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Forgotten Organisations from the First World War

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Like many museums, Queensland Museum has a host of small collection items such as buttons and badges related to organisations that were active during and immediately after the First World War. While some of these organisations existed before the War, others came into existence specifically because of the War. Some have lasted until today, while others ceased to exist once the War was over.

Today, the Red Cross and the Returned Services League (RSL) are well known across the country. In Queensland, the Golden Casket lottery began in 1917 as a fundraiser for war workers. Since then it has morphed into the State's premier lottery, raising a significant amount of revenue for the State's budget. Legacy started just after the War as a community-led organisation looking after the families of killed or critically wounded service personnel.

Meanwhile, the only evidence of the existence of events and organisations such as Jack's Day, King George's Fund and For King and Empire lies in archives and in the repositories of collecting institutions such as the Queensland Museum.

Where it is tempting to consider the First World War as a one-off event with clear boundaries (and indeed many of the current centenary commemorative events only focus on 1914 to 1918), its legacy is all around us. This paper considers what these badges and buttons, some long forgotten, tell us about fundraising and welfare-related work during and since the First World War. The need for such organisations has not disappeared in the past 100 years of incessant military and other conflicts, despite the lessons of the war to end all wars.

❑ First World War, charity, welfare, patriotic, rehabilitation, shell shock

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King and Empire Alliance badge. Queensland Museum collection, N7135.

Every museum has them: badges, buttons and other tiny mementoes, some bearing easily recognisable names while others commemorate events and organisations that have long left the public memory. Because they are so common, and usually tiny, items like badges and buttons run the risk of being overlooked, especially when considering objects to include in an exhibition. When looking for that standout object, a 1.5 cm badge will almost certainly not be considered. However, badges can reveal much about key events such as the world wars, including that the First World War.

During and after the First World War, hundreds, if not thousands, of groups and organisations were formed across the country, for charitable, fundraising and other purposes. Many were formed to help our own and allied troops serving overseas, and later on to help the war's victims overseas as well as Australia's own damaged returned servicemen and women. While accurate figures vary considerably across sources, the Australian War Memorial estimated total funds raised in Australia at about £12 million (equivalent to about $1.02 billion today), an astronomical sum for those times (AWM 2016).

Some fund raising entities were formally constituted charities, while others were small energetic informal groups – children and adults alike – with perhaps one fundraising event or project in mind. Some were affiliated to a particular cause, some more concerned with promoting their views than with raising funds to help others. Likewise, some have since become household names, providing much the same services 100 years later. Others have disappeared from public memory.

Badges and buttons have long been used from promoting political causes to advertising, and a multitude of purposes in between. They are often some of the first items to appear in response to political events and popular causes, and are avidly collected all over the world. The Queensland Museum Network alone has well over a thousand badges in its Social History collection, of which about 100 have origins in the First World War. Many are commonplace – Red Cross, RSL and Legacy – but among the 100 are a number that have been buried in the collection for most of the twentieth century, their origins and stories relatively unknown. The 100-year commemoration of the war provided an opportunity to research these items, and to bring to light their diverse and illuminating stories. Many of the organisations, causes and events represented by these badges occurred after the war, sometimes decades later, as Australia recovered from the four-year conflict.

OVERSEAS CAUSES

Many of the early fundraising efforts of the First World War were directed at events overseas. Most ended when the need ended, although a mere two decades later the same countries went through war again, and as a result many of those same charities were resurrected.

Three examples of this type of fundraising centre on the Western Front. The French Appeal badge (figure 1) was sold to raise funds for the relief of France. It possibly depicts French commander Marshall Ferdinand Foch.

The Yser region was in the centre of the battles in Belgium in 1914, and from about October that year children were evacuated from the area to escape the escalating war. In 1915 the London-based journal *The African World* helped to raise funds for clothing for the young evacuees. The Children of the Yser

FIG. 1. French Appeal badge. Queensland Museum collection, N6837.

FIG. 2. Badge presumably produced by the Red Cross to raise funds for the Yser region evacuation of children. Queensland Museum collection, N6788.

