

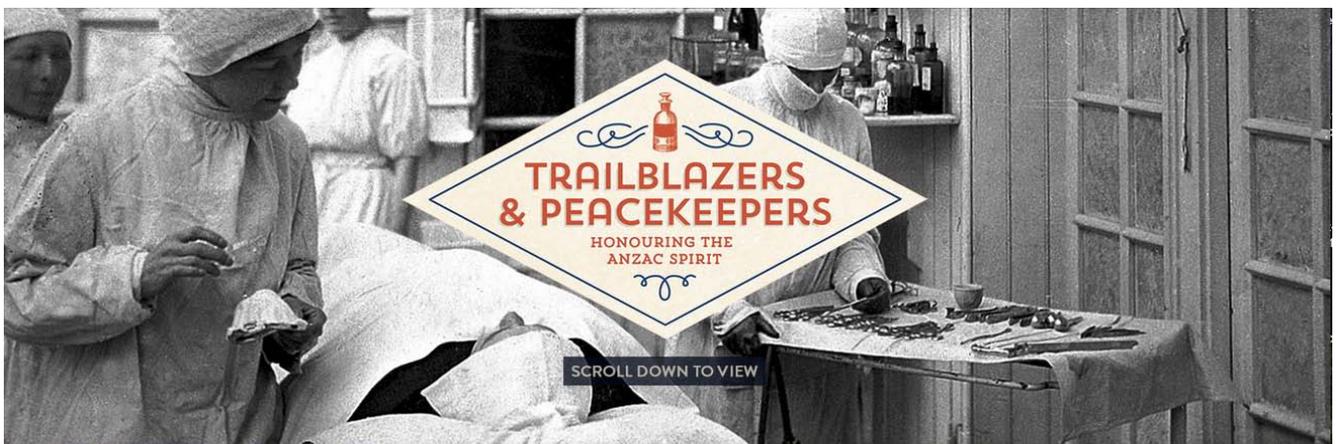
# Trailblazers & Peacekeepers

## Anaesthetists on the Frontline

By Rebecca Anne Naughton Lush

Anaesthetists in war and peace – a topic rarely, if at all, presented to the public. We are currently witnessing World War I Centenary commemorations permeating just about every facet of our public history. As a result, alternate stories of war are now emerging with the hope of creating new dialogues to interest and engage the wider public. *Trailblazers & Peacekeepers: Honouring the ANZAC Spirit* is an online exhibition presented by the newly formed Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History in Victoria. This exhibition is just one example of these alternate stories, tracing the history of Australian and New Zealand anaesthetists during catastrophic times, from the Boer War to the Boxing Day Tsunami. It is an ambitious project, casting a wide net to draw in multiple stories. However, it achieves its main goal through an engaging online experience.

The exhibition sets out to reveal the struggles and innovations of anaesthetists whilst serving in the theatres of war and on peacekeeping missions. It was launched alongside a book and physical exhibition of the same name. According to curator, Monica Cronin, they decided to add an online component to attract a broader audience than those who could physically visit the museum.



Welcome banner to the Trailblazers & Peacekeeper online exhibition.

What is particularly interesting about this exhibition is who they are hoping to engage. You would be excused for assuming it caters only to medical historians and doctors. However, the use of personal stories in the exhibition can connect with visitors who may have limited medical knowledge. In other words, having a background in history did not prevent me from engaging with the subject matter.

The exhibition itself is divided into twelve primary case studies. You are chronologically guided through each one, experiencing it in a very organized and logical manner. At the same time, it is quite an emotional exhibition, unveiling the faces behind the masks, their struggles, and their legacies. The use of personal photographs is particularly powerful, instantly establishing a relationship between you, the visitor, and the subject.

Once this initial relationship is formed, each case study follows the same formula to try and further engage. For example, the story of Geoffrey Kaye begins with his photograph and a large blue sign displaying his name and relevant war. Scrolling down reveals a clearer photograph of Kaye with a panel of text explaining why he in particular was selected to represent this war. Scroll down again and you see more photographs of Kaye during his career and two photographs of objects that featured in the physical display.



Schimmelbusch mask – Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History



Vaporiser – Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History

**Photographs of objects accompanying the section on Geoffrey Kaye.**

These photographs of objects really aid in bringing the physical exhibition to your screen. It is as Cronin hoped; the exhibition is a viable substitute for physically visiting the museum.

Though not with Kaye, some case studies do include more personal items such as diaries or letters to illustrate hardships faced and commitment to the work. Similar to the personal photographs, these objects are used to create emotional connections. You are allowed a small insight into the life of an anaesthetist, reading their stories in their own words. This group, usually excluded from mainstream history, now has an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

Each voice links back to the main aim of the exhibition, revealing how anaesthetists coped during catastrophic events and what innovations emerged as a result. This aim is what really pulls the exhibition together allowing for so many diverse stories and experiences.

What is available is strategically displayed and easy to navigate. At the end of each case study is a continue key that takes you directly to the next case. The colour schemes, fonts, and decision to use block colours to separate the various sections of

each page are all aesthetically pleasing. The design also serves a practical role. Moving from the block colour behind the photographs to that of the text replicates movement in a museum, from the text on a board to the objects in a case. The layout invites you to carefully examine each section before moving to the next.

One major challenge for an online exhibition is that the audience is unable to properly view objects in their 3D form and experience the physical layout. Walking into a space to see an exhibition is a multi-sensory experience. You can see, hear, and even touch and smell your surroundings. Viewing an exhibition online, however, removes much of this atmosphere. An online exhibition cannot fully replicate a museum experience but it can and should be engaging. Remember it is just as easy to log off as it is to log on.

Reflecting on this, it was a wise decision of the Geoffrey Kaye Museum to allocate funds for graphic and web designers. The aesthetics, combined with the stories, are what ensured I pressed continue every time in an eager search for new information.

Overall, *Trailblazers & Peacekeepers: Honouring the ANZAC Spirit* presents an interactive online exhibition that remains loyal to its purpose. Although there are elements that could be further refined, this online exhibition successfully presents a history of anaesthetists in war and peace, achieved through a simply designed aesthetically appealing website. Ironically, it will not put you to sleep.

*The Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History is located in the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists in Melbourne, Victoria. The physical exhibition is running until May, 2016. The online exhibition will continue to operate after this date and can be accessed here: <http://anzca.online-exhibition.net/trailblazers/>.*

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