



The Royal United Services Institute of Victoria, Inc.
Promoting National Security and Defence

A constituent body of The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies Australia Limited

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RUSI VIC QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Mike Rawlinson

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Northrop Grumman Triton UAV

The Royal Australian Air Force's first MQ-4C Triton High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Uncrewed Aerial Vehicle (UAV) made its first flight on the 9 November in California. The RAAF's four Tritons will be based at RAAF Tindal and controlled by the newly-reformed No. 9 SQN from RAAF Edinburgh, nearly 2,500 kilometres away. A small number of 9 SQN personnel will be based at Tindal to provide taxi, landing and takeoff services. All maintenance on the operational aircraft will be carried out by Northrop Grumman Australia under an interim sustainment support contract. Triton has a wingspan greater than a Boeing 737.

Christmas Greetings



**Royal United Services Institute of Victoria
Incorporated
December 2023 Newsletter**

RUSI VIC -2023/24

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Department of Veteran's Affairs	www.dva.gov.au
Shrine of Remembrance	www.shrine.org.au



Opinions expressed in the RUSI VIC Newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Institute.

From the President:

Major General Mike O'Brien CSC (Retd)



On behalf of the RUSIV Council may I wish you all a safe, happy and healthy Christmas and festive season.

You will be pleased to know that we have scheduled a series of lunchtime addresses in 2024 by key Defence personnel and commentators.

The first of these talks will be in February and details will be announced separately.

Mike O'Brien



October Speaker – Sam Roggeveen

Director Lowy Institute International Security Program –

The Echidna Strategy: Australia's Search for Peace and Power

Operation Kingfisher

The cancelled rescue mission that sacrificed Sandakan POWs to the Death Marches

Speaker: Gary Followill

MHHV Zoom Speaker Event
Wednesday 21 February 2024 7:00PM-8:00PM



 A poster for a conference. The top half has a red background with a white dove in the center, holding an olive branch. Above the dove is a red banner with black and white portraits of several men. Below the dove, the text "PAX SOVIETICA" is written in large, bold, black letters. The bottom half of the poster has a black background with red and white text.

PAX SOVIETICA

GAME OF DOMINOES:
AUSTRALIA'S SECURITY AND THE COLD WAR
1947-1991

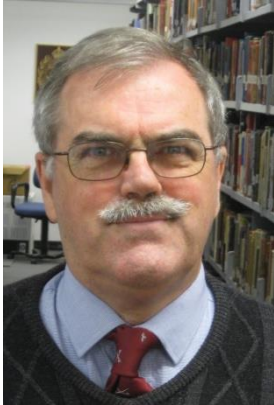
THE 5TH MHHV BIENNIAL TWO-DAY CONFERENCE
SATURDAY 13 & SUNDAY 14 APRIL 2024

WAVERLEY RSL
161 COLEMAN PARADE, GLEN WAVERLEY, MELBOURNE.

 At the bottom of the poster, there are three logos: a gold trumpet icon for Military History and Heritage Victoria Inc., the "echo" logo for Echo Books, and the RSL (Returned Services League) logo.

From the Secretary:

Lieutenant Colonel Bob Hart RFD



As 2023 draws to a close, with all its ups and downs, it is perhaps appropriate to wish everyone the best of the holiday season and remind you all to stay safe.

Membership

We have been advised of the death of Dave Jenkins. The Council approved the following applications for membership.

David Hundt, Lachlan Gaylard, Timothy Bull, Matthew Pickett, Samuel Bashfields, Peter Williams, Trevor Williams, Timothy Lewis, Phillip Battye, Richard Gray, Peter Johnson, Riley Maddeford, Andrew Meagher.

A warm welcome to those new members.

There are also four other applications that arrived after the Council Meeting, and they will be put up for approval at the next meeting.

I hope to see you all in 2024.

Bob Hart



At ANZAC House

Bequests

Royal United Services Institute of Victoria

The Royal United Services Institute of Victoria was established in 1890. It seeks to promote informed debate on and improve public awareness and understanding of defence and national security.

The Institute maintains a specialist library to assist in this, as well as scheduling regular lectures and visits of interest. The costs of doing so, however are becoming burdensome and are exacerbated by an ageing and declining membership.

To allow us to continue to provide services to members and the community into the future, you could greatly assist us by remembering the Institute in your will. Should you desire assistance in adding an appropriate codicil to your will, please contact the Secretary at secretary@rusivc.org.au. If you have added a bequest to your will, it would be of assistance to be advised of it (not the specific amount) in case we need to communicate with you or your executors.



Presidential Address
Annual Luncheon, 13 November
Angliss Restaurant

Opinion -Nuclear Power Update

Mike Rawlinson

Energy Security is a necessary determinant of National Security. The routine intermittency of wind and solar is overcome by batteries and pumped hydro. This means that wind and solar infrastructure must be overengineered to provide for normal demand plus the charging of batteries and/or pumping of water. However, because of the short-term nature of intermittency, grid energy security cannot be achieved by wind/solar generation backed by batteries/pumped hydro alone.

As Energy security is compromised if renewables are dormant for a long period, they need to be complemented by sources capable of providing base-load power in contingency situations. Sources could be Gas, High Efficiency Low Emissions (HELE) Coal with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) or Nuclear.



Nuclear energy faces challenges, including high capital costs, a history of budget blowouts, and implementing permanent storage solutions for nuclear waste. However, nuclear energy can provide carbon dioxide emission free energy, and its ability to produce reliable power over a long lifespan means that it can play an important role in a decarbonised future.

Now that Australia has signed up to acquiring nuclear powered submarines under the AUKUS agreement it is appropriate to revisit nuclear power for electricity generation.

The Nuclear Energy Story

Civilian nuclear fission reactors have been in use since the 1950s. There are about 440 nuclear fission reactors currently operating in the world, representing 10% of world power generation. Nuclear power plants currently operate in 31 countries. The United States is the largest producer of nuclear power, while France has the greatest proportion of its electricity generated by nuclear power. China is currently building more reactors, while some reactors are being decommissioned early in the US as they are not cost competitive with energy from shale gas. Compared historically with other

energy sources there have been few accidents and deaths associated with nuclear power. However, three events have had a very high profile and have inspired public fear of nuclear accidents in many countries including Australia. The events are the 1979 Three Mile Island accident, the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, and the 2011 Fukushima-Daiichi Tsunami disaster.

Following Fukushima, several countries decided to phase out nuclear power. (Germany, Belgium, Taiwan, Spain, Switzerland and South Korea). Germany (17 reactors) is the only country to follow through, with the last three reactors being turned in April 2023. Germany was planning to complement its renewables with imported Russian gas. Now that this has been stymied by the Ukraine war and sanctions against Russia, Germany is recommissioning some of its coal fired plants, largely because of the high-profile accidents there was a dearth of new reactor construction for 30 years from 1980, resulting in much professional expertise in reactor construction being lost. All first-generation fission reactors have now been retired. Most operating nuclear reactors are improved second-generation. Finland's Oikiluoto 3 reactor was commenced in 2005. It was to be the first "Generation III" reactor and would pave the way for a new wave of identical reactors - safe, affordable, and delivered on time - across Europe. However, construction was plagued by delays and cost overruns. After 18 years in April 2023 Oikiluoto 3 finally commenced regular output. At 1.6 GW it is the largest nuclear reactor in Europe.

The Nuclear Energy Renaissance

The most promising one design Generation III reactor was to have been the Westinghouse AP1000 of 1,110MW with examples in the US, China and several other countries. Construction commenced before the design was finalised and this presaged a litany of problems. In the US one AP1000 is in operation, construction on another has stalled and two have been cancelled after US\$9 billion spent. In 2017 Westinghouse was forced into bankruptcy with billions of dollars of cost overruns on four AP1000 nuclear power plants it was building for two utilities in the United States. Positive results were achieved for AP1000 builds in China and for a comparable Chinese design.

Generation IV, including Small Modular Reactors (SMR)s, are expected to be available from 2030. Fourth generation reactors offer significant advances in sustainability, safety, reliability, economy, waste minimisation, proliferation resistance and physical protection. While supplies of uranium are finite, the element thorium is plentiful and is used as the fuel in some fourth-generation fission reactors. Thorium reactors produce much less radioactive waste. Climate Change's Net Zero decarbonisation target, the war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, have inspired new interest in nuclear power particularly in SMRs.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as at 21 August 2023 there were 57 reactors

under construction across 17 nations. The countries with the most reactors under construction were China (21), India (8), and Türkiye (4). Of these 57, seven are expected to be completed in 2023, and another 11 in 2024. It's not just new reactors being built as some reactors have seen increases in power generation capacity, and many have seen extensions to their original planned lifespan.

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

Small Reactors are not new. Their most recognised use is in nuclear powered submarines and warships. They have never been commercially viable for civilian power generation. With SMRs the economy of scale of the large nuclear reactor is replaced by the economy of series factory production of the SMR modules of a specific design. As with aircraft production unit cost falls as development costs are spread over long production runs, with significant learning curve efficiencies.



