

A U T U M N 2 0 1 5

the  
**Memory Bank**

Quarterly Newsletter of the Millthorpe & District Historical Society

### The President Writes

With Anzac Day coming up I thought it would be appropriate to feature something about WW1. We plan to have a special display to commemorate the 100 years since the first Anzac Battle and remember the sacrifice made by so many.



I was recently given a photo by Ruth Kingham taken by her father, Leslie Thomas, who was in the Gallipoli Campaign. He took the photo below, with his little folding camera when he was on the Western Front in France. Taking photographs of war scenes were particularly frowned on by the British Officers with severe penalties imposed if you were found out, but the young Australian soldiers delighted in snubbing British rules.

The photo holds significant interest because it was an Australian who came up with the original design for the Army Tank. It looks like this one came to grief.

In 1912 South Australian Lance de Mole submitted a proposal, complete with extensive drawings, to the British War Office, for a "chain-rail" vehicle which could be easily steered and carry heavy loads over rough ground and trenches. The British War Office rejected the idea at the time, but De Mole made several more proposals to the British War Office in 1914 and 1916, and formally requested he be recognised as the inventor of the Mark I tank. The British Royal Commission on Awards to Inventors eventually made a payment of £987 to De Mole to cover his expenses and promoted him to an honorary corporal.



We hope to have more information of this invention and many more to be featured in the Trevor Pascoe Pavilion when it is completed later this year.



Peter Whiley

# THE SAMPLER

**We feature here items from the museum collection to be highlighted in our upcoming display on World War 1.**

## Photographic Collection

Millthorpe Museum has many photos in its collection. These have been donated by the wider community. Featured here are photos donated by member Mrs Ruth Kingham. They were taken by her father Leslie Alexander Carl Thomas of "Hillview", Guyong. Mr. Thomas who was born in 1892 served in Gallipoli and the Western Front. He returned in 1918 and married his childhood sweetheart, Vera Violet Harris, a teacher from neighbouring Shadforth.

Mr Thomas's foresight in capturing on film these images leads us to a better understanding of the conflicts of the period.



Leslie Alexander Carl Thomas enlisted in the AIF at the beginning of WW1 serving with the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Egypt, Gallipoli and France. He trained as a Sergeant Armourer but continued with his keen interest in photography recording scenes of life in camp, the battlefields and a few lighter scenes such as Christmas in France in 1917. Displayed in the museum is a Kodak Eastman camera similar to the one he carried.

## Trench Art

It is said that warfare can be described as "interminable boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror". Soldiers whilst sitting in the trenches often filled their free time by creating decorative items to take home to loved ones, as souvenirs or to sell. Items were usually made from discarded objects and remnants of military hardware. Common articles include decorated shell and bullet casings.

The Millthorpe Museum is fortunate to have several items on display.



*Trench art clock created by Leslie Thomas using a dumped clock face, part of a shell case and German bullet salvaged from a battlefield in France in World War One.*



## Comfort Tin



This decorative brass box was sent by Princess Mary to members of the British, Colonial and Indian Armed Forces for Christmas 1914. Over 426,000 of these tins were distributed to those serving on Christmas Day, 1914. The tins were filled with various items including tobacco, confectionary, spices, pencils, a Christmas card and a picture of the princess. Soldiers held on to these useful containers to store letters and personal items

<http://www.millthorpemuseum.com>



## Shine a light on a member

Mrs Ruth Kingham has been a stalwart member of the Millthorpe and District Historical Society for over 30 years. During this long period she has seen the museum grow and evolve into the vibrant and comprehensive facility it now is. Mrs Kingham has had a particular interest in family history and has seen this aspect of the museum's role become more important in recent years as more people have taken an interest in genealogy. It is far easier to do research now with the internet and the museums ever expanding collections so available. With the increasing subdivision of local landholdings Mrs Kingham has seen an increase in new owners researching the earlier names and families who once owned their land. This is wonderful as our pioneers and their stories are remembered by those who have a direct link to the land.

Mrs Kingham is impressed with the museum's growing involvement in schools and would like to see children develop an understanding of their homes and who once lived in them.

The Millthorpe and District Historical Society recognize Mrs Ruth Kingham and her many years of service.

## World War 1 Memorials in Millthorpe

Millthorpe has a collection of memorials to the fallen and those that served in Word War 1. These include the War Memorial gates, the honour board in Millthorpe Public School and several honour boards in the museum that have been donated as small schools notably Shadforth and Greghamstown have closed.

