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Engines of Destruction: biographies of a museum's war trophies

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When the First World War commenced in 1914, Queensland Museum was 52 years old. A recognised cultural and scientific leader within the Queensland community, the Museum was supported by the State Government with a mandate to exhibit and research the State's cultural and natural heritage. At the conclusion of the Great War, Queensland Museum records demonstrate that it was the recipient of four First World War trophies collected under the auspices of the Australian War Records Section. These trophies were initially displayed prominently at the Queensland Museum, however, they fell from favour and were later relocated. With the advent of the centenary of the First World War, these trophies are once again attracting attention through display and research. This paper explores cultural biographies of these weapons and aligns the treatment of these trophies with changing public attitudes to war commemoration thereby considering the role of the Museum in reflecting those attitudes.

❑ Queensland Museum, cultural biography, war trophies, Mephisto, commemoration, museology, mortar, machine gun, First World War.

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INTRODUCTION

When the First World War commenced in 1914, Queensland Museum was 52 years old. A recognised scientific and cultural leader within the community (Robinson 1986, p. 9), the Queensland Museum was supported by the Queensland State Government with a mandate to collect, exhibit and research the State's natural and cultural heritage. The outbreak of war coincided with a desire within the Queensland Museum to develop a science and technology collection. In 1911, R. Hamlyn-Harris (Queensland Museum Director 1910–1917) introduced a new object register specifically to record donations of technological and historical items. In 1918, H. A. Longman (Queensland Museum Director 1917–1945) appealed to a number of Queensland institutions requesting object donations with a view to 'building up a distinct section of historical objects with Queensland associations' (Robinson 1986, p. 229). The war also presented an opportunity to collect in this field. Queensland Museum received at least four First World War trophies allocated through the Australian War Records Section. They have had divergent histories, resulting in different research and exhibition outcomes as well as different significance and regard within the Museum and the wider community. Despite different histories, they recieved increasing attention as Queensland Museum developed a First World War exhibition and gallery.

The centenary of the commencement of the First World War has created an impetus both internationally and particularly within Australia to engage with stories and material culture directly associated with the conflict. Public grant funding provided by local, state and federal governments has been awarded to individuals and institutions with an aim of encouraging and facilitating wide-ranging engagement and support for commemorative activities associated with the centenary. Significant funding has been allocated to projects that seek to preserve, repair and reinterpret existing material culture including trophies and memorials as well as develop new content. A 2013 report to the Australian Federal Government stated that by 2013, $115 million had been committed, at a national level, to commemorating the ANZAC Centenary with anticipated further requests for funding (Anzac Centenary Advisory Board 2013, p. 17). By October 2016, the Queensland State Government expended $4 million in grant funding supporting Queensland-focussed activities commemorating the First World War (Queensland Anzac Centenary, 2016). The Australian War Memorial (AWM) received significant additional funding ($35.2 million over 4 years and $27 million for the refurbishment of the First World War gallery) in order to 'prepare for the Centenary of the Anzac landings and other important military anniversaries' (Harris c. 2012). The results of this funding have been numerous commemorative projects, events and exhibitions from grass-roots community level through to Federal level. The AWM's First World War gallery redevelopment and an associated touring exhibition, entitled *The Spirit of ANZAC Centenary Experience,* brought key artefacts from the national collection to regional Australia (Queensland Anzac Centenary, 2016). The Queensland State Government also created public grant programs, including the *Spirit of Service* grant (funding up to $20 000 to community groups) and the *Lasting Legacy* grant (funding from $20 001 to $80 000 to community groups), resulting in over 180 supported projects and an accumulated outlay of $4 million (Queensland Anzac Centenary 2016).

In addition, the Queensland Government funded three large-scale projects, entitled *Legacy projects*, allocated to the State Library of Queensland, the Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Museum. These projects are funded with the intent that they 'provide a lasting legacy to Queenslanders beyond 2018 and into the next century of service' (Queensland Anzac Centenary 2016). The State Library of Queensland successfully launched its centenary activities with *QANZAC 100: Memories for a New Generation*, a four-year program with regional outreach, symposiums, fellowships, digital content and workshops (Queensland Anzac Centenary 2016). The Brisbane City Council received $13.6 million to restore and enhance the ANZAC Square Memorial in the Brisbane CBD (Queensland

Anzac Centenary 2016). The Queensland Museum developed a gallery 'that explores the impact and legacy of the First World War on Queensland and the brave sacrifices made by our diggers' which opened in 2018 (Queensland Anzac Centenary 2016).

This centenary has strongly focussed interest on the First World War, its outcomes, its legacy, associated collections and objects as well as generating intent to renew, reinterpret and affirm objects, stories and cultural knowledge-norms associated with the conflict. It is this same lens which enables us to consider the material culture of the First World War and its cultural history. Multiple case studies are available which encourage application of material culture theory in understanding and interpreting the lifecycles of war artefacts across the past 100 years (see Cornish & Saunders 2014, Saunders 2004, 2005 and Pearson & Connah 2013). This paper details the cultural biographies of four First World War trophies under the custodianship of the Queensland Museum and employs a material culture approach towards understanding the Museum's acquisition, care and exhibition of these artefacts by aligning their treatment with the Australian community's changing engagement with the commemoration of war.

CULTURAL BIOGRAPHY FRAMEWORK

Material culture study has emerged as both a theoretical framework and an interdisciplinary field in its own right. This study of the role of objects within societies has extended back many decades, resulting in a long-recognised understanding that objects are culturally manifest. Hoskins (2006) writes 'Anthropologists since Mauss (1924–1954) and Malinowski (1922) have asserted that the lines between persons and things are culturally variable, and not drawn in the same way in all societies'. Although this theoretical perspective is utilised widely in many social sciences (see Hicks and Beaudry (2010) for a strong summary of the breadth of application of this theory), it has been strongly related to archaeology through the shared emphasis on interpreting material culture as the primary focus of study towards understanding social culture. In 1975, James Deetz, a noted historical archaeologist and strong advocate for material culture study to be employed within historical archaeology, argued that material culture is the most culturally sensitive data available to archaeologists (Deetz 1975). He went on to state that the study of material culture may be the study of humanity, demonstrating his strong belief in the connectivity of material and social culture. It is this focus on the objects themselves and their reflection of changing and prevailing cultural norms that forms the foundation of this paper.