Artist's Impression Westinghouse AP300 SMR

SMRs are defined as reactors with an output of 50-300MW. As of 2023, there were 80 different nuclear reactor designs under development in 19 countries. Types under development include sealed factory produced reactors that would be exchanged at the end of their operating life. The first SMR units are already in operation. One in Russia and one in China. However, these are prototypes and have not gone into series production. Safety is paramount, and the licencing costs of nuclear reactors is slow and expensive, regardless of size.

The development costs of SMRs have been very high. Despite heavy subsidies the two most promising US projects (Nuscale and NexGen) have been recently cancelled after being unable to attract any further finance. Work on Bill Gates Terrapower SMR has stalled over lack of access to High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU) from Russia. SMR development is proceeding in Ontario Canada and the UK (Rolls-Royce).

Australia and Nuclear Power

Australia does not have nuclear power generation, nuclear powered vessels, storage of high-level nuclear waste, or nuclear weapons, although it is a leading

miner 30% of world uranium reserves and is the world's third largest exporter of uranium. Australia also has remote and geologically stable sites suitable for the secure storage for nuclear waste, should there be the political will to use them.

It has been an understatement that in Australia any policy proposal with the word nuclear in it has been politically sensitive. Anything nuclear is particularly easy to demonise and generate fear of nuclear accidents, radioactive nuclear waste, high cost, high water consumption, the link to nuclear weapons, nuclear targets, and security from terrorists. Also, the engineering and economic desirability of siting the nuclear plant on the coast not too far from population centres, always generated extensive NIMBY objections. However, the real stumbling block to nuclear power in Australia has been the country's extensive coal reserves which have underpinned thermal electricity generation that has been cheap by world standards. For incumbent federal and state governments changing to nuclear power was never worth the electoral risk. Federally, by a 1999 environmental legislative ban, the Commonwealth specifically prohibits nuclear power generation.

The 2006 Switowsky Report into Uranium Mining, Processing and Nuclear Energy was pro-mining and pro-nuclear power. However, it found that nuclear power was not cost competitive compared with coal unless there was a price on carbon dioxide emissions. The report led to no further action.

In South Australia a Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission reported in 2016. It recommended pursuing a waste repository, simplifying mining approvals processes and seeking a relaxation of federal restrictions on nuclear power generation in Australia. The high-level nuclear waste storage facility was particularly controversial, and recommendations did not proceed.

In July 2023 the Federal Court supported a traditional owner in stopping a low-level nuclear medicine waste storage facility being established by the Commonwealth at Kimba in South Australia. Although a research reactor has been operating at Lucas Heights in Sydney since 1958, the Commonwealth has been unable to establish a remote site for the storage of its low and intermediate level nuclear waste which remains at Lucas Heights. There is now a new urgency, as the AUKUS nuclear submarine agreement requires Australia to provide a site for the storage of high-level nuclear waste.

Australia's mood is changing concerning things nuclear. Attitudes towards nuclear power have softened as climate change has become a public issue and reduction of carbon dioxide emissions an imperative. In Australia this has meant the end-of-life closure of coal fired power stations and to-date no new coal fired power stations, even though modern High Efficiency Low Emission (HELE) designs offer significantly less emissions.

With the passage of the Climate Change Act in September 2022, the Australian government became

legally committed to transforming the energy system by replacing coal, gas and oil with low-carbon alternatives by 2050.

The renewable sources, wind and solar which are intermittent and unreliable, and needed to be complemented by pumped hydro, hydrogen, batteries, gas, or nuclear to ensure dispatchable power (power on demand by the grid operator). Now that climate change considerations preclude Australia from utilizing its extensive coal reserves for cheap base-load power, the often-overstated risks associated with nuclear power appear to be worth undertaking.

Repealing the sections of the Act which ban nuclear plants, would allow the private sector to incorporate nuclear in their plans for Australia's future energy mix, particularly to complement intermittent power from renewables. This will not necessarily mean that a nuclear power plant will be built, as any proposed plant will need to be economic and meet federal environmental requirements. Current electricity prices are ample incentive for private activity with the prospect that a nuclear power development which is economic, safe and environmentally sustainable could be implemented in the future.

There is a lead time of 10-15 years to build a large reactor, and somewhat less for a smaller reactor. While Australia may have missed the time window to construct large base load reactors, what the country needs is small to medium sized reactors to complement wind and solar renewables.



Nuclear power has been used by most developed countries to provide base load power to complement the intermittent power from wind and solar renewables. Nuclear Power has recently endorsed by most nations at the COP 28 Climate Change Conference. Australia needs to follow their example. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister appears to have a 'no nuclear' mindset carried from the 1960s, and the energy minister believes nuclear is too expensive. While he may be right, this may be a necessary expense to achieve energy security. The opposition leader has indicated that Liberal policy at the next election will allow nuclear power if it is economically viable.

A CHRONICLE of Events, Decisions & Issues relating to Defence Matters September 1 2023 –November 30 2023

Michael Small

September 9 2023

The committee on foreign affairs says states and territories can no longer treat the ADF as "some sort of shadow workforce" to respond to domestic crises, warning that the practice is "unsustainable" and risks degrading ADF warfighting capabilities. The committee expressed alarm that more than half of all ADF members had been assigned to domestic disaster relief tasks in recent years. The committee said diversion of ADF personnel to such tasks carried "genuine and profound" risks that would grow as the climate warmed. The requirement for Defence to respond to domestic crises is unsustainable, and creates unacceptable pressures that will soon degrade the ADF's warfighting capability.

September 20 2023

Australia will purchase a fourth long-range Triton UAV to patrol the country's northern approaches as the US slashes its order for the unmanned aircraft that are deemed "not survivable" in high-threat environments. Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy will announce the investment on Tuesday along with a suite of upgrades to the RAAF's P-8A Poseidon surveillance aircraft, including modifications to allow the planes to carry advanced anti-ship missiles. The Poseidon upgrades from 2026 will enable the 14-strong fleet to carry Long-Range Anti-Ship Missiles, or LRASMs, which have a range of nearly 1000kms. They will also get new long-range submarine detection technology, as well as increased communications bandwidth.

September 25 2023

A new army brigade will be established in Adelaide to operate mobile long-range strike and air defence batteries under a shake-up of the service that will see combat units moved from South Australia to the Top End.

Defence Minister Richard Marles and Chief of Army Simon Stuart are scheduled to announce the army's new structure on Thursday, which flows from the DSR's focus on northern Australia and the government's decision to cut the number of Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs) the service will get from 450 to 129. The latter decision meant there would be too few IFVs to share equally among the army's three similar combat brigades, requiring a re-organization of the force.

The changes are expected to include the relocation of the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment from Adelaide's Edinburgh Barracks to Robertson Barracks in Darwin, where it would combine with the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. The 1st Armoured Regiment, which operates M1A1 Abrams tanks, is also set to be moved from Adelaide, and will head to Townsville,

where it would be united with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

September 28 2023

Townsville is emerging as the new Army capital with soldiers to be relocated to north Queensland over coming years. Adelaide becomes the home of advanced land-based, long-range strike capabilities.

- The changes are designed to make the Army more focused on conducting missions in waters close to shorelines in the Pacific
- From 2025 all of Army's heavy armour and half of its helicopters will be based in Townsville
- Defence Minister Richard Marles says the changes are about maintaining "peace, security and prosperity".

Defence Minister Richard Marles will unveil the Army's re-structure on Thursday to make the service more focused on conducting missions in littoral waters close to shorelines in the Pacific, where a future conflict could be fought against an adversary such as China.

In response to the Defence Strategic Review (DSR), two Adelaide-based combat units are being disbanded, and from 2025 all of Army's heavy armour and half of its helicopters will be hosted in Townsville.

The 3rd Brigade will be re-formed as the Army's only heavy combat formation with up to 500 personnel added to its ranks.

Army explained the changes as follows:

- 1. 1st Brigade**, based in Darwin, will be a light combat brigade.
- 2. 3rd Brigade**, based in Townsville, will be an armoured combat brigade.
- 3. 7th Brigade**, based in Brisbane, will be a motorised combat brigade.
- 4. 10th Brigade**, based in Adelaide, will be raised close to the Cultana and Woomera training ranges, and the ADF's space sector partners which provide targeting data.

Darwin's 5th Battalion will be re-linked with Adelaide's 7th Battalion to become 5th/7th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, and will be based in the northern capital, but very few personnel will have to move.

September 30 2023

ADF faces limitations in its ability to conduct operations after the government announced the MRH-90 Taipan helicopters would not return to the skies before their planned withdrawal date in December 2024. Defence Minister Richard Marles made the announcement following the grounding of the Taipans after the deaths of four Australians when an MRH-90 helicopter plunged into the ocean off Whitsunday Islands on July 28 during the Talisman Sabre military exercises with the US.

