



# The Fact'ory

NEWSLETTER OF THE LITHGOW SMALL ARMS FACTORY MUSEUM

## Significant recognition of the Museum by UNESCO

On the 26th June 2018, the Museum submitted a detailed proposal to the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to recognise the Museum's archives collection within the UNESCO Memory of the World Australian Register. Being part of the Register is a highly prestigious honour, it is internationally recognised and only a handful of Australian museums are included in this prized Register.

Well, we've done it! We are one of only three regional museums across Australia honoured in the 2019 award. This is a tremendous win for the Museum as it substantiates the incredible value in the history we hold about the Factory, its people, its products, its culture and the massive contribution made towards national security and industry growth.

Further, no other Lithgow based organisation has UNESCO Memory of Australia recognition – we are the first and we are absolutely proud of it from both the Museum and Lithgow community perspectives.

Below are highlights of the UNESCO's Australian management team's summary of our proposal.

### Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum Archive 1910-1986

#### Background:

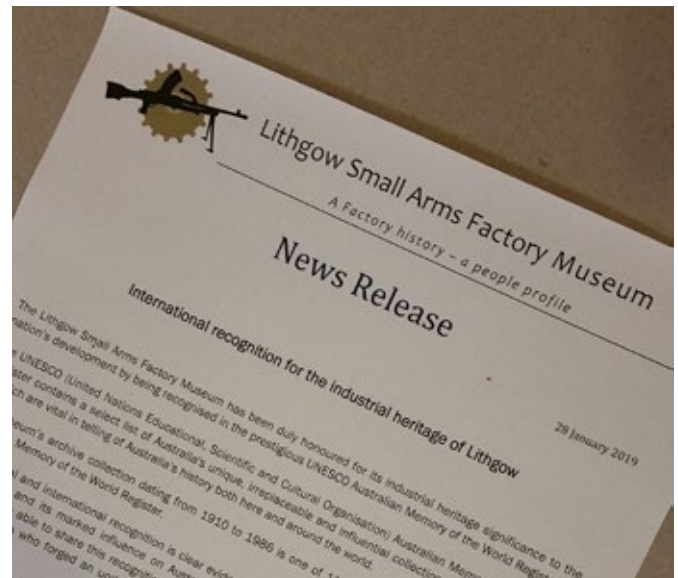
The Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum (LSAFM) holds the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Archives from 1910-1986. They consist of about 35,000 records including primary sources such as employee records, photographic material, blueprints, plans, drawings, factory administration records, employee diaries, technical specifications and cartoons, as well as secondary sources such as machine tool periodicals and catalogues and engineering books.

#### Significance

##### 1. Overall Significance

The LSAFM is clearly of national – and even international – significance on a number of counts:

- It is a rare surviving example of a manufacturing company's archive over an extended period of time;
- The Lithgow Small Arms Factory was the first precision engineering works to be built in Australia and followed an American (Pratt & Whitney) rather than a British model;
- As a government owned and managed entity, it had the resources to be at the cutting edge of machine manufactures in Australia, including being the first



to install an overhead conveyor system and the first to introduce computer-controlled materials handling; and,

- It provides a detailed record of Australia's primary ordnance/weapons production facility across both the 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 world wars.

*Continued next page ...*

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Significant recognition for Museum	1
A word from the President	3
Muse News	4
LSAFM Constitution review	5
From our archives - SWARF	6
Collection feature - Mont St Quentin statuette	7
Firearms feature - Two special SMLEs	8
Collection additions	9
Volunteer spotlight - Brian Maloney	11
Vale Bob Notson	12
New Blog - fight to save LSAFM collection	12

**This edition is late due to our problems with the NSW Firearms Legislation. (see pg 12)**

## Significant recognition of the Museum by UNESCO ... cont'd

### 2. Selection Criteria

The following selection criteria were used in assessing all applications. The assessment of the LSAFM archives follows:

#### 2.1 Historic Significance

When the Factory opened in 1912 it was Australia's first high precision mass production facility. The archives have considerable value in relation to the history of manufacturing in Australia and the changing patterns of working life in regional NSW.

Although other institutions such as the Melbourne University Archives and the State Library of NSW will hold records from specific manufacturers, it is very unusual for a comprehensive archive to survive in situ which further adds to its significance.

The collection includes important holdings that record the design and construction of a modern munitions factory between 1909 and 1912, supported by blueprints, engineering drawings, sketches, photographs and negatives that depict changes to work processes, technology and structures.

