



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 Ltd

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RUSI VIC QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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MC-55A Peregrine – A New Capability

The MC-55A Peregrine is a first-of-type, airborne intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and electronic warfare (ISREW) aircraft for the Australian Defence Force. It represents a new capability.

Modelled from the Gulfstream G550 airframe modified by L3Harris Technologies, the MC-55A is a long-range, persistent ISREW platform able to deliver multi-intelligence effects.

The first of four Peregrine aircraft was delivered to Australia in January 2026 and is operated by RAAF's Number 10 Squadron, based at RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia.

Royal United Services Institute of Victoria Incorporated June 2026 Newsletter

RUSI VIC -2026

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

President's Column

Major General Mike O'Brien CSC (Retd)



Your RUSIV had its 136th birthday on 2nd June. Long may we prosper!

The fight for a future location for RUSIV and its Monash Memorial Defence Library continues but no solution has yet been reached. Defence is determined to sell Victoria Barracks. We have put several workable options to Defence seeking to exempt small but heritage-significant parts from the sale. We have also sought the support of politicians from federal, state and local governments to back these options. To date we have had no meaningful response, not the willingness to visit our library to see its value at first hand. The danger is that we may be subject to desk bound and ill-informed outcomes.

We ask all our members to give us what support you can, particularly by lobbying politicians. Emphasise that have an irreplaceable collection of national significance worthy of preservation - and ask them to visit to confirm that for themselves by visiting.

Our library keeps up to date by receiving review copies of books relevant to our collection policy. This also saves us members' funds to the tune of \$3000 a year. It depends on an all-too-small band of reviewers. We urgently need more. Please volunteer to help by contacting our secretary.

Our future will be more assured by RUSIV use of social media - an arena used extensively by younger age groups than our current membership age profile. We have a wealth of pre-written material suitable for social media. We need the expertise of youth and their endemic instinctive advice on how to achieve this. Can you recommend a young but savvy relative or friend to do this - the time involvement would be minimal and the educational reward very much worth the effort.

Mike O'Brien



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.

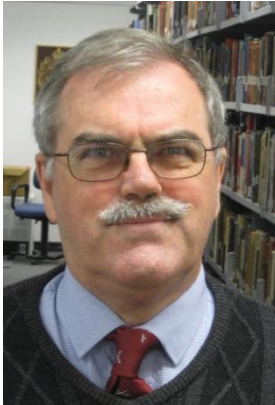
As benefactors of their generosity, we have an obligation to the publishers. They are often looking for a review to include in their publicity for the launch of a new title – so timeliness (a reasonably short turnaround time) is expected.

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

Please contact the Secretary Bob Hart, by email: secretary@rusivc.org.au

From the Secretary:

Lieutenant Colonel Bob Hart RFD



Dear Members,

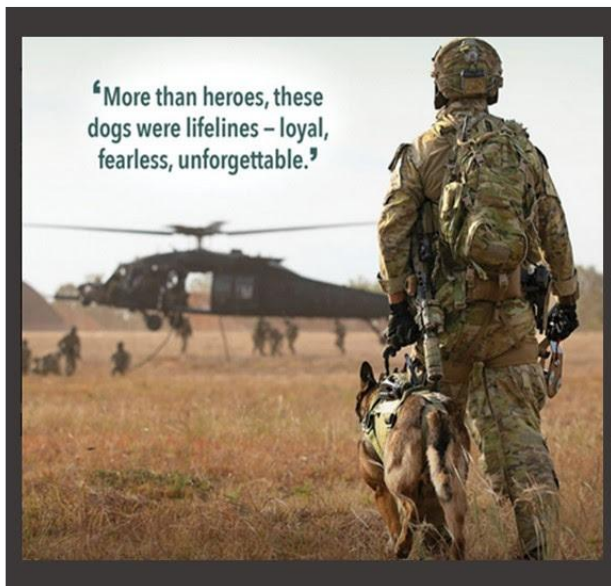
We have been advised of the passing of:
Lachlan Shackelton-Fergus

We welcome new members:
David Gormley-O'Brien
Shirley Limo

I am preparing to send out subs notices for 2026/27. These will go out by email to save the postage. Please start checking your emails from 1st July to ensure you get them.

Regards,

Bob Hart

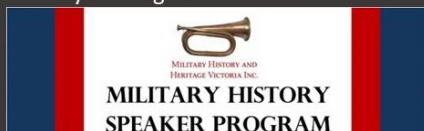


Dogs of War

Guardians of the Battlefield: True Stories of Loyalty and Bravery

Speaker: Nigel Allsop

MHHV Zoom Speaker Event
Wednesday 19 August 2026 7:00PM-8:00PM



Library Notes

Our library has been extremely busy during the last quarter. We have received an exceptionally large donation of books, personal diaries, official documents and pamphlets. Some of these items are rare or unique. This donation has come from a prestigious library which is closing, about which more information will be available in the future. A rough estimate of the number of items is at least 400. This of course presents us with a problem of storage. We have catalogued about 70% of the books and pamphlets so far. Surprisingly, we have managed to shelve these items, although a proportion are stored horizontally above existing books. We have also scanned to PDF the cabinet war book covering the period 1938 to 1945 which currently resides in storage in the Cabinet war room in A Block. Victoria Barracks. In general, the book covers the duties and responsibilities of the defence forces and public service organisations and utilities in Australia during the period of conflict.

Best wishes to all

Brian Surtees
Hon Librarian

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.

As part of its role the Institute is custodian of the Monash Memorial Defence Library, the largest collection of Defence volumes in Victoria which has public accessibility. While the Institute has always had support from the Department of Defence, in recent years this support has been pared back, increasing the financial burden to members.

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, Bob Hart, at secretary@rusivic.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 executor.

