

**Locality:** BRIAGOLONG

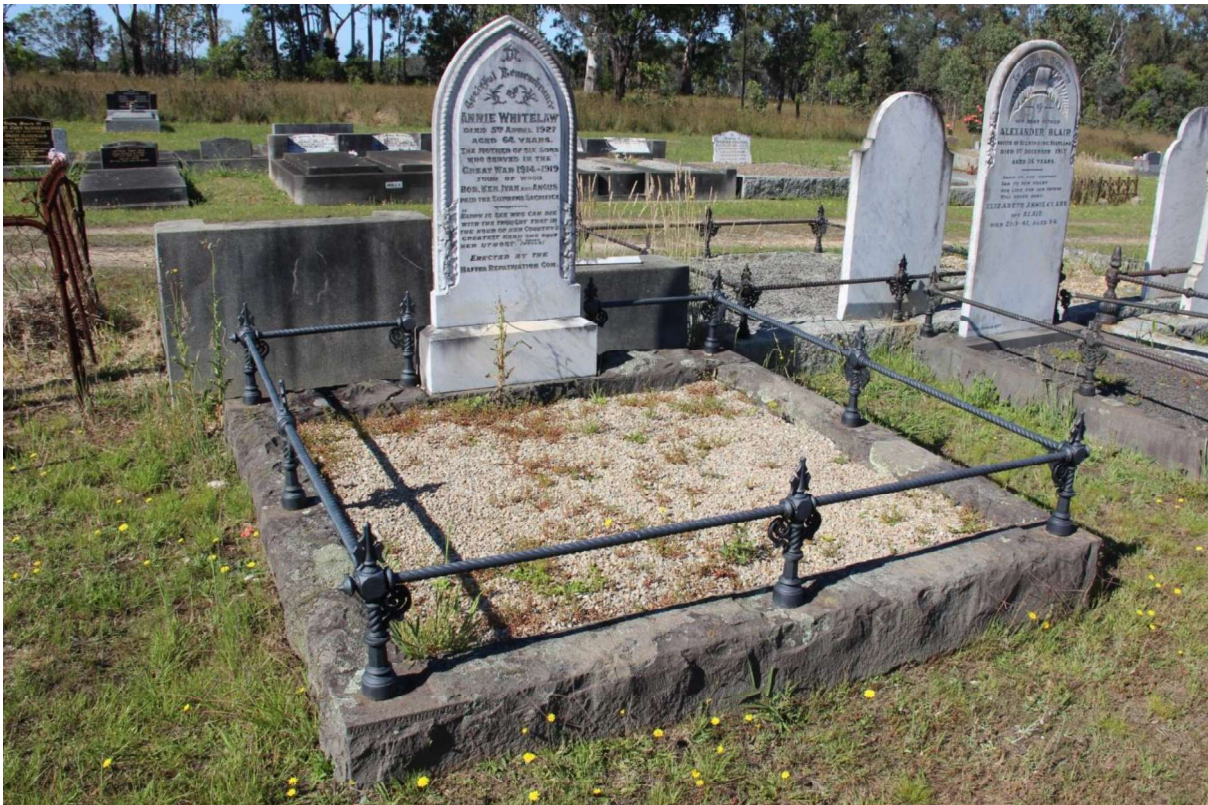
**Place address:** BRIAGOLONG CEMETERY, 570 BOUNDARY ROAD

**Citation date** 2016

**Place type (when built):** Memorial

**Recommended heritage protection:** National government level.  
National Heritage List: Yes  
Local Planning Scheme: Yes  
Heritage Inventory (Archaeological): Yes  
Vic Heritage Register: No

**Place name:** Annie Whitelaw Grave



**Architectural Style:** Inter War Gothic

**Designer / Architect:** Not known

## Statement of Significance

This statement of significance is based on the history, description and comparative analysis in this citation. The Criteria A-H is the Heritage Council Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance (HERCON). Level of Significance, Local, State, National, is in accordance with the level of Government legislation.