ADF had allowed the MRH-90 Taipan fleet to resume flying in April, two weeks after one of its helicopters ditched into Jervis Bay, NSW, because of engine failure. The Minister said the ADF would continue to

operate its CH-47F Chinooks, Tigers and MH 60R Seahawks, which would "provide a robust and ready aviation capability to the Australian people".

October 7 2023

Mass Rocket and Terror Attack on Israel by HAMAS from Gaza

October 23 2023

Day 607 of Russia's *special military operation* in Ukraine

October 26 2023

ADF has shrunk to its smallest size in seven years, amid warnings of delays to its submarine program. Despite government warnings of strategic threats, Defence revealed on Wednesday that the number of uniformed ADF personnel had fallen by more than 1400 to 57,218 in the three months since June 30.

A RAAF E-7A Wedgetail early warning aircraft will use its highly effective radar system to search for missile launches from hundreds of kilometres inside Russia and Belarus as it watches over Ukraine's supply lines from Europe. Air Marshal Robert Chipman said, the US decision to call in the Wedgetail to help protect the flow of military and humanitarian supplies Ukraine relies on as it battles Russia's invasion, demonstrates the aircraft's effectiveness. 100 ADF personnel will accompany the aircraft to Germany.

November 15 2023

Day 629 of Russia's war in Ukraine.

November 16 2023

A commanding officer of a RAN warship has been removed from his position while an inquiry begins into alleged "unacceptable behaviour" involving alcohol. Alcohol is prohibited when RAN personnel are at sea. Defence says there is "no place for unacceptable behaviour or conduct". Military sources have said the matter relates to "heavy drinking" while at sea. Defence has confirmed the senior officer is no longer in command of the vessel, but is not releasing any other details about the matter due to privacy obligations.

November 23 2023

HMAS Anzac has been taken out of the water due to crew shortages. The ship, which had a mid-life overhaul three years ago, has been put on hard stands at Western Australia's Henderson shipyard. Defence Dept. said a lack of crew members in key roles had made it impossible to keep all of the vessels in service. RAN is short of key personnel, particularly in the engineering department. One unfilled billet can prevent a ship deploying.

The crewing difficulties come amid a wider Defence workforce crisis, with uniformed personnel numbers falling more than 3,400 under target last financial year. ADF's uniformed workforce contracted by 1,161 personnel in 2022-23 to 58,642 – 5.5 per cent short of Defence's 62,000 target.

November 24 2023

Temporary ceasefire and release of hostages negotiated in the Israel – HAMAS war.

End

stronger relationship with Indonesia; and (iii) a regional order centered on a gathering of its great powers.

Summary by Michael Small

The Echidna Strategy



Sam Roggeveen, Director of the Lowy Institute's International Security Program, was the speaker for the October lunch time address. The address was based on his book: [The Echidna Strategy: Australia's Search for Peace and Power](#). Black Books Inc. published August 29, 2023.

The address to members was wide ranging and covered a multitude of related areas. Roggeveen presented a rationale/framework within which to consider Australia's current defence situation. Areas such as statecraft; weapon systems; military technology; opportunity costs; China a maritime threat; the missile age; Australia's surface fleet; cruise missiles; AUKUS - a job providing project; were all referred to giving members the opportunity to ask questions.

In the book, Roggeveen takes a novel approach to Australia's security situation, arguing that Australia will have to defend itself without American help, but this should not cost more. According to Roggeveen, America's security is not threatened by China's rise. Once we accept that proposition, the approach on which our security has been built collapses, and we need to start afresh. Despite the rapid growth of China's military forces, defending Australia should not be difficult. Our leaders insist on making the defence of Australia expensive. In the name of the US alliance, Australia is exposed to more danger. *Roggeveen* addresses the contest for leadership in Asia, and proposes a new approach in developing foreign policy which Australia should adopt *i.e.* Australia's foreign policy should become more benign and non-threatening. The three goals are of this new and revised foreign policy would be to develop: (i) leadership in the Pacific; (ii) a



The RUSI Needs You

Book Reviewers Wanted

Due to the generosity of Australian and overseas publishers, RUSI – Vic Library finds itself swamped with copies of books that are required to be reviewed. To lighten the load and spread the workload, we are urgently seeking members who are prepared to assist with this task.

It matters not that you have never review a book before – we can provide you with easy-to-follow guidance. As benefactors of their generosity, we have an obligation to the publishers. They are often looking for a review to include in their publicity for the launch of a new title – so timeliness (a reasonably short turnaround time) is expected.

If you feel you can assist, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please contact the Secretary Bob Hart, on 9282 5918

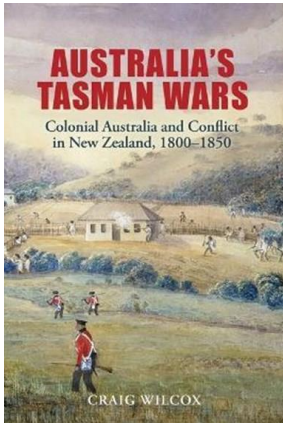
Book Reviews

This newsletter has 13 Book Reviews. On behalf of members the Editor thanks the reviewers. The Royal United Services Institute of Victoria Library thanks authors and publishers for providing copies for review.

If you would like a hard copy of a review, please contact the Secretary.

Australia's Tasman Wars

Colonial Australia and Conflict in New Zealand, 1800 - 1850



Craig Wilcox

North Melbourne, VIC:

Australian Scholarly

Publications, 2023

Paperback 287pp RRP:

\$44.95

Reviewer: Robert Dixon,

November 2023

This is a very detailed account of the many incidents of warfare which

took place in New Zealand in the first half of the nineteenth century. As would be expected by anyone familiar with the history of New Zealand, much attention is given to the inter-tribal "Musket Wars" which took place in the period 1807 – 1845 and the "New Zealand Wars" which took place in the period 1843 – 1872. The early battles in the Musket Wars involved a small number of tribes attacking other tribes using muskets obtained from trading ships in return for flax, timber and smoked heads. This set off an inter-tribal arms race which eventually involved warfare using muskets between Māori tribes in both North and South islands. Indeed, the fighting extended as far as the Chatham Islands – these are in the Pacific some 800km east of the South Island! It is estimated that one-fifth of the Māori population died in the Musket Wars.

The New Zealand Wars (aka. Land Wars) were very different to the Musket Wars as they primarily involved fighting between Māori and British troops and their allies in the North Island. In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between representatives of the United Kingdom and various Māori chiefs, bringing New Zealand into the British Empire. This resulted in a marked expansion in the number of settlers moving to New Zealand from Britain and Australia and this inevitably led to conflict over land ownership. The representatives of the Crown, seeing the conflict as a challenge to its authority, responded by summoning a number of British army regiments and also volunteers from Australia. Ultimately over 18,000 troops were involved and they were well equipped with rifles (actually muskets with a rifled barrel, accurate to 300

– 400 metres unlike a musket which was accurate to 60 – 80 metres) and artillery. These weapons were far superior to those used by the Māori. By 1872 the British regiments together with colonial troops and allied Māori tribes had suppressed the tribes opposing them with the colonial government confiscating much of their opponent's land.

Wilcox sets out to "narrate in roughly chronological order an Australian dimension and experience to collective violence in New Zealand during the first five decades of the nineteenth century..." and in this he succeeds. The author presents the conflict in New Zealand as a process of colonization by a recently colonized eastern-seaboard Australia, with Sydney serving as the staging point for the colonial expansion. The work is very well written and is a most welcome addition to the literature covering both colonial Australian history and the history of New Zealand in the period 1800 – 1850. As the author makes clear, the violence in New Zealand has not yet been integrated into accounts of Australian History.

Whilst appreciating the detailed accounts of battles and raids in the period 1800 – 1850, the reader might none-the-less be puzzled by two aspects of the book. First, the title *Australia's Tasman Wars* (and note especially the apostrophe indicating the possessive case) is odd as it draws attention away from the fact that it was the British government and its representatives in Eastern Australia and New Zealand who were the key decision makers. Far better I think if the sub-title (*Colonial Australia and Conflict in New Zealand, 1800 – 1850*) had been used as the title for the book. Having said all that, I should make it clear that this is an issue to do with the title and not the contents of the book as the author is careful to point out who is literally 'calling the shots' in each engagement. Secondly, the New Zealand Wars involving conflict between Māori and British Regiments (amongst others) continued well past 1850 with much of the conflict taking place in the 1860s. Given this, I think the author may have devoted space to explaining the reason for ending in 1850 or alternatively added a chapter or two to bring the narrative up to the end of the New Zealand Wars. The book is 287 pages long and includes five pages of very useful maps, 36 pages of endnotes, a 40-page bibliography and a very detailed index of 16 pages. There is also a brief one-page guide to the pronunciation of Māori names.

Craig Wilcox is a historian who lives and writes in Sydney. His books include *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa 1899-1902* (2002), *Red Coat Dreaming: How Colonial Australia Embraced the British Army* (2009) and *Badge Boot Button: The Story of Australian Uniforms* (2017). He wrote the entry on the Anglo-Boer War for the *Oxford Companion to Military History* (2001) and the entry on Charles Bean for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2006).

