

Reg moulds the model soldier

Story, pictures:
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KATHRYN SHAPLAND

A COLLECTION of 315 hand-made miniature soldiers, the work of former British Army warrant officer class two, Reg Copeman, stands at attention behind glass.

The 2008 Denmark Citizen of the Year and 2018 Senior Citizen of the Year for his cleanups of verges throughout the shire, Reg, 88, has for decades been casting the soldiers from plaster.

They can be seen at a private museum, Recollections of War, on South Coast Highway, by appointment with the owners, John and Kathryn Shapland.

Reg began making the soldiers, starting with a Cossack, as a hobby while living at Newman between 1973-1993.

With 20 years in the British Army under his belt, starting with the Boys Battery, Royal Artillery in 1947 he served with the Royal Horse Artillery and later volunteered for service in Hong Kong and Korea.

Serving in the Special Air Service he undertook jungle training in Malaya returning to England in 1955 and serving another eight years being unable to leave the Army due to the Suez Crisis.

A highlight was an exchange to the USA with the 7th Special Forces Group in 1960 and being introduced to US Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland.

With this background Reg took to making the moulds and bases for



the plaster cast miniature soldiers with each trunk, legs and arms varied as required.

Reg told Kathryn and John that each soldier took about 50 days to make with no set pattern as to which sort was chosen next.

The next creation often was based on whatever book Reg was reading at the time, though at times they were completed in blocks, for example, the soldiers from Indian regiments.

As Kathryn says, the attention to detail is incredible – everything has been handmade and painted based on reference material, en-

suring historical accuracy.

“This extends to the smallest of details such as buttons, insignia, lanyards, belts, footwear and headgear as well as weaponry (swords, rifles, spears) and musical instruments,” Kathryn said.

True to his military training Reg has numbered each soldier and the details relating it is written in a file including the version of each body part used and the reference consulted.

Kathryn says Reg was keen to keep the collection together and after exploring a few possibilities he donated it, including reference

material to Recollections of War.

John built the display case and the Shaplands say it has become an iconic centrepiece to the museum, admired by their many visitors.

After being discharged from the British Army in 1969, Reg worked in Zambia and Sierra Leone, Africa for SAS founder David Stirling training police.

In 1973 he worked as a surveyor's assistant in Newman and afterwards joined the environmental section of the geology department's survey party in Newman. In the mid-1990s he moved to Denmark.

John Shapland and the case of miniatures at Recollections of War. Creator of 315 miniature soldiers Reg Copeman.



Forum to tackle fire issues

A FORUM on fire and prescribed burning and its effects will be held on February 25 at the Denmark Civic Centre from 6-9.30pm.

The evening, compered by Councillor Mark Allen, will highlight the practice of prescribed burning which in WA accounts for 200,000ha annually on a rotation of 5-15 years depending on the vegetation type.

Prescribed burning was introduced after devastating fires in the 1960s,

by the late Alan McArthur, who advocated for the reduction of fuel loading in the forest by burning to reduce the risk of wildfires.

A variety of viewpoints will be presented at the forum starting with Warren Blackwood MLA Terry Redman, Shire bush fire risk planning coordinator Melanie Haymont, Great Southern DFES superintendent Wayne Green and Kathryn Kinnear of Bio Diverse Solutions, Albany.

Adjunct Associate Professor Philip Zylstra, who developed the fire research and modelling environment (FraME), will also speak.

FraME introduces a peer-reviewed alternative to older fire models, building on a forest flammability model to provide a comprehensive tool for the design of risk treatments.

Biologist and professor at Curtin University, Kingsley Dixon, is another speaker.

A specialist in conservation and restoration of plants in the South West, Prof. Dixon was instrumental in discovering smoke for germination of Australian species and worked on the discovery of the chemicals in smoke responsible for promoting post-fire germination.

Professor of biodiversity Stephen Hopper is on the list too.

• Please turn to page 15

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