Opinion: The May 2026 Budget and National Security

Mike Rawlinson

The May Federal Budget has been controversial for its changes in taxation provisions and lack of measures to encourage investment and increase productivity.

National Security

National Security requires sovereign capabilities in critical areas, and a defence force of sufficient size and capability to be able to inflict unacceptable losses upon an adversary. While the ADF is respected as a highly professional, force, it is currently seriously short of some capabilities. Most analysts agree that Australia needs to increase its defence budget from the current 2% of GDP to at least 3.5%. The 2026 budget foreshadows this happening but at a slow pace.

Defence

Notwithstanding Australia's dangerous and uncertain strategic circumstances, there was only a very modest increase in the Defence budget and no indication of urgency. Following the National Defence Strategy, defence expenditure will progressively increase for the acquisition of the AUKUS submarines and missiles, and replacement of most of the surface fleet. Due to the long lead times involved this will not happen until the 2030s.

While not stated, in the intervening period Australia will rely on the presence of US Forces for deterrence and accept the risk of their reliability. Implicitly, the government has also accepted the risk that nothing untoward will happen in the next few years, including the present ADF capability affecting the perception and action of our neighbours near and distant, including China. An associated domestic risk avoided is the public outcry and electoral consequences if the welfare budget was reduced to bolster defence. In the Guns or Butter choice, Butter has prevailed.

It seems that only an explicit crisis will reverse this position.

The Fuel Crisis

Blockage of the Strait of Hormuz has given Australia a wake-up call for governments to improve the nation's resilience. The call has generated a positive response in respect of fuel reserves.

'Never let a good crisis go to waste'
Winston Churchill

In recent years Australia has had about 30 days of onshore liquid fuel reserves. Australian Federal

Governments have been warned for decades that fuel reserves were inadequate, particularly as strategic circumstances deteriorated.

The Budget 2026-27 addressed Fuel Supply and security, first outlining government action to secure sufficient fuel and fertilizer for March to June. These actions have been successful and include fuel cargoes that have crossed the Pacific, from both sides of North and South America.

Current success should not fully condition future fuel reserves policy as Australia could be subject to a naval blockade. As well as cutting off Asian supply by closing the straits through the Indonesian archipelago, an enemy with satellite intelligence and nuclear-powered submarines could cut off supply from the Americas.

The government has secured fuel and fertilizer during the crisis and is committed to building up reserves for the future, increasing Australia's diesel and jet fuel reserves to 50 days. This includes government funded extra storage as well increased holding requirements for commercial businesses. This is still well short of the 90 days Australia agreed with the International Energy Agency.

The Coalition's Budget Reply included a fuel security strategy designed to boost strategic reserves, expanding national storage capacity and doubling minimum reserve requirements to from 30 to 60 days.

Now the Strait of Hormuz is tentatively open, analysts say it is likely to be months before refineries get back to full production and supply chains stabilise. For Australia petrol supplies appear satisfactory, while diesel and jet fuel may be a problem.

Government is now attuned to increase our energy resilience by supporting oil exploration, increasing refinery capacity, increasing onshore storage. Biofuel development and coal liquefaction are also supported to contribute towards self-reliance in liquid fuels.

In supporting resilience in liquid fuels by expanding refining capacity government measures have been at cross purposes with existing decarbonisation 'net zero' programs which penalize oil refining. These issues are yet to be resolved. All sovereign capabilities are expensive and need to be subsidised and/or tariff protected. As with fossil fuel activities, existing programs to encourage investment are tied to decarbonisation 'net zero' targets. Hurdles to be overcome by potential new investment are Australia's high cost of energy and labour, troublesome industrial relations and excessive red and green tape.

Australia needs to grow the economy and increase productivity if it is to be able to afford the creation and maintenance of needed sovereign capabilities and the implementation of the National Defence Strategy. The 2026 Budget did not provide a strong start for this growth.

**A CHRONICLE/SUMMARY
of Events, Decisions & Issues
relating to Defence Matters - June 2026**

Michael W. Small

June 3, 2026

PM Albanese faces revolt over AUKUS with some members of his party. Several have used a caucus meeting to question the future of the \$368bn deal. Defence Minister Pat Conroy said Labor had a clear mandate for AUKUS, and that AUKUS had gone through a thorough review process as part of the Defence Strategic Review.

The 50th ALP's triennial National Conference is due to take place in Adelaide, Thursday, July 23 – Saturday, July 25. The key question: 'Will AUKUS be on the agenda?'

June 12, 2026

AUKUS has been dealt a blow with the resignations of UK Minister for Defence (John Healey) and UK Minister for Armed Services (Al Carns). UK Defence Minister (Healey) has accused UK Prime Minister (Keir Starmer) of failing to commit enough money to protect the country.

In Australia, the 'Australian Peace and Security Forum' (chair, Peter Garrett, Carmen Lawrence etc) has commenced a crowd-funded Public Inquiry into AUKUS (public hearings are taking place at Victoria's Trades Hall) which will assess the transparency, the cost and the strategic impacts of the \$368 billion nuclear submarine project. A report will be produced in October, 2026.

In the Middle East, the cease-fire is not holding. Iran attacked US forces days after an assault on Israel. An Iranian drone shot down a US helicopter on Monday, 8 June, the two crew members were rescued. A cease-fire will take place on Friday, 19 June.

June 16, 2026

A news item which had been reported earlier (February 12, 2003) has re-surfaced. The item referred to HMA Submarine *Dechineaux* (CO Commander Peter Scott) which had undergone a near catastrophic incident/failure while submerged 50 miles off the coast near Perth. The news report, with details of the incident from members of the crew, has been re-published.

