



Army Museum of Tasmania

Anglesea Barracks
HOBART

Information Sheet No 10

BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE Army Museum of Tasmania COLLECTION

In 1947 Brigadier E. M. Dollery was appointed Commandant of Tasmania Command. Dollery had an interest in military history and began to gather together information in relation to Anglesea Barracks and the military in Tasmania generally. He presented papers to the Tasmanian Historical Research Society, the Royal Society of Tasmania, Defence Journals and the Tasmanian Daily Newspapers. He corresponded with many people who added to his understanding of our military history.

As a result of that interest he gathered together various items of historical interest that remained in military units in Tasmania and formed a collection which he displayed at the Barracks. To this nuclei he added other items that he either borrowed or had loaned from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the Hobart City Council, various institutions and individuals. He also transferred some records and books to the Royal United Services Institute and the Archives of Tasmania.

On his retirement in 1952 the collection remained however it slowly began to disintegrate through disinterest and pilfering. He returned in the early 1960's to find much was missing. The Department of Defence initiated an investigation as many of the missing items were on loan from well known Hobart families and institutions. Most of the items were located and returned but as late as 1969 Dollery was corresponding with the then Commandant Colonel P.H.G. Oxley about some of the missing items.

In 1981 Major John Opie who was then OC of the District Support Unit began to re establish a museum, The 6th Military District Museum, at Anglesea Barracks and the former Military Goal was made available for that purpose.

His efforts and the collection were boosted in 1984 with a substantial donation of the military memorabilia of the well known Tasmanian family of pastoralists, the Cameron's. This collection related to several generations of the family who served in the British Army, the Tasmanian Colonial forces and the Commonwealth military forces and spanned the years 1870 – 1945. The breadth of this significant donation provided a boost to the further development of the museum. Opie had an enthusiasm and vision that was to sustain and drive the museum to achieve best practice standards.

At this time Army Museums and collections were not officially recognized and beyond accreditation by the Army Historical Policy Committee, The Australian War

Memorial Act acknowledged the Army Museums and gave the AWM a watching brief to assist Army museums in their preservation of objects and material that was not within the scope of the AWM to collect.

In 1993 the Australian Army engaged Gavin Fry (then curator of Art at the AWM) to conduct a review of Army Museums. His major recommendation was that a Directorate of Army Museums be created and there be recognition of the value and importance of museums to the Australian Army, that Army museums be adequately resourced and that there be rationalization of the museums.

Of the then 6th Military District Museum, Tasmania Fry said, it “is fortunate to have one of the finest colonial collections in the country and certainly the pre-eminent collection of Tasmanian militaria”. He did however warn that a large part of its success was due to one person and that on that persons retirement in 1993 the museums future development was in doubt unless Army developed a strategic vision.

Two things flowed from this report, firstly the Army History Unit (AHU) was created and secondly a sum of money was made available to further improve the 6th Military District Museum displays and make available to the public some of the Cameron Collection. Gavin Fry was contracted to carry out this work.

With the formation of AHU positions of Museum Managers were created and other administrative positions within museums that were later filled in Tasmania by Army Reserve appointments.

As a result of the report Incorporated Boards of Management were established in Army Museums however it was soon recognized that the Australian States had different legislation which caused administrative problems to Army History Unit. A new procedure was adopted nationally in 1999 and not for profit Foundations were created that were registered as Companies and operated under Commonwealth law. These companies had a Board of Directors and a legal Operating Agreement with the Army History Unit which the MHFT signed in 2003.

Since then the newly created Military Heritage Foundation of Tasmania has operated alongside of the Army Reservists who are posted to the Military Museum of Tasmania as Army History Unit representatives.

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY MUSEUM OF TASMANIA

The purpose of the Military Museum of Tasmania is to,
collect, store, preserve, display and interpret Tasmanian military history for the education and enjoyment of serving and retired members of the Defence Force, the general public and future generations.”

Collect may be defined as ‘historical material’relating to Tasmanian military history or material related to the use of or by occupants of Anglesea Barracks during its non military period”.

‘Tasmanian military history’ maybe further defined as the history of -

- a. wars and warlike operations in which Tasmanian’s have been on active service, including the events leading up to, and the aftermath of, such wars and warlike operations,
- b. the Australian Defence Force in Tasmania,
- c. The Colonial Military Force, and
- d. The British Army in Tasmania”.

Material is included in the collection of historical material:

- a. to ensure that original items of enduring value are preserved for future generations.
- b. for use in exhibitions and displays within and, where appropriate, outside the Museum; and
- c. as a study and research resource for curatorial staff and other researchers.