FIG. 3. National Committee for Relief in Belgium Badge. Queensland Museum collection, N6896.

badge (figure 2) was presumably produced by the Red Cross to raise funds for the evacuation.

The National Committee for Relief in Belgium was formed in England in 1915 and wound up in 1919 (figure 3). Australia was one of the contributors to the fund; by March 1916 Australia had contributed a staggering £737 000 to the fund (*The Brisbane Courier*, 20 March 1916, p7). While fundraising for events in Europe was considerable, there were comparable efforts fundraising for charities at home in Australia.

CHARITIES AT HOME

When the war broke out in 1914, Queensland already had many well-established charities and not-for-profit organisations working for different causes across the State. Mutual benefit organisations such as friendly societies provided insurance, health services and so on; building societies helped members save for and purchase housing. Unions and trade-based lodges also provided benefits similar to those of the mutual societies. Business societies, educational societies, sport and recreation organisations and acclimatisation societies were also among the mix. There was a proliferation of faith-based welfare organisations, especially those for the care of children (Lyons 1993, p. 308). One study estimates that more than half of Australia's population would have been members of friendly or mutual benefit societies, and received services such as insurance, health, savings, business and other, through these organisations until the 1940s (Lyons 1993, p. 315). When the First World War began it added a whole new dimension to the operation of these organisations.

It has been well documented that the 1914–1918 war caused injury and death on an unprecedented industrial scale and for many, the damage affected them and their families for the rest of their lives (Anderson 2014; Larsson 2009). For the first time individuals survived wounds that would have killed them in earlier conflicts, greatly increasing the need for long-term rehabilitation. Official estimates were that about 46% of the 324 000 Australian soldiers in the field were wounded, and by 1920 about one third of veterans were receiving a war pension. Despite the popular image, damage was not restricted to missing limbs. The list of conditions the veterans returned home with was extensive, and most wounded veterans suffered from several complex debilitating conditions; their health continued to deteriorate for the rest of their lives (Jackson, this volume). Two of the most common after-effects were 'moral and mental disorders' and tuberculosis picked up while on service (Larsson 2004, p. 45–48).

The Red Cross is probably the most well recognised provider of care for the wounded and permanently disabled returned servicemen and women. Following a tradition of care for injured soldiers stretching back to the mid-nineteenth century, the first Australian branch of the Red Cross as we know it today was formed in Australia in August 1914; that is, within ten

days of Australia joining the hostilities. It remains one of the world's best known care organisations providing services to the war-affected.

The First World War also saw the creation of organisations formed and led by veterans specifically for veterans. Legacy, the RSL (formerly the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), and the Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmens Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA)) are also well known, and follow a long tradition of self-help groups. All had as their agenda helping their fellow service personnel to adjust to a vastly changed society and to cope with their own war-related situation.

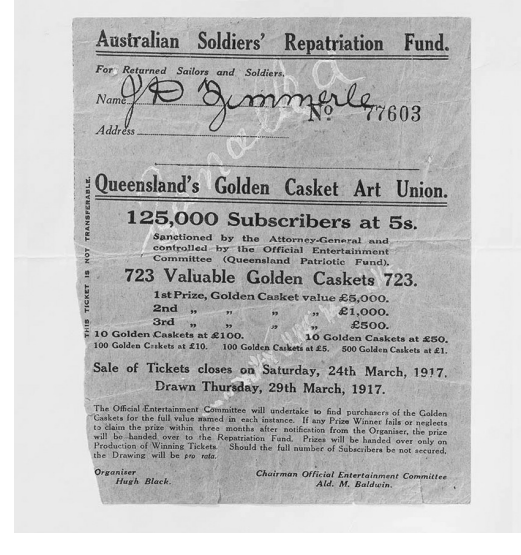
In 1915 a Queensland committee of the Australian Massage Association (figure 4) was formed to provide masseuses for wounded First World War veterans; it was believed to be especially effective for shellshock. Some masseuses joined the Army Massage Service of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and served overseas.