June 21, 2026

An investigation into an Army helicopter crash (on Lindemann Island, July 28, 2023, of a MRH 90 Taipan during a night time training activity in which four army aviators were killed) has blamed 'pilot fatigue and loss of spatial orientation' for the crash. This finding is now in dispute with former Army aviators who said that such a crash was 'foreseeable'.

June 22, 2026

US Navy will re-establish Sub Squadron (CSS-3) at HMAS Stirling for a scheduled Submarine Maintenance Period (SMP). USS *Vermont* will soon make use of this

facility which previously operated out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, but was decommissioned in February, 2012.

The re-establishment of this base is a milestone in the AUKUS trilateral security partnership.

June 23, 2026

HMA Submarine *Dechineaux* is in the news again with more firsthand reports of the events of February 13, 2003. Petty Officer George Bunting said *inter alia*: 'he was very proud to be a submariner.'

The submarine is the nation's principal strategic deterrent in the present unstable environment.

June 25, 2026

Exercise Austral Shield focusing on domestic security threats will take place 3-19 July. It will involve 1,500 service personnel.

June 29, 2026

At April 1, 2026 the number of fulltime ADF personnel was 63,027, an increase of 3004 from 12 months ago. The RAN needs nuclear trained submariners, the Army needs missile experts, and space/cyber specialists are needed for long range weapons. The key word now is *Integration* among all three services.

June 30, 2026

The ADF has arrived in Hawaii for RIMPAC (24 June-11 July). This is the 30th iterative of this exercise. 430 ADF personnel will participate. HMAS *Sydney* (a Hobart-class guided-missile destroyer), ADV *Guidance* (Australian Defence Vessel) plus Poseidon and Wedgetail aircraft will participate.

The Government will provide a further \$100m in assistance to Ukraine for military equipment in its fight against the Russian invasion.

The next generation of *Bushmaster 5.6* military war fighting vehicle has been shown at the Eurostar Trade Fair in France. It has left-hand drive for use by potential customers, plus a range of upgraded different systems to meet the requirements of contemporary war fighting.

**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

Book Reviews

This newsletter has six Book Reviews. On behalf of members the Editor thanks the reviewers. The Monash Memorial Defence Library is most grateful to the authors and publishers for providing copies for review. If you would like a hard copy of a review, please contact the Secretary.

Challenging Anzac

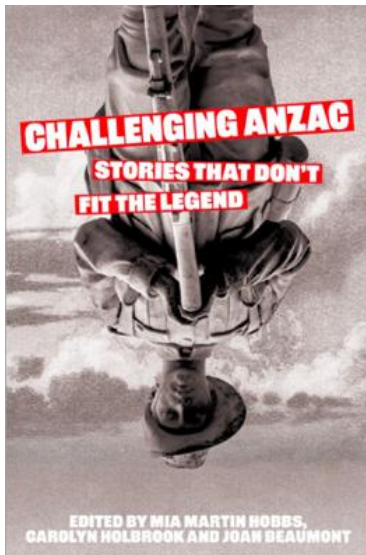
Stories that Don't Fit the Legend

Mia Martin Hobbs, Carolyn Holbrook, Joan Beaumont (Eds)

Randwick, NSW: New South Books, 2026

Paperback 368pp RRP: \$39.99

Reviewer: Michael Arnold, May 2026



Challenging ANZAC: Why Now? Is the title of the opening chapter written by the book's editors. It is a good question. What more can be said about the ANZAC legend that has not been written already? Plenty it seems. Including the editors, thirteen of Australia's leading historians have contributed stories that patently do not fit the ANZAC legend. The editors contend that the

reality of warfare has always been at odds with the ANZAC myth. They and the authors who have contributed to the book analyse why, despite the dissonance between reality and the ANZAC legend, it survives. The book contains stories of Australian service personnel and others affected by war, who obviously do not fit the ANZAC legend.

In the opening chapter, *Challenging ANZAC: Why Now?* the editors frame the book's context. They note that Charles Bean, the Australian journalist and official historian of World War One was an early exponent of the ANZAC legend. He subscribed to a notion Australian exceptionalism. Bean reported that Australian soldiers, who were all volunteers had proven to be exceptional fighters. According to Bean this could be explained by the largely agrarian society from which they came, that is, Australia of the early Twentieth Century. Australia in these times, he contended, was apparently almost classless and overwhelmingly egalitarian. Australian soldiers were laconic, resourceful, courageous, loyal, selfless and so on. Of course, the realities of war and

veterans' experiences in the conflicts in Australians fought in from World War One through to the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq usually do not neatly fit into this legend.

John Maynard's chapter *Fighting on the Western Front and Returning Home* details the terrible experiences of Aboriginal ANZACs. They faced overt racism during their service and, unlike their white brethren, were not feted upon their return to Australian society. Indeed, those who sought to take advantage of the soldier resettlement scheme after World War One were usually blocked. Maynard asserts that after the war they continued to experience blatant racism; and that even former white comrades would express their mateship with them in couched terms, positioning them as 'white inside', marking their Aboriginality as inferior.

In Chapter 6, *Bolshevik ANZAC*, Nathan Hobby, focuses on the story of Captain Hugo Throssell, VC, who was the first Western Australian to win a Victoria Cross in the Great War. Throssell became an ANZAC celebrity but this was later complicated by his conversion to socialism at the war's conclusion. The key point Hobby makes is that the RSL's forebear the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) became a politically conservative organisation, which was often at odds with the working-class aspirations of many returned soldiers and sailors. The idealised ANZAC myth that it propagated glossed over or ignored the many contradictions posed by working class and Aboriginal veterans.

Veteran suicide is another area which sits uncomfortably with the ANZAC myth of the stoic, fearless and laconic Australian soldier. In the aftermath of World War One, veteran suicide was at a much higher rate than that of civilians. Margaret Hutchison and Karen Bird in *Soldier Suicide* have written a thoughtful piece on World War One veteran suicide, drawing poignant parallels with veteran suicide in modern day. They suggest that the ANZAC myth may indeed be a contributing factor to veteran suicide.