Proponents of the material culture framework posit that objects are designed and created through human endeavour and thought, therefore, incorporating the functional knowledge as well as the cultural knowledge, symbolism and beliefs of the individual who created them plus the end user. Beaudry, Cook and Mrozowski (1991) argue that objects have meaning associated with them through cultural knowledge and negotiation. Objects carry both explicit and implicit signs, symbols and messages. Importantly, the contextual data contained within objects may be interpreted differently according to the individual and their own cultural norms. Equally significant, as cultures develop and change over time, the inherent symbolism within objects will also change. Beaudry, Cook and Mrozowski (1991) also claim symbols are physical representations of cultural values. Crilly (2010) argues that it is inaccurate to claim that objects contain separate functional and symbolic purposes. He argues that the term 'function', when used with reference to objects, often relates to more than the physical purpose of the object, claiming that the technical function of an object is intrinsically linked with its aesthetic and social functions. Objects have multiple purposes in conveying a technical function (e.g. a car provides transport), and aesthetic function (e.g. the car has design cues that make it visually appealing) and social function (e.g. the economic value and rarity of a car can also demonstrate a social status for the owner). In this sense, objects are layered with meaning and symbolism and perform multiple functions. Whilst Crilly argues that

objects have multiple functions, Gosden and Marshall (1999) also argue that these functions are also fundamentally changed depending on the role of the object. Objects transform as their role within a society changes. This transformation is constant and is profoundly linked to the people interacting with the object (Gosden & Marshall 1999, p. 1). Hoskins (2006) writes that objects can be given names, gender, history and ritual function. A cultural biography is generated for an object as these transformations occur and are recorded.

Kopytoff (1986) sought to define the cultural biographical methodology through identifying a series of questions posed of objects which, he argued, could also have been posed of a person. Kopytoff considered objects as they transformed through a lifecycle of production, exchange and consumption and argued, that through 'questioning', an object can reveal a lifeway. Identified questions include:

- where an object was created and who made it,
- what had been its 'career' to date and, culturally, was that considered an appropriate career for such an object,
- what were the recognisable periods within an object's lifespan and, importantly, what were the cultural markers for these periods, and
- how did an object's use change with time and what happened at the end of its usefulness (Kopytoff 1986, p. 66).

These questions were not considered an exhaustive list, however, provided a general idea of how time and people's changing perceptions of objects contribute to the phases of usefulness and significance over an object's existence. These phases, or transformations, contribute to how objects are perceived and, consequently, valued. Collating this data reveals a cultural biography of an object. Sassoon (2004) builds upon this approach through the inclusion of a 'discard' process, where objects are lost and then 'rediscovered' thereby creating a new stage within the lifecycle. Holtorf (2002) also recognised this important stage within the lifecycle, arguing that the discard or loss of an object can create a lifecycle much longer than previously understood, as objects created thousands of years ago, are rediscovered and reinterpreted within the norms of contemporary culture and so are given new roles within a society. These concepts demonstrate the complexity of the methodology as well as the multitude of roles objects may perform over an extended time period. War trophies provide excellent case studies in understanding the cultural biography concept yet have been the subject of a relatively small number of investigations using this concept. Nicholas J. Saunders (2004, 2005) has been particularly active in this field, using a material culture approach to highlight the complex nature of objects created for the purpose of warfare which, both during and after the conflict, undergo multiple transformations.

War creates significant and enduring cultural and social change. Using material culture studies to consider how societies view material culture generated through war provides an opportunity to develop new understanding about how societies view war. It also contributes to knowledge about how societies take and adapt material culture to generate new knowledge. This process can be identified within the treatment of the Queensland Museum's First World War trophies. In part, the Museum's focus on research, exhibition and object acquisition reflects the views of the broader community, however, the Museum's exhibitions, public programming and research outputs also influence community perspectives. This relationship can be used as a tool to interpret the Museum's display of First World War trophies and the community's changing perspectives of the First World War over the past century.

AUSTRALIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH WAR TROPHIES

During the First World War, Britain developed a formal system designed to acquire and manage war trophies collected from the battlefields. The system was managed by the Imperial War Trophies Committee, created in 1916, followed by the establishment of the National War Museum (later Imperial War Museum) in 1917. The intent of the museum was to 'collect and display material

as a record of everyone's experiences during that war – civilian and military – and to commemorate the sacrifices of all sections of society.' (Imperial War Museum 2016). Cornish adds that the National War Museum was supported by some people within the British Government who felt it was 'essential that the public were left in no doubt as to why the war was being fought', particularly after the massive loss of British life on the Somme (Cornish 2004, p. 36).

In 1917, Australia quickly followed suit through the introduction of the Australian War Records Section (AWRS). This section was charged with acquiring trophies captured by Australian troops from the battlefields of the First World War and ensuring they were distributed for public display in cities and towns across Australia. Australia captured over 5000 trophies, mostly comprising of guns, machine guns and trench mortars for distribution to Australian towns and cities (Pearson and Connah 2009, p. 1). Australia's quota of First World War trophies was enormous, with more trophies collected per head of population than any other combatant (Clayton, 1995, p. 20). Responsibility for the allotment of the trophies fell to State Trophy Committees who operated under a series of regulations developed by the Australian War Museum (the precursor to the Australian War Memorial) and AWRS. Each committee included a senator, a member of the House of Representatives, a State Government representative, an Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) representative, and the Director of the Australian War Museum (later Australian War Memorial) (AWM n.d.f.). Two foundation principles of allocation were that trophies should be allocated according to population size so that larger population centres should receive more trophies or receive more significant trophies than smaller population centres and that a State should receive trophies captured by the units it had raised, as well as some of those not associated with any particular unit. *The Brisbane Courier* newspaper reported that:

> Cities and towns with populations greater than 10000 were entitled to 2 field guns and 2 machine guns, towns with a population between 3000 and 10000 to 1 field gun, those with a population between 1500 and 3000 to 1 field gun or 1 trench mortar: and those with a population between 150 to 1500 to 1 trench mortar. (*The Brisbane Courier* 28 March 1921, p. 7)

In July 1919, it was decided that the Australian War Museum Committee would retain only a small selection of trophies and relics for a national war museum. The larger proportion was to be divided between the States. Through the actions of the AWRS, Queensland Museum was the recipient of four First World War trophies. A fifth trophy was allocated to the museum but never received. This trophy, a 149 mm Belgium howitzer, is currently at the Enoggera Barracks, an Australian Army base in north Brisbane. The display history of the four trophies received by the Museum is not clearly recorded in the Queensland Museum archives. However, information is available through several sources: through images taken of the Museum and containing the trophy displays, through supporting evidence, for example, invoices and receipts for capital works relating to display spaces for trophies, through newspaper accounts of Museum activities and various letters and telegrams associated with the trophies. Importantly, physical evidence on the trophies themselves provides important primary evidence of their display history. A chronology of these trophies can be developed from this varied pool of primary and secondary evidence.

HISTORY OF QUEENSLAND MUSEUM'S FIRST WORLD WAR TROPHIES

The largest First World War trophy within the Museum collection is a German tank, designated as an A7V Sturmpanzerwagen. The crew named the tank after a character of German theatre – *Mephistopheles*, the evil spirit to whom Faust sold his soul (Whitmore 1989, p. 17). On the front of the tank, along with the name *Mephisto*, the crew painted an image of a red devil with a British tank tucked under one arm. *Mephisto* was the first of the four First World War trophies displayed at the Queensland Museum, arriving at the Gregory Terrace site in August 1919. The tank was salvaged

by the 26th Battalion AIF along with the British Tank Corps on 22 July 1918 at Villers-Bretonneux. The 26th Battalion AIF was formed, in April 1915 at Enoggera, a suburb of Brisbane and comprised of both Queensland and Tasmanian recruits. The battalion fought first at Gallipoli and then the Western Front before being disbanded in May 1919 (AWM n.d.c). This Queensland connection was the impetus in arranging for this trophy to be displayed in Brisbane.

Mephisto has been comprehensively documented and researched. Whitmore's comprehensive 1989 publication, *Mephisto A7V Sturmpanzerwagen 506*, fully details the development of German tank technology, the production of these weapons as well as their deployment, actions and losses with a strong emphasis on *Mephisto*. In 2018, Queensland Museum released a new publication in conjunction with the launch of the ANZAC Legacy Gallery at Queensland Museum Southbank. The publication, entitled 'Mephisto A Queensland Museum Discovery Guide', builds on Whitmore's publication by providing outcomes of research conducted during the 29 year gap between the publications. In addition, other useful publications include Hundleby and Strasheim 1990 and Strasheim and Hundleby 2010.

In summary, *Mephisto* was one of 14 tanks deployed to support infantry attacks on targets including Villers-Bretonneux and Hill 104. After initial success on 24 April 1918, *Mephisto* was driven into a shell crater where it became irretrievably stuck. Despite being stranded in no man's land, evidence demonstrates that the German forces were using the tank as a strong-point in the fighting that continued to rage in the area (Whitmore, 1989: 50). On the evening of 22 July 1918, an Allied operation to recover *Mephisto* was commenced based on a plan that was developed by a Queenslander, Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) J.A. Robinson. Two tanks from the British 1st Gun Carrier Company moved forward under the cover of darkness, and with artillery support and air cover to disguise the noise of the recovery operation. Despite prolonged exposure to mustard gas shelling, the tanks and a detachment from the 26th Battalion successfully recovered *Mephisto* and towed it safely behind Allied lines (Whitmore 1989 p. 51). By dawn, *Mephisto* was hidden under camouflage and prepared for transport to the 5th Tank Brigade demonstration ground at Vaux-en-Amienois (Whitmore 1989 p. 52). During this time, the damage to the tank was assessed and components, including fuel tanks, radiator and machine gun mountings, were stripped from the tank (Whitmore 1989, p. 52). Allied soldiers also began to graffiti the tank, either engraving or writing their names, initials, home town names and unit details in chalk onto the tank. A large image of a British lion resting its paw on an A7V appeared on one side of the tank and, on the other side, an AIF Rising Sun badge along with a purple and light blue diamond-shaped unit badge of the 26th Battalion (Whitmore 1989, p. 53). *Mephisto* was shipped to England and proposed as an Australian war trophy. After continued lobbying by people including Official Historian Dr C.E.W. Bean, Major J.A. Robinson and the Queensland Premier, Hon. T.J. Ryan, *Mephisto* was unloaded at the Norman Wharf on the Brisbane River in June 1919 whereupon, on 22 August, *Mephisto* was towed to the Queensland Museum on Gregory Terrace (Whitmore 1989, p. 54).

The Brisbane Courier reported the delivery of the tank as being accompanied by excitement and 'in the presence of a fair crowd' as the tank was placed 'in position in the Museum gardens, directly in front of the building' (*The Brisbane Courier*, 23 August 1919, p.4). Within a year, concern was raised regarding the Museum's treatment of the tank and reported in a newspaper article relating to ownership and funding for a suitable enclosure for the trophy (*The Brisbane Courier*, 15 September 1920, p. 6). The issue was that the tank was on loan to the Museum and, internally, Museum management requested that a protective shelter be funded by the owner of the tank – the Australian War Museum. A series of letters and telegrams were exchanged in 1920 between the Queensland Museum Director, the Acting Premier of Queensland and the Prime Minister's Office, seeking a resolution of the question of who would fund the shelter for the tank. On 23 October 1920, a letter sent from the Prime Minister's Office advised the Queensland Premier that, during a special meeting of the Australian War Museum Committee, a decision was made to allow the tank to remain permanently in Brisbane and that the funding required for the shelter

should come from Queensland (Millen 1920). On 2 November 1920, William Gillies, Acting Premier, replied with thanks, advising the Queensland Government would make 'the necessary arrangements to safely house the tank' (Gillies 1920). A small shelter with a roof and fenced sides was subsequently built around the tank.

