

Background History of the Army Museum Waiouru 30 Years On

On the 15th October 1978, Governor General Sir Keith Holyoake officially opened the QEII Army Memorial Museum. This act symbolised the fruition of one mans vision, Major General RDP Hassett CBE, who through steadfast determination and sheer force of will, conceived and executed the means to erect an institution representing and honouring the servicemen and women of the New Zealand Army, an Army that has played a vital role in every major conflict the world and its freedoms have faced. Major General Hassett was, at the time, the New Zealand Army's Chief of General Staff.

With an eye on the past, and one firmly on the future, he recognised the need to house New Zealand's military heritage under one roof. On the day the foundation stone was laid (15th October 1977), the General took a bet with one of his regional commanders that the Museum would be operating within a year. The Army raised the money while the engineers of 2nd Field Squadron, Royal New Zealand Engineers (RNZE), carried out most of the building. One year to the day, Sir Keith Holyoake, conducted the opening ceremony.



With the need for more display space to exhibit our ever increasing collection of artefacts, Phase 2 was implemented with construction being tasked to 1 Field Squadron RNZE. Five years after the Museum was first built, Prime Minister Robert Muldoon opened Stage 2 on 23rd April 1983.

A Museum of this calibre and relevance, firmly rooted, yet still growing in the national awareness, would be incomplete without a comprehensive Library and Archives to serve the public need, military and civilian. Once more, as he had done 15 years previously, General Hassett, aided by Brig. 'Blackie' Burns, led the charge to establish the Kippenberger Military Archives and Research Library (KMARL). Named after one of New Zealand's finest soldiers, Major General Howard Karl Kippenberger, the Kippenberger Pavillion (KP) was opened by his daughter Mary Weston on 24th March 1995. The foundation stone of the KP was laid on 25th April 1994 by yet another highly revered soldier, Charles Upham VC and Bar, an officer and a gentleman.



For more information about the Museum please see www.armymuseum.co.nz or contact Nicola Bennett, Marketing Manager on 06 387 6911 or 021 495 178.