Joan Beaumont's chapter on Tobruk is a thorough examination of ANZAC mythologisation of the 'Rats of Tobruk'. The fact that most of the Australian forces in the garrison were relieved, at the insistence of the Australian government well before the siege was finally relieved in early December of 1941, is rarely discussed. Popular recounting of the story of the Rats of Tobruk tends to dismiss this fact and implies that all Australian forces stayed at Tobruk until the siege was relieved.

Mia Martin Hobbs's Chapter, *Anti-War Veteran Activism From Vietnam To The War on Terror* states that it should not be surprising to veterans that many of their contemporaries, with experience of the horrors of battle, would become anti-war. Nor should it be surprising that many would go on to become anti-war activists. Martin Hobbs states that her research shows that large

numbers of American veterans have indeed become staunchly anti-war. Many are unafraid to voice their opinions, whereas Australian veterans interviewed generally show contempt for the anti-war movement, and most strongly adhered to ANZAC narratives of war. Her research, which includes interviews with veterans of Vietnam and the War on Terror, suggests that those who develop anti-war views tend to keep their opinions to themselves for fear of being isolated and marginalised.

In the chapter *Crimes Cloaked in ANZAC*, Martin Hobbs looks at the recent allegations of atrocities in Afghanistan by Australian Special Forces. She examines the various stakeholder groups' responses to the Brereton Report, noting many initially thought that its findings would deal a fatal blow to the ANZAC legend. Martin Hobbs analyses the many complex reasons why this did not occur.

What then of ANZAC in the age of autonomous warfare? Bianca Baggiani and Joan Beaumont ask how might the construction of the myth evolve in a future defined by the growing role of autonomous systems in warfare? What follows is a particularly interesting discussion about the evolution of autonomous systems and how the ANZAC legend will probably evolve and retain its currency despite the profound changes to warfare that these systems will continue to cause.

The final chapter by Carolyn Holbrook is *How ANZAC Evolved And Why It Endures – For Now*. Holbrook explores the ANZAC myth's religiosity suggesting that it has a strong similarity to Christianity, from its, '...origins in a traumatic event, around which a set of morals coalesced along with a community of adherents whose cohesion was affirmed around the enactment of powerful rituals.' Thus, facts or the history of what actually happened at Gallipoli and throughout World War One are far less important than deeper human impulses about values, as well as the groups to which people with specific values belonged. The author's analysis provides insight as to why the myth persists to the current day, despite the many challenges to its veracity.

I found *Challenging ANZAC* a provocative but engaging read. Those with or open to a more nuanced understanding of the ANZAC myth will appreciate the book's authors' efforts to challenge its tendency towards homogenisation of Australian military history; and the prevailing orthodoxy it imposes in relation to discussion of veteran experiences in Australia's wars. The book shows that the veteran experience in war is diverse and that more often than not, fails to conform to the heroic mythology of ANZAC. I highly commend this book to anyone interested in the ANZAC myth's place in Australian military history.

After Anzac

The Development of Australian Infantry on the Western Front, 1916–1918

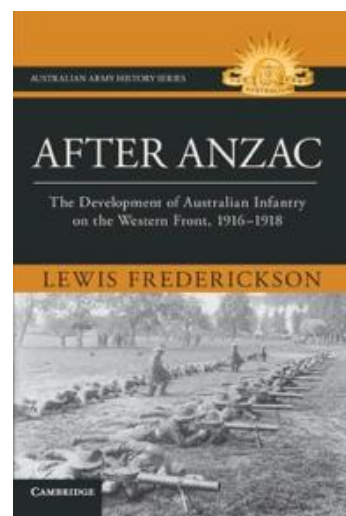
[Australian Army History Series]

Lewis Frederickson

Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2026
Hardback 304pp RRP: \$59.95

Reviewer: David Rees, May 2026

Understanding the Australian Army's history and learning lessons from it often requires a deep knowledge of the nature and character of war. It is a responsibility well accepted by the authors of the Australian Army



History Series (AAHS), as evidenced by the 40 books that AAHS has published over the last 25 years. The aim of the books is to ensure that they are thought-provoking, educational, of high scholarship, and well-researched, with an emphasis on the Army's historical operations, its organisational and cultural development, and its preparation for the future.

In this book, the author certainly meets the AAHS's aim. He gives a detailed and critical analysis of how Australian Infantry units in World War 1 learned from their early, disastrous experiences on the Western Front. He also shows how they developed better tactics, weapons, and training to become, by 1918, one of the most effective corps in the British Imperial force.

Frederickson argues that, while Australian troops of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were generally seen as exceptional, courageous, and tough fighters, they were also sometimes insouciant and irreverent. He explains that early in the war, the Australians, like the British, suffered heavy casualties, not because of a lack of fighting spirit but because of inexperienced leadership, ineffective tactics, and insufficient training in the use of appropriate weapons and technology. Historian Williamson Murray notes that the military establishments of both sides were initially unable to overcome trench warfare, stating, '*Stupidity initially reigned supreme amongst the military establishments of both sides as they were unable to develop effective tactics of overcoming the stalemate of trench warfare.*'

Like the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), the AIF suffered heavy losses in their first Western Front battles, and improvement only came later in the war.

The main reason for the improvement in effectiveness was the introduction, in late 1917 and 1918, of new

tactics, new weapons, and improved training by the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). These had been developed from the hard-won lessons of the past three years and codified in a document (SS143) that ensured the necessary degree of operational conformity was achieved throughout the force. The document was disseminated to all five BEF armies, including the Australian and Canadian Corps. Each army received intense reinforcement training as the axiom was that the better the training, the better the self-discipline and the better the soldier.