By July 1921, the shelter also protected a German trench mortar (see figure 1). The trench mortar (serial number 5753) was accompanied by a light machine gun (serial number 4771) and a heavy machine gun (serial number 2440) with stand. The three trophies were part of the Queensland State Trophy Committee's selection of trophies allocated to the Metropolitan Area of Brisbane and were placed in the custodian care of the Museum. Further information regarding the provenance of the trophies was also provided. The mortar was 'captured by the 25th Battalion near Zonnebeke, on 4 October 1917, during the attack by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australia Divisions on Broodseinde Ridge' (Troedson 1921). The 25th Battalion was raised at Enoggera in Queensland in March 1915 as part of the 7th Brigade (AWM, n.d.b). The trench mortar is a German 170 mm trench mortar, known as a 17 cm mittlerer Minenwerfer neuer art (medium trench mortar, new model). The base of the mortar carries the inscription, 'Nr. 5753/ Rh. M.F. 1917'. This important data provides the serial number (5753), the year of manufacture (1917) and the manufacturer (Rh. M.F = Rheinmetall).

The heavy machine gun (serial number 2440) was captured by the 9th Battalion A.I.F in August 1918 during the Australian advance east of Amiens (Troedson 1921b). The 9th Battalion was one of the

FIG. 1. *Mephisto* and trench mortar exhibited together at the entrance to the Queensland Museum, Gregory Terrace. Queensland Museum collection (Negative No. RB990). Photography by Department of Agriculture.

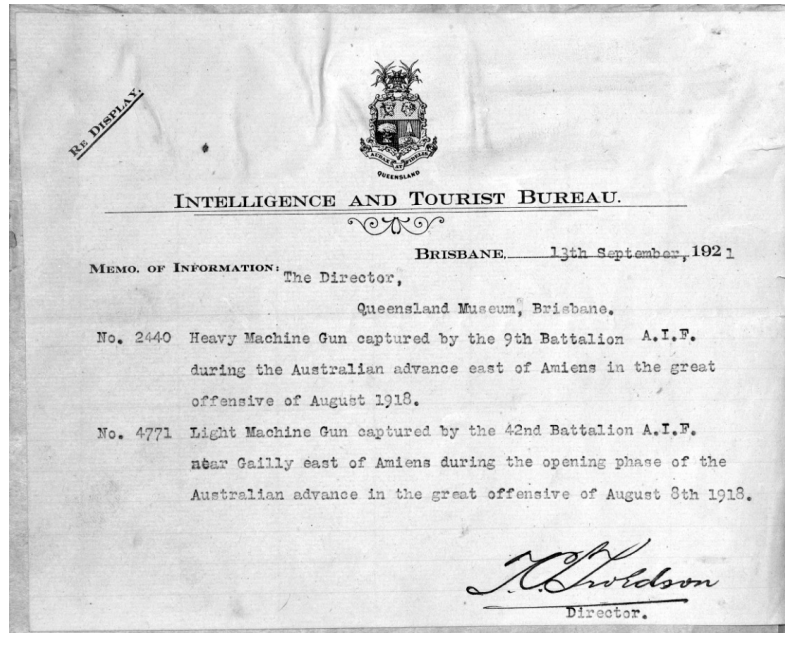
first AIF infantry units raised and the first battalion recruited in Queensland (AWM, n.d.a). The specific day of capture is not recorded, however, the gun was captured during the Australian advance east of Amiens 'in the great offensive of August 1918' (Troedson 1921a). The 9th Battalion unit diary records that the unit was travelling to the front lines on 8 and 9 of August, however, encountered very strong resistance when deploying on the morning of the 10th of August. The diary records that the battalion was 'held up by terrific machine gun fire' (9th Battalion Field Diary August 1918, p. 4). The battalion suffered many casualties and mention was made of the 'heavy machine gun barrage', 'concentrated machine gun fire' and 'constant machine gun fire'. The battalion succeeded in capturing '90 prisoners, 2 batteries of 4.5 howitzers of four guns each, 30 machine guns, 2 trench mortars and 3 complete telephonic installations', noting that the machine guns were used defensively and to great effect against the Germans. It is possible that gun 2440 was one of these weapons.

More specific details regarding the light machine gun (serial number 4771) detailed that it was 'captured by the 42nd Battalion A.I.F near Gailly east of Amiens during the opening phase of the Australian advance in the great offensive of August 8th 1918'. The 42nd Battalion was also a Queensland unit, raised at Enoggera in 1915 (AWM, n.d.d). The Battalion's unit diary records the battalion was in position at the Red Station, Gailly by 02:45am on 8 August 1918. The unit had captured and consolidated their third objective by 0730am that morning, recording that during the course of completing that object, they captured '300 prisoners, 3 – 77cm guns, 25 M.G, 7 trench mortars with a large amount of munitions and stores' (42nd Battalion Field Diary August 1918, p.4). Gun 4771 may be one of the 25 German machine guns captured on 8 August 1918, a day later described by General Erich Ludendorff as the black day of the German Army (Ludendorff 1919, p. 679).

Although the mortar was placed on public display in a prominent location at the Museum, the exhibition history of the two machine guns is unknown. 'Re Display' is recorded on an information card detailing the provenance of the guns (Troedson 1921a), suggesting that in accordance with the AWRS requirements, the weapons were publically displayed (see figure 2). It is likely these two weapons were exhibited securely within the Museum as they may have been considered portable, valuable and likely dangerous. The machine guns were later offered to the Australian Defence Department in response to a public callout for weapons to assist the Second World War effort (Longman 22 December 1941). Consequently, the machine guns were removed from the Museum in 1942 and never returned. Their fate is unknown. The tank and mortar continued to be publically displayed in the Queensland Museum gardens at Gregory Terrace for many decades.

