

YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT - 81

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.

World War 2 Gallery “Jewel Boxes”

In the entrance presentation of the World War 2 Gallery are seven simple Perspex cases or ‘jewel boxes’ set into the wall. These seven installations are intended to present the Australian experience in World War 2 through medals awarded and a series of evocative artefacts. Visitors can experience them as objects in their own right or as start points for reminiscences, conversations or connections.



George Cross



The George Cross is the highest civil decoration for heroism in the United Kingdom and until 1975 in Australia. It is awarded to civilians for "acts of the greatest heroism" or to military personnel for actions that are not "in the face of the enemy" Designed by King George VI, it was announced by him in a radio broadcast on 23 September 1940. The most famous award was to the Island of Malta on 15 April 1942 "To honour her brave people to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history."

This box also contains a copy of the poem “*God Knows*” or “*The Gate of the Year*” by Minnie Louise Haskins. The King used this poem in his Christmas message on 25 December 1939.

This is not “The King’s Speech” of 3 September 1939 on the declaration of war which was the subject of the movie of the same name. The photo shows King George VI inspecting troops of the 9th Australian Division, elements of which had arrived in the United Kingdom in 1940.

***And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”***

And he replied:

***“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”***



1939 - 45 Star

The 1939–1945 Star was awarded for operational service and was the only campaign star that covered the full duration of the Second World War. The 1939–1945 Star was awarded for specified periods of operational service overseas between 3 September 1939 and either 8 May 1945 in Europe or 2 September 1945 in the Far East theatre. The medal was announced on 8 July 1943 and ribbon bars were issued later that year, although the medal itself was not issued until after the War. The broad criteria were 180 days of service between these dates. The ribbon colours represent the Navy (dark blue) the Army (red) and the Air Force (light blue).

The box focuses on agencies which provided support to Australian service personnel. It contains a Red Cross Christmas Box intended for Prisoners of War, a deck of cards provided by the Australian Comfort Fund, the program of a Red Cross Fundraiser at the Claremont Show Grounds on 3 May 1941 and a metal cigarette tin designed for shipment to servicemen overseas.



Africa Star

The Africa Star was granted for operational service in North Africa from the date of the entry of Italy into the war on 10 June 1940, up to the date of the cessation of operations against the enemy in North Africa on 12 May 1943. It was awarded for a minimum of one day’s operational service in North Africa, west of the Suez Canal between 10 June 1940 and 12 May 1943 and in Syria between 8 June 1941 and 11 July 1941. Three clasps were issued for the Africa Star: 8th Army; 1st Army; and North Africa 1942-43. The ribbon colours represent the desert (tan) and the service of the Armies (red), Naval Forces & Merchant Navy (dark blue) and the Air Forces (light blue).

The box contains items reminiscent of the Western Desert campaigns west of Suez including a German style steel helmet in sand colour, an Iron Cross of the era, the German Army Wound badge and an Italian campaign medal.



Pacific Star

The Pacific Star was awarded for entry into operational service in the Pacific Theatre of Operations including the South-West Pacific between 8 December 1941 and 2 September 1945. The ribbon has central yellow and green stripes that represent the forests and the beaches of the Pacific, flanked dark blue, light blue and red stripes that represent the service of the Naval Forces and Merchant Navy, the Air Forces and the Armies.

The box contains a fur lined Japanese fighter pilot helmet. This was liberated from a supply dump in Rabaul and later did duty on cold mornings on the tractor in the Wheat Belt. The medal is the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun, Seventh Class. Both are sitting on a telegram announcing that a soldier reported Missing has been confirmed as a Prisoner of War.



Defence Medal

The Defence Medal was awarded for six months service in a prescribed non-operational area subject to enemy air attack or closely threatened, in Australia and overseas, or for 12 months service in non-prescribed non-operational areas. Within Australia the area is the Northern Territory, north of 14 degrees 30 minutes south, and the Torres Strait Islands between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. Overseas service includes the Middle East, east of the Suez Canal (less the period of the Syrian Campaign) or Malaya prior to the Japanese invasion on 8 December 1941. The green represents the Islands of the United Kingdom, the orange represents enemy attacks, and the black represents the black outs.

This box reflects the home front experience with a poster promoting efficient use of petrol, oils and lubricants, ration cards and Wartime Savings Stamps.



British War Medal 1939-1945

The War Medal 1939-45 was awarded for 28 days full-time service in the Armed Forces between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. Operational and non-operational service may be counted, providing that it was of 28 days or more duration. A member qualifies for the award where service was brought to an end by death, wounds or other disabilities due to service or by cessation of hostilities on 2 September 1945. The ribbon colours of red, white and blue represent the colours of the Union Flag.

The box contains an engraved 25 pounder cartridge case from the 101 Gun Salute fired in Perth on 15 August 1945, a program for the Service of Thanksgiving and a dip pen and ink representing the various surrender ceremonies which subsequently occurred. All are placed on an official telegram to next of kin announcing the death of a service member.



Australian Service Medal 1939 – 1945

This medal was instituted in 1949 to recognise the service of members of the Australian Armed Forces and the Australian Mercantile Marine during World War II. The medal was originally awarded to those who served at home or overseas for at least 18 months full-time service, or three years part-time service, between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. In 1996 the qualifying time was reduced to 30 days full-time or 90 days part-time service. To be eligible for the medal a serviceman or woman must have been honourably discharged from the Australian Armed Forces. The khaki represents the Australian Army, and the red, dark blue and light blue represent the Merchant Navy, Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force respectively.

The box represents the setting aside of service responsibilities at war's end and contains a Demobilisation Book, identity discs, ribbon bar and a variety of badges and bits and pieces in a leather case designed for starched, detachable collars. The silver bands are shirt sleeve holders to keep cuffs above the wrists (and thus clean), a fashion necessity of the time (and trendy today).

LINKS FOR FURTHER ENJOYMENT

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

<https://www.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/honours-awards>

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2013/12/10/the-gate-of-the-year-minnie-louise-haskins-1875-1957/>

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/4f72a0b097f83e0308601cf0>

<https://www.kingsspeech.com/>

<https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/the-true-story-of-malta-and-the-george-cross.415417>

<https://www.airspacemag.com/daily-planet/more-70-years-later-rabauls-aerial-battleground-still-haunting-180973537/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFSEuv6i0Ug>