The emphasis in the changes was on the operations at platoon level, in which autonomous action was encouraged. The platoon leader was supported by a bombing section, a Lewis gun section, a rifleman section and a rifle bombing section. Each man was also trained to be multi-skilled within the platoon. Changes also included how the platoon cooperated with other units, such as tanks, artillery, and aircraft, to achieve its objectives. Both Australian and Canadian corps commanders, as part of the BEF 4th Army, were enthusiastic about the new methods, and they were employed to great effect by Lieutenant General Sir John Monash as the General Officer Commanding the Australian Corps during the successful battle at Le Hamel in July 1918. The Australian and Canadian Corps together with the British III Corps then fought a coordinated and successful campaign from August 1918 onwards using the new tactics. By November 1918, the Allies had pushed the Germans almost back to their border and the war ended.

This is a very readable and engaging book. It is both critical and praiseworthy of the Australian Army and its development during the latter years of World War 1. The supporting material includes 34 pages of Endnotes, a short Bibliography, and an Index. It stands as an insightful and valuable contribution to military history and is highly recommended.

Huey

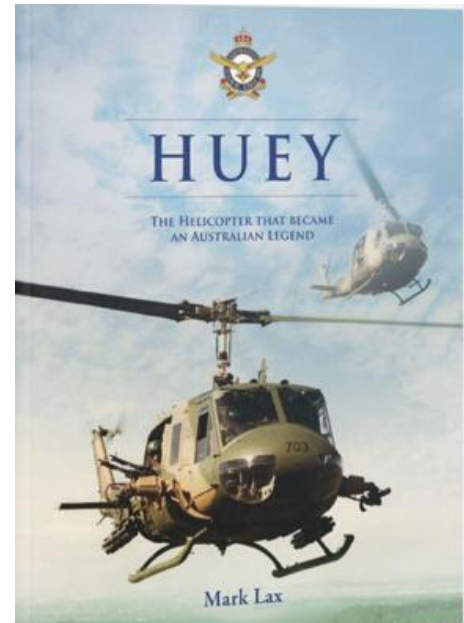
The Helicopter that became an Australian Legend

Mark Lax

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2025
Hardback 240pp RRP: \$69.99

Reviewer: Neville Taylor, May 2026

This overreaching publication is a fine testament to an aircraft that is so well known and fondly remembered by generations of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the wider Australian and international communities. It saved lives from shipwrecks, drowning, freezing and starving civilians, as well as delivering aid to victims of cyclones, floods and bushfire areas. It has also played peacekeeping roles in the Middle East and Pacific areas.



Beginning with the protracted 'will-we, won't-we' stance by politicians and heads of the ADF through to the eventual acceptance that there were considerable advantages to having availability of the enhancement of the Services, the history of 'adoption' has been comprehensively described. The helicopters that preceded the Huey has been carefully documented, and their delivery and usage by the RAAF and RAN from 1962 is covered in both word and tabular form. The other aircraft that supported the Huey have not been overlooked with both their capabilities and roles mentioned in detail.

The axe finally fell on the RAAF's Hueys, when in 1986 they were transferred to, and became an integral part of the Army. Serving as an infantry battalion commander on exercise at the time, I was fascinated by the 'extra yards' the RAAF went to in an effort to forestall any transfer. The final Huey flight of three aircraft took place on 21 September 2007, but they will not be forgotten - there have been 11 RAAF and RAN UH-1Bs and 22 Army UH-1Hs approved for public display at museums and RSL clubs around Australia. Attention has been paid to the aircraft that have succeeded the Huey with their capabilities and ongoing roles explained.

Mark Lax has gone to incredible lengths to ensure that no stone has been left unturned. The detail in words, tables and photographs (many depicting the various aircraft livery) has been more than generous. Four most important Indices have been included: A Roll of Honour of those who died in Vietnam on Iroquois Operations, ADF Helicopter Orders, ADF Iroquois Serials and 26 write-offs. Eleven pages of Endnotes, five pages of Bibliography and an Index round out this excellent production.

A must-read for those who served in the four decades that saw our skies filled with Hueys and their well-known sound on approach or departure.

Solomon Islands Air War

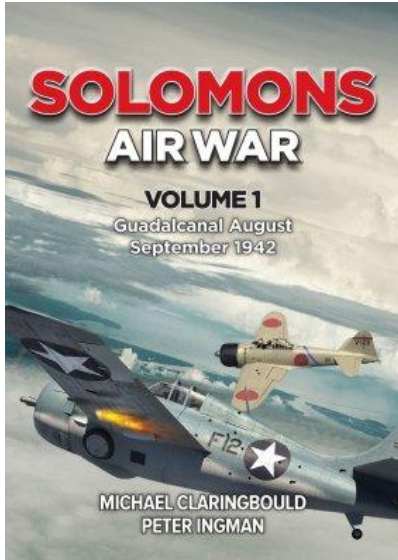
Volume 1

Guadalcanal August – September 1942

Michael Claringbould, Peter Ingman
Kent Town, SA: Avonmore Books, 2023
Paperback 200pp RRP: \$46.95

Reviewer: Robert Dixon, April 2026

This is the first volume of a planned new series of books by Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman which aims to cover the Air War in the Solomons in 1942 and 1943. This particular volume chronicles aerial warfare in the opening phase of the war in the Solomons Islands theatre and focuses on events in and around



Guadalcanal during the critical period of August-September 1942. The time period covered by the book was very eventful as the island was the site of the first major land offensive against the Japanese in the South Pacific with US Marines landing on the island on August 7th, 1942.

The landings were prompted by the intelligence that the Imperial Japanese Navy had commenced building an airfield on Guadalcanal which would extend the reach of their aircraft into the Allied occupied island chains of Fiji, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia and the shipping lanes between America and Australia.

