Air raid shelters were constructed all over Newcastle during the Second World War. As a centre for industry and shipping, Newcastle represented a potential target for attack from enemy aircraft. At least three anti-aircraft guns in the Newcastle area were approved for training. For the majority of those local women, it was a chance to fulfill a patriotic purpose and contribute to the war effort.

Generations of Newcastrians have experienced the impact of war on their lives and their city. Explore Newcastle through the conflicts that have shaped its landscape and character. Meet locals that experienced the impact of war on their lives and their city.

Newcastle at War

Newcastle Region Library
Ground Floor, 15 Laman Street, Newcastle
Monday to Friday 10am – 4pm, closed Tuesday

Fort Scratchley
Nobly's Road, Newcastle East
Wednesday to Monday 10am – 4pm, closed Tuesday
www.fortscratchley.com.au

Newcastle City Hall
248 King Street, Newcastle
Monday to Friday 9am – 4.30pm, closed public holidays
www.newcastlecityhall.com.au

Newcastle Museum
Workshops Way, Honeychurch
Tuesday to Sunday 10am – 5pm, Open Monday during school holidays
www.newcastlemuseum.com.au

Explorers: Generations of Newcastrians have experienced the impact of war on their lives and their city. Explore Newcastle through the conflicts that have shaped its landscape and character. Meet locals that experienced the impact of war on their lives and their city.

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Overlooking Pacific Park, the only original building of Royal Newcastle Hospital still standing.

Royal Newcastle Hospital

More than 70 Nurses from Newcastle and the Hunter served with medical units during the First World War. Waging a war on death and suffering, they impacted on the lives of thousands of soldiers in makeshift hospitals across the battlefields of the Great War. To be eligible to serve, nurses must have completed three years of approved hospital training. For the majority of those local women, that training would have taken place at the Royal Newcastle Hospital. See feature on Matron Ida Gneaves.
Vietnam Veterans. from those who objected to Australia’s participation in the conflict.

Australian history. Many returned servicemen experienced hostility Newcastle’s memorial to those who fought and died in Australia’s flown by the 13th Battalion of the AIF at Gallipoli. donated by local citizens relating to the War, including the flag exquisite work by talented craftsman and artisans, the chapel another place of remembrance for those who fell during the Great War and played at Gallipoli. A bugle that travelled with its owner across the battle fields Matron Ida Greaves was one of the nurses whose journey to the Great War started here at the Royal Newcastle Hospital. Ida was born in 1875. Growing up in Newcastle, she completed her certificate in nursing at the Hospital in 1904. Ida volunteered in private nursing in Australia and Britain until 1914. She was in London the day Britain declared war on Germany. Ida volunteered for the Australian Voluntary Hospital and was appointed Matron of the unit. Embarking for France in late August 1914, she was among the first Australians to serve on the battlefields of the Western Front. Spending almost five years in uniform, Ida was one of the longest serving Australians of the Great War. She was also the first Australian to receive the Royal Red Cross for distinguished service in 1915, awarded to her in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace by King George V. Ida stepped off the Brisbane Mail train at Newcastle Station on the 25th of September 1919. Greeted by a crowd of family and friends, her journey through the most devastating conflict in history finished only a short walk from where she had completed her training in 1904. The Great War changed the way people grieved. With loved ones lost so far from home, memorials like this one became a focal point for community remembrance and personal grief. Shepherds Hill was occupied by military forces in the 1890s and was the site of a “disappearing gun.” Loaded and made ready to fire, below ground, it was lifted by a hydro pneumatic system, fired, and returned below ground to be reloaded and hidden from the enemy. During the Second World War, Shepherds Hill performed a variety of roles and was the only installation that was occupied by all three branches of the armed forces in Australia. Walter Barton, circa 1915

Walter Barton

Born in London in 1886, Walter Barton emigrated to Australia just prior to the Great War. He enlisted with the 6th Reinforcements of the Second Battalion AIF in May 1915 and became the Company Bugler. His son Reg says that “He didn’t want to be a fellow with a rifle, he didn’t want to kill anybody... he ended up with a bugle”. Walter embarked with his unit and arrived at Gallipoli in August 1915. Walter had begun sketching the names of the places he traveled onto his bugle. Starting with the Liverpool Camp, the inscriptions document Walter’s tour of duty. Walter and his unit were transferred to France in 1916. He suffered a shrapnel wound to his right leg on June 6th and spent many months in hospitals in France and England recovering. Walter was transferred to the Royal Australian Flying Corps as a carpenter and fitter. He came home to Australia and lived on Union Street in Newcastle. Walter joined the Newcastle Orchestra and kept the bugle for the rest of his life. His son Reg recalls that his father used the bugle to call him and his brother Ian home for tea. He died in 1983 and his bugle was donated to Newcastle Museum by his son Ian. The foundation stone for Newcastle’s first war memorial was laid in early April 1916. On the first anniversary of the ANZAC landing, marchers led by men wounded at Gallipoli saluted the incomplete pedestal on their way to church services. The memorial was donated to the city by L.T. Gardiner. When first unveiled it was inscribed with 15 names and by the war’s end, 73 names were remembered on its surface. The Warrior’s Chapel at Christ Church Cathedral represents The 35th Battalion was raised in December 1915 and drew its recruits from Newcastle and surrounding areas, resulting in strong representation from the local mining communities. The Newcastle community rallied around the Battalion with an enormous crowd of friends, family and well-wishers farewelling their troops from Broadmeadow Railway Station on May 1st, 1916. The Battalion arrived in England during June 1916 and embarked for France that November. The Battalion’s first encounter in the trenches of the Western Front occurred during the parish winter of 1916/17 and their first major action was the Battle of Messines on July 7th 1917. City Hall formed the nerve centre for Newcastle’s civilian response to an attack on the city during World War Two. The National Emergency Services used the site as their headquarters and from within a bunker underneath Budgewoi Park, information was relayed to the Chief Warden and other officials based inside City Hall. City Hall also played an important role in the social life of Newcastle during the war. From March 1944 the Hall hosted free concerts on Sundays for local and visiting troops, as well as the civilian population. The 35th Battalion also remembered on the Hunter Street Memorial are the men of the 35th Battalion, dubbed Newcastle’s Own. The Battalion was raised in December 1915 and drew its recruits from Newcastle and surrounding areas, resulting in strong representation from the local mining communities. The Newcastle community rallied around the Battalion with an enormous crowd of friends, family and well-wishers farewelling their troops from Broadmeadow Railway Station on May 1st, 1916. The Battalion arrived in England during June 1916 and embarked for France that November. The Battalion’s first encounter in the trenches of the Western Front occurred during the parish winter of 1916/17 and their first major action was the Battle of Messines on July 7th 1917. One of the Battalion’s biggest challenges was to come during an assault near Passchendaele on October 12th, 1917; the 308 men from the 35th that crossed the start line that day only 90 remained unwounded at the end of the battle. The German Spring offensive of 1918 also proved a harrowing time for the unit, suffering nearly 70 per cent casualties during operations to hold back the German advance. In spite of these heavy losses the 35th continued fighting right up until the end of the war. The Battalion was disbanded in March 1919.