During this period, members of the public climbed on the tank, adding their initials, exploring the interior of the tank and posing for photographic opportunities. Further graffiti appeared on the interior of the tank, some of which can be attributed to visiting American servicemen during the Second World War. In January 1948, the tank was relocated away from the entrance of the Museum but remained physically accessible to the public in the Museum gardens. At the same time, the trench mortar was relocated to a small space alongside the Museum which housed other large technology items including a gold ore crushing mill and trophy guns from the Boer War, however, it was no longer under any shelter and exposed to the elements (see figure 3).

1970 saw the 50th anniversary of *Mephisto* being exhibited at the Queensland Museum. This milestone also saw renewed curatorial and conservation interest in the tank and coincided with key Museum staff appointments to the roles of Curator of History and Technology in 1972 and Curator of Industrial Technology in 1974. Curatorial notes contained in the Museum archives relate to a number of remedial works being completed on the tank commencing with sandblasting and painting of the external surfaces in November 1971.



re Display

INTELLIGENCE AND TOURIST BUREAU.

MEMO. OF INFORMATION: BRISBANE, 13th September, 1921

The Director,
Queensland Museum, Brisbane.

No. 2440 Heavy Machine Gun captured by the 9th Battalion A.I.F. during the Australian advance east of Amiens in the great offensive of August 1918.

No. 4771 Light Machine Gun captured by the 42nd Battalion A.I.F. near Gailly east of Amiens during the opening phase of the Australian advance in the great offensive of August 8th 1918.

T. Weldon
Director.

FIG. 2. Information card detailing the capture of two First World War trophies. Memo card from Intelligence and Tourism Bureau. Queensland Museum Collections & Research Resource Centre (Box 125 General Correspondence 1946-1948, 1950).

FIG. 3. The trench mortar displayed outdoors and exposed to environmental conditions. Queensland Museum Collections & Research Resource Centre (Object File Box No. H24848).

In late 1972, Queensland Museum curators cleaned the interior and undersection of the tank and, in September of 1974, the red devil character, the iron crosses and the name were repainted to correct errors created during the repainting in 1971.

In 1986, the Museum relocated to South Brisbane. During the relocation, the trench mortar was placed into storage, away from the public, whilst *Mephisto* was exhibited outside the new building, tucked under a pedestrian overpass. This arrangement mirrored its display at the Gregory Terrace premise, in that the tank was undercover but exposed to environmental factors as well as being physically accessible to the public who continued to climb on the tank. During 1988, when the Southbank precinct hosted World Expo 88, further analysis of *Mephisto* paint samples was undertaken in an attempt to determine the original colours and paint schemes applied by the German crew. These paint samples were taken from relatively inaccessible areas such as within closed hinges. Further conservation work was undertaken including removal of sand from the transmission housing and further cleaning of the interior. Samples of the chalky soil, munitions, barbed wire and other small artefacts were recovered and retained. The cupola sides on top of the tank were raised, while replacement front, rear and top panels were fabricated. The gun barrel was also loaned from the AWM. This work coincided with major research efforts in Europe relating to A7V tanks including a project to construct a full-sized replica A7V in Germany.

Eventually, *Mephisto* was relocated into a secured space, providing environmental protection and allowing for the inclusion of interpretative signage and images. *Mephisto* remained at Southbank until 2011, when parts of the Museum, including the *Mephisto* exhibition showcase, were inundated by rising water from the flooding Brisbane River. The tank was promptly removed for approximately 18 months to an offsite conservation space for assessment and treatment, whereupon, *Mephisto* was returned to public display at the Ipswich campus of the Queensland Museum Network. The Museum also launched a social media campaign entitled Share your memory of *Mephisto*, aimed at encouraging the public to share personal stories relating to their own or historical family connections with *Mephisto*. This campaign was also used as a platform to share updates on the tank's journey to Canberra in 2015. *Mephisto* was transported by road freight to Canberra to be a centrepiece in an exhibition at the Australian War Memorial during the centenary of the First World War. Marketing collateral proclaimed *Mephisto* 'the rarest tank in the world' (AWM n.d.e.).

The four war trophies began their separate chronologies from a similar position – developed and manufactured for the German army and deployed against the Allies. Over time, interest and public concern for the trophies diminished. Interest in *Mephisto* was revived around the time of the 50th anniversary of its time in Queensland, however, the other trophies were lost to the public, being either placed into long-term storage or surrendered to the war effort and never returned. It is possible to test how the attitudes of museum staff reflected the broader community attitudes to war trophies and commemoration by assessing variations in community views towards First World War trophies and war commemoration over the same time period.

PUBLIC OPINION OF COMMEMORATION

During the war, there was strong support for the collecting and display of trophies, citing a need to publically demonstrate the sacrifice required to defend Australia's freedom. Significantly, Clayton (1993, p. 18) states 'the trophy gun was by far the most common WW1 commemorative form'. People argued that collections of war objects and ephemera were symbolic and physical manifestations of the war effort, claiming them to be 'the outward and visible sign of heroic endeavour, of deathless courage, of the honourable fulfilment of the duty of free men to fight in defence of their national liberties' (*The Brisbane Courier*, 11 August 1917, p. 4). During the initial trophy allocation, some representatives

of Queensland towns argued that their allotted trophies did not adequately demonstrate their loss and contribution to the war effort. One representative highlighted that the districts wanted to receive their quota of trophies and that a higher quality trophy represented a higher and nobler sentiment (*The Daily Standard*, 10 December 1920, p. 8). In June 1916, the Australian command had recognised the potential value of war trophies in stimulating recruiting. Commander of the Australian and New Zealand forces, Lieutenant General Birdwood, directly requested of the British that any trophies should be dispatched to Australia during the war instead of at the conclusion of the war for that specific purpose (Clayton 1993, p. 46). In August 1917, a German field gun captured in Loos was unveiled in Queens Park in the Brisbane CBD. A newspaper article reported that the Hon. T. J. Ryan, Premier of Queensland, had earlier requested a trophy 'as an incentive to the people of Queensland'. During the unveiling ceremony speeches, an ex-recruiting sergeant, Mr MacDonnell, 'took advantage of the opportunity to deliver a forceful appeal to eligible men to enlist' (*The Brisbane Courier*, 20 August 1917, p. 7).