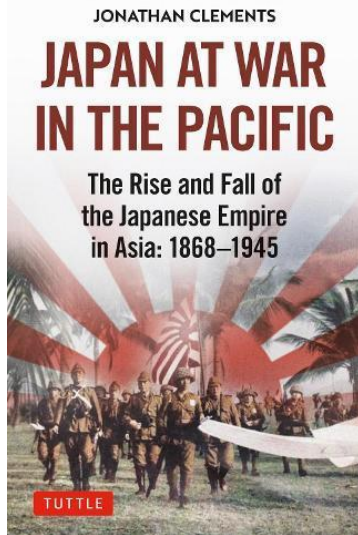
Japan at War in the Pacific

*The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire in Asia: 1868
- 1945*

Jonathan Clements

Rutland VT, US: Tuttle Publishing, 2022
Hardcover 320pp RRP: \$39.99

Reviewer: Roger Buxton, November 2023



Subtitled "The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire in Asia 1868-1945", Jonathan Clements has written an admittedly populist history describing the revolutionary development of Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. The new leaders wished Japan to become a modern society accepted as an equal by the West and able to avoid the

unequal treaties forced on them by China. This was a period of the rapid modernisation and the militarisation of society.

Short of natural resources and with a large population, Japan was determined to establish colonies and annexed Korea, colonized Formosa (Taiwan) and successfully attacked the Russians at Port Arthur. On the side of the Allies during World War I, Japanese cruisers served in the Mediterranean, and Japan captured German Islands in the Pacific that would be important to the defence of the home islands in World War II.

New Western anti-Asian immigration laws, especially the American law of 1924, were deeply resented in Japan, which turned increasingly to intervention in China. Manchuria was considered important to Japan, which felt it had to intervene if China could not administer it in the interests of Japan. In 1931 "Henry" Puyi, "The Last Emperor" was brought to Port Arthur, proclaimed as the new president of Manchukuo in 1932 and emperor in 1934. Japan's war with Chiang Kai-shek's China was ruinously expensive and led to austerity when the important silk industry was almost destroyed by the invention of nylon.

Events moved steadily towards a crisis. Japan walked out from the League of Nations, any criticism of militarism in the government was purged, the Emperor successfully resisted an attempted coup d'état but accepted that the Army and Navy ministers would be serving officers, and the lead up to war with the

United States and the British and Netherland Empires continued. The chapter 'Running Wild' covers the Pacific War from 1941 to 1945.

There is a useful timeline of important incidents, suggestions for further reading and several maps. The omission of campaign maps is a failing of many books, but here there are good maps including for the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. The book also explains the Japanese view of themselves as a nation and as individuals, which is important as it affects the commonly held view of Japanese wartime brutality. This is recommended reading for anyone who would like a better understanding of Japan in the 70 years before the Second World War. My only criticism is that the editor did not correct the description of USS *Missouri* (page 280) from 'aircraft carrier' to 'battleship'

Secret Agent, Unsung Hero

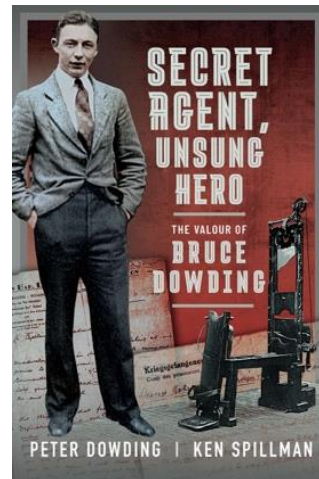
The Valour of Bruce Dowding

Peter Dowding and Ken Spillman

Peribo 2023

Paperback 288pp RRP: \$39.99

Reviewer: Roger Buxton, October 2023



This book has two authors: prolific Australian author Ken Spillman and senior counsel and former West Australian premier Peter Dowding. Peter Dowding spent four decades researching the wartime experiences of his uncle Bruce Dowding, a heroic and important secret agent in France during World War II, who was captured and secretly executed in Germany.

The French government proposed Bruce for two high decorations, but these were not awarded because the necessary approval was not given by the Australian government.

Bruce, from the Melbourne suburb of Glenhuntingly, was a graduate of the University of Melbourne and was teaching at Wesley College in 1938, where he obtained a leave of absence to study at the Sorbonne with the expectation that he would return to the College in 1939. Falling in love with France, he extended his visit and was still there when war broke out in September 1939. With his excellent French he joined the British army as an interpreter in the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC), was captured

near Boulogne, but escaped and made his way to the south of France in the unoccupied (Vichy) zone.

After Dunkirk many British soldiers and airmen, either escaped prisoners or evading capture, were stranded in northern France and attempting to return to Britain. Through the courage of French and Belgian civilians most of these managed to reach neutral territory or Vichy France in the chaos before German control became organised and escape much more difficult. After this, most of the Allied servicemen who found themselves unexpectedly on French soil were shot-down aircrew. Aircraft could be replaced but it was expensive and time consuming to train replacement aircrew. The British Government Department of Military Intelligence (MI9), set up in 1939, established escape lines in occupied territory to help evaders reach neutral countries. Some evaders were taken off by sea and some crossed from Occupied France to Portugal, but most crossed the Pyrenees from the south of Vichy France into Spain and then to Gibraltar. One of the most important escape lines collected evaders in the north of France, usually in the *zone interdite*, moved them south to Marseille and then into Spain via Perpignan. This organisation became known as the Pat Line after one of its several leaders, Patrick O'Leary (typical of the time and place, Patrick Albert O'Leary was actually a Belgian doctor Albert-Marie Guérisse, who served in the Royal Navy, was accidentally left behind during a night landing mission and when temporarily captured by the Germans claimed to be an evading Canadian airman!), and it was as deputy leader of the Pat Line that Bruce Dowding performed his important service. His French was excellent, and he was fearless, usually operating from Hôtel de la Loge in Perpignan, sheltering evaders and arranging Spanish *passeurs* for the trip over the Pyrenees. These *passeurs* had to be handsomely paid and large amounts of money were provided by MI9. It should also be understood that the collection of intelligence was another function of MI9 and that MI9 was arguably controlled by the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6).

One of the Pat Line managers was the British soldier Harold (Paul) Cole, variously described as 'an East End spiv' and 'common'. Cole embezzled MI9 funds to support his fondness for women and the high life, but his extravagant lifestyle attracted the attention of the *Abwehr* and on 5 December 1941 he was arrested. Incredibly he immediately provided the names of about 80 French helpers and MI9 agents, including Bruce Dowding, who was quickly arrested. This arrest was at an unfortunate time as Hitler's *Nacht und Nebel* decree had just been promulgated so Bruce disappeared into Germany with no further news of him until after the end of the war.

The book contains an excellent description of the operation of the escape line, as far as this is possible considering that some of the helpers and agents did not survive, the secrecy of the time, the policy of not writing things down and the continuing unavailability of important MI9 files. The treatment of

the very controversial confrontation of the Pat Line leaders with Cole before his arrest and his subsequent treason is particularly thorough and informative.

The epilogue 'Finding Bruce', written by Peter Dowding, describes the lengthy efforts he made to trace Bruce Dowding from his arrest to his execution. This is a tribute to the uncle he never met, and a duty both to Bruce Dowding and Bruce's bereaved parents. I highly recommend this book to those interested in the history of escape and evasion in France and especially of the Australian involvement.

The Yachties

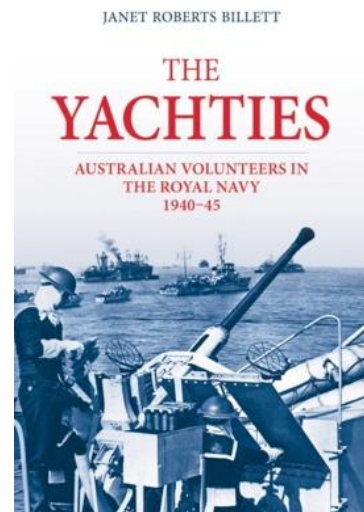
Australian Volunteers in the Royal Navy 1940-45

Janet Roberts Billett

North Melbourne, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publications, 2023

Paperback pp266 RRP: \$45.00

Reviewer: Scott Whitechurch, November 2023



An interesting question to ask at a military function would be which was the most decorated cohort of Australian Service Personnel in World War 2. A group which would make a powerful claim to this distinction would be the Yachties - that group of 500 Australians who volunteered and participated in the Royal Navy's (RN) Volunteer Yachtsmen Scheme.

The contribution of the Yachties has been largely ignored or overlooked in Australian naval history. This has now been properly rectified in a book by Janet Roberts Billett, appropriately named *The Yachties*. The author undertook extensive archival research and interviews with surviving Yachties and her book highlights in an absorbing way the contribution they made to the war at sea.