It tells the story not just of early 20th century factory design but also of how the original structures were altered in response to changing technologies for the manufacture of munitions – and at various times commercial products, such as sewing machines, sheep shearing tools and medical implants -- as well as significant changes in labour supply, including the introduction of women workers during World War II.

These collections are further supported by secondary materials including machine tool catalogues, engineering periodicals and books. Although these are undoubtedly available in other state collections, the LSAFM archives have the advantage of being gathered together on the site where they were used as reference materials.

The 20,000 employee records for the period 1911 to 1941, supported by evidence of workplace rules and conditions, and film footage showing factory processes and events, provide a rare insight into workplace history and culture in a regional centre. Newspaper clippings that detail developments at the site, and record special events and achievements, further enhance this story.

The collection also includes personal diaries, photographs and collections of sketches and cartoons that provide a personal slant on working life at the factory particularly during World War II.

Following its opening in 1912, the Factory took on a new significance with the outbreak of World War I, manufacturing SMLE III rifles and bayonets for the military and in World War II Vickers machine guns and Bren guns. The archives thus provide an insight into these significant events through documenting the impact

both wars had on local manufactures and the changes they brought, including the opportunities for women to enter the workforce once men were being called up for military service.

The collection is also important in the light it shines on the town of Lithgow, once a site of considerable industrial innovation. The Zig Zag railway which connected Lithgow to Sydney was at the time of its opening in 1869 considered an engineering marvel. This stimulated manufacturing in the town, which by 1901 had seven collieries and four brickworks.

The first recorded production of iron ore in Australia was at the Eskbank Iron Works which were established in 1875. Australia's first galvanising and corrugating plant opened in Lithgow in 1894 and the first production of open-hearth steel occurred here in 1900.

The Factory (which continues to operate today, albeit on a reduced scale) is the only one of these manufacturing works to survive and as such is an important reminder of the significance of regional centres such as Lithgow in the 20th century.

#### 2.2 Social and community significance

The Factory was the largest employer in Lithgow and its main manufacturing industry. As such it was key to the survival of the town – at one time it employed 5700 people – and today, on a reduced scale and privately owned (by Thales Australia) the manufacture of small arms in Lithgow continues to this day.

Its resonance with the community is evidenced by the 9,000 visitors the Museum receives each year – including school groups – many with family links to the Factory and town. It also complements the Blast Furnace site, demonstrating the continuity of innovation in the region from the 19th century until today.

It should be noted the LSAFM, being volunteer run, maintains a very high standard of interpretation and care of the archives. They have commenced digitising the archives and are open to researchers five days a week.

#### 2.3 Rarity

The archives are rare on two counts: the 'one-off' nature of the documents, particularly the blueprints and engineering drawings, and also the fact that as a collection it represents the changing history of a manufacturing plant over a considerable period of time that continues to be held in the place where it was generated.

#### 2.4 Condition

The condition of the archives is very good. Its care is overseen by qualified archivists and it is stored in appropriate conditions. It is clear the collection is closely monitored and, as and when resources are available, vulnerable materials are being treated.

## A word from the President

At the Annual General Meeting in December last, a new Management Committee was elected. I'm delighted and privileged to be your President and Secretary for this year and I'll do whatever it takes to advance the cause of the Museum. Importantly, I welcome the opportunity to build upon the momentum of last year by improving our facilities, our services and our standing within the Lithgow and broader communities.

I'd like to welcome the other Committee members - namely Donna White (Vice-President and Custodian), Kerry Guerin (Treasurer and Firearms Dealer), Ean Jones, Adam Cullen and Brian Maloney – and look forward to working together on a range of strategic and operational matters.

I would like to thank Jason Masarella for his support and involvement on the management committee in the past year and while he is moving to another part of the State, I'm sure he'll continue to support the work of the museum whenever he can. Equally, I thank the other volunteers who give of their time to make the museum a great place for our 9000 visitors.

This year will be a watershed for the museum. We have a 3-year management plan in place and the acquisition of buildings on the site will be our key strategic priority. Operationally, our efforts will go towards increasing our volunteer numbers, augmenting our exhibits and displays, holding a variety of forums and functions and, revamping our website. Further, promotion of the museum will be increased via various media channels, thus projecting our positioning as Australia's premier facility showcasing firearms and precision manufacturing.

I welcome your ideas and suggestions as to how we can make the museum a better place for all. Please let me or any of the other Management Committee members know what you are thinking. I look forward to keeping you updated on our activities as we progress in 2019.