### *What is significant?*

The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone, and perimeter fencing are significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone, and perimeter fencing are historically significant at a local and **National level**. The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone and perimeter fencing are socially, aesthetically and scientifically significant at a local level to Wellington Shire. It is also locally significant for the potential to yield archaeological data.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone, and perimeter fencing are **historically significant at a National level** for the local and national recognition of Annie Whitelaw's loss of four of her six sons directly due to their service in WW1, and for illustrating the impact on Australian women of the soldiers' deaths. The Governor-General's Private Secretary wrote a letter addressed to the Maffra Repatriation Committee in apology that his Excellency and Lady Somers could not attend the unveiling of the memorial held on 25 August 1927, but that they 'very much appreciate the action which your Committee has taken in erecting a tombstone to such a worthy subject of Australia. His Excellency is very fully alive to the great part taken in the late war by mothers who were willing to send their sons to fight the Empire's battles, and both he and Her Ladyship realise in full measure the heavy strain and anxiety which mothers bore in silent bravery'. (Criterion A)

The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone, and perimeter fencing are **socially significant at a local level** for their association with the Maffra Repatriation Committee who raised funds for the tombstone and fence, and for the unveiling of the memorial on 25 August 1927, which continues to be highly regarded in the community today. (Criteria A & G) It is also significant for its special association with Mrs Annie Whitelaw and her sacrifice, and for the rare recognition of honoring the contribution of the womanhood of Australia, as articulated at the memorial service by dignitaries who stated that 'the monument was primarily in memory of the late Mrs Whitelaw but was at the same time intended as a recognition of other mothers who had lost sons at the war', while another stated that Mrs Whitelaw's 'contribution to the Empire was a unique one'. (Criterion H)

The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone, and perimeter fencing are **aesthetically significant at a local level** for the intact white marble memorial headstone with lead lettering, the rustic quarry-faced bluestone plinth and the low, elegant cast iron fence which consists of twisted rails to resemble rope supported by nine bracketed posts. (Criterion E)

The Annie Whitelaw grave, memorial headstone, and perimeter fencing are **scientifically significant at a local level** for the work of the artisans with stonemasonry skills, as illustrated on the hand carved memorial headstone and lead lettering, which are now rarely used for new monuments. It also has potential to yield archaeological evidence in the land around the grave. (Criteria B, C & F)

## Statutory Recommendations

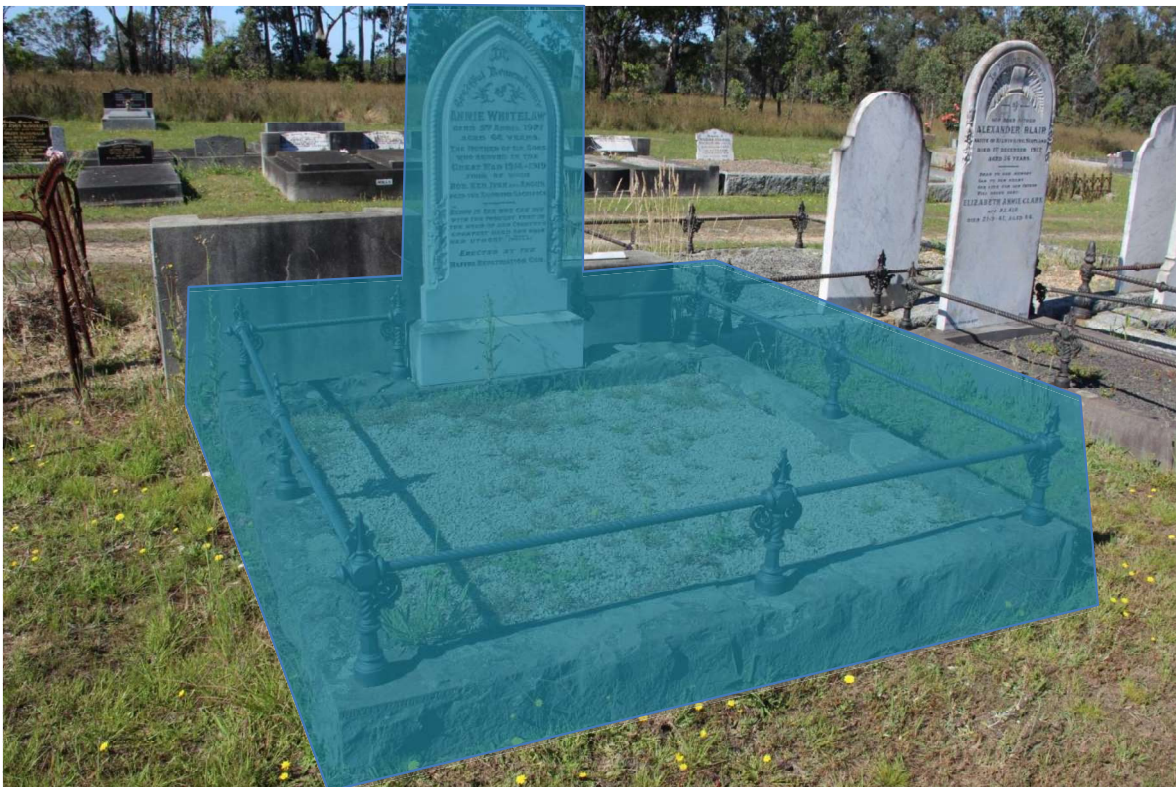
This place is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wellington Shire Planning Scheme with the boundaries as described below.