The book traces the origins of the scheme, the background and reasons for the Australians enlistment, their training, war time service in the RN and their experiences with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) upon their return home to Australia.

The aim of the Yachtsmen Scheme was to recruit experienced yachtsmen and train them as officers and to serve in and command mainly small RN warships, such as motor torpedo boats, motor launches and various types of landing craft. What is intriguing about the Australian recruits was that nearly

all of them lacked any yachting experience, instead giving reasons for volunteering such as out of duty and the promised adventure on offer. They were appointed as members of the RAN Volunteer Reserve upon enlistment in the scheme.

They trained in England. Most were required to undergo a period of three-months seagoing service on the lower deck before their officer training and appointment as officers of RN warships. Tragically four of the recruits were lost in HMS *Hood*. The author refers to others who lost their lives during their wartime service. Once they completed their training at HMS *King Alfred* they were appointed as temporary sub lieutenants to a variety of RN ships. These included cruisers, destroyers, corvettes and minesweepers and other smaller vessels. One chose submarines and had the distinction of being appointed as first lieutenant to an RN submarine without ever having undertaken a wartime patrol in a submarine. Ten were appointed to the RN's Rendering Mines Safe Service. The author devotes a chapter to this and highlights the very dangerous work that this service involved.

Other Yachties' service included: North Atlantic convoys, the ordeals of Arctic convoys, the Mediterranean, Indian and Pacific Oceans and a range of combined operations, including the D-Day Landings. A couple of them ferried Yugoslav Partisans in the Adriatic and were highly admired by them not because of their skill as sailors but because they had the good sense to paint a red star on their landing craft infantry.

All valued the experience of service as officers in the RN – the training they received, its professionalism and the variety of service they had and their standing as RN officers. Depressingly for most of the Yachties, the reception they received from the RAN upon their return to Australia was lukewarm and their service with the RN was not properly recognised. This was despite their many achievements and hardships they had endured.

The Yachties is an important contribution to both Australian naval and military history and would be a valuable addition to readers' bookshelves.

And what of the claim that the Yachties were the most decorated cohort of Australian service personnel in World War 2? Their record speaks for itself: four George Crosses, ten George Medals, 32 Distinguished Service Crosses, 38 Mentioned-in-Despatches, three Orders of the British Empire, three Members of the British Empire, two King's Commendation for Brave Conduct and one Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (the only one ever to be awarded to an Australian Navy person).

The RUSI – Vic Library thanks the author for making her work available for review.

Revealing Secrets

*An Unofficial History of Australian Signals Intelligence
& the Advent of Cyber*

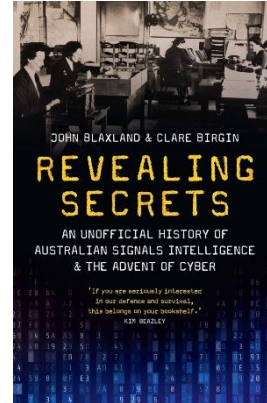
John Blaxland and Claire Birgin

Randwick, NSW: New South Books, 2023

Paperback 464pp RRP \$49.99

Reviewer: Adrian Catt, September 2023

This work is an exhaustive and authoritative history of signals intelligence (SIGINT) operations and applications within the Australian context and environment, both strategically and operationally.



From its origin in the Boer War in Colonial times, through Federation, peace and wars up to the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (the Cyber Age), and the resultant current statutory authority, the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD).

Commencing with a brief history as to the origins of codes, codebreaking, cyphers, cryptanalysis and semaphore, (collectively known as SIGINT), the story of the evolution of Australian military units, primarily Navy and RAAF specialising in the collection, analysis and strategic and operational applications from sources such as interception, decryption, traffic analysis and direction finding, is revealed.

Such endeavours have been of huge significance to the protection and administration of Australia and its interests - diplomatically, economically and militarily. The sustained effort to capture the secrets of others, whilst preserving ours, has been built-up continually over time, via self-reliance, partnerships, and formal alliances with our trusted Allies.

Moving from telegraph and cable intercepts in the early years, through the wireless age (and the development of radar), the revolution that was the computer age, we are then delivered to the age of being Web-dependent – the Cyber Age. The ramifications, benefits and global entities to which Australia is now cross-dependent make it a valuable contributor to SIGINT over a super-charged Allied network of Geo-stations, satellites and human intelligence, which furnish the protection of Australia around the clock, and assist in the maintenance of a resultant current world peace.

The authors are both highly qualified and experienced to report and comment on these matters, owing to their academic and professional backgrounding, and their use of source material for this outstanding book, which is clearly set-out in the comprehensive *Bibliography* and also *End Notes*. This

is an excellent source for those seeking to appreciate the value of SIGINT in Australia's history, or indeed the gestation and emergence of the Australian Signals Directorate.

The RAAF History 1921 - 1996

Volume 1 *The Third Brother* (1921 to 1939) –
Dr Chris Clark

Volume 2 *Going Solo* (1946 to 1971) - Dr Alan
Stephens

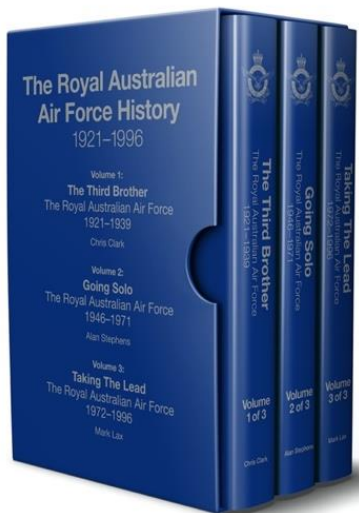
Volume 3 *Taking the Lead* (1972 to 1996) –
Air Commodore (Dr) Mark Lax

Royal Australian Air Force

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2021

Hardback – Box set
2034pp RRP
\$69.99

Reviewer: Rob Ellis,
September 2023



In the years after the first World War, the British Royal Air Force (RAF) gifted Australia with a significant number of military aircraft that were surplus to the RAF's post-1918

requirements. These aircraft were the

base around which the Australian Defence Forces would build a new air service, separate and distinct from the Army and Navy, to replace the Australian Flying Corps, initially formed around a Central Flying School at Point Cook, Victoria, in 1913, and disbanded in 1919.

There were several hundred Flying Corps members, both aircrew (pilots and observers) and technical and administrative ground staff, who were available to join this new arm of the Australian Military Service. [My late uncle, WO Stanley Robertson MSM, had served as an engine fitter with No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, during the Palestine Campaign].

This three-volume history of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) focuses on the issues that arose, and had to be addressed by, the ex-Australian Imperial Force and Australian Flying Corps officers, whose role and duty it was to design a new service, define its role, establish a doctrinal structure under which it would perform its functions, as an independent Service and not as two ancillary support components of the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Navy.

The Federal Government agreed to commit £3 million, over three years, to finance a new and independent military aviation arm. There was strong opposition from the two existing Services, which feared erosion of their already limited budgets. The final decisions were influenced by the decisions taken in Britain in 1917, to bring the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service together as a single, separate Arm of the British defence forces.

It was not easy to do this, as there were ongoing disputes with the Army and Navy (each of which wanted control of its own dedicated aviation force), about its size, equipment, personnel and future roles. Both also feared that the Federal Government, at that time unwilling to allocate money to the armed forces, would reduce their financial budgets to cover the cost of an independent aviation arm of the Commonwealth's Defence Forces.

A further complication was that the officers appointed to create and lead this new Service sometimes sought different routes to different goals. They did not always get approval from the appropriate Federal Cabinet members for their suggested policies and functions. A large part of the first volume is taken up with a well-researched account of the attempts by the three military services, the Government and the Public Service, to come to some agreement on each of these issues.

The Royal Australian Air Force was eventually formed as 'The Third Brother', an independent Arm of Service, commanded and led by its own officers. Faced, as it was in 1936-1939, with the prospect of another major war, the RAAF was barely prepared. The World War One vintage aircraft were being replaced by more modern designs, either purchased from the United States or 'begged' from British manufacturers, but only in small numbers, and not with first-line aircraft. As the war developed, thousands of Australians, trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme, served in the European and Middle Eastern theatres, almost always under Royal Air Force Commands, so that few RAAF officers were able to gain experience in higher ranks and appointments in the Service.

A short-coming in Volumes 2 and 3 is that the authors touch only lightly on the contribution of RAAF personnel in World War 2, the Korean and Vietnamese wars, and other conflicts between 1939 and 1996. Coverage is given to changes in equipment, and especially to the conversion from piston-engine to jet-engine aircraft and the introduction of helicopters, and to the changes in recruitment, training, pay scales and career paths for personnel. There are good accounts of the contributions made in all these areas by senior officers, across all these aspects of the service's history.

Volume three records the transition of the air service from a small force designed to protect Australia to a more technically sophisticated participant in smaller wars and conflicts, and in different roles – such as peacekeeping, aid programs after natural disasters, and support to the civil authorities in times

of flood, fire and famine, both here in Australia and overseas.