We trust 2019 will be a better, bigger and more rewarding year for the Museum.

Cheers,



Renzo Benedet

## The 2019 year ahead

The Museum's Management Committee met for the first time on the 15th January. It provided an opportunity for the Committee to plan for the year and agree on the priorities to advance our cause. We've settled on the following key initiatives:

- Negotiate and conclude negotiations with Thales Aust on the acquisition of three buildings on the site and proceed with sub-division works;
- Complete upgrade works to the General Machine Shop with all surplus plant to be removed and overall cleaning of the facility ready for visitations and holding of events;
- Carry out progressive upgrading of the various displays in both the Museum and General Machine Shop, inclusive of interpretative signage;
- Establish the LSAFM Volunteer Program;
- Augment and refresh marketing and promotions activities;
- Continue to secure external funding for Museum improvements; and,

- Introduce new displays depicting industry advances in science and technology.

A series of performance measures will be in place and these will revolve around visitations, visitor satisfaction, volunteering, membership and community involvement.



*A contractor carries out repairs on the roof of the General Machine Shop*



## Muse news

### More grants for LSAFM



Recent success with grant applications will bring us a step closer to a more comfortable and relevant museum for our visitors.

The Museum's external windows have been repaired and painted via the M&G NSW Building Improvement grant.

Soon external mesh and internal panels will cover all windows on the Northern side of the building. This will not only cool the building in summer and prevent heat loss in winter, but will also eliminate outside light, enabling us to illuminate each display to enhance the objects and interpretation while also controlling UV exposure on light-sensitive objects.

### Self-help touch screen for employee records



With another grant from Energy Australia we are designing a touch screen application that allows visitors to search our database of employee records.

Over 90% of the records between

1910 and 1941 have been digitised, and many people asking about their ex-SAF relatives can be helped on the spot. We are still hoping to get access to the post 1941 records, as many of the enquiries we receive are for those who worked during the WWII era and beyond.

This grant also funds a plaque commemorating the efforts of the men and women who worked at SAF over the years.

**NOTICE OF LEAVING.** Form S. 28.

Clock No. 135 Department SAF Date 1/8/18

The undersigned has this day left his employment—

Name John A. Wilson

Employed as Engine Driver

Time 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

Ability Good Workman, Fair Workman, Other Position, Misconduct, Incompetence, Poor Health, Temporary, Discharge, Red Discharge, Misconduct, Misrepresentation, Unusually, Intemperance, Lack of Ability, Does not apply himself, Lack of Work, Unconcerning of Tools

Cause for Discharge As Checked.

Reason for leaving Retired

Remarks Retired as per your order

Approved John A. Wilson Foreman.

Approved Comm. for work Manager.

### Bringing Criminal Minds to Justice

A 100-strong audience of mostly inquisitive locals witnessed a detailed account of how ballistics evidence and forensics have put behind bars, some of the most notorious criminals.

Sergeant Gerard Dutton, Head of Ballistics (Forensic Services), of Tasmania Police was a guest speaker at the Museum. Sergeant Dutton, one of Australia's senior and most accomplished forensic firearms experts, has studied and practiced technical/forensic investigation of crime involving firearms for over 31 years.

Sergeant Dutton presented on some of the more interesting ballistics investigations he has been involved with over many years. In his forensic style, Sergeant Dutton spoke at length about a New Zealand murder case which was perhaps the most technically challenging of all his case work.



'Ballistics evidence in major murder cases are extremely technical and complex and each require a rather lengthy process of investigation, forensics and testing', said Sergeant Dutton. He added 'some of the major cases take months and even years of painstaking due diligence of matching bullets, fragments and other related evidence with weapons of alleged suspects'.

We had the pleasure in showing Sergeant Dutton and the Palestinian Civil Police representative the extensive firearm collection housed at the Museum, along with the precision engineering machinery used by the Factory going back to 1912'.

Sergeant Dutton's presentation is the first we have held in the old Canteen, and as we progress our growth, it is our intention to hold more of these informative events.



---

## LSAFM Constitution reviewed

The Museum has a new Constitution. Approval was given at the 2018 AGM with 25 amendments being made to the existing 2012 version. Below are the key changes showing the amendment. A copy of the new Constitution can be made available on request.

### **Objects of the Association**

The role of the Museum and the adjoining facilities is captured precisely, highlighting both the firearms and precision engineering components, along with the services and educational value that underpins why the Museum exists.