<b>External Paint Controls</b>	Yes, including cleaning
<b>Internal Alteration Controls</b>	No
<b>Tree Controls</b>	No
<b>Fences &amp; Outbuildings</b>	Yes, stone and cast iron fence to the Annie Whitelaw grave
<b>Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan</b>	No
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place</b>	Not assessed

## Recommended boundary for Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay boundary to cover the plot of Annie Whitelaw. HO to cover: the whole area of the grave site, including the marble headstone and the bluestone and cast iron fencing, as seen in the photo below and listed in the Statement of Significance.

It is recommended that the setting of the grave and memorial be protected when the cemetery is covered with a Heritage Overlay as part of a future assessment and amendment to the Planning Scheme.



## History

### Thematic context

This place is associated with the following themes from the *Wellington Shire Thematic History* (2005):

8. Governing and administering:

- 8.7. War and Defence

9. Developing cultural institutions and way of life:

- 9.2. Memorials

The following is based on information taken from the *Wellington Shire Thematic Environmental History* (Context 2005:45-6):

Memorials are erected throughout the Shire in honour of pioneers and district explorers, significant events and people, and those who served in world wars and other conflicts.

The soldiers' memorials that are spread throughout the Shire show the impact that the two world wars, and subsequent conflicts, had on so many communities and families within the Shire. It must be remembered that while commonly referred to today as 'war memorials', these memorials were originally erected in honour of, and to commemorate, the soldiers and those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The memorials were often funded by the community and erected with great community pride, in honour of the locals who died or served and returned.

The group of Rosedale memorials comprises two soldiers memorials and an Angus McMillan memorial. Among the names listed on the soldiers memorials are those of James Wilfred Harrap and Ernest Merton Harrap, brothers from Willung who were killed on the same day at the battle for Polygon Wood near Ypres in 1917. Listed on the Briagolong soldiers' memorial are the names of six Whitelaw brothers, three of whom were killed on active service and one who died later from wounds received. A memorial to their mother, Annie Whitelaw, was erected at her grave in honour of her sacrifice, and to all mothers of sons who served at the front. Soldiers' memorials also remain at Maffra, Stratford and Yarram, to name a few. While St James Anglican Church in Heyfield stands as a Soldiers' Memorial Church. There are also remnants of avenues of honour. The pine trees at Stratford lining the route of the former highway were planted as a memorial to soldiers who served in the First World War. Many of the memorials also have plantings, such as a lone pine, planted in connection with the memorial.

Among the many other memorials in the Shire are those to district pioneers. The cairns erected to Angus McMillan and Paul Strzelecki in 1927 follow their routes through the Shire and were part of an orchestrated campaign of the Victorian Historical Memorials Committee to infuse a sense of history into a landscape that had no ancient monuments.

The struggle for road access in isolated areas is remembered by a cairn dedicated to the Country Roads Board, erected in 1935 at the intersection of the Binginwarri and Hiawatha roads. Transforming a landscape from dryland grazing to irrigated pasture is symbolised by a dethridge wheel mounted on a cairn on the Nambrok Denison estate. A memorial is planned at site of the West Sale Holding Centre to commemorate the migrants who came to settle in postwar Australia. Bronze plaques, designed by Sale artist Annemieke Mein and on display in Sale, document the contributions of several famous Gippslanders, including singer Ada Crossley and writer Mary Grant Bruce.

