

YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT – 69

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.

5th MILITARY DISTRICT

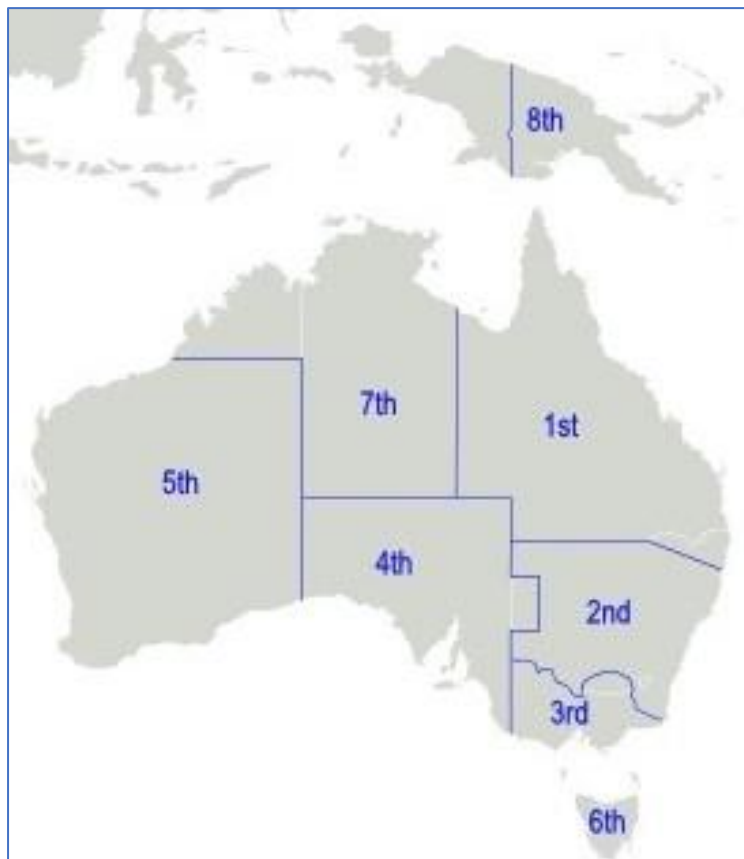


The **5th Military District Honour Board** features prominently in the Traditions Gallery at the start of the visitor experience in the Army Museum. This large memorial lists the members of the Regular and Instructional Staff of the District Headquarters who served overseas on active service. The names contain some interesting stories. Early in the war, permission to join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was denied to not only the Garrison Artillery required to man fortifications but also to instructional staff needed to train the units of the AIF in key military skills. This happened to RSM George Goff.

When War was declared in 1914, RSM Goff was assigned to instructional duties. After several requests for permission to enlist in the AIF were refused, he technically deserted and travelled to Victoria where he enlisted on 29 September 1915 under the name of Robert Joseph George. His thinking was that if recognised and called by his familiar name, "George", he had a plausible denial if he responded. A name change could not disguise his military skills and experience and he was serving as Regimental Sergeant Major in 32 Battalion when finally detected. He reverted to his name of George Goff on 27 February 1916 and continued to serve.

RSM Goff's subsequent war service saw him commissioned and serve with the Trench Mortars before returning to 32 Battalion. Promoted Captain he was subsequently awarded the Military Cross when all officers present being killed, he assumed command of the Battalion and through his courage steadied it and extracted the survivors from difficult circumstances. Later he suffered shell shock after being buried alive during a bombardment and was repatriated to Australia before the Armistice. He also volunteered for home service in WW2.

Origin of Military Districts



Prior to the Federation of Australia, each colony maintained its own military and naval forces. After Federation, the forces came under control of the Commonwealth. To assist with administration of the new Australian army, each state was allocated a military district to be known by its state name. In 1911 the boundaries for the military districts were changed. Although based on states, the new districts did not strictly follow state boundaries: Further changes followed in the approach to World War 2. Throughout this period Western Australia, less the Kimberley, formed 5 Military District (5 MD).

At the beginning of the Second World War, the districts were reorganised into geographic commands and 5 MD became Western Command. Early in 1942 the army command structure was again reorganised based on a system of operation headquarters. Western Command was replaced with **3 Australian Corps**; with a separate administration through a Line of Communications.



After the end of the Second World War the regional command structure [**Western Command**] was reinstated. In the early 1970s the army moved from geographical commands to a system of functional commands, which absorbed many responsibilities of the military districts, such as training and logistics. However, smaller military district headquarters remained to provide general support within their areas and to act as points of contact between the army and state governments. Military districts were finally disbanded in 1997 under reforms to reduce administrative costs.

A Residence for the Commander

The residence at 67 Tuckfield Street, Fremantle, known as **Gun House**, was built in 1913 to house the major in command of the Garrison Artillery stationed at the Barracks and serving the guns at Fort Forrest and Fort Arthur Head. It served that purpose until World War 2 when it became single officer's quarters. During that war, successive commanders of Western Command lived in various rented accommodation as the Army could not find a suitable residence to purchase. In the post-war housing shortage, the GOC designate Major General JS Whitelaw was unable to find even rental accommodation and so in 1946, as a temporary measure, he moved into Gun House. The reputation of Fremantle at the time was "in every way a locality quite unsuitable for a GOCs residence," Nevertheless, the next 18 senior army commanders (6 major generals and 12 brigadiers) lived in Gun House. With the gentrification of Fremantle, by 1986, Gun House was deemed to be in an acceptable socio-economic environment. Significant renovations were carried out by the Defence Housing Authority in 1996 and Gun House is now home to the senior regular defence force officer in Western Australia.

Military District Identifiers on Army Numbers and Identity Discs



Prior to the introduction of army numbers in 1921, soldiers serving in the Australian Military Forces (AMF) were assigned regimental numbers. These numbers were allotted at either battalion or corps level and were not unique. The Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) introduced its own numbering system. Numbers were allocated according to the military district in which the soldier enlisted, commencing from 1. The number was prefixed with an index letter for the district and an "X" to indicate enlistment in the Second AIF (for example WX1234).

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

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/numbers/army>

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=6504117&isAv=N>

<https://www.dha.gov.au/docs/publications/western-australia.pdf>



During the world wars and the years in between, Australian soldiers wore cloth patches of various shapes and colours on their upper sleeves to indicate to which unit or formation they belonged. The use of colour patches was discontinued in 1949 when the British system of embroidered shoulder titles, formation signs and lanyards was adopted.

In July 1987 colour patches were reintroduced in order to foster the Army's heritage and are now worn on the right side of the puggaree on the slouch hat.

What badge is that? For post 2010 Australian patches see below

<https://bpcmilitaria.com.au/product/operational-shoulder-patches-from-2010/>