The period covered by this volume includes: the initial landing by US forces; the capture of the airfield and its eventual use by US aircraft; attempts (often successful attempts in this time period) by the Japanese to land reinforcements and supplies on the island; the many (unsuccessful) counter-offensives by the Japanese, and; a number of naval battles including the 'Battle of Savo Island' during which the RAN's heavy cruiser HMS *Canberra* was heavily damaged and was scuttled.

With those events forming the background the book gives a very comprehensive day-by-day account of the air war. I do not use the word 'comprehensive' lightly. The aerial activities are described in very great detail where amongst other things the reader is told the number and type of aircraft involved, what unit they belonged to and where they were based, the names of the pilots of each of the aircraft involved and the purpose of the sortie and lengthy accounts of the movements of the aircraft including movements in aerial

combat (if any), together with the damage and losses sustained in combat and the fate of the aircrews.

Appendices provide a very detailed and likely complete list of American and Japanese losses and fatalities on each day including information on the type of aircraft lost, a brief description of the reason for the loss, and the number of aircrew killed. One notable feature of the book is that it does not confine its attention to aerial combat but places much emphasis on reconnaissance missions conducted by both sides – a very important activity in the war in the Pacific.

The authors explain that this volume goes beyond their own earlier writings on the air war in the Pacific as in this work they 'have obtained considerable new primary source material Japanese material and have tried where possible to use primary Allied source material as well.' In my view this volume is not merely the latest and very welcome book on the topic (aerial warfare in the Solomon's campaign has not received the attention that land and naval actions have been given) but is a reference book that will be regarded as 'definitive'. The text, the maps, the many photos (there is marvellous photo of the fuselage of a Catalina which has been stripped of its wings lying across the flat deck of a seaplane tender while being repaired) and the many coloured drawings are first-rate.

I have only two negative comments. First, when discussing the Coastwatchers and the important role they played in the Guadalcanal campaign the authors write (p 36) that 'Amongst the most important was Martin Clemens ...'. On the page which follows there is a map of the Solomons titled 'Coastwatchers, Location and Call Signs' but it does not show the location of Martin Clemens (this may be because his location is mentioned in the text but, even so, it does strike me as a little 'odd' that he is left out). Second, the book contains numerous first-rate coloured drawings of a number of different Japanese and American aircraft, many of which show the aircraft 'side-on', allowing us to see the various insignia born by the aircraft on the fuselage and tail together with their camouflage (if any) – these side-on drawings are a great boon to anyone modelling aircraft which took part in the campaign. However, while there are many B&W photos and drawings featuring two of the most important flying boats being used by both sides, the American's PBY Catalina and the Japanese Kawanishi H6K, codenamed 'Mavis' by the Allies, I was surprised to find that the book does not contain side-on drawings of either of these aircraft, both of which are mentioned many times in the text. These are very minor criticisms of a most impressive work.

I highly recommended this book for anyone interested in the Guadalcanal campaign and/or with an interest in military aviation and tactics associated with combat in the Pacific more generally. It was a pleasure to read.

Against the Rising Sun

An Australian POW's Survival: From Changi to Nagasaki

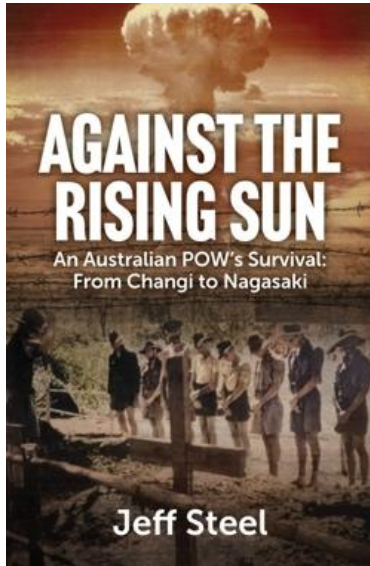
Jeff Steel

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2026

Paperback 368pp RRP: \$36.99

Reviewer: Michael Arnold, April 2026

Against the Rising Sun is Don Graham's story of survival in the most appalling of circumstances. A private soldier and signaller, Graham was assigned to the headquarters of Australia's ill-fated 8th Division which was sent to Malaya and would be a part of the greatest military



disaster in the history of the British Empire. Don Graham would experience the full horrors of being a prisoner of war (POW) of the brutal Japanese Army.

Steel brings Graham's experiences to life with a thoughtful reconstruction of his likely day-to-day experiences, from his arrival in Singapore as a wide-eyed young man, to the terrors he must have experienced

during the Japanese blitzkrieg down the Malayan Peninsular. He graphically depicts the Japanese Army's barbarism and the dehumanising treatment accorded to those allied soldiers who had the misfortune of being their POW. The reader gains insight into the depravity and casual brutality inflicted on soldiers like Don at the POW camps at Changi and Kobe, Japan. Graham experienced the horrific firebombing of Kobe and witness the atomic bomb detonation at Nagasaki.

Steel has thoroughly researched his subject and has closely liaised with Graham's descendants in bringing Don's story to light. He has produced an impressive historical scaffold of the major events of the war in the Pacific and of Don Graham's life in which to construct a plausible and compelling tale of Don's interactions with his fellow POWs and their appalling captors.

Steele is unflinching in describing the inhuman savagery of the Japanese Army towards their prisoners. Their deliberate policy of maximising the outputs of slave labour while starving their captives to death. The descriptions of the casual beatings, torture and stripping away of all human dignity are likely to be hard for younger readers to reconcile with modern Japan. Even for those of us old enough to have known relatives who survived the depravations of Changi and the other Japanese camps, it is hard to fathom.