### **Membership**

There are three types of members:

- Ordinary Member (with voting rights and involvement in day to day operations of the Museum)
- Associate Member (non-voting rights and not having a day to day involvement)
- Life Member (with voting rights and appointed to such membership due to their long serving and positive contribution towards the operations of the Museum)

### **Nomination for membership**

The need for nomination is withdrawn; rather the applicant can make an application directly to the Secretary who subsequently refers the application to the Committee and due process is followed as is the case now. However, there is one proviso that on becoming a member, the person must pay their annual membership fee before they can undertake any work for the Museum.

Further, the Secretary must enter details of the member into the Member Register and must contain the name, residential address, date of birth, contact details (phone number and/or email address).

### **Fees and subscriptions**

It is now clear on when membership fees ought to be paid and if not paid by 30 June in each year, then the timing of the absolute date before a member ceases to be a member. Also, in the event of a Life Member, the membership fee is waived.

### **Resolution of disputes**

A Committee will be appointed to interview/review / resolve the disputation and if after that process, there is no amicable resolution, the dispute is then referred to the Community Justice Centre (and ultimately to arbitration)

### **Disciplining of members**

A new clause added (sub-clause 6) which gives the Committee the power to immediately suspend or expel a member without any appeal process if there is proven beyond reasonable doubt that the issue is grave, unethical or unscrupulous.

### **Election of committee members**

A Nomination Form (a written consent) is provided to be completed and signed by two members. It also makes clear that use of a ballot process be deemed to be secret ballot as determined by the Committee and used at AGM.

### **Delegation by committee to subcommittee**

A new clause inserted that states that a subcommittee cannot make decisions binding on the Association without prior consultation with the Committee.

### **Inspection of books**

A new sub-clause inserted which allows the Committee to refuse the provision of data on grounds of confidentiality, personal, commercial, legal or employment basis which if provided would be prejudicial to the Association and/or members.

### **Audit / Review**

A new insert details the methods and substance of financial auditing or reviewing of the Association's accounts.

### **Custodian of the museum**

A new sub-clause (no 4) inserted which allows the Committee to intervene and where necessary to issue a warning or remove the Custodian in the event of conduct which harms the Museum and the Association.

### **Dissolution of the association**

The proposal does not name any Association should a transfer be necessary and any decision to that effect would be made by a majority vote of the members.

### **New clauses**

The proposal contains new clauses relating to:

- Indemnification of Committee members
- Application of Income and Property
- Use of electronic communications

---

## Back issues ...

Back issues of 'The Fact'ory' can be found on our website:

<https://www.lithgowsafmuseum.org.au/support.html#backissues>



# From our archives - SwArF newsletters

When we came across a copy of 'SwArF', the journal of the Bathurst Small Arms Factory, on Ebay we had to buy it.



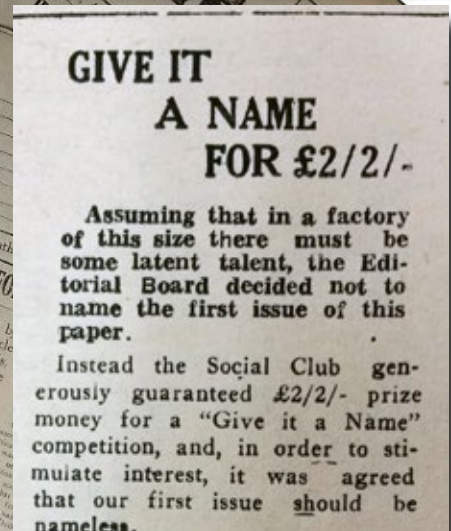
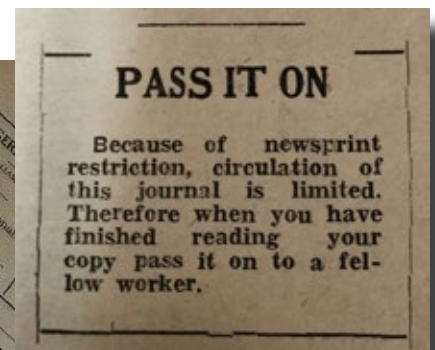
Previously we knew nothing of this newsletter - and this one, being the last edition before closure of Bathurst, was autographed by some of the workers who were there in the final weeks.

Bathurst was one of the auxiliary factories the Government set up in Central West towns when Lithgow struggled to keep up with demand during World War II.

Imagine our surprise and delight when, a year or so later, the Wicks Family donated some of their father's memorabilia, to find it contained a full set of SwArFs! H R Wicks was manager of Bathurst SAF during its 4 years of operation.

