



FEATURE STORY

Work Life: Industry Develops in Cowra as a Result of the War

After the war began, Cowra's industries were transformed in a number of ways. The hospital required an additional wing and more equipment, a military camp was opened to train soldiers before they were sent to war, munitions were manufactured in the town and a cannery was opened early to provide food for the growing need of tinned products at the time.

Hospital:

The war had affected Cowra both positively and negatively. One of the positive events that happened was the expansion of the hospital. The hospital began to be used immensely and accommodation was severely taxed once Cowra acquired military training and POW camps. By mid-1940, extensions were required to meet the military standards. A 30 bed military wing was immediately constructed. In 1941, 560 military patients were treated. The prisoners were put in an isolation ward out the back. When patients required an X-ray they would have to go through the Children's Ward as it was the only way to get to the X-ray room. The children were always entertained when prisoners came through with guards.

Cannery:

Due to WW2 the canned vegetable industry received a boost because of the increasing demand for food that would not spoil within long periods of time. After Japan launched the Pacific War over 500,000 military personnel were temporarily based in Australia and New Guinea.

DP Mellor wrote, "A large part of the supply of vegetables for the services was drawn from Leeton and Griffith from Bathurst, Cowra and Windsor, the Goulburn valley in Victoria and Tasmania.



Production expanded after the Commonwealth and the United States governments became concerned about shipping canned food for Australia and its allies. They needed to commence building immediately. Edgell Cowra went under construction in February 1943 as a monument of Ham Edgell, the founder of the cannery.

Ammunition Factory:

The Cowra showground was converted into a branch of an ammunition factory operated by the women of Cowra during the war. This was unusual, as at the time women did not generally work in paid occupations. A lot of people didn't actually know about the factory and only found out after the war was over. This meant they didn't know the large contribution their town made during the war. The factory was recently recognised on the National Trust Register acknowledging its historical importance.