Steele addresses the strategic failures of the British in Malaya, while graphically portraying the hopelessness that the Australian soldiers of the 8th Division must have felt as the Japanese advanced inexorably down the peninsular to the so-called island fortress of Singapore. The island had limited meaningful air power, and Japanese dominance of the air proved decisive. The parlous state of the island's defences and the general lack of combat experience of the island's defenders was, of course, well-known to the British commander, Lieutenant General Arthur Percival. He knew the likely operational approach and the capability of the Japanese but was powerless to stop them. Percival would be pilloried for his failure to defend Malaya and be humiliated by the Japanese by being forced to march under a white flag to the surrender ceremony in Bukit Timah on 15 February 1942. He, like Don would be held captive for the remainder of the war.

Steele brings to life the key Japanese protagonists, including the architect of the Malayan campaign, Colonel Masanobu Tsuji and the commander of the invading force, General Tomoyuki Yamashita. The former gained notoriety for organising mass slaughters of civilian and allied soldiers, including the Bataan Death March and the Pantangan River massacre in the Philippines but avoided court martial by the allies. The latter bore overall responsibility for many massacres in Malaya and after a court martial would be hanged in February 1946 by the allies. Steele also brings to life the other Japanese key figures in Graham's life as POW, describing in detail their usually brutal interactions with the prisoners.

Life for Don Graham in Changi, the Kawasaki shipyard camp in Kobe, and the Aso Yoshikuma coal mine, which was near the town of Keisen, was hellish. The long arduous days were punctuated by casual beatings by Japanese guards, and all too regularly, the deaths of comrades. A starvation diet of little more than rice was exacerbated by the complete lack of medical care, and the theft of the POW's Red Cross packages. He and the other POWs suffered from chronic and preventable illnesses which would in many cases, adversely impact their health for the rest of their lives. There was limited, if any, correspondence from their loved ones. Don would neither receive a single letter from home and nor would his family receive any of the many letters he wrote during his incarceration. His family was left in limbo, not knowing if he was alive, from his capture in Singapore until the very end of the war in the Pacific.

Graham would experience, close-hand the firebombing of Kobe by the B-29 Superfortresses of US Air Force with the newly developed incendiary, napalm. He would also witness the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki, which was approximately 100 kilometres to the southwest of Aso Yoshikuma camp. Steele graphically describes the toll exacted on the Japanese civilian population by these events with sympathy, while outlining the allied strategic context of the time for these actions. While describing the horror and human costs, he does not pass judgement on these events, at least not overtly. He also

describes the psychological impact these and all the other awful experiences had on Graham and his fellow prisoners. He hints at the means by which they would manage this trauma (for better or for worse) for the remainder of their lives.

I found *Against the Rising Sun* an excellent read. I am usually reluctant to read historical works that have been fictionalised. However, in this case, I was taken by the care of the author to inform the reader that what they are reading about Don's day-to-day experiences are indicative, a best guess albeit based on a solid foundation of historical knowledge of life at the time. Also there has been considerable guidance from relatives, who are intimately aware of the subject's life-story. The book has broad appeal, well beyond those particularly interested in military history. It is a compelling read for anyone interested humankind's ability to survive in the most difficult conditions, while retaining their very humanity as Don Graham did.

Australia's Aviation Heroes

True stories from our airmen at war

Colin Burgess

Cammeray, NSW: Simon & Shuster, 2025
Paperback 336pp RRP: \$37.99

Reviewer: David Rees, March 2026



Colin Burgess is an Australian author who has written many articles and books about the lives of several Australians heroes. He is particularly interested in those heroes who were involved in military and civil aviation operations during wartime. Working at Qantas Airways for many years as a Flight Services Director and as an editor of some of Qantas' publications gave the author ample opportunity

to meet and interview many Australian aviation heroes and World War II survivors. He wrote about many of them when he was not busy flying or writing about the activities of early Australian aviation pioneers, the space adventures of international astronauts, great prisoner of war escapees or the survival of courageous Betty Jeffrey and her 'Sisters in Captivity'.

In this book, Burgess revisited seven of the airmen's interviews he undertook in the mid-1980s. By conducting some additional research about their biographies, he wrote short, fascinating accounts of their lives and heroic experiences.

Each of the airmen had joined an Air Force, fought as aviators during the war in which they had participated, and then became involved in aviation in one way or another at the war's end.

The names and roles of the seven Australian heroes were

1. **Captain Jack Treacy AFC** served as an engineer and fighter pilot with the Australian Flying Corps during WW1, then transitioned to commercial flying with Queensland Air Navigation Pty. Ltd.
2. **Ernie Guest AFC** fought at Gallipoli in the First World War and then became an engineer and pilot in the Australian Flying Corps. After the war, he worked as a Qantas maintenance engineer.
3. **Squadron Leader George 'Scotty' Allan, RFC & RAF** was a fighter pilot in the First World War. He later left the UK for Australia and flew with Australian National Airlines, co-piloting with Kingsford-Smith and Ulm, before transferring to Qantas as a pilot.
4. **Air Vice Marshal Don Bennett CB, CBE, DSO** RAAF & RAF was a superb air navigator who during the Second World War transferred from the RAAF to the RAF to command the RAF's famed Pathfinder Force. After the war, he purchased Blackbushe Airport in the UK.
5. **Flight Lieutenant Joe Herman** RAAF was a pilot who flew Halifax bombers over France during the Second World War and was blown out of his aircraft without a parachute after his aircraft had been hit. Against the odds he managed to survive. After the war, he flew as a chief pilot for Queensland Aircraft Pty. Ltd.
6. **Group Captain Clive Caldwell DSO, DFC & bar, Polish Cross of Valour**, RAAF, was a top Australian ace fighter pilot in the Second World War and scored 28½ victories. Towards the end of the war, his career ended in controversy over the alleged 'Morotai mutiny'. After the war, he retired as a writer.
7. **Flying Officer Phillip Zupp** RAAF was a pilot who flew Meteors and Mustangs in the Korean War, earning a US Purple Heart. At the end of the war, he joined NSW Air Ambulance as a pilot.