Queensland's own Golden Casket Lottery owes its origins to the First World War. The Golden Casket Art Unions were introduced by the Entertainment Committee of the State Government-run Queensland Patriotic Fund to raise funds for veterans of the war. The first five Art Unions raised £24 138 for the Australian Soldiers Repatriation Fund and £37 115 for the building of Anzac Cottages for war widows and their families. The first Golden Casket Lottery in 1917 (figure 5) is symbolic of the role this organisation has played in Queensland since the war.

FIG. 4. Australian Massage Association Badge. Queensland Museum collection, N7079.

The Anzac Cottages scheme began in 1917 to provide cottages to be rented to severely injured servicemen or the widows and families of servicemen who were killed on active service. In all, fifty-four cottages had been built in Queensland by the time the scheme ended in 1921, many by volunteer labour on donated land. By 1920 the Golden Casket Art Union had evolved into Australia's first government-run lottery and by 1922, the Golden Casket was raising 2% of Queensland's State budget. Over the years, the proceeds have gone to numerous causes, and many of Queensland's existing hospitals and health services have benefited from funds raised by the Golden Casket.

As well as these well-recognised organisations, the First World War produced a bewildering array of other funds and special events. The Australian War Memorial lists forty-seven different Queensland funds that raised money between 1914 and 1920 alone, ranging from the well-known – Red Cross Fund, Anzac Cottages Fund – to the somewhat obscure – Sheepskin Vests Fund, Travelling Kitchens Fund. And this list does not include the hundreds, if


Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Fund.

For Returned Sailors and Soldiers.

Name J D Summerle No 77603

Address

Queensland's Golden Casket Art Union.

125,000 Subscribers at 5s.

Sanctioned by the Attorney-General and controlled by the Official Entertainment Committee (Queensland Patriotic Fund).

723 Valuable Golden Caskets 723.

1st Prize, Golden Casket value £5,000.
2nd " " " " £1,000.
3rd " " " " £500.
10 Golden Caskets at £100. 10 Golden Caskets at £50.
100 Golden Caskets at £10. 100 Golden Caskets at £5. 500 Golden Caskets at £1.

Sale of Tickets closes on Saturday, 24th March, 1917.
Drawn Thursday, 29th March, 1917.

The Official Entertainment Committee will undertake to find purchasers of the Golden Caskets for the full value named in each instance. If any Prize Winner fails or neglects to claim the prize within three months after notification from the Organiser, the prize will be handed over to the Repatriation Fund. Prizes will be handed over only on Production of Winning Tickets. Should the full number of Subscribers be not secured, the Drawing will be *pro rata*.

Organiser Hugh Black. *Chairman Official Entertainment Committee* Ald. M. Baldwin.

THIS TICKET IS NOT TRANSFERABLE.

FIG. 5. Winning ticket for the first draw of the Golden Casket Lottery in 1917. Queensland Museum collection, H48876.

not thousands, of unofficial welfare and fundraising events and organisations, special days and weeks held before and after the war.

Special 'Days' were a favourite of fundraisers during the war. Red Triangle Days were held by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) from about 1917 to raise funds for the war effort (figure 6). In May 1918, the RSSILA (later RSL) held a Returned Sailors and Soldiers Day (figure 7). The King George's Fund was established in the United Kingdom in 1917, specifically to help naval and mercantile marine sailors and their dependants during the First World War. Jacks Day was one of its fundraising events. Jacks Day was first held in Queensland in 1918; fundraising events were held over several weeks from November that year, with Jacks Day itself falling on 29 November. Jacks Day fundraising events were revived when a similar need arose in the Second World War (figures 8a–e).

FIG. 6. Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) badge. The Red Triangle is the YMCA symbol. Queensland Museum collection, N5821.

