



Foundation News

Army Museum of Western Australia Foundation

March/April 2008

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From The Chairman's Desk

Although it may seem to many of us that schools have only just started we are already planning for the next school holidays. Over the past few years we have established the expectation that we will be open every day of the shorter school holidays. As always, staffing is the criterion and all are asked to volunteer.

It is difficult to under estimate the importance of having the galleries open to the public. All that we do in collecting, conserving, classifying and recording is wasted if we do not use the collection to pass on the stories. The Museum has an important role to play in helping fellow Australians understand their cultural heritage and this is what we do by opening the Museum to visitors. I note that many of our specialist curatorial staff recognise this need and take a turn at staffing the galleries. I would urge all others to do likewise.

I wish also to remind volunteers of two important

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 From the Chairman's Desk
- 1 From the Manager's Desk
- 2 Operations 'Coral' and 'Balmoral', South Vietnam, May 1968
- 3 Forthcoming Events
- 4 From the Curator's Desk

From the Manager's Desk

I have issued the Policy Directive that covers the direction the museum will take in 2008. The main focus this year will be the planning and preparation for the occupation of the rest of Artillery Barracks when the Western Australian University Regiment (WAUR) moves out in November. The planning process has already started with a meeting between Defence Support Group (DSG), myself for Army History Unit and Tom Goode representing the Foundation to discuss the way ahead during the transition and also the first meeting of the Precinct Planning Committee within the museum. Further details on future plans are covered by the Curator, Captain Gardiner, in his section of this newsletter.



Heritage will be preserved in the Museum's expansion at Artillery Barracks

Army History Unit has posted a new uniformed Army Reserve soldier to the museum to take up the vacant Clerk Admin position. Pte Daniell Taylor has already started and her desk is situated in the Reception Office of the Admin Building.

continued on page 2

training courses that will be run in the near future. The first of these will be a course for duty officers. This course will provide valuable information on the role and responsibilities of the duty officer and is something that all gallery attendants should do. The more people who know what to do, the more smoothly everything runs. Volunteers who currently act as duty officers are most welcome both as a refresher and an opportunity to share your experiences.

The other course is for tour guides. Our school bookings are starting to pick up and it is important that this duty does not fall to an overworked few. Helping young Australians understand their cultural heritage is probably one of the most important things we do and one of the most rewarding.

Tom Goode
Chairman
Army Museum of WA Foundation Board ■

Operations 'Coral' and 'Balmoral', South Vietnam, May 1968

"Coral" and "Balmoral" were the names of two Fire Support Bases (FSB) established by troops from 1st Australian Task Force in May 1968 across the route used by the Viet Cong to depart and approach Saigon and nearby Bien Hoa. The bases provided defended positions for artillery, mortars and armoured vehicles which would, in turn, support infantry patrols of the area at a time when expectations of enemy attacks on Saigon were high.

On the afternoon of 12 May 1968 the 1st and 3rd Battalions Royal Australian Regiment (1 and 3RAR), 102 Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, and 161 Field Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery deployed into FSB Coral. 1 and 3 RAR began preparing ambush positions but these were incomplete when a North Vietnamese regiment attacked the base during the early hours of 13 May. The North Vietnamese, having penetrated the 1RAR Mortar Platoon and 102 Field Battery positions and briefly forcing the defenders to abandon one of their artillery pieces, were forced back after heavy fighting. Coral came under attack for a second time at 2.15 am on 16 May when an estimated three battalions of North Vietnamese infantry assaulted the base, which was along with infantry, now also defended by armoured personnel carriers of A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment. – *continued opposite*

There has been a big push on conformity to the Army's OH&S requirements with AHU providing funding for a large range of safety equipment and First Aid training courses for 8 volunteers, to be conducted by St John's Ambulance at Fremantle in April.

Finally I look forward to the Sponsors Night to be held at the Barracks by the Foundation on Friday 07 Mar 08.

Capt Henry Fijolek
Museum Manager ■

Operations 'Coral' and 'Balmoral' – continued

Fighting lasted several hours before the attackers were forced to withdraw.

Further mortar and rocket attacks on Coral followed, on 22 May, and again on 26 and 28 May, but the base was not seriously threatened again. Having had the opportunity to establish a strong defensive perimeter, the Australians were able launch their own attacks against the North Vietnamese. On 26 May, in a major contact, infantry and tanks from C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment destroyed part of a North Vietnamese bunker system that had been discovered in the vicinity. The Australians continued to launch aggressive patrols from Coral, engaging in combat against North Vietnamese forces and experiencing some fierce actions through until the end of May.



Weapon pit on perimeter of 1 Armoured Regt Workshop area, FSB Coral. Centurion Bridgelayser in background.

Continued on page 3

BACK TO THE BARRACKS PROGRAM 2008

The second of our 2008 Public Lectures will be on **10 April** with a talk on the battles for **Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, South Vietnam**. Speaker is **Mr Norm Wells**, a museum volunteer who served in Vietnam during these operations.

All foundation members, and guests are welcome.

Cost: \$15 (includes supper)

Time: 7:00 pm

Venue: Conference Room, Bldg 7, Leeuwin Barracks, Riverside Road, East Fremantle.