At the time the field gun was unveiled in Queens Park, Anzac Day was a growing national event. The concept of a national day to commemorate the loss of Australian and New Zealand lives at Gallipoli had been developing since 1915 and been conducted in a number of cities and towns across Australia. The first Anzac Day held in Brisbane on 25 April 1916 was observed by 50 000 people, many dressed in mourning costume (Evans 2007, p. 156). Anzac Day had been proposed both as a public commemoration of the significant loss of life during the Dardenelles campaign but also, due to the religious response by the traditional Christian clergy, as a day of mourning to acknowledge the loss and grief being experienced at home (Moses 2002, p. 55). Queensland personalities lead the way on creating and defining the scope of the national day with the creation of Anzac Day Commemoration Committee (ADCC) at a public meeting at the Exhibition Hall in Brisbane on the evening on 10 January 1916, attended by T.J. Ryan, Premier of Queensland, Hamilton Goold-Adams, State Governor and Canon David John Garland, a high profile local Anglican priest and secretary of the Queensland Recruiting Committee (Moses 2002, p. 55). The purpose of the committee was to 'make all necessary arrangements, and carry out the celebrations for Anzac Day' for 25 April 1916 (Moses 2002, p. 55).

The strong, initial support for these activities was not unanimous. Some Queensland towns did not immediately reply to the offer of war trophies causing delays in the finalisation of offers across the State (*The Brisbane Courier*, 30 September 1920, p. 7). *The Brisbane Courier* reported statements from a discussion in Queensland's Legislative Assembly in late 1920, supplying a variety of views regarding Queensland's allotment of trophies. Mr Ferricks, Member for South Brisbane, argued that Queensland had enough trophies in the form of 'wounded and crippled soldiers walking the streets' (*The Daily Standard*, 10 December 1920, p. 8). Other members hoped the trophies would not be seen as an incentive to further war whilst others expressed satisfaction that the trophies represented the victory and humility in the outcome of the war and that the trophies would be used as a lesson to future generations. The views expressed during the Queensland legislature meeting were likely a reflection of the wider shared Australian perspective immediately after the conclusion of the war. In 1921, *The Telegraph* reported Alderman Carter's views that money allocated to the ongoing preservation and protection of war trophies or 'instruments of destruction' could be better spent towards the beautification of the city. Carter lamented the constant sight of trophies as they were placed prominently in the public eye, identifying the 'hideous tank at The Exhibition' as one example (*The Telegraph*, 20 September 1921, p. 3). Alderman Gelston, responding in the same article, suggested the trophies were 'symbols by which great deeds could be bought to mind' and they stood as a reminder of 'great sacrifice' (*The Telegraph*, 20 September 1921, p. 3).

The mixed statements reflected mixed cultural viewpoints of the trophies. Some felt the trophies demonstrated victory and implicitly demonstrated

the character of the defence force personnel. Others felt they demonstrated sacrifice and loss and so provided a warning to future generations. Others still felt they were not warranted at all. Clayton acknowledges indications that public opinion towards Australia's war trophies began to shift with the advent of growing anti-war sentiment during the 1920's (Clayton 1993, p. 78). Pearson and Connah (2013, p. 43) report that one source in 1926 labelled Australia's collection of First World War trophies both a 'gruesome scrap heap' and 'ghastly collection of scrap iron'. Some trophies, including Queensland Museum's two German machine guns, were repurposed for the war effort during the Second World War when they were surrendered for training, dismantled for parts or melted for valuable metal whilst other trophies were disposed of through burial (Connah and Pearson 2013). In 1948, the *Courier Mail* reported that three 'weather-worn' Boer War trophy guns were relocated from Queen's Garden, George St, to the Museum, joining the 'rusted World War 1 tank' and giving the Museum 'a Victorian junk-heap appearance' (*Courier Mail*, 12 March 1948, p. 3). It appears the trophies with their strong connection to a time and place began to lose favour and relevancy as time passed.

Despite the large attendance at the inaugural Anzac Day, over time, concerns were raised regarding dwindling attendance numbers (McLeod 2002, p. 4). In the inter-war years, anti-war sentiment grew in both Australia and New Zealand (Clayton 1993, p. 80). However, ANZAC Day continued to be supported and attended by some members of the community. MacLeod (2002) identifies that Anzac Day was initially strongly associated with Australia's military and the Returned Services League (RSL) thereby alienating many younger people from participating in the event. Reynolds and Lake (2010) identify opposition to inherent militarism within Anzac Day events since the 1920's and intensifying from the late 1950s. By the 50th anniversary of Anzac Day in 1965, the commemoration was controlled by the RSL, who organised local ceremonies and controlled who participated in them (McLeod 2013, p. 3). Although legislated as a national day by 1930, media coverage on the 50th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings covered two broad themes – doubts as to whether Anzac Day would continue to be observed and the welfare of returned service people. Attendances to the parades during the 1960s and 1970s were varied, although never reached a low point where the commemoration was in danger of disappearing (McKenna 2010, p. 130).