The authors have tried to present a holistic view of the problems facing a small group of permanent service officers who were, over many years, trying to create a complete armed service with little knowledge of how this should be done or what was needed, and while facing down opposition to their endeavours from more experienced and more senior officers in the other two services. This situation was further complicated because few of the political 'masters' to whom the service officers were answerable had any great knowledge of aviation, especially within the context of what was expected and needed to create a viable organization which could, should the need arise, contribute to the defence of Australia in time of war.

To the credit of the publishers the three volumes are very well presented, with numerous photographs (mostly of senior officers), but the writing style is pedestrian. The history contains over 1,750 pages of text, plus extensive *Prefaces*, *Bibliographies* and *Indices*, and the reader may find that the narrative flow is disjointed, and sometimes lacking in detail. Much of the content is presented in short blocks, without adherence to a consistent time continuum, so there is a lack of 'flow' to the narrative. The reader, if interested in any one aspect of the RAAF's story, may find it necessary to jump from one chapter to another, not necessarily in the same volume.

It is apparent, from the way the RAAF's story is developed in these books, that the aviation arm of the defence forces, especially in 1938-1940, was not prepared for World War 2 of 1939-1945, because initially its equipment was obsolete or inadequate. The service, early in the war, had no clearly defined strategic doctrines, and was to a significant extent lead by officers who were working within a framework based on the knowledge and experiences they and their predecessors had gained in a past war. But they were working in a wider environment where strategy, tactics and technology were changing rapidly and in wide-ranging and challenging ways. It was also handicapped by the almost complete lack of an aviation industry in Australia, and so they were reliant largely on America for more modern aircraft – at a time when both British and American manufacturers were fully committed to meeting the needs of their own national air service and could spare little to help Australia.

For the reader interested in the way a technologically complex arm of service can be created, and its leaders met and solved the many problems encountered, these three books would be of interest and of value. However, this is a history only of the men who created the Royal Australian Air Force, it records few of the achievements, in both peace and war, of the many thousands of men and women who were the Royal Australian Air Force over some seventy-five years. Too often, they served with inadequate equipment, against over-whelming odds

and in difficult and dangerous environments. I was disappointed that the people aspect was not included.

Walking with the ANZACS

An updated Guide to Australian Battlefields on the Western Front

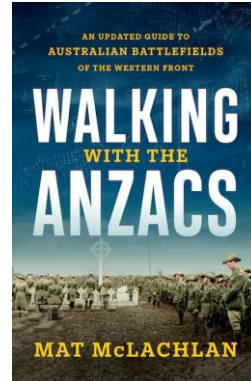
Mat McLachlan

Sydney, NSW: Hachette, 2023

Paperback 416pp RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: David Rees, November 2023

In this latest updated edition of Mat McLachlan's guidebook, more information is provided on visitor travel tips, accommodation, and web sites for 14 of the most important First World War battlefields of the AIF on the Western Front. The battlefields include *Messines*, *Polygon Wood*, *Broodseinde Ridge*, *Passchendaele* and *Ypres* in Belgium, as well as *Fromelles*, *Pozières*, *Villers-Bretonneux*, *Hamel*, *Mont St Quentin*, *Bullecourt*, *Mountbrehain*, and villages south of *Albert* and east of *Bapaume* in France.



Like other guidebooks such as the *Guide to the Memorials on the Western Front in France and Belgium* produced by the Department of Veterans Affairs & Office of Australian War Graves or the *Australian Army Campaigns Series* books distributed by Simon & Schuster, McLachlan's guidebook not only describes each battle and its outcome but also identifies by name, a few of the soldiers who participated in each battle and their stories. The names include 52 men who were awarded the Victoria Cross for their bravery. Such information provides a personal touch to the guidebook, especially for those who lost relatives in the Great War. In addition, information is given about the nearby Australian war cemeteries and numerous other Allies' cemeteries such as British, Canadian & New Zealand as well as German First World War cemeteries and their locations. Most of the information has been obtained from unit diaries, personal records, official communications and the archives of the Australian War Museum.

The walking tour maps of the battle areas helps one to navigate each battlefield and advice is given on the time required for an effective tour of each site and how many tours one could undertake in a day (namely 3). This reviewer could only manage to complete two Australian battlefield tours per day when he visited *Messines* and *Polygon Wood* in 2007 using a local Belgian guide. However, he did include an additional quick visit during the day to Hill 60 with its memorial to the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company as well as a visit to the Menin Gate victory arch and cenotaph. So, the guidebook advice is appropriate.

This latest edition is an excellent guidebook for those wishing to visit and learn more about the Australian WW1 battlefields. It has numerous photographs and maps and a very detailed index for quick referencing.

My Mother, the Spy

The daring and tragic double life of ASIO agent Mercia Masson

Cindy Dobbin and Freda Marnie Nicholls

Allen & Unwin, 2023

Paperback 320pp RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: Neville Taylor, September 2023

This is a fascinatingly sad story told by a daughter who was virtually estranged from her mother, and, in her passing, was not really able to obtain a very satisfying picture of the extent of her activities as an ASIO agent



Mercia Masson possessed both talent and personality that enabled her to seamlessly fit into the upper echelons of society and politics, making her ripe for recruitment by ASIO. She had well-meaning advice from 'both sides of the fence' in order to not reveal her involvement as she was regarded as a valuable to both ASIO and the

Communist Party of Australia (CPA). There were numerous changes in her employment engineered to make her accesses attractive to the CPA. The constant weekly business shuttling between Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra was quite amazing for the 1950s and 60s – and it is obvious that she was in no position to be a constant and loving parent to her daughter Cindy.

The key players mentioned in ASIO, and the CPA are not very numerous. Betty Vassilieff, one of her Warrandyte neighbours, wished to attend the 1952 Peking Peace Conference, but had had her Australian passport cancelled and sought Mercia's assistance. [Betty was married to Russian-born artist Danila Vassilieff, who two years later appeared as my Art class teacher in a Victorian country high school.]

As the 50s progressed, Communist activities in Australia continued to grow. On Christmas Eve 1953 Russian Third Secretary Vladimir Petrov had a serious car accident, and considered he was shown little sympathy and extremely poorly treated by his colleagues and the newly-arrived Russian Ambassador. In an effort to counter a likely information leak from

the Attorney General's Department, ASIO was eager to recruit someone from inside the Russian Embassy. Mercia's colleagues were instrumental in achieving the official defection of the disillusioned Petrov in April 1954. ASIO's restraining of Mrs Petrov's subsequent boarding of an aircraft in Darwin became world headlines.

Despite a plea from Colonel Spry, Head of ASIO, Mercia was called in February 1955 to give evidence at a Royal Commission investigating Soviet espionage in Australia. She broke down on several occasions while giving evidence, knowing that her life as an ASIO agent would be exposed and she would have no hope of living a normal life in future. Consequently she turned to alcohol as her solace despite returning to country journalism with the ABC. Mercia suffered from stomach cancer and passed away in 1975. The holiday home that played such a part in her life sits on Masson Lane, Killcare

In 2011 Cindy Dobbin, Mercia's daughter, was given two day's access to the ASIO files, with no opportunity to copy or record any of the heavily redacted information. She came away knowing very little more about the life of her mother as a spy.

Operation Hurricane

The story of Britain's first atomic test in Australia and the legacy that remains

Paul Grace

Sydney, NSW: Hachette, 2023

Paperback 368pp RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: Roger Buxton, September 2023

Paul Grace discovered a report in his deceased grandfather's papers describing his involvement, as an RAAF Dakota pilot, in the first atomic test. To discover more about Australia's role in the test he searched the available literature, but the sources were so meagre on this aspect that he quit his job and spent five years researching and writing this book.

After early work in Britain, development of the first nuclear bomb was moved to the United States where, as the Manhattan Project, it created the bombs that ended World War II. Nuclear weapon information was to be shared with Britain, but in 1946 the Atomic Energy Act prohibited sharing this information with foreign sources. Fearing that the Soviet Union would develop a nuclear bomb (it tested its first in 1949), the British government set out to develop its own bomb by 1952.



Selection of a testing site was a major problem. The Americans were reluctant to allow access to their testing sites, which was the preferred option, and the most promising locations were in the wide-open spaces of Canada and Australia. An Admiralty study suggested that the Monte Bello Islands off the northwest coast of Western Australia were a likely location and in September 1950 Prime Minister Attlee wrote to Prime Minister Menzies proposing an examination of the Monte Bello Islands as the test site. Mr Menzies, without consulting the cabinet, immediately replied that "We agree in principle and to the proposed detailed reconnaissance". Australia was now involved.

At this point I can state that the book is very comprehensive and shows the effect of the five years that were spent in its preparation. It is informative, does not avoid important technical details (an end note recommends the Admiralty Manual of Seamanship Volume III for information about the types of ship moorings) and records the 'human interest' experiences of many of the British and Australian service and scientific personnel involved so that interest is maintained.

