

HERALDIC STAINED GLASS DOWNUNDER

Published in the R.H.S.C. BC/Yukon Branch THE BLAZON Winter 2018

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While I lived in New Zealand from 1970 to 1980, I hadn't been back there for nearly twenty years. I used the occasion of visiting family in Australia to also visit cousins and friends in Auckland. The city has changed quite a bit and it was interesting visiting old haunts. One of which is the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Located in a park domain in downtown Auckland, this large structure is considered one of the finest Greco-Roman design buildings in the Southern Hemisphere. It was built in 1929 through public subscription of Auckland residents

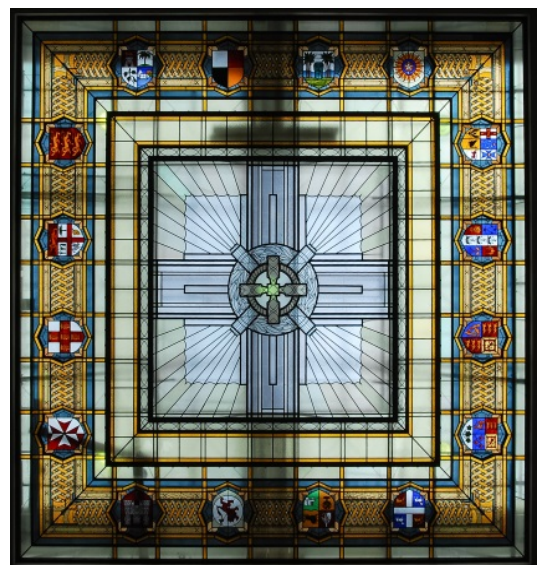


Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland NZ, built 1929.
Photo from: www.authors.org.nz

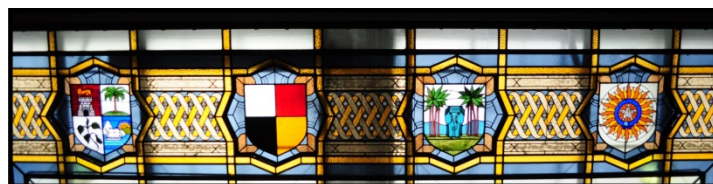
in remembrance of the sacrifice made during World War One; it was the third Auckland museum. It is not a war museum; it is a war memorial museum and, as such, has a wide variety of cultural and heritage displays that also includes some areas of military remembrance. Around the exterior are 44 WWI battle scenes in the frieze.

I often visited the Museum and recall helping as a volunteer sorting some of the military artifacts to make space for new items. The purpose of my recent visit in November 2017 was to discuss heraldry with Mr. Roger Barnes, Treasurer of the Heraldry Society of New Zealand. I had made contact with Roger before I left sunny Comox and we arranged to meet. Roger drove us to the Museum and we entered through the new underground parking and new modern visitor entrance that were completed as part of the recent renovations and developments. We set off exploring the ground floor of the museum as we made our way to the large columned front entrance area (as seen in the photo, above). In the main foyer the light spilled down from the huge heraldically decorated stained glass skylight four floors above. Once on the top floor we got a better view of the skylight details.

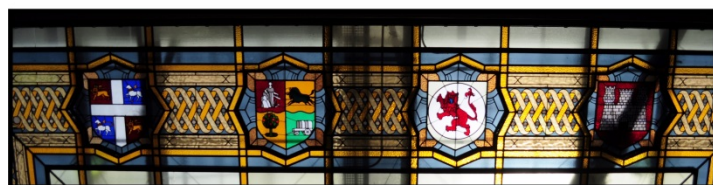
Around the four sides of the skylight were arranged sixteen shields of the arms of prominent nations and colonies of the British Empire. Some of the arms were easily identified, like Great Britain, Canada and New Zealand. Some took a little research to get the right name. Malta was easy, as was India. It was fun getting the correct name for the right badge. The background shadows obscured some of the badge images, like the one for Gibraltar. And there were more colonies not included.



Main entrance skylight
Photo credit: Daniel Vorndran



Straits Settlements Malaya Ceylon India



Newfoundland South Africa Kenya Gibraltar



Australia New Zealand Great Britain Canada



Malta Jamaica Fiji Channel Islands

Cropped panels from the stained glass skylight at the Auckland War Memorial Museum to show and identify the arms.

Photos by Steve Cowan

Around the mezzanine floor were a various memorial panels and displays relating to WWI. There were several large maps that showed the principal engagements of the war. And around these maps were the various arms of British dominions and colonies. This made for an interesting collect of colourful arms of former colonies that are mostly now independent nations, and mostly still in the Commonwealth.



One of the large wall maps; note the national arms in chief and base.
Photos by Steve Cowan

The Arms of allied nations were also included in several displays. As a world war, the 1914 - 1918 Great War included allied nations not typically associated with this conflict. Below are some of the allied nation arms from Central and South America.



Some of the allied nations' arms displayed on walls near the heraldic skylight. The names shown here are Uruguay, Brazil, Cuba and Panama from the Western Hemisphere as well as Poland from Europe.

Photos by Steve Cowan

The visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum was very interesting and lead to a unique behinds-the-scenes archival and viewing that will be another article.