By 1970, the situation was changing. MacLeod's 2002 paper successfully traces a fundamental shift in ANZAC Day observances and attendances as the role of the RSL in dictating the nature and participants in the day diminished and new, younger generations of participants became included in the day. A new generational lens was slowly applied to the Anzac Day commemorations and the underpinning themes of heroism and loss were slowly transformed to include mateship. On balance, the day was continuing to transform into a myth of nation-building and away from a commemoration of loss. By 1988, media outlets were reporting a change to ANZAC Day attendances. Vietnam veterans were recognised with a homecoming march the previous year. Organisers in 1988 recognised more younger people (16–25 year olds) were marching and this coincided with ANZAC Day crowds in Canberra growing steadily over recent years (The *Queensland Times*, 26 April 1988, p. 1). In 1990, the Australian Prime Minister, R. Hawke, was the first Prime Minister to attend the ANZAC Day observance at Gallipoli and beginning a trend that continues today. On ANZAC Day 2016, the AWM reported large crowds in attendance to hear an address delivered by Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia (AWM n.d.g) and media reported record crowds in attendance for the 2015 services which marked the centenary of the Gallipoli landings (Reinfrank & Thorpe 2015). MacLeod (2002) compares the 1965 and 1990 ANZAC Day commemorations (representing 50th and 75th anniversaries of the Gallipoli landings) and begins by quoting Alan Moorehead who, in 1956, wrote that few people visited the Gallipoli peninsula except for occasional tours of up to six people from year to year. Today, the Gallipoli Dawn Service is trending towards attracting increasingly larger crowds as the peninsular is gaining greater significance each year (Coletta 2016).

Australia's ANZAC Day was initially well-received and attended throughout the First World War and the inter-war period, despite growing anti-war sentiment. However, attendances began to reduce post-Second World War, becoming critically low in the years immediately after the Second World War. As new generations of Australians attended services the day was reinterpreted for new audiences. A new narrative regarding significance of the date in Australia's formation as well as political interest through attendances at events has renewed interest in the day and attendances have accordingly soared. In this regard, the waning and waxing interest in the commemorative events mirrors the treatment of Queensland Museum's First World War trophies.

PARALLEL LIVES

This case study demonstrates a clear correlation between changing significance assigned to four First World War trophies within the Queensland Museum collection and wider community views towards First World War commemoration. As the cultural commitment towards ANZAC commemorations waxed and waned, so did physical treatment and cultural perceptions of the trophies. They were, at one time, publically exhibited directly in front of the Museum's main entry. However, over time, successive directors called for their removal and the trophies were gradually removed from public access. Understanding the functional history of Queensland Museum's First World War trophies, as they transformed from weapons to trophies to museum objects, provides both a chronology as well as a contextual backdrop which we can overlay a social history in order to consider their symbolic role within the Queensland Museum.

All four trophies were developed between 1914 and 1918 as technological responses to large-scale trench warfare. The machine guns and mortar were mass-produced and highly effective but commonplace across the First World War battlefields. These weapons were not named or decorated by their crews as documented in photographs of larger weapons such as cannons and tanks. As trophies, they were held in lower regard and offered to the smallest Australian towns. However, given their efficiency, they caused significant death and injury, particularly when deployed in strongholds. Capturing these positions required great self-sacrifice and often extreme loss of life, ensuring these weapons were taken as trophies. The dates of capture of the trench mortar and two machine guns represented significant turning points in the war that were achieved with critical Australian involvement, symbolising progress and Allied success in an increasingly desperate war.

In contrast, A7V tanks represented a different engineering solution to trench warfare than the Allied tanks and were also rare with only a few manufactured before the end of the war. The *Mephisto* crew, given the opportunity to name the tank, made an overt connection with a devil. The strong symbolism speaks to the implied power of the A7V and its ability to defeat its main opponent, the British tank. The powerful imagery likely inspired confidence with the tank crew and soldiers operating in conjunction with the German tanks. The imagery of a devil carrying a British tank demonstrated confidence in German technology. It also sent a message to the Allied troops of the German's perceived superiority of German tanks over Allied tanks. It is important to note that this image was created prior to any tank versus tank battle. However, unlike the machine guns and trench mortar, *Mephisto* was not captured through a large-scale, critical military action but rather in a smaller operation under the cover of darkness. No less lethal, the circumstances of the capture of this trophy set it slightly apart from the other three. Soldiers directly involved in the capture of the tank were hospitalised for gas exposure. *Mephisto* was a rare object, the first German tank captured by Australian troops, and never seen before by people on the home front.

Public display of the trophies signalled a further clear transformation from weapons to trophies. The public displays performed a number of roles by providing a physical demonstration of the strength of Allied troops and evidence of their victories as

well as commemorating the sacrifice required to capture the trophies and provided some people with a tangible link to loved ones serving or lost overseas. As trophies, these objects represented the implementation of successful strategy and achievement of military goals. *Mephisto*, however, was unique and so generated a different significance for German and Allied troops, and, later, for Australians at home. Its size and presence reflected the strength and courage of the Allied soldiers in wresting it from the Germans. The implied superiority of this A7V drew a strong response once captured. The Australian Rising Sun badge was quickly decorating one side and on the other side appeared a proud British lion with one paw placed on top of an A7V. This symbolism refuted German claims implied through the devil imagery but also was a strong propaganda tool for Allied troops and the general public at home. The Allied graffiti represented the tank being wrested from the enemy and claimed as Australian. The Rising Sun adornment reinforced the ownership transfer. The British lion reinforced the symbolism of the British Empire and Australia's role within that empire.

The immediacy of the war ensured the community engaged with both the trophies as well as other forms of commemoration. Public displays were supported and encouraged by various institutions including the government, clergy, military and community groups. The trophies provided people with a physical reminder of the war, victory, connection to Empire and loss. The graffiti on *Mephisto* was considered significant as it gave people at home a direct connection to friends and relatives serving in Europe and considered by some to be sacred and irreplaceable (*The Brisbane Courier* 15 September 1920, p. 6). Almost immediately, concern was raised regarding the exposure of the tank to the weather and media reporting highlighted the sentimental and historic significance of the tank as well as the public emotional investment in the trophy. However, an emergent peace movement and a growing acceptance of the losses incurred during the war altered the power of these symbols. The trophies were undergoing another transformation.

