



**KATOOMBA, NSW, 1 - 3 NOVEMBER 2017**

## **International Art Loan Flights with the Royal Australian Air Force**

Barbara H.C. Reeve FIIC, M. ICOMOS, M.EIANZ

### **ABSTRACT**

This photographic essay illustrates the close cooperation between the Australian War Memorial and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) to transport art and military heritage objects from the Australian War Memorial to museums around the world. Thanks to the RAAF's deep appreciation of the Memorial's mission "To assist Australians to remember, interpret, and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society.", when the Memorial's Director, a former Minister of Defence, calls the Chief of Air Force with a request for transport, a C-17 is usually made available.

The combined RAAF / AWM exercise, RAAF Mission 3614, enabled delivery of the Singapore Surrender Table to the National Museum Singapore; exchange of the AWM's Model M31A Stuart Tank for the Canadian War Museum's Second World War CV-33 Italian Tankette; retrieval of the Menin Gate Lions from Ottawa; and the delivery of William Longstaff's painting, *Menin Gate at midnight*, to the In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper.

The combined RAAF / AWM exercise, RAAF Mission 3626 enabled the return of *Menin Gate at midnight* from Belgium, and the collection of 15 tons of stone for a 'Flanders Fields' garden at the War Memorial for the 100th anniversary of Passchendaele. The mission also carried 'sacred soil' from Belgian cemeteries and battlefields destined to go into this commemorative garden.

The most recent RAAF / AWM exercise, RAAF Mission 3607, enabled the delivery of the Menin Gate Lions to Ypres, for display from ANZAC Day until Remembrance Day 2017.

AWM courier / RAAF crew interactions during these 3 – 4 day flights provide insight for Memorial personnel into the world of the service men and women whose experiences the Memorial exists to portray, and demonstrates how serving personnel view the Memorial, its collections, and its programs.

This on-going relationship between the RAAF and the Memorial routinely exposes people from heritage and military backgrounds to one another, providing each with insight into the issues and choices inherent in the other's worlds.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Recently retired from the Australian War Memorial, (Manager, Heritage Preservation Projects, 2014-2017 and Head, Collection Services, 1998-2014), Barbara's professional training and experience in Europe, the Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East includes object conservation and heritage, collections, and museum management. As a Visiting Scholar, Wolfson College, Cambridge, 2010, she studied eco-effectiveness in the heritage sector.