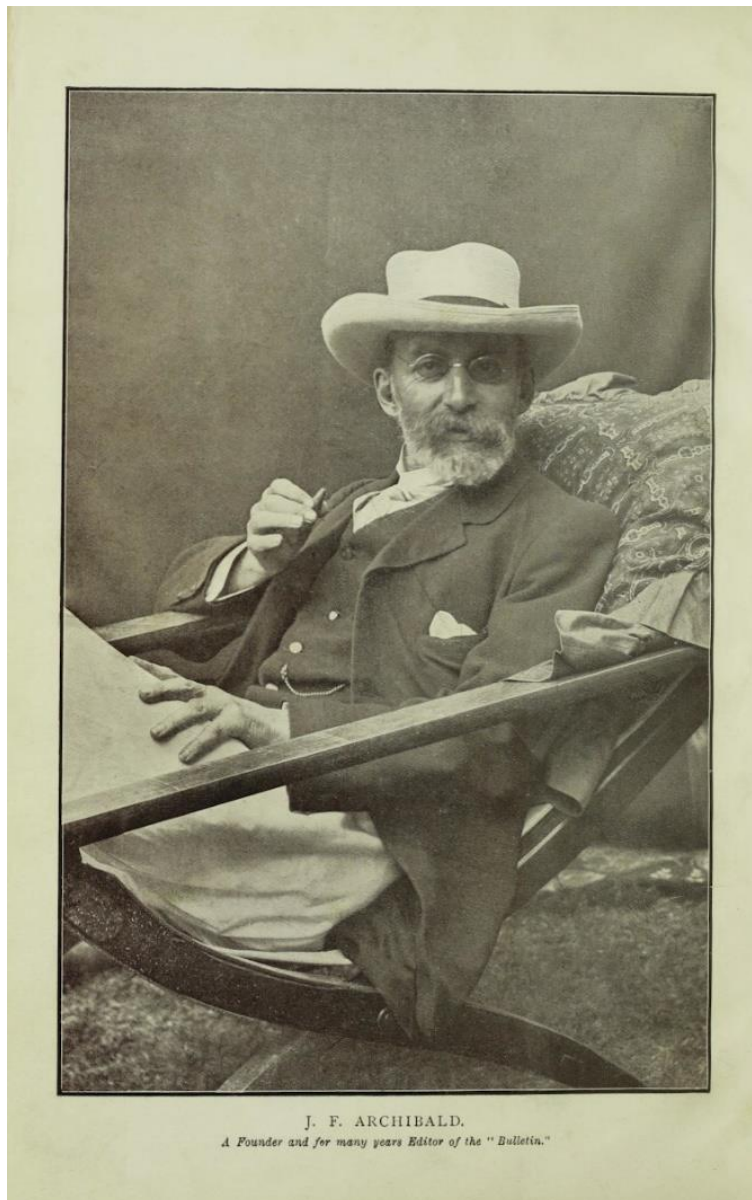




**Australian Army Museum of Western Australia**

# **“Wartime Archies” The Archibald Prize 1939 - 1945**



*Photograph of J. F. Archibald published in The Lone Hand (Sydney, NSW), May 1907*

## **A 2024 Australian Heritage Festival Event**





Art has played a pivotal role in shaping, reflecting, and influencing various aspects of military history, ranging from propaganda and morale-boosting to documentation and commemoration. It continues to be a powerful means of expressing the complex and multifaceted nature of armed conflicts.

During times of war, governments and military authorities have used art as a powerful tool for propaganda. Posters, paintings, and other visual mediums were created to inspire patriotism, encourage enlistment, and demonise the enemy.