By the Second World War, and in line with the actions of other communities, Queensland Museum staff actively sought to distance the Museum from the First World War trophies. Trophies in general were seen by some influential citizens as unwanted expenses and their cultural and spiritual importance was undermined to the point where the trophies were being disposed of (Clayton 1993, p. 107). As the machine guns were surrendered only 20 years after deposition at Queensland Museum, Longman wrote to the Officer in Charge stating the weapons are not in first class condition but suggested that they may be of training and instructional use. Longman then wrote to Corporal Kenneth Jackson, a Queensland Museum employee serving with the 9th Battalion in Papua New Guinea, declaring that 'The Police have taken away our two machine guns but they would not tackle the old tank' (Longman 1942). Both the identification that the guns were not in good condition and referring to *Mephisto* as 'the old tank' infers Longman's apparent lack of interest in the trophies. A few short years later, G. Mack (Queensland Museum Director 1946–1963) wrote to the Queensland Government Under Secretary, stating that *Mephisto* was 'now a very unsightly hulk and I should like to have it removed' (Mack 1946). He continued 'With the passing of the years interest in the tank has gone, and it is now merely an ugly object across the entrance to the Museum' (Mack 1946). This letter reveals a very clear disinterest in the tank. It also documents a perceived lack of public interest which is a strong contrast to the significant public, media and political interest in *Mephisto* 20 years earlier. Given the Museum's close association with the Queensland Government, any attempt to dispose of the tank would only be conducted if the risk of public backlash was low. In July 1947, Mack received a firm response from the Director-General of Education, written on behalf of the Premier, advising that the Premier 'does not favour any approach to the Commonwealth Government regarding the transfer of the tank to the National War Museum' (Edwards 1947). The motivation behind the strong desire to retain the tank is unclear, however, it is likely that the Queensland government recognised the Museum's responsibility

to care for an object on permanent loan from the Commonwealth government. No similar concerns were raised regarding either fate or condition of the three other trophies, again highlighting a lack of interest in the trophies.

In 1948, Mack separated the two remaining war trophies and the spaces occupied by the trophies housed other large and significant technology items, coinciding with the growth of this collection within the Museum. The trophies, by default, joined this collection, signalling a further transformation into examples of a past technologies, and came under the care of a new group of curators. They invested time in researching and conserving *Mephisto*, however, the trench mortar continued to deteriorate. Both trophies remained in these locations until the Museum moved to Southbank.

The situation continued to change significantly by the late 1980s and early 1990s. The trench mortar was moved to long-term storage, completing its transformation to a museum technology piece. The tank's new location in the Museum gardens with ready access for people climbing and touching it ensured the tank became intrinsically linked with the Museum. The object was no longer solely associated with a distant conflict but also with family days at a Brisbane institution. Its context and rarity ensured a core group of military enthusiasts continued to remain interested in the tank, prompting a number of publications, however, it also appeared in family photographs. These were not memories of war-torn landscapes and loss of life but of family days out. The tank was transforming to an icon and strong links were culturally generated between the tank, the Museum and, more broadly, Brisbane. Public interest was identified as a commercial opportunity and postcards were generated along with Whitmore's publication for sale in the Museum shop. As the centenary approached, heightened interest in the tank was generated through further research, curatorial presentations and social media.

However, in 2015 the tank was loaned to the AWM, not as a Queensland cultural icon but as a highly significant national and international trophy. The cultural transformations *Mephisto* underwent during its time at Queensland Museum appeared restricted to the immediate community and museum visitors. More widely, the tank was still considered by many as a rare example of wartime technology and as a trophy. This demonstrates that the cultural transformations inherent in objects are not linear nor are they universal. Objects reflect different cultural knowledge depending on their audience. Objects are used in both functional and symbolic contexts which are not static – they are fluid and constantly reinterpreted by individuals and communities through a variety of processes. For example, the process of exchange will create new meaning as objects are removed from their primary place of use to new places and people, for example, into museums. New participants in the agency of the object will reinterpret that object and so the transformation continues. Essentially, different cultural perspectives create different significance and values imbued within objects. The context of that interpretation will change over time through cultural change and objects are reassigned significance, value and meaning within that culture. Those attributes may be culturally shared on a larger scale and, consequently, the symbolism imbued within objects may change over time for a wider population.

CONCLUSION

Objects perform multiple, complex roles (functional, aesthetic and symbolic) within societies. They are physical manifestations of cultural messages, memories and knowledge which are altered depending on the cultural lens they are perceived through. Material culture studies provide an opportunity to interpret how cultures perceive objects and how that perception changes both as the role of an object transforms and as time impacts cultural norms of groups, generating and overlaying or replacing with new messages, memories and knowledge. This change can be mapped to a timeline, creating a biography for an object. Cultural biographies of objects can be created by interpreting

and recording these roles and, importantly, how and when an object transforms within a role. Reflecting on object transformations can provide insight into associated broader cultural transformations within societies. This process is demonstrated within the Museum's engagement with the four First World War trophies identified within this paper. This shifting engagement correlates with changing cultural engagement with First World War and reflects new generations acquiring, altering and renewing the cultural content imbued within both the trophies and Anzac commemoration. Objects that were created initially as weapons in a new style of warfare have transformed to museum pieces and examples of old technologies and cultural icons. This idea is also generally expressed by Pearson and Connah (2013, p. 67) as 'cultural recursivity'. Time has ensured new interpretations have been developed, new memories have been associated with these objects and new knowledge is recorded and shared about them.

Museums enable this type of study as they are both the physical repository of material culture as well as, through ongoing curation, the contextual data associated with these objects. Considering how objects are reshaped and circulated within communities informs us how changing social contexts guide people to reconstruct and reinterpret the objects and use them to project new cultural messages. Embedded memories in objects are demonstrably culturally created and modified over time. Museums have a role in recording both object transformations as well as changing attitudes and transformations within their broader communities to ensure changing cultural interpretations of objects are recorded and retained over time. In turn, objects preserved in museum collections along with their associated growing dataset of knowledge enable future generations to understand their changing cultural past.

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