## Place history

The Briagolong Cemetery is located south of the township and was reserved for use as a cemetery in 1880. The earliest headstone at the small cemetery, which is aligned along one main axis, dates to 1882 (Context 2005).

The cemetery contains the headstone of Annie Whitelaw, wife of Robert Whitelaw. The headstone was erected as a monument to her sacrifice during World War I, and to all mothers of sons who served at the front. Six of Annie's eight sons (two were underage) enlisted in World War I (Monuments Australia). Three of the brothers were killed in active service, while a fourth, Kenneth, died later from wounds received in action (Context 2005:45-6). Annie also lost two nephews (her sisters' sons), Thomas Leslie Lotton and Angus Cyril O'Nial, whose names are also listed on the Anzac Park Memorial along with the six Whitelaw brothers (MDHS; Briagolong History).

Army records state that Sergeant Robert Angus Whitelaw (Figure H1), 21<sup>st</sup> battalion, was killed in action on 3 May 1917 at Bullecourt, France. Corporal Ivan Cecil Whitelaw, 12th Battalion, was killed in action on 23 April 1918, and Private Angus McSween Whitelaw, 24th Battalion, was killed in action on 25 August 1916 (AWM). Robert was the second son of Robert and Annie, while Cecil was the fifth son. Robert had previously been reported wounded and missing (*The Argus* 6 Aug 1917:1; 22 May 1918:1).

After World War I, the Briagolong community were sensitive to her loss and are thought to have installed a blind above the Honour Roll in the Mechanics Institute in order to spare her the distress when visiting. Annie is known to have watched the ANZAC Day parades from a distance from her buggy, unable to attend (Monuments Australia). Portraits of the three Whitelaw brothers killed in action are hung at the Briagolong R.S.L. clubrooms.

The headstone was installed at her gravesite following her death in 1927. The headstone reads 'In Grateful Remembrance of Annie Whitelaw, Died 5<sup>th</sup> April 1927 Aged 64 years. The mother of eight sons who served in the Great War 1914-1919, four of whom, Bob, Ken, Ivan and Angus paid the Supreme Sacrifice'. A quote below reads 'Happy is she who can die with the thought that in the hour of her Country's greatest need she gave her utmost. (Conan Doyle)' The bottom of the headstone notes that it was erected by the 'Maffra Repatriation Com.(mittee).'

The unveiling of the memorial was held on 25 August 1927. A local newspaper published a full report on the ceremony which a number of important figures attended. The article reported that the Maffra Repatriation Committee, and the originator of the idea Secretary Mr James French, had gathered a 'large and representative gathering' at the Briagolong Cemetery for the unveiling of the monument 'to the memory of the late Mrs R. Whitelaw, who lost four out of six of her sons who sent to the war'. The Governor-General's Private Secretary wrote a letter addressed to the committee in apology that his Excellency and Lady Somers could not attend, but that they 'very much appreciate the action which your Committee has taken in erecting a tombstone to such a worthy subject of Australia. His Excellency is very fully alive to the great part taken in the late war by mothers who were willing to send their sons to fight the Empire's battles, and both he and Her Ladyship realise in full measure the heavy strain and anxiety which mothers bore in silent bravery.' Mr A. McAdam, Chairman of the committee, stated that 'the monument was primarily in memory of the late Mrs Whitelaw but was at the same time intended as a recognition of other mothers who had lost sons at the war', and added that Mrs Whitelaw's 'contribution to the Empire was a unique one'. The Hon. Donalds McKinnion, who was Director of Recruiting during the war, unveiled the monument and stated that 'during the war the women of Australia had displayed the highest love for their country, and the work they had done throughout that long and terrible campaign was perhaps not fully appreciated. Australia's part in the war was a noble one, and her contribution was worthy of this part of the British Empire. Sixty thousand of the flower of her manhood made the great sacrifice in the cause of liberty and freedom. It was an anxious time for the mothers of the sons who were engaged in that struggle, for they never knew the moment when the clergyman would appear at their homes to break to them the sad news of