*Australian recruiting poster depicting a wounded soldier standing triumphantly on a Gallipoli ridge with Ottoman shrapnel bursting in the air behind him. In the background are battleships, plumes of smoke indicating their involvement in the battle. The 'Hill' in the title may refer to the battle of Hill 60, August 1915.*

*Made by Harry J Weson, New South Wales government, WA Government Printer.*

## **Hill 60**

The fighting for Hill 60 (a low rise in the foothills on the north-western end of ANZAC) represented the last major Allied offensive operation on the Peninsula. It an attempt to consolidate the narrow strip of foreshore to connect British forces at Suvla with the ANZAC beachhead. The first unsuccessful attempt to seize Hill 60 on 21 August was hastily planned and poorly arranged; a further attack on 27 August was the prelude for 3 days of intense fighting during which objectives were taken, lost and retaken. The 18th Battalion, 9th and 10th Light Horse and composite group from Monash's 4th Brigade failed to secure the crest, and the costly attacks were called off on 29 August.

## **Hugo Throssell VC**

On 29–30 August 1915 at Kaiakij Aghala (Hill 60), Gallipoli, Turkey, Second Lieutenant Throssell, although severely wounded in several places, refused to leave his post during a counter-attack or to obtain medical assistance until all danger was passed, when he had his wounds dressed and returned to the firing line until ordered out of action by the Medical Officer. By his personal courage and example, he kept up the spirits of his party and was largely instrumental in saving the situation at a critical period.

Art has been employed to boost the morale of troops on the front lines. Paintings, music, and other forms of artistic expression have been used to uplift the spirits of soldiers during challenging times. Artists have played a crucial role in documenting military events and battles. Before the advent of photography, artists were often the primary means of visually recording military campaigns, capturing scenes of battle, camp life, and the impact of war on landscapes and people. These artistic representations have provided historians with valuable insights into the conditions and events of various conflicts.

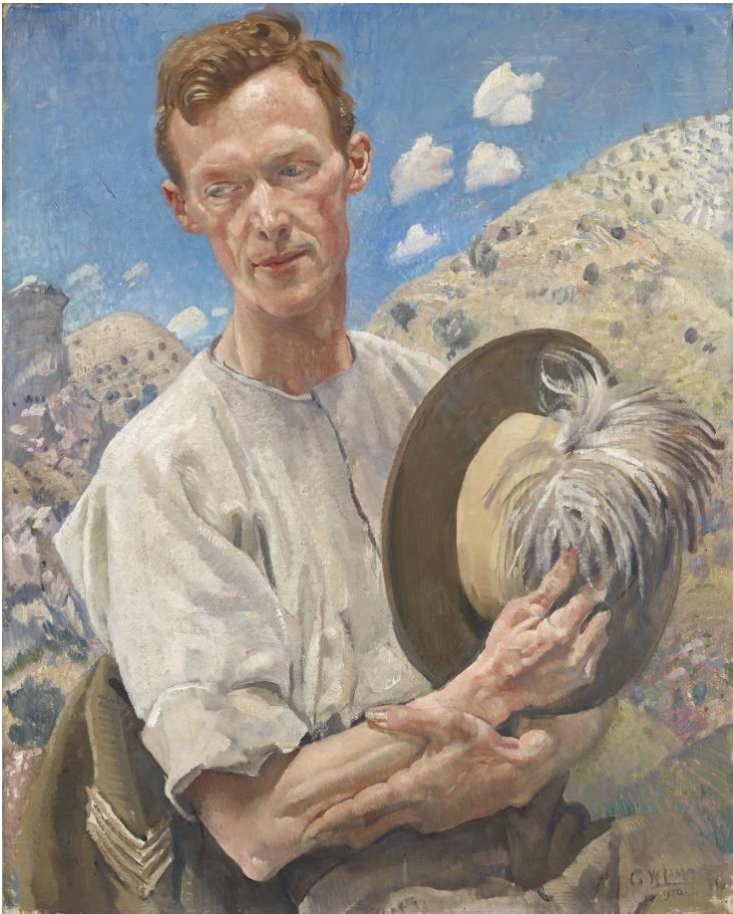


Image Credit  
George W. LAMBERT  
A sergeant of the Light Horse 1920  
oil on canvas  
77.0 x 62.0 cm  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1921  
1182-3

War memorials and monuments are often artistic expressions created to honour and remember those who have served and sacrificed in conflicts. These memorials serve as a tangible reminder of the human cost of war and are often adorned with sculptures, reliefs, or other artistic elements. Artists have been commissioned to create commemorative works that reflect the values and sacrifices associated with military service.