SwArF lasted 20 months, with the first, Volume 1 No 1, being printed in February 1944: The last edition, Volume 2 No 8, covered September/October 1945. It was put together by the 'workers committee' and was free to staff, but had to be shared around because of War Time shortages.

If anybody knows of newsletters from any of the other 'feeder' factories we'd love to hear about it.





## Collection feature - Mont St Quentin statuette

Imagine today, asking a manufacturer to make a very limited number of an item as a one-off project. Even with less complex objects than the Mont St Quentin statuette, costs in terms of time and money would be prohibitive.

To give you some idea of the process involved in casting an object with only photographs to go on: A scale replica of the original item needs to be crafted, from which to make a mould to produce a wax pattern for each finished item. The wax patterns are dipped into a liquid silica to form a casting shell. When the shell has set, the wax is melted out, and molten metal poured in. The shell is broken away when the metal has cooled and hardened, leaving the finished object.

Three of these statuettes were cast by ADI in 1990 - not long before ownership of the Factory transitioned from semi-Government to fully corporate. It could possibly be the last project undertaken on the site where costs of production were of less consideration than getting the job done.

While a Government owned factory, SAF undertook many unprofitable outside projects during periods of underemployment - mainly to keep key employees and machinery ready for quick response to any need to re-arm. But also, at times, to fulfil needs where no other manufacturer had the facilities for the job.



*Lithgow Mercury 29th April 1991*

### Mont St Quentin boasts art of ADI

Another Anzac Day come and gone has served to focus attention on the fact that the skills of tradesmen at the Lithgow factory of Australian Defence Industries extend well beyond the manufacture of some of the world's best fire-arms.

Currently holding pride of place in displays in Europe are examples of Lithgow ADI fine arts.

ADI was approached to make replicas of a World War I statue which used to stand in the French village of Mont St Quentin — a famous battleground in the Great War that gave its name to a street in Lithgow more usually referred to simply as The Circle.

The statues is of an Australian Digger bayoneting a stylised eagle, the symbol of the Kaiser's Germany.

The Digger is using a Lee Enfield rifle — the venerable Lithgow made .303.

The statue was erected by a grateful Mont St Quentin community after the Germans were driven out and hostilities ended.

When the Germans again invaded France in World War II they were understandably not impressed by the 10 metre statue and had it melted down.

When plans were being made last year for an official Australian contingent to visit the historic French battlefields the Army approached Lithgow ADI to see if a replica of the statue could be made.

It took several months of detailed and painstaking effort before the first superb replica was produced by the Investment Casting division at Lithgow and more replicas were made over a period of months.

The finely detailed statuettes have now been delivered to delighted recipients overseas and one, with an appropriate Lithgow ADI inscription, holds pride of place in the Mont St Quentin museum.

**PICTURED:** Top — ADI Investment Casting fitter Mark Bennett pays close attention to detail as he works on the all important statuette. Below — the completed product reflects the variety of skills available in the Lithgow plant.



## Featured firearm - two special SMLEs



**Above:** Pratt & Whitney Short Lee Enfield Mk III. **Below:** The 'Ratcliffe Rifle'

These two rifles share a distinction of being the most significant Lee Enfields linked to the Lithgow Factory.

### Pratt & Whitney Short Lee Enfield MkIII

In 1909, US company, Pratt & Whitney, won the tender to supply plant and machinery for the new Australian small arms factory.

Pratt & Whitney's offer included training in America for six specialist Australian tradesmen who were then to become foremen at Lithgow. Training involved making rifle parts on the new machinery destined for Lithgow.

The P&W rifle holding pride of place in our No 1 display cabinet is one of just twelve assembled at Pratt & Whitney's Connecticut factory from parts made by the Australian tradesmen.

Pratt & Whitney were accepted over three British tenderers on the recommendation of Commander William Clarkson, an Australian Naval officer who was sent to investigate arms manufacturing overseas. In 1911 Clarkson approved the rifle parts before assembly of the twelve rifles:

*'I may state that all the parts were inspected by me prior to my departure from America, and stamped with my private stamp.'*

Clarkson's arrow/C oval stamping can be seen on every separate metal part of the Pratt & Whitney rifle - even down to individual screws.



### The Ratcliffe Rifle - first rifle made at Lithgow

Pratt & Whitney claimed a rifle could be made in 23½ hours, and the Factory was built to manufacture 300 rifles per week, so the general expectation was that rifles would come out of the Factory soon after production began in February 1912. However, it wasn't until December 1912 that the first rifle was announced.