Bookings: Ring 9430 2535. Further information is available from coordinator Norm Wells ■

MILITARY HISTORY CONFERENCE

The **Military Historical Society of Australia** is to hold its 2008 **National Biennial Conference** at the Museum over the **Easter weekend in March**. This is to be hosted by the Museum in conjunction with the WA Branch of the Society. The conference will be open to Society delegates and Active Volunteers of the Army Museum who may be interested in attending some of the conference sessions. (Those Volunteers interested can Contact Peter Shaw for further details of the Conference program) ■

VIETNAM COMMEMORATIVE DISPLAY

In **May** the museum will be opening a special display in its Post-World War Two Gallery to commemorate the **40th Anniversary of the operations for Coral and Balmoral**. ■



Centruion Tank recovery operation, FSB Coral

Museum Sponsors

The Army Museum of Western Australia Foundation has received financial support from the following:



Operations 'Coral' and 'Balmoral' – continued from page 2

By this time the North Vietnamese had turned their attention to FSB Balmoral which had been established by 3RAR some 4.5 kilometres north of Coral on 24-25 May. Tanks from Nui Dat helped Australian infantry defeat a two battalion-strong North Vietnamese attack just hours after their arrival at the base on 25 May. A second attack followed on 28 May, but a combination of infantry, armour, aircraft, artillery and mortars repelled the North Vietnamese assault and North Vietnamese activity in the area eventually subsided.



Troops from 3RAR awaiting extraction from FSB Balmoral

Coral and Balmoral were evacuated on 6 June 1968 after twenty six days of heavy action – the largest Australian battle deployment since WWII – two battalions in constant contact with a determined enemy force. Across the twenty six day operation 27 Australians were killed in action and many more scarred and wounded for life ■

From the Curator's Desk

For this edition I intend to brief you all on progress so far in regard to the use of the buildings that have been allocated to the AMWAF for the museum's future use when WAUR leave later this year.

A small Precinct Plan Committee has been formed comprising Capt Henry Fijolek (AMWA Manager), Capt Wayne Gardiner (Curator) and Mr. Tom Goode (AMWAF Chairman) and held the inaugural meeting on the 14th of February. The main agenda item was to confirm the Precinct Plan site usage.

From this meeting the following has now been accepted and will form the basis for all future AMWAF planning for the phased redevelopment of the Army Museum of WA:

Building 17 (the main large building seen on entering Artillery Barracks to the north of the parade ground) –

- A lift to be built to the rear of the back veranda, East Wing to access the top floor.
- New enlarged museum entrance to include a shop and the installation of the history of Cantonment Hill and Artillery Barracks (presently where the Post 1945 Gallery is on the ground floor, East Wing). The new post 1945 story will be on the top floor, west wing.
- Combination Temporary Exhibition Gallery/Convention Room (presently the WWII Gallery)
- Enlarged gallery interpreting 1826 to 1914 (using the existing Pre 1914 Gallery and the present museum entrance).
- WWI Trench Gallery remains in present location as does the existing WWI Gallery.
- The new WWII Gallery and WWII POW Gallery will be installed on the top floor, east wing.
- Archives, Images and Map sections will move to the rooms presently used for the WWII POW Gallery.
- A Research Centre will be established with the Library together with a Lecture Room in the 2 large rooms on the ground floor in the West Wing.
- The present Lower Main Store will be used for textiles only and Data Entry.
- The top floor will have galleries for 1919-1939 (mostly Militia), WW II (including POW), all post 1945 conflicts, Peacekeeping, CMF/Ares/Cadets. The Guidon and Colours display will also be

installed in the top floor. There will be some access to the upstairs verandas and windows facing south for visitors.

Buildings 16 (presently WAUR Q Stores, west of parade ground)-These will be the new workshops and museum storage.

Building 15 (presently used by WAUR, west of parade ground)-

- Top floor – Kit and Heraldry
- Ground floor – Rendered and edged weapons.

Building 14 (south western corner of the parade ground)-Unit Equipment and Education.

Building 12 (west gate house)-New museum donation receivals office. Also isolation/initial cleaning of objects.

Building 11 (east gate house)-Office of Curator, Deputy Curator and Museum Registrar.

Building 26 (present AMWA HQ, east of parade ground)-For Administration only.

Building 25 (a.k.a "the Artillery Shed")-Rooms vacated by Archives and Images to be used for the Loan Collection. Large room remain as a gallery.

Building 24 (present workshop and storage rooms)- Under cover vehicle displays with the small northern room to be used for gallery exhibition preparation.

Building 23-Remains for short term storage and receivals.

Building 22 (presently the WAUR combined Officers/Sgts Mess)-Small functions and kindred association meeting rooms.

Building 21 (presently the WAUR Officer Cadet's Mess)- Café/Lunch Room.

Building 18-Remains as the AMWAF Q Store

Future meetings of the committee will deal with time frames and the detail required for the changes that are to occur.

With ratification of the buildings, the AMWAF has a sound, firm starting point for future development. Definitely an exciting and challenging time ahead for the next few years.

Capt. Wayne Gardiner, Curator

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