. Current COVID19 protocols including contact tracing will apply.

The Army Bell Tent



A standard pattern Bell tent was adopted by the British Army from the mid nineteenth century. This style of tent saw extensive use by Australian military forces both at home and abroad in both world wars and beyond. Although there are not extensive records, the earliest conical style tents began to take shape around 600 AD during the reign of Emperor Maurice for the use of the Byzantine Army. After that, bell tents appear as early as the 9th century. The Crimean War (1853-56) was the first heavily documented war, due to the invention of photography and telegraphs. Photographs show that both British and Turkish encampments used bell tents

Conical, or “cone-shaped” tents have been in use by Native peoples around the Northern Hemisphere in varying designs for thousands of years. Whether you call it a Tipi, Chum, Goahti, Lavvu, Kohte, Nentsi, or any other number of names, a conical shape is the most aerodynamic in terms of shedding rain, snow, and wind. These shapes are also the most heat, space, and weight efficient designs, offering the highest margin of tensile strength with the smallest amount of structural support.



A conical tent was patented in 1856 by a United States Army Colonel, **Henry Hopkins Sibley**. While stationed at the Texas frontier from 1850-1854, Sibley developed an appreciation for the Native American tipi after visiting a Comanche village. Understanding the importance of tents in military campaigns, his original interpretation of the tipi had no side walls, a single center pole, and a vented “cap” from which smoke could escape, no guy lines, a low entry, no defined porch, and a fire pit similar to the Scandinavian Lavvu.

The Bell tents originally used by the British cavalry in the Crimea, unlike the Sibley, had sidewalls and guy lines providing additional headroom and breathability. The Bell tent doesn't have a fire pit inside the tent.



An Australian Army Bell Tent in the collection of the Australian War Memorial is described as follows:

Standard British pattern Bell tent made from fine cotton canvas, designed to be supported by a wooden centre pole. The tent consists of a cone shaped upper section, 2.97 metres high, made up of 21 triangular sections sewn together, attached to a lower skirt section 610 mm high. The join between the two sections is reinforced with 2 inch jute tape. The tent is constructed with a pair of access flaps which are integral to the upper section, the outer hems of which are reinforced vertically with jute tape. Each flap is also fitted with a pair of brass loop hooks and a pair of reinforced eyes on each side to secure the flap. The skirt below and adjacent to the flaps is loose, and is fitted with one brass hook along the horizontal break and four hooks and loops along the vertical break to allow the flap to be placed open or closed independent of the flaps. For locating the tent pegs, there are 19 rope toggles along the lower hem of the skirt which pass through eyes, reinforced with sewn string. Each toggle is 260 mm long and is retained on the inside by a wooden bead knotted to each end. The distance between each eye is 55 mm. There are 22 guy ropes attached to the upper section of the skirt, each fitted with a wooden adjusting slider, 125 mm x 30 mm x 15 mm.

The inner apex of the tent is reinforced with a heavy canvas panel and fitted with a thick rope donut for locating the wooden centre pole. There are three ventilators fitted just below the apex. Each has two hemmed elongated oval holes cut into the main tent body, covered on the exterior by a separate cover, 580 mm long, which is weighted and shaped at its lower end with a u-shaped wire. All brass hooks have been sewn to the tent in string in a decorative pattern.



British camp at the 'W' Beach (Lancashire Landing) Cape Helles.



Mena Camp in the shadow of the Pyramids



Cavalry Lines in France

LINKS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Visit the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia web site

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

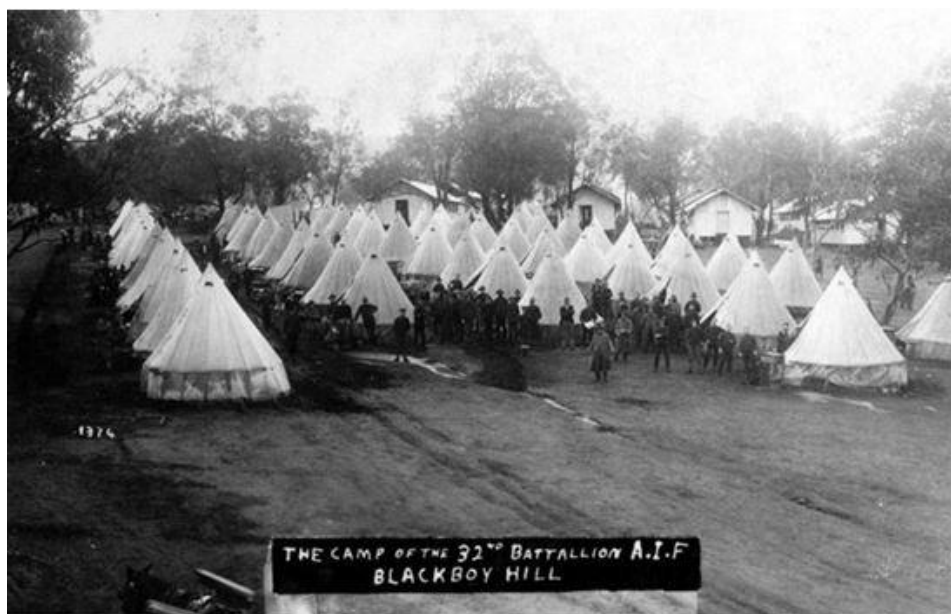
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sibley_tent

https://www.canvascamp.com/en_au/blog/history-of-the-sibley-bell-tent

<https://www.australiantemporarystructures.com.au/military-shelters>

<https://www.belltent.com.au/anzacs-history-belltents/>

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/stories-service/great-war-memories/bell-tent-devonport>



A Troop tent at a recruit training depot at Enoggera in Queensland during 1916. The tent was occupied by either 9 or 8 men and as can be seen by the serial "QDF 704" stencilled above the door, it is a pre-1901 tent from the former colonial Queensland Defence Force.