the loss of a loved one.' Speeches were also made by the Honourable G. M. Davis, M. L.A., who 'knew the Whitelaw family intimately', and the Honourable M. McGregor, who said that 'the late Mrs Whitelaw was a fine example of the best of womankind in Australia' and that 'the Whitelaw family had indeed played a noble part in that Great War', in sending six sons. Mr J. W. McLachlan, M. L. A. Praised Mrs Whitelaw, stating that 'by her sacrifice, had shown herself to be one of the foremost mothers in the Commonwealth' and that 'he was not aware that her greatest contribution to the war had been surpassed in the Commonwealth.' McLachlan had spoken to Colonel Boucher, who had Gippsland boys serve under him, and that he conveyed that 'Mrs Whitelaw's performance was a unique one'. He continued by saying that 'the late Mrs Whitelaw was a humble homely and patriotic woman' and that 'Briagolong had lifted itself on to a high plane in paying tribute to a woman who was an honor to the Empire. To the future historian in searching the records would come upon the name of Whitelaw, and would hold it up as an example of what a mother did in a preceding generation for her country and her Empire'. Mr Semmens, a returned soldier and Cr. Long, President of the Maffra Shire, also paid warm tributes to Mrs Whitelaw and all mothers of men who served at the front. The ceremony was concluded with the sounding of the Last Post (*Gippsland Times*, 25 Aug 1927:5).

Facing and surrounding Annie Whitelaw's headstone are the headstones of family members. The headstone of Private Kenneth Whitelaw (died 17 October 1922) is opposite. A second headstone nearby is that of Sergeant D. J. Whitelaw (died 14 April 1965, aged 77). Other headstones are for Elizabeth Whitelaw (d. 2 July 1970, aged 81) and Francis Norman Whitelaw (died 2 Sep 1972, aged 70 years).

In 2015, Annie Whitelaw's headstone stands above a double plot, lined with bluestone with a cast iron rail (recently restored) of a common type to the cemetery.



**Figure H1. Studio portrait of 1003 Private (Pte) Robert Angus Whitelaw, 21st Battalion, of Briagolong, Victoria (AWM).**

## Sources

Australian War Memorial (AWM), item DA09096, <<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/>>, accessed 17 Dec 2015.

Briagolong History Facebook page, <<https://www.facebook.com/BriagolongHistory/photos/>>, accessed 19 Dec 2015.

Context Pty Ltd (2005), 'Wellington Shire Heritage Study Thematic Environmental History'.

*Gippsland Times*

Maffra & District Historical Society (MDHS) collection: historical information and photos generously provided by Linda Barraclough, Pauline Hitchins & Carol Kitchenn, provided Nov 2015.

Monuments Australia, 'Annie Whitelaw', <<http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/>>, accessed 17 Dec 2015.

*The Argus*

## Description

This images describes the place in 2016.



Figure D1. View of the front of the gothic memorial headstone and base, both made of marble with hand carving and lead lettering.



Figure D2. Detail showing the carved 'rope', gothic pointed arch, and deteriorating lead lettering on the marble memorial headstone.



Figure D3. Back of the gothic memorial headstone showing black algae growth.



**Figure D4. Detail showing lichen on the bluestone plinth, and 'restored' cast iron rail and post.**

### *Sources*

All photos taken in 2015 by Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd as part of Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study.

## **Comparative analysis**

The Annie Whitelaw grave provides a commemorative focus and reminder to the Australian community of the significance of the great personal loss of their family's sons in WW1.

There are several cemeteries, and some with specific graves, listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. However, none of them are associated with the sacrifice and honour of the women of Australia, whose sons participated, died or were wounded in WW1.

The Australian War Memorial and Memorial Parade is on the National Heritage List, however, there are no graves associated with WW1 or specifically associated and honouring the role of women and their personal suffering, for the loss of their children due to service in WW1.

The Annie Whitelaw Grave is unique in that it has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of its special recognition of the personal contribution of the women of Australia in the loss of their sons in WW1.

The locally significant Inter War Gothic design, comprising the white marble memorial headstone with lead lettering and sculpted detailing and decoration, is an intact but typical example of many graves of the time, including similar styled graves in the Briagolong Cemetery.