An initial survey of the Islands was carried out by HMAS *Korangi*, and it was reported that 'the site would be suitable for the trial'. This trial was followed by a rapid succession of further examinations and construction work, initially by Australian units and later also by British units when the first of two British task forces arrived. The amount of work carried out by RAAF Airfield Construction Squadrons and the RAN was astonishing, and Mr Menzies, who had accepted all British proposals volunteered to pay for the entire Australian contribution.

Paul Grace describes the very involved sequence of events from the first surveys, through the extensive creation of infrastructure and instrumentation in the Islands, the arrival of the Operation Hurricane commander in HMS *Campania* with the frigate HMS *Plym*, carrying the bomb in a forward hold, the test itself and the resulting fallout and radiation monitoring.

The trial was carried out in a way that was generally safe, within the knowledge of the time, but with some egregious exceptions, especially in aircraft radiation monitoring and the protection of servicemen exposed to gamma radiation from the explosion. The British nuclear testing in Australia became a controversial subject leading to a Royal Commission, and this very balanced book is recommended for anyone looking for a most readable description of the test and its impact.



Tomahawk

Saving Lieutenant Kennedy

The Heroic Story of the Australian Who Helped Rescue JFK

Brett Mason

Randwick, NSW: New South Books, 2023
Paperback 264pp RRP: \$25.95

Reviewer: David Rees, November 2023



This book is a fascinating WWII story about a modest Australian Lieutenant Reg Evans, RANVR who served as an Australian Coastwatcher in the Solomon Islands. He, with the help of his local Pacific Island supporters played a very important role in the rescue of Lt. John F. Kennedy, USN and his crew in August 1943 when their PT-109 was rammed and sunk by a Japanese Destroyer "*Amagiri*" in the Blakett Strait.

The US Navy tactic against the frequent Japanese freighters and destroyers bringing supplies from Rabaul along the "*Tokyo Express*" route to Japanese troops in the Solomons, was to attack at night, operating fast patrol torpedo (PT) boats for sinking the ships and getting away quickly. However, it was very risky and the PTs had no radar for night detection and their torpedoes were not very effective. John Kennedy and his 12-man crew of the PT-109 were part of a 15-PT boat flotilla who were in the Strait but were detected before they could sink any Japanese ships.

Before World War II, Lt Reg Evans (born in 1905) had worked as an agent for an Australian Trading Company in the Solomon Islands. He had a good knowledge of the Islands and had got on well with the Pacific Islanders. However, when war broke out, he joined the Army in 1940 and served with the 2/9th Field Regiment before transferring to the RAN Voluntary Reserve and becoming a Coastwatcher with the rank of Lieutenant in October 1942. In March 1943, he was posted to a hideout on Kolombangara Island in the Solomons. His role, like many of his fellow renown Coastwatchers such as Snow Rhoades and the Coastwatchers' CO Eric Feldt, was 'To observe and report enemy activity, stay alive and only fight in self-defence'. Fortunately, on the night that John Kennedy's boat was sunk, Reg Evans was on duty on Gomu Island and observed that some men were clinging to the wreckage of a PT. He alerted two of his

scouts to look out for survivors next morning. They found John Kennedy and ten of his crew still alive and hiding on a small island,. Two of the crew had been killed during the collision. John Kennedy was taken by canoe to meet Reg Evans. On arrival at Gomu Island, Reg Evans arranged for JFK and his ten remaining crew to be picked up by a USN PT boat and taken back to their base at Rendova. Reg Evans and John Kennedy didn't meet again until 18 years later when Reg Evans was invited by the US President, now JFK, to the White house on 1st May 1961.

The author, Brett Mason had been a Senator for Queensland from 1999 to 2015 as well as being Australia's ambassador to the Netherlands from 2015-2018. In his book therefore, he builds on the positive rescue story, by analysing how the successful shared wartime relationship between Australia and America had become stronger and how the alliance may possibly develop in the future. The book is easy to read and very timely because the publication year 2023 is not only the 80th anniversary of the rescue but also the 60th anniversary of JFK's assassination.

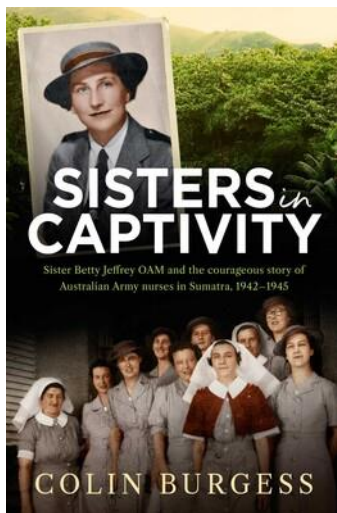
Sisters in Captivity

Sister Betty Jeffrey OAM and the courageous story of Australian Army nurses in Sumatra, 1942-1945

Colin Burgess

Cammeray, NSW: Simon & Shuster, 2023
Paperback 368pp RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: Adrian Catt, October 2023



Although this work is focussed upon the life of Betty Jeffrey OAM, it is so much more than the title suggests. It is primarily the proud story of Australian Army nurses deployed initially to Singapore during World War II and who, from that point, became the tragic victims of war in all its most brutal forms.

Though Jeffrey and her fellow nurses, including her close friends and colleagues such as Vivian Bullwinkel and Iole Harper escaped Singapore as it fell quickly to Japanese invaders, they were to flee upon a vessel which was sunk in Banka Straits. From here, their epic battle to survive strong seas so as to make landfall upon Banka Island, only led to terrifying and horrific treatment of the nurses as POW's, and the Radji Beach massacre at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army.

Jeffrey kept a diary of her wartime experiences; even concealing and maintaining it during captivity as a POW, hidden from the Japanese as she and her surviving Nurses were shuffled back-and-forth from prison camps at Muntok (on Bangka Island), and Palembang and Lubok Linggau (on Sumatra).

The women were held captive in filthy and primitive camps for Three Years and nine months, enduring starvation diets and punishing daily duties. Many of these Nurses were to die from disease or starvation. Those who survived were left to fend for themselves, whilst nursing their fellow sick or dying Sisters. The sad irony was that ample food grew abundantly just out of reach of the nurses - on the outside of the camp's wire.

The nurses shared overcrowded camps with British and Dutch civilian prisoners, including children; they were however segregated from Allied male POWs who were held in separate camps. The men relied upon the visits of the sisters to provide essential nursing for their sick and dying men. At Christmas-time, the nurses made mahjong sets as gifts for the men.

Sixty-five Nurses left Singapore on that fateful voyage, and of them, 32 would be held in captivity. Only 24 nurses would return to Australia alive at War's end, on the vessel HMAHS *Manunda*. At subsequent War Crime trials, Jeffrey's diary and the testimony of Vivian Bullwinkel would be used successfully in the prosecution of their Japanese tormentors,.

Though Betty and Vivian faced many years of treatment at the Heidelberg Hospital for various illnesses, they continued to display their respects for their lost colleagues and seek highest standards of recognition for the nursing profession. Betty and Vivian went on a drive around Australia post-war, collecting valuable donations to fund their dream of a place of memorial, learning and recognition for the nursing profession in Australia; now known as the Australian Nursing Federation.

A most moving and distressing story, with both sad and positive outcomes, which pays due credit, in detail, to the angels in habits, who bring aid and comfort to us all, whether in peacetime, or in war.

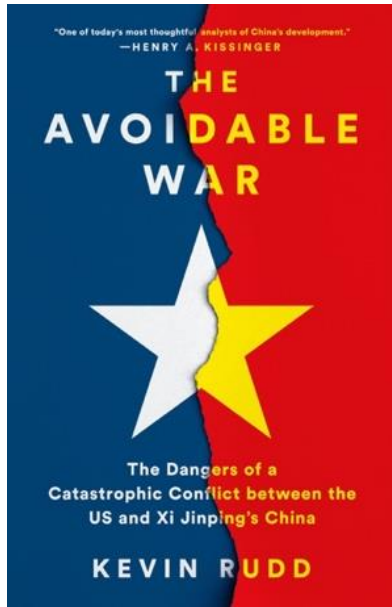
The Avoidable War

The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China

Kevin Rudd

Sydney, NSW: Hachette, 2022
Paperback 400pp RRP \$34.99

Reviewer: Neville Taylor, September 2023



Kevin Rudd has never been lost for words. Here he has excelled – but with an unbelievably detailed account of China’s philosophy and geopolitical aims. Personal experience and his study of China’s language and culture makes this a very authoritative dissertation on one of the world’s most obvious, and ‘How do we deal with this?’, scenarios.

Prefaced by an overview of the 20th century conflicts and the consequences of the political decisions made by the victors, the mutual distrust by the superpowers is clearly espoused. Rudd sees the path leading to the diffusing of this situation is to embrace ‘managed strategic competition’ – finding how to coexist ‘without betraying their core interests’.