### **Art and Military Intelligence**

Before cameras and modern cartography, maps and illustrations have been critical in military planning and strategy. Artistic representations of terrain, fortifications, and enemy positions have aided military leaders in making informed decisions on the battlefield. Considerable technical excellence by serving officers in sketching and watercolours was achieved during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Training in battlefield sketching remained in the Army officer syllabus until the 1980s.

## **Australian War Artists - World War 1**

There were two separate commissioning schemes for artists during the First World War. Ten Australian artists living in England received appointments for generally not more than three months and were expected to produce at least 25 drawings during this time. This scheme was administered by the Australian High Commission in London, with official war correspondent Charles Bean as adviser. Artists included Will Dyson, Arthur Streeton and Fred Leist.

Five artists already serving with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were selected by Bean to be attached to the Australian War Records Section including Frank Crozier and Louis McCubbin. Sculptors, Wallace Anderson, Web Gilbert, and Leslie Bowles were employed in the Modelling Subsection of the Australian War Records. They were tasked to produce the Memorial's topographical plan models and First World War dioramas.

## **Australian War Artists - World War 2**

During the Second World War there were two separate commissioning programs for official war artists. One program was administered by the Australian War Memorial. Under this, artists who were already enlisted or were civilians were given honorary commissions as officers.

The other program was administered by Lieutenant Colonel John Treloar, Director of the Australian Military History Section (who had been seconded from his pre-war position as Director of the Australian War Memorial). Artists who were already serving with the Army, Navy, or Air Force, were personally selected by Treloar, and simply seconded to work as artists attached to the Military History Section.

## **The Archibald Prize**

The Archibald Prize was established in 1921 by J.F. Archibald, the then editor of *The Bulletin*, an influential Australian magazine. He left a provision in his will to fund the prize, specifying that it should be awarded to the best portrait "preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in art, letters, science or politics, painted by any artist resident in Australasia".

The inaugural Archibald Prize was awarded in 1921, with W.B. McInnes winning for his portrait of the artist Desbrowe Annear. Over the years, the prize has seen its fair share of controversies and debates, often revolving around the selection of winners and the interpretation of the terms of the prize. These controversies have contributed to the prize's notoriety and have kept it in the public eye.

While initially, the prize was limited to portraits of distinguished individuals, the criteria have since broadened to allow portraits of anyone, not just the famous or prominent. This change has led to a more diverse range of subjects and styles being represented in the competition.

Alongside the main Archibald Prize, several associated prizes are also awarded, including the Packing Room Prize, the People's Choice Award, and the Wynne Prize for landscape painting or figure sculpture.

The Archibald Prize has become a significant event in the Australian art calendar, attracting widespread attention and fostering the development of portraiture in the country. It continues to showcase the diversity and talent of Australian artists.

Overall, the Archibald Prize stands as a testament to the enduring importance of portraiture in the Australian art scene and continues to play a vital role in recognising and promoting the work of both established and emerging artists.

### **Australian Army Museum of Western Australia Connection**

The Australian Army Museum holds two portraits in their collection which were entered into the Archibald Prize by Margaret Johnson in 1939 and 1943. During the more than 100 years of the Archibald's, there have been more than forty military related portraits entered, the most in 1943.

Both portraits may be found in the World War 2 gallery along with the story of the artist and the sitters. The portrait of Colonel George Wieck who was responsible for the layout and setting out of the Northam Army Camp is in the Home front Section. The portrait of Major General Gordon Bennett commander 8 Division AIF at Singapore and later 3 (Aust) Corps in Western Australia may be found in the Singapore section of the World War 2 Gallery.