## Management Guidelines

Whilst landowners are not obliged to undertake restoration works, these guidelines provide recommendations to facilitate the retention and enhancement of the culturally significant place, its fabric and its setting, when restoration works or alterations to the building are proposed. They also identify issues particular to the place and provide further detailed advice where relevant. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive and a pragmatic approach will be taken when considering development proposals. Alternative approaches to those specified in the guidelines will be considered where it can be demonstrated that a desirable development outcome can be achieved that does not impact on a place's heritage integrity.

### 1. Location and Setting

- 1.1. The grave, memorial headstone, fence should not be removed from this site.
- 1.2. The setting of the cemetery, including the other graves and particularly the other Whitelaw family graves within the historic Briagolong Cemetery, should be protected with a Heritage Overlay over the whole Cemetery, possibly as a group listing of cemeteries in the Shire.

### 2. Care and Maintenance

- 2.1. **Never** waterblast, sandblast or soda blast (or any sort of blasting) the memorial.
- 2.2. Never 'seal' the surface with any product, or acid wash the marble memorial headstone (acid dissolves marble, even when briefly on the surface).
- 2.3. Never use commercial rust converters on the cast iron railing and posts. Treat them with Fish Oil, rather than painting.
- 2.4. If the joints between the bluestone require repointing, traditional mortar mixes were commonly 1:3 lime:sand. Never use cement mortar.
- 2.5. Refer to the Resources list below. These were written by Jenny Dickens, Senior Conservator at Heritage Victoria. They are in plain English, well illustrated and have very important instructions to avoid irreparable damage from using modern methods and products. Further assistance is available from the Shire's heritage advisor.
- 2.6. Monitor your memorial regularly.
- 2.7. It is not a disgrace for a monument to look its age and reflect its history.
  - 2.7.1. Leave the algae on the perimeter bluestone plinth. It does no damage to the bluestone, and imbues it with a patina of age.
  - 2.7.2. Memorials are meant to develop a patina of age to imbue them with a sense of timelessness, and gravity of the memory. They are not meant to look bright and super clean, apart from when they did when they were built. Honour the original craftsmen when doing cleaning and repairs. Do not scrub away the historic craftsmanship.
- 2.8. Don't introduce new features or embellishments, such as cement.
- 2.9. Don't use modern products or cleaning agents.
  - 2.9.1. The biggest risk to memorials is permanent damage by the use of cleaning materials, agents and methods. E.g. sand or water blasting will remove some of the stone, and sand blasting in particular will destroy the original, highly skilled hand cut lettering. This is serious damage which cannot be undone.
- 2.10. This memorial is mostly in good condition however, the following repairs are recommended.
  - 2.10.1. The lead lettering is starting to dislodge. Deterioration of lead lettering on marble usually results from weathering of marble adjacent to the letters (acid washing will cause this), but repeated heating and cooling can cause crevices at the edges of the lead, in which mould can grow causing further loosening.
    - 2.10.1.1. Use a professional conservator to repair the lettering.
  - 2.10.2. The back of the memorial headstone is discoloured with algae growth.

2.10.2.1. The following is taken from Cleaning Marble Memorials Methodology (Jenny Dickens Senior Conservator, Heritage Victoria):

1. Clean off windblown dirt with a small amount mild detergent in water, sponges and paint brushes. Followed by rinsing in clean water. No scrubbing. Suitable detergents are hand dishwashing liquids (NOT dishwasher detergents).
2. Apply a quaternary ammonium compound like 'Wet and Forget' or 'D-2 Biological Solution' Use NSW HO's recommendations (link below) of painting on the solution and leaving it for 4-6 weeks before brushing with a stiff hair brush. No scrubbing with wire or stiff nylon bristle brushes. This method is a lot better because the 4-6 weeks allows the plant life to die and the roots to shrink and dry up. So the removal is a lot easier and less likely to damage the stone.

<<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/tagbiologicalgrowths.pdf>>

### *Resources*

The following fact sheets contain practical and easy-to-understand information about the care and preservation of war heritage and memorabilia commonly found in local communities across Victoria. They can be downloaded at <<http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/veterans/victorian-veterans-virtual-museum/preserving-veterans-heritage/preserving-war-heritage-and-memorabilia>>:

- [Finding-the-right-conservator-tradespeople-and-materials](#)
- [General-Principles](#)
- [Useful-resources-and-contacts](#)
- [War-Memorials.](#)