Major chapters on the history of the US-China relationship and the emerging distrust in recent decades follow. A lack of preparedness to listen to and learn about Chinese language, culture and ambitions by Western countries in the past has fuelled this distrust. Chairman Xi Jinping’s world view has been portrayed as ten concentric circles of interest. From most to least important they are:

- the politics of staying in power
- securing national unity
- ensuring economic prosperity
- making economic development environmentally sustainable
- modernizing the military
- managing China’s neighbourhood
- securing China’s maritime periphery
- going West – the Belt and Road initiative
- increasing Chinese leverage in all continents
- changing the global rules-based order

Each of these has been discussed in their own chapter and include the ramifications of each for the West.

A thorough examination of the strategic response to China under Xi’s leadership reveals a huge increase in

public perception of China being the number one threat to the US. 2018 saw a major shakeup and hardening in the US attitude towards China. A move from concentration on trade to technology occurred, and the right of exercising navigational passage through the South China Sea became the norm. The politics of China’s Twentieth Party Congress have locked Xi into a path that may or may not lead to China’s best interests. Since Rudd’s writing in 2022, economic growth and the level of youth unemployment have become two areas of concern for Xi.

Rudd sees the current decade as one fraught with danger. He poses ten scenarios (five of which do not involve conflict) and the potential for even more combinations of them. His final chapter sees him putting the case for his solution of ‘managed strategic competition’.

This is a formidable treatise by one of the West’s most-highly credentialed and respected commentators on Chinese matters. Well-written with an excellent *Index*, this could be regarded as a text for anyone studying this aspect of international relations.

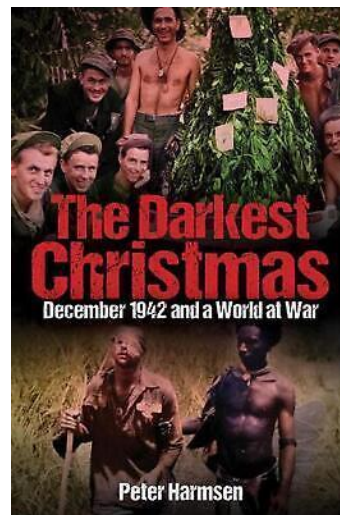
The Darkest Christmas

December 1942 and a World at War

Peter Harmsen

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2022
Paperback 256pp RRP: \$32.99

Reviewer: Neville Taylor, November 2023



described in detail, with ample personal anecdotes rounding out the text.

The *Introduction* describes the release of Bing Crosby’s immortal hit *I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas* and a summary of its impact in combat zones where it was anything but a white Christmas and the nostalgia generated in troops thousands of miles from a home experiencing winter.

Starting with Australia’s controversial government austerity drive during the Christmas period, the impact

Harmsen’s fascinating ‘smorgasbord’ is a ‘travelogue’ around the world from East to West. The chapter for each country visited describes how the festive season of Christmas developed in the countries embracing Christianity, and how Christmas is regarded and/or tolerated in non-Christian countries. The major war occurrences for the year and their impact upon the society at Christmas are

of the spending by American servicemen more than compensated Australian businesses. New Zealand saw a street battle in Wellington between the Marine Raider battalion on leave after its battle at Guadalcanal and New Zealand troops. Then, it's off to New Guinea where the Japanese were determined to fight to the last man after having been pushed back up the Kokoda Track.

Japan had been at war against China since 1938 and Christmas celebrations had virtually ended but Japan used the season to broadcast propaganda into Allied countries. There was consideration given for the prisoners of war around south-east Asia. China, Burma and India are next visited and the Russian release of Polish prisoners into the sub-continent is discussed.

The world-wide Christmas radio messages by George VI and the Pope were delivered on schedule. Winston Churchill continued his 'workaholic' approach whilst the Americans were experiencing their first Christmas without fathers and sons, but with optimism and plans for their return home. In Germany, Goebbels continued to micro-manage the German propaganda machine that many Germans were beginning to realize was just that, while Himmler was obsessed with providing for those serving outside of Germany with gifts from the enormous warehouses containing valued items removed from Jews prior to their execution. The ultimate fate of some German units in Russia was becoming more evident, and the Russians used Christmas Day to launch a major attack on their Christmas-observing foes.

Stories of benevolence, tolerance and generosity in the most unusual circumstances punctuate the text. Individuals who exhibited great courage against tremendous odds have been recognised. A generous collection of high-quality photographs has been included as an insert. An unexpected, but extremely interesting *Appendix* lists the post-1942 fate of those appearing in the text. Excellent *Endnotes*, *Bibliography* and *Index* round out this very interesting approach that provides a valuable holistic 'snapshot' from the Second World War.

Donations to your Library Fund are Tax Deductible

Help to maintain the Institute's Library as the best collection in Victoria on defence and military related subjects by donating to your RUSI VIC Library Fund. The RUSI VIC Library Fund is a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) approved by the Australian Taxation Office, and monetary gifts to the Fund over \$2 are tax deductible by the donor.

Please make cheques to the 'RUSI VIC Inc Library Fund'. Receipts will be provided.

The King's Christmas Message

The Oscar winning film *The King's Speech* stars Colin Firth as King George VI, Geoffrey Rush as the Australian speech therapist Lionel Logue and Helena Bonham-Carter as Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother).

The film's climax is with King George VI's 1939 Christmas Message Empire Broadcast, which concluded with an inspirational poem.

At the onset of the Second World War, the King's words and the delivery of the speech were vital in maintaining morale. What particularly stuck in people's minds was the appositeness of the words of the poem. Everyone asked, 'who was the author of the poem?'

When he was Secretary and Editor of *RUSI News* the late Bill Wallach reproduced the text of King George VI's 1939 speech in the September 1996 edition but omitted the poem. He redressed this oversight by printing the text of the poem in the September 1997 edition, adding 'author unknown'.

The story continues, as the author was not only known but was related to a member of the Institute, Major Ian Haskins. A stylised and illustrated version of the poem was reproduced in the April 1998 *RUSI News*, together with an explanation of its providence. Here is the poem, unfortunately without the visual embellishment:

At the Gate of the Year

**And I said to the man who stood at the gate of
the year,**

**Give me a light that I may tread safely into the
unknown.**

And he replied ...

Go out into the Darkness

and put your hand into the hand of God.

**That shall be to you better than light and safer
than a known way.**

From *God knows* – Minnie Louise Haskins 1875-1957

The poem was first published in 1908 as part of a collection entitled *The Desert*. The poem appeared in *The Times* in the months before Christmas 1939 and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) gave a copy to the King.

After King George VI died in 1952, she had the words engraved on brass plaques placed on his Memorial. The poem was read at the Queen Mother's funeral in 2002.

Mike Rawlinson

Library Notes

There has not been much new activity during the last quarter. However, we have made considerable use of our scanner. Some twenty items have been digitally scanned to PDF. These include rare books, pamphlets, maps and images. A successful book sale was held at B Block and a considerable amount of money was made. This activity encouraged several new members to sign up. We are now receiving some books from publishers in PDF which is a shame in a way but will enable easier loans via email. These books are also being recorded onto CD. We wish all members a happy and safe Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Brian Surtees

Hon Librarian

New Acquisitions (since September 2023)

Books reviewed in this *Newsletter* have not been included

Title	Author	Subject
<i>All the Broken Soldiers</i>	Jan McLeod and Andrew McLeod	Private Kennedy's war.
<i>The Glass Cricket Ball</i>	Jan William Smith	War · Art · Sacrifice.
<i>Chasing Bandits in the Somalia 1993.</i>	Bob Breen	Australian soldiers adjusting <i>Badlands</i> attitudes in
<i>Wallaby Airlines</i>	Jeff Pedrina	Twelve months flying the Caribou in Vietnam.
<i>Operation Kingfisher</i>	Gary Followill to the	The cancelled rescue mission that sacrificed Sandakan POWs Death Marches.
<i>Dreadful Lady Over the Mekong Delta</i>	Bob Howe	RAAF Canberras in the Vietnam War.
<i>Gona's Gone</i>	David W Cameron	The battle for the beachhead New Guinea 1942.
<i>The Echidna Strategy</i>	Sam Roggeveen	Australia's search for power and peace.
<i>Flawed Hero</i>	Chris Masters	Truth, lies and war crimes.
<i>Where the Flaming Hell are We?</i>	Craig Collie	The story of young Australians and New Zealanders fighting the Nazis in Greece and Crete.
<i>The Battle Within</i>	Christina Twomey	POWs in post-war Australia.
<i>Men at War</i>	James Mitchell	Australia, Syria, Java 1940-1942 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion.
<i>Head-hunters in the Malayan Emergency (PDF)</i>	<i>Dan Poole</i>	The atrocity and cover-up.
<i>Great-Uncle Harry</i>	Michael Palin	A tale of war and Empire.
<i>The Savage Storm</i>	James Holland	The battle for Italy 1943.
<i>The Eagle in the Mirror</i>	Jesse Fink	In search of Australian war hero, master spy and alleged traitor, Charles Howard 'Dick' Ellis.