### **Margaret Johnson (1898 – 1967)**

Margaret G. Johnson was a Sri Lankan born Australian portrait artist. born to father James Wood, in Kadugannawa, Ceylon. At a young age her father immigrated to Western Australia. She was educated in Perth, and after completing her schooling at age 13 was sent to the Glasgow School of Art. She completed her four-year course in three years and returned to Western Australia after the end of World War I and married.

As a portrait artist she specialised in portraiture painting. Her portrait works may be found in the National Gallery of Australia, Parliament House Canberra, Perth City Council, the Art Gallery of Western Australia and WA Parliament House.

In 1934, her model for a portrait plaque of Edith Cowan was chosen for a memorial work on a clock tower in Kings Park, Perth honouring the latter. The Edith Cowan bust was in high relief above a wreath of gum leaves and nuts and would be cast in bronze, above a bronze inscription on the eastern face of the clock tower.

## The Exhibition

During the current redevelopment at the Australian War Memorial, the loan of portraits from the collection was not possible. Our exhibit presents three large scale (A2) framed reproductions.



Henry Aloysius Hanke

Sister VA Torney, MBE

oil on canvas  
76.6 x 61.6 cm; 95.5 x 80.5 cm framed

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



Douglas Watson

Despatch rider Sgt Rex Beggs

oil on canvas  
91.4 x 76.2 cm

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



William Dargie

Corporal Jim Gordon, VC

oil on canvas  
76.2 x 55.8 cm; 100 x 80 cm framed

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial



William Dargie

Captain EP Harty

oil on canvas on plywood  
106.8 x 63.6 cm; 131.2 x 88.3 cm frame

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



Henry Aloysius Hanke

Sister MI Anderson, GM

oil on canvas  
76.6 x 61.4 cm

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



Nora Heysen

Col Sybil H Irving, MBE, controller of AWAS

oil on canvas  
76.4 x 56 cm

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



Nora Heysen

Group Officer Clare Stevenson, director, WAAAF

oil on canvas  
77 x 56.8 cm; 96.5 x 76.1 cm framed

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



Nora Heysen

First Officer S McClemans, WRANS

oil on canvas

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial, Canberra



William Dargie

Lt-General The Hon Edmund Herring, KBC, DSO, MC, ED

oil on canvas  
91.8 x 76.6 cm

Image courtesy Australian War Memorial

## Further exploration:

[The Archibald Prize in World War 2 – National Trust](#)

[https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/war\\_artists/ww2](https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/war_artists/ww2)

[https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/war\\_artists/artists](https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/war_artists/artists)

<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/artboards/archie-100/war-and-aftermath/>

<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/artsets/e7y4qp>

[Edith Cowan | Monument Australia](#)

## Related Exhibitions at The Australian Army Museum of Western Australia:

### Artists in Residence

Michele Eastwood

[Artwork - Wounded in Action by Michele Eastwood 2015 | Collections WA](#)

Peter Dailey - [Artwork - Trench by Peter Dailey, 2015 | Collections WA](#)

Tusuf Ahmad - [Papercutting, Qur'an 41:34 | Collections WA](#)

### Vernon Lorimer Artworks (March 2022 through June 2023)

[Vernon Lorimer Artworks | Collections WA](#)

### Edwin Garbett Artworks and Drawings (August 2023 through February 2025)

[Edwin Charles Garbett Artworks and Drawings | Collections WA](#)

[EDWIN GARBETT EXHIBITION - Army Museum \(armymuseumwa.com.au\)](http://armymuseumwa.com.au)

### "Crusading at Anzac" Sketches by Ellis Silas (from April 2025)

["Crusading at Anzac" Sketches by Ellis Silas | Collections WA](#)



## Exhibition Credits:

Australian Army History Unit

Museum Manager; Major Stephen Muir

Australian Army Museum of WA Foundation

Curator: Stephen Sinclair

Curatorial Lead: Julianne McKay

Installation: Richard Bennett, Robert Mitchell, Bob Wise

Technical Support

Graphics and Design:

Photographic Reproduction: Minuteman Press, Fremantle

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Heritage Festival Coordination

National Trust of Western Australia