Precision mass production, and particularly Pratt & Whitney's economical solution using reconfigurable machines, relied on producing batches of components and stockpiling them until there were enough of all components to assemble into rifles.

With high expectations placed on the Factory, and an impatient Government and newspaper reporters, Factory Management was pressed into showing results. On 19th December 1912 a telegram arrived at Defence in Melbourne *'First Rifle finished today.'*

That first rifle - the Ratcliffe Rifle - was assembled mostly from Lithgow components, but a few parts - the safety catch and parts of the volley sight - were British made. Those parts had not yet been made at Lithgow.

The rifle was displayed in the Manager's office for 18 years until it was gifted to manager, Frederick Ratcliffe upon his retirement. It remains with his family and is on extended loan to the Museum.

The markings - and lack of them, make this rifle unique. There is no serial number or model designation.



'HWE' inscribed on the knob form is assumed to be the mark of Herbert E Wright, one of the experts on loan from Pratt & Whitney.

A stylised 'S' on the bayonet boss, the bolt and under the barrel, is attributed by author, Tony Griffiths, as the mark of another Pratt & Whitney man on loan to the Factory, E Skillman.





## Collection additions

**Walther Model 2** - This rare German sporting rifle was donated to the Museum fitted with an after-market Parker Hale target barrel. Produced in the 1920s/30s, it was a combined bolt action and self loading (semi automatic) rifle - either mode being selected by the position of the bolt.



**Model 67 Winchester** - The Model 67 is the rifle that the design of the Lithgow single shot sporting rifles was based on. One of the major differences between it and the Lithgow rifles is the location of the safety lever



**Lithgow Model 1 single shot** - Although Model 1s are not lacking in our collection, this particular one is one of the rarer early production with the 'Z' prefix to the serial number. All of these ones were made in December 1945, before official production commenced.



**Quackenbush Safety Rifle** - Another addition to our range of the unique Quackenbush rifles, this model is in .22 calibre and was suitable for BB long or short cartridges. The breech was swivelled to the side to load, and the rifle was manually cocked. The barrel was easily detachable for transporting and the stock is fitted with the later pressed steel butt plate.



**Bayard bolt action .22 rifle** - This little rifle has one of the most complicated and unusual bolts ever seen on a .22. Unlike the normal .22 action, where the cartridge simply ejects out of the chamber when you pull the bolt back, the Bayard has a separate ejection port on top of the receiver. The bolt head is necessarily very long to make way for the ejection port and can only be fitted into the receiver in one spot.



**Home-made underhammer percussion rifle** Twelve months ago there were no underhammer guns in our collection - now we have 5! The under-hammer action originated in the mid-1800s and only lasted a short time. However, the ease with which this type of action could be made saw a resurgence of home-made versions for black powder club competitions in USA from the 1970s. It's interesting that such a simple idea can produce so many innovative variations - this one uses the trigger guard as the hammer return spring.



**Franc Sodja hammerless shotgun** - Franz Sodja was one of the prominent high class gunsmiths/engravers in Ferlach, Austria (Sodja is of Slovenian extraction - Franc is the Slovenian version of Franz). He was an exponent of high relief engraving, which he taught at a school of gunsmithing. Ferlach was a hub of gunsmithing activity with a number of prominent gunsmiths.



**Steyr Zephyr bolt action rifle** - The Zephyr was a very desirable sporting rifle, being considered the Rolls Royce of .22. The early production didn't have a dovetail cut into the receiver for a scope, as did the later production like this one. These rifles have recently been resurrected and marketed by Steyr as the Zephyr II.



## Collection additions cont'd

**Johansson surface plate** - This black granite precision surface plate was made by C E Johansson of Eskilstuna, Sweden. These plates have been the foundation of precise measurement for decades, giving a reference plane for inspection layout and tooling set up. They are inherently stable, non magnetic, will not rust, and will not raise a burr at the edges if suddenly struck by a falling object. Carl Edvard Johansson also created the system of combination gauge blocks that were to become world famous.