The accomplishments of each of the airman were exceptional. They all showed courage, perseverance and a strong sense of duty to their country. The author writes about their accomplishments in an easy-to-read style, and he includes in the book, 60 photographs of the airmen and their aircraft. The book has a good index as well as a limited but select biography and will interest air enthusiasts and military historians in particular.

Stay Loose

30 Years – An Infantry Soldier's Story, Somalia, East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq

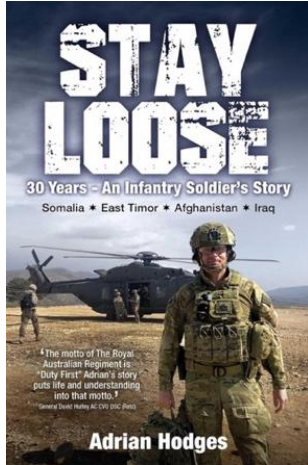
Adrian Hodges

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2025

Paperback 312pp RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: Russell Linwood, April 2026

This is an autobiography by a career Infantry soldier who served overseas in multiple deployment over a time when there were many such opportunities. As such, it provides a rich range of experiences that his generation faced, Adrian Hodges served for 30 years through two enlistments which were separated by a period of soul



searching, adventure and civilian employment which gave him several unusual experiences. The book's title becomes most apt when his story unfolds.

Adrian Hodges presents as an inveterate/consummate Infantryman. Following recruit training at Kapooka,

he went on to serve in every rank up to Warrant officer Class I. Along the way, he

commanded a section, served as a platoon sergeant, a company sergeant major and then Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) in a range of units, mostly his beloved 1 RAR which comes across as his pride and joy. He also had other instructional appointments. He is clearly dedicated to the art of Infantry, and the book is replete with excellent details of how that arm works within the wider Army construct. Finishing his Army career with selection and part-attendance at the US Army Sergeant Major's course for top soldiers, he is eminently well qualified to write a book such as this and share his experiences.

The journey the reader is taken through is presented in four parts, delivered over eleven conventional chapters. The first, after a dramatic introduction set early in his Army life, is his youth and the influences that those experiences played in his formative years, spent mainly in Victoria and then Brisbane, arguably two different cultural settings even within Australia. These generate opportunities for growing up and becoming steeped in the culture typical of the average Australian soldier, culture that remains to a degree even after enlistment and affect later behavior and decision making.

The second is his first period of service in Army which takes him from recruit and initial employment training, then posting to 1 RAR with whom he serves in Somalia and into 1994 when he decides to separate from Army. The third, in a chapter titled *'Lost then Found'* deals with his time backpacking and touring around the world and civilian employment. The fourth covers his second period of enlistment during which is deploys several times and

works his way through the ranks from scratch until deciding for a second time to leave the Army after an extraordinary range of experiences and transition through technology change and even the nature of warfare as we know it. An Epilogue briefly addresses his post-ADF (and current at time of printing) employment in in the United Arab Emirates as a military contractor.

Throughout, the reader is treated a smorgasbord of highs and lows of service as an infantryman in both peace and war environments, in both Regular and Reserve units, training establishments and staff appointments commensurate with his rank at the time. He does not miss many opportunities along the way, and this makes for most appealing story telling. He meets with characters ranging from the lower to the higher and goes to places most of us hardly even read about let alone get the opportunity to visit and savour the local atmosphere.

The detail of soldiering provided is exacting and with, as far as I can tell as a fellow career infantryman including with 1 RAR, without fault. Hodges has an excellent ability to present clearly how weapons work, why soldiers do what they do and their physical and emotional travels as they navigate through the vagaries of their career and private lives. Adrian Hodges does this in a manner that is succinct and easily understood by the lay reader who might not have had military experience. To me, this is a gift that not all autobiographers have.

The author is also clearly an avid historian. His story is punctuated with many forays into the background of why conflicts had occurred, personalities, politics, failed states, places of historical significance whether they be battlefields on which he served or simply tourist destinations he reached and journey to get there. Many readers will enjoy this aspect of the book; I found this extra information most informative and am very happy to say that I learned a lot that I did not already know about several places including some that I also have been to. He is a professed learner, and it is notable that he completed a degree in his later years as well which gives some evidence to this observation.

As a natural story told in the first person, the style is crisp and enjoyable; easy to read and the pace maintained. There are no references nor an index, but this type of book succeeds with a simple structure - which it has - told by a compelling and passionate storyteller with rich experiences to read about, which is the case with Adrian. An excellent array of coloured photographs centred in the book provide great visual reinforcement to this charismatic and enthusiastic soldier. The style is attractive; it holds the reader's attention as he takes us through the highs and lows of both service and civilian life. The prominence of the value and strength of the military family (those in uniform who form a unique bond) and the value of family support at home beams out of the page.

Victoria's Military History and Heritage

Melbourne's Memorial Statue of

Major-General Charles George Gordon CB

Marcus Fielding

This article originally appeared in the August 2012 Newsletter

Major-General Charles George Gordon, CB (28 January 1833 – 26 January 1885), also known as 'Chinese Gordon', 'Gordon Pasha', and 'Gordon of Khartoum', was a British army officer and administrator.



He saw action in the Crimean War as an officer in the British Army, but he made his military reputation in China, where he was placed in command of the "Ever Victorious Army", a force of Chinese soldiers led by European officers.

In the early 1860s, Gordon and his men were instrumental in putting down the Taiping Rebellion, regularly defeating much larger forces. For these accomplishments, he was given