

MEDIA STATEMENT



Monday, 2 May 2016

Museum talk reveals identity of Bunbury soldier

A Bunbury soldier who features in one of the most iconic images from the First World War has been formally identified by family members during a talk at the Bunbury Museum and Heritage Centre.

A WA Genealogical Society project to identify the men in the famous photograph *11th Battalion at the Great Pyramid*, which was taken on 10 January, 1915, reaped rewards when presenter Julie Martin spoke about the myths and mysteries of the image.

Descendants of Bunbury soldier William Hough were among the 40 people who attended and they were able to formally identify him in the picture, in the process helping the WA Genealogical Society get closer to its goal of identifying all 704 men photographed that day.

About 300 of the men in the image have been either positively or tentatively identified, among them some of the 60 Bunbury men who joined the 11th Battalion and were in the photo taken at the ancient pyramid of Cheops in Egypt.

Other family members of former soldiers were also in attendance to help shed light on their service and the story of the famous photo.

Mrs Martin said the photograph, which has been reproduced over many years and now hangs in homes around Australia, was best referred to as “a ghost of a moment in time”.

She said what made the image so significant was its composition and the manner in which the men were instructed to pose.

“The men would have been told to be very natural, to be typical Aussie larrikins, which resulted in the very natural look of the photo,” she said.

The relaxed poses also gave rise to numerous myths and mysteries, including one that a soldier was dead and was being propped up by mates.

“There is no truth to this myth at all as research shows no men died round the time of the photo,” Mrs Martin said. “And there is no way that the soldiers would desecrate a mate’s corpse by propping him up on a pyramid for a photo.”

Mrs Martin said the clarity of the image and digital technology were key contributors to identifying the men.

“We are able to focus closely on the men and see details, such as insignia, that give us clues to their identities,” she said.

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“It also allows us to see the character of these men, many of whom posed in different ways to ensure they could identify themselves later.”

For more information on the project, visit <http://11btn.wags.org.au/>

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