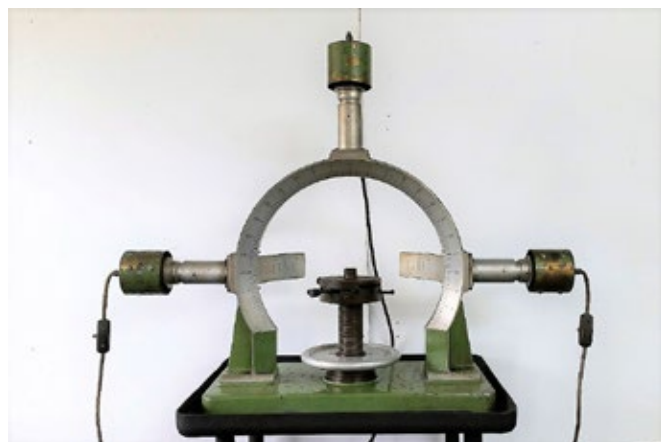


**Lathe** - This hand-built lathe, seems too well machined to have been made in a home workshop, so we think it might be a "foreign order", made on the quiet at an engineering works and smuggled out, as was quite a common occurrence at SAF. We have no idea where this one was made, but it's worth a spot in our collection as a wonderful piece of ingenuity.

Any operator who has caught their foot under the treadle of a lathe or sewing machine, knows what pain and injuries can result when inertia of the flywheel keeps the treadle going. This lathe has an automatic disconnect feature - if the operator's foot becomes caught under the treadle, the connecting arm goes into an elongated slot, instantly releasing the treadle from the flywheel.



**Goniometer** - A goniometer is designed to measure angles. This one was made by Griffin & George of Wembley, London for Diamant Boart. This one was made to measure three related angles, or facets, of diamonds. Diamant Boart, founded in 1937, developed industrial tools and machines using 'boart', a low quality diamond, often found in mines in the Congo. Natural stones were replaced in the 1960s by synthetic diamonds. A search of Griffin & George catalogues and the internet, has not revealed another one like it. The donor assumes it was a one-off special order for this very wealthy company.



**Bren & ISA Picnic poster** - This wonderful hand-drawn poster came to us passing through the hands of two museum supporters, Tony and Gordon. It was donated by the son of the late Tom Wade, secretary of the Bren Picnic Committee at the time.

Factory picnics were suspended between 1940-45 with the money raised for them, donated to the war effort.

However, the Bren section, always an independent group, celebrated their achievements with a picnic in 1943.

Between 1941 - 44, the Bren section manufactured an extraordinary 15 172 Bren Guns.

Unfortunately somebody has laminated the poster. We don't know yet if this can be reversed.





## Volunteer spotlight - Brian Maloney



You would be forgiven if you thought Don McLean's 'Vincent' song was only about Vincent Van Gogh. Well, there's another privileged soul. We've found Brian Maloney, who isn't an impressionist painter but rather an impressionist restorer of the British 'Vincent' motorcycle brand. Those words, 'starry starry night' were exactly what Brian was thinking as he

took his Vincent for a spin.

Brian grew up in Lismore. He went to a one-teacher primary school before progressing to the local high school. He learnt enough to get to Sydney University and completed a 4-year Civil Engineering degree. He was soon in the workforce working with the Department of Main Roads and remained with them until he retired in 2008.

His job took him to various parts of the State and in the mid-1980s he settled in Lithgow. Reflecting on his 38 years, Brian considers the Campbelltown-Cross Roads project and the bridge on the Great Western Highway over the Macquarie River in Bathurst as his two greatest work achievements.

Engineering is in Brian's DNA. While civil engineering dominated his work life, it was his hobby life that saw Brian mess around with motorbikes. And he messed about big-time. In fact, he could have taken out patents such as Brian's ingenuity. Brian (and his brother) took a liking to the British made Vincent motorbike – more a love for machining and restoration than riding. The British Vincent motorcycle was made from 1928 through to 1955 with 500cc and then 1000cc engines - at the time, it was the world's fastest production motorcycle at 206kph.

Restoring motorbike engines can be a pain in the backside. But getting the parts for the limited production 1000cc Vincent was outright impossible. This didn't faze Brian. He knew he had to do some serious machining turning 'bits and pieces' into precision made parts (the Brian trademark). All he had to do was to find the critical engine block and bike casing parts from anywhere, whether in someone's shed or through overseas connections.

It would have been helpful though if Brian had his own machinery to do the work. He clearly didn't. He had to come up with a solution. He started an informal course at Bathurst TAFE on fitting and machining which not only went well, but gave Brian access to the lathes and milling machines he



needed to undertake his beloved Vincent restoration.

His solution paid off and over the years Brian worked at night and on weekends to machine and mill a variety of parts, from suspension components to valve guides to camshaft spindles – all of this without any specifications – it was trial and error. Once Brian was convinced he had it right, final assembly only took 2 weeks. In 2002, after almost 20 years of labour, Brian completed his masterpiece Vincent. In later years, the Vincent gave way to restoring more bikes but also cars.

In 2011, Brian became one of the Museum's family members. It didn't take long before Brian began tinkering with rifle making machinery. Now that the Museum has almost 50 pieces of rifle making machines dating back to the early 1900s, Brian is in all familiar territory and restoration is well underway. When asked which small arms weapon is the best in engineering terms, Brian is quick to say 'the Owen sub-machine gun because of its simplicity, ruggedness and fit for purpose in the field'.

Besides being a 'mild mannered engineer', Brian has an in-built larrikin in him. During one of the constant organisational changes within the DMR, the Government amalgamated the DMR with the Traffic Authority, to become the RTA. No-one knew what the new duties would be, or even what the new letterhead would look like. The Lithgow Senior Clerk was about to get a shock. Brian (with others) used his larrikin streak to write a letter (using the first of the new letterhead) to the Senior Clerk announcing that the RTA would be providing the secretarial service for future Regional Traffic meetings, and that the Senior Clerk would be the minute-taking secretary. A working knowledge of shorthand would be required and the letter went on to say that the Senior Clerk needed to make himself conversant with the enclosed Pitman Shorthand book and be ready for the first meeting in three weeks' time.

Well, the 'shit hit the fan' when the Senior Clerk complained bitterly to the Divisional Engineer, who immediately complained to Head Office about the shorthand caper. Seeing what was unfolding, Brian intervened to calm things down. But when Brian's role as the instigator was found out, his world changed big-time. Today, Brian is proficient in shorthand (not!!).

Brian lives with wife, Maude, at Napoleon Reef. They love travelling and have done plenty of it within Australia and around the world. Such is Brian's love for travelling, he clocked almost 10 000km in just 5 weeks when he and Maude decided to see the sights of France by road. They sure did and very quickly at that!



## Vale Bob Notson (1929 - 2019)

Many of our current volunteers didn't know the pleasure of Bob's friendship, but as a founding member of the Museum back in 1996, he was one of those who built the foundations that we are building on today.

Bob had a good innings, passing peacefully on 6th March at Kanandah Nursing Home in Mudgee at the ripe old age of 89.

An interesting character, Bob was of English descent. He kept volunteers entertained during quiet times with his childhood stories of being sent from his home in London to the relative safety of the British countryside during the London Blitz of World War II.

Bob immigrated to Australia in 1951 as an aircraft technician with the RAF. He worked at Lithgow SAF as an instrument fitter from 1962 - 89.

Previous museum member, Tom Machin, wrote of Bob in his memoirs '*Workplace - Small Arms Factory Lithgow - 1946 - 1989*':

*... Part of the T.D.P stipulated a 'clean air' room, to a certain particle density. I didn't have a clue about 'clean air', where I am going to find more information? In one of my brighter moments, I approached Bob Notson, foreman of the instrument section, told him of my dilemma, presented him with the available information which required this room for the assembly of the sighting scope.*

*That was the end of my worries, Bob in his usual manner, dug deep, and over a period of time, I was presented with a 'clean air' room in the indoor range, which met everything required by the specification, temperature control, air conditioning and particle extraction.*

Bob's legacy remains in other areas as well as his



volunteer work with the Museum. He was on the first Board of Directors of the SAF Employees Credit Union Ltd (1967), which grew from a volunteer-run loans and banking service for SAF employees into today's Family First Credit Union, with branches in several surrounding towns.

Being a keen amateur radio enthusiast, Bob was also instrumental in establishing a Communication Brigade for the Lithgow Rural Fire Service and mentoring volunteers to provide the service.

Bob maintained his interest in the Museum well after his failing health prevented his active volunteering. As a subscriber to our newsletter, he took a keen interest in the Museum's development, and especially looked forward to hearing about our progress with the General Machine Shop.

So it's goodbye for now old mate. We'll remember you with great affection.

## New Blog - 'Firearms in Museums'

We've begun a blog to provide a forum for museums affected by the NSW Firearms Regulation which is very damaging to museum collections. The Regulation was brought in at the end of 2017 without consultation with museums, and nobody knew of its existence until recently.

We are fighting to have this ill-informed Regulation amended in a way that shows better respect for museums and their objects. Anyone interested can subscribe to the blog to receive email notifications when new posts are added.

<http://blog.lithgowsafmuseum.org.au/>

The link to 'Our Services' is the place to go to find out about our firearms related services for museums and the general public.