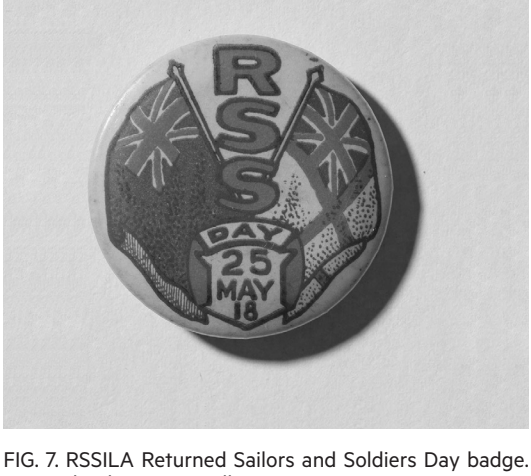


FIG. 7. RSSILA Returned Sailors and Soldiers Day badge. Queensland Museum collection, N6814.

The numbers of incapacitated veterans took years to stabilise as not all damage was immediately evident. In 1927 the Repatriation Commission advised that there were more returned soldiers under treatment than at any time since 1921, with 8000 new applications for pensions received that year alone. Each month more men became totally and permanently incapacitated, with no signs that the increase was slowing (*The Telegraph*, 28 April 1927, p. 16).

As a result, years after the war ended, new self-help groups were still being formed. The Incapacitated and Wounded Sailors and Soldiers Association Qld (IWSSAQ) was one of many (figure 9). Formed in 1930, it catered for members of the British or Australian expeditionary forces classed as medically unfit on or after discharge. Like the RSL and Legacy, the IWSSAQ was run by servicemen to represent the interests of affected service personnel in matters such as pensions and employment.

The Second World War and the many conflicts in the later part of the twentieth century – to say nothing of those around the world in the first decades of the twenty-first century – have all resulted in thousands of damaged servicemen and women needing treatment and care, often for the rest of their lives. Fundraising certainly continued following the Second World War with intiatives such as the Disabled Soldiers Appeal in 1948 (figure 10).

TEMPERERANCE AND PROHIBITION

Mental disorders suffered by veterans covered a wide range of conditions, many of which were poorly understood in the early twentieth century by health professionals as well as the public. With a lingering belief that many mental conditions were closely associated with the consumption of alcohol, Queensland veterans suffering from

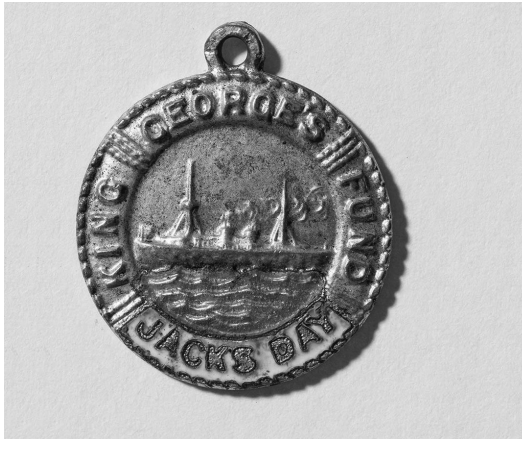


FIG. 8a. Badge with ship on ocean, for King George's Fund Jacks Day, Queensland Museum collection, N5815.

FIG. 8b. Badge, white enamel background, gold lettering and green laurel wreath. Queensland Museum collection, N7051.

FIG. 8c. Badge, blue enamel outside, inside a flag in red enamel with Union Jack in corner. Queensland Museum collection, N7053.

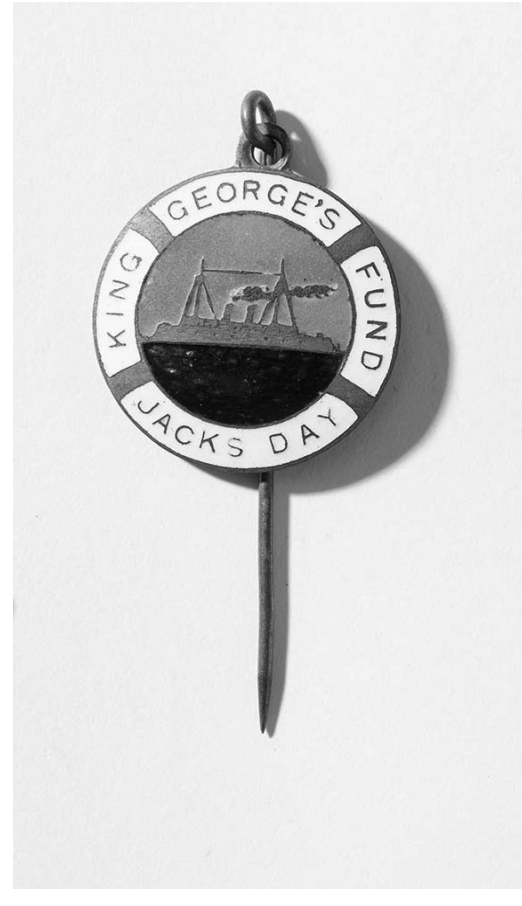


FIG. 8d. Battleship 'King George's Fund Jacks Day'. Queensland Museum collection, N6843.

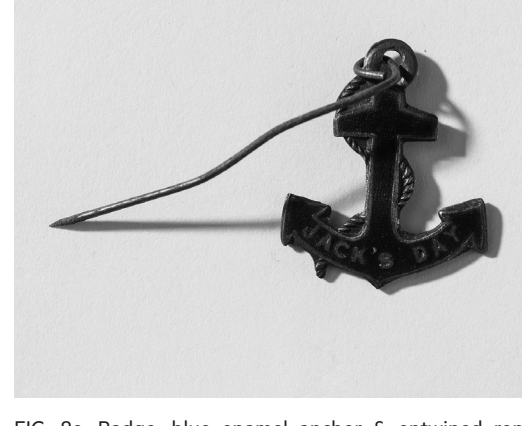


FIG. 8e. Badge, blue enamel anchor & entwined rope. Queensland Museum collection, N7054.

FIG. 9. Incapacitated and Wounded Sailors and Soldiers Association badge, 1930s. Queensland Museum collection, N7074.

FIG. 10. Disabled Soldiers Appeal badge, Queensland Museum collection, N6765.

FIG. 11. The Strength of Empire badge. The Strength of Empire movement believed alcohol, tobacco and VD caused by sexual promiscuity were weakening the country. Queensland Museum collection, N7127.

various service-related conditions – including those collectively known as shell shock – were likely to find themselves institutionalised at places such as the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on North Stradbroke Island, including in the inebriates' camp, where rehabilitation services were all but non-existent (Jackson, this volume). The stigma attached to the label 'inebriate' led to an inquiry by the RSSILA in 1918, during which affected veterans complained of being housed with 'habitual drunkards' (*Daily Mail*, 1 Nov 1918, p. 6). However, little changed; of the 119 patients at the inebriates camp in 1919, 53 were returned soldiers (Evans, 1969, p. 364), despite growing awareness that such facilities did not offer suitable services for veterans with 'shattered nerves' (*North Western Advocate* and the *Emu Bay Times,* 5 November 1918, p. 9) – or even for alcoholics (Fitzgerald and Jordan 2009, p. 171).

Temperance groups were quick to capitalise on reports of servicemen affected by alcohol to further their cause, blaming liquor for bad behaviour, and for exacerbating the physical and mental disorders suffered by those who returned. The temperance groups argued alcohol weakened soldiers' and others' physical and mental capacity to fight the war, and also used precious resources such as grain and sugar that could be directed to better uses; it was also argued that the money saved if alcohol was prohibited would pay a country's war debt (WCTU 1917, p. 42). In 1918 the Strength of Empire patriotic movement began in Queensland, based on the Strength of Britain movement. The movement focused on 'social and moral reform' (Brisbane Courier, 19 August 1918, p. 6); one of its key goals was, at the least, wartime prohibition, although tobacco and venereal disease were equally in its sights (figure 11). When the war ended, the push continued, supposedly to help returned soldiers already damaged by their war service from suffering further damage from alcohol. In 1921 the Strength of Empire Movement merged with the Queensland Prohibition League, bringing many of the smaller prohibition and temperance societies under the one umbrella (*The Brisbane Courier*, 8 July 1918, p. 6; *The Telegraph*, 17 August 1921, p 2).

The temperance movement was powerful and despite considerable public opposition, across

Australia various pieces of legislation were introduced, designed to control alcohol consumption (figure 12). Immortalised as the 'six o'clock swill', early closing was a favourite of organisations such as the Womens Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Lobbying for early closing had begun before the war, but its proponents argued it was even more important during the war to 'protect the men in uniform and those they leave behind' (WCTU, 1917, p. 42). Some States introduced it as early as 1916 and Queensland also passed early closing legislation that came into effect in 1923 (although the pubs closed at 8 o'clock rather than 6 o'clock).

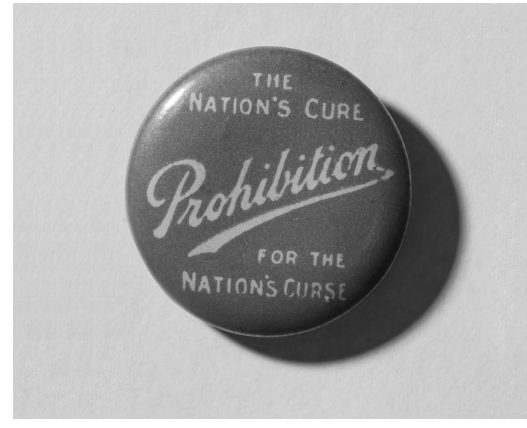


FIG. 12. Women's Christian Temperance Union badge. Queensland Museum collection, N6802.

DEFINING PATRIOTISM

To add to their difficulties, Queensland's servicemen and women returned to a highly fractured society with wide social divisions and significant economic issues across the State. Loyalty, nationalism, imperialism, Bolshevism, capitalism – all were hotly debated exacerbated by the war, and its impact on day-to-day living through high prices and unemployment. During and after the war, unemployment in Queensland was the highest of any Australian State, averaging 9.6% in 1918, and in 1920 reaching 16.3% compared with national average of 7.8% (Black 1991, p. 38–44).

The conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917 are regarded as indicative of the widening divisions within Australian society at the time, particularly in Queensland (Evans 1980, p. 236). The 'yes' badge (figure 13) was produced by supporters of conscription.

FIG. 13. The 'yes' badge produced by supporters of conscription. Queensland Museum collection, N6842.

Another organisation, the Win the War League, first appeared in late 1916 in response to the conscription debates and the 1916 referendum, and was intended to boost recruitment (figure 14). Women, who were commonly targeted by both pro- and anti-conscription propaganda, were particularly encouraged to join. As members they were obliged to do everything they could to help win the war for the Empire, especially by encouraging their male relatives to enlist. League members were expected to wear their

FIG. 14. Win the War League badge. Queensland Museum collection, N6856.

badges at all times to indicate their support. The League was intended to be apolitical and all-inclusive, embracing everybody except those who opposed Australia's involvement in the war (*The Telegraph*, 21 December 1916, p. 5; *The Brisbane Courier*, 3 January 1917, p. 9). A Win the War League was formed again in 1940 with the same goal of boosting recruitment.

The King and Empire Alliance, originally called the United Loyalist Executive, first appeared in Queensland about 1919 in response to its members' concerns about Australians' relationship with the British Empire after the First World War. The objective of the organisation was to combat Bolshevism and disloyalty to the King and Empire and to maintain Australia's links with Britain. It was one of many such organisations and alliances at the time.

The Alliance and its predecessor attracted considerable criticism from the Labor movement and others for their perceived anti-Catholic, pro-capitalism, pro-Tory views. The Alliance appears to have been most active in New South Wales, and had petered out by the early 1930s (Figure 15).

During the war, established events such as Wattle Day were used as fundraisers. Wattle Day itself dates from 1910, although the use of wattle as Australia's floral emblem dates from the early 19th century and gained momentum during the Federation debates as Australian nationalism grew. Wattle Day was closely associated with the Australian Natives Association, an ardently nationalistic organisation that supported protectionism and a white Australia, while at the same time remaining loyal to Britain. Wattle Day for Maimed Soldiers badges were sold in Queensland from about 1915 to 1918 (figure 16).

Under pinned by ideas of patriotism, the Honor the King and help our heroes badge (Figure 17) is another example of the many welfare and fundraising events and organisations that proliferated during the war. In May 1917 King George's birthday celebration was combined with a series of events to raise funds for the Repatriation Fund.

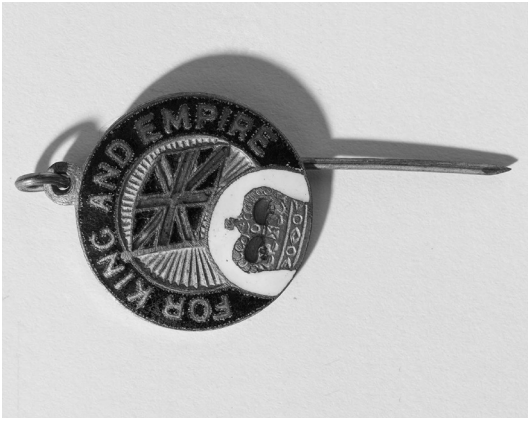


FIG. 15. King and Empire Alliance badge was issued by the King and Empire Alliance for its sympathisers in May 1919. Queensland Museum collection, N7135.

FIG. 16. Wattle Day badge raising funds for maimed soldiers. Queensland Museum collection, N6833.

FIG. 17. Honor the king and help our heroes badge. These badges were sold as part of the fundraiser. Queensland Museum collection, N6854.

CONCLUSION

This small sample of Queensland Museum's badge collection illustrates some of the powerful themes to emerge from the First World War. The first is the long-lasting, permanent damage military conflict inflicted on so many. As a result of that war, the need to care for damaged veterans on a massive scale was born, and remains with us to this day.

One writer predicted in 1993 that Legacy would cease to exist within twenty years as its primary customer base – women in their seventies – would have passed away and thus no longer need its services (Lyons 1993, p. 317). Due to more recent conflicts, such as the Gulf War, and those in Iraq and Afghanistan, Legacy looks like remaining a strong organisation with clients who have an ongoing need for its services.

Jack's Day, the Limbless Soldiers Association and the Children of the Yser appeal may no longer exist, but the need for the services they offered still exists for those affected by war and military actions, civilians as well as military personnel.

Similarly organisations to care for veterans with PTSD exist in their multitudes; and just before Anzac Day in 2014 a senior military man predicted 'a tidal wave of new Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) cases amongst returning veterans', with 'a four-fold increase in PTSD cases since Australian troops first went to war in Afghanistan in 2001.' (Brown 2014).

The same report states 'DVA statistics show mental health problems like PTSD, depression and medically diagnosed alcoholism now account for a third of successful compensation claims from the ADF's four post-1999 conflicts.

A second, related theme is the public silence during the current First World War commemorations surrounding the ongoing damage war did and still does, especially to those directly involved. Governments, patriotic organisations and even the groups providing the care downplayed the severity of the injuries the troops came home with during the First World War (Larsson 2004, p 45; Neale, 2007, p 115–116) – and continue to do so – but these badges continue to tell the story as eloquently as the plethora of war memorials, honour boards, and even parks, libraries, swimming pools and stained glass windows across the country.

A final thought is about the collection itself. Much has been written about the socially divisive nature of the war period, and the patriotic badges in Queensland Museum's collection attest to this, as these groups obviously felt the need to wear their opinions on their chests. Anti-war groups and activities were strictly controlled by legislation such as the War Precautions Act and the Unlawful Associations Act (Beaumont 2013, p 231–233), but ample evidence exists that such activity still occurred. The Red Flag Riots in South Brisbane, men who received white feathers, organisations such as the Womens International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) – all originated because of the war. While the Museum has a significant number of charitable and patriotic items in its collection, it has none representing the groups or people who opposed the war, the empire or their supporters.

It is outside the scope of this paper to explore Queensland Museum's collecting rationale since the First World War, but it serves as a useful reminder that there are as many sides to the major events of our times as there are voices, and to be truly representative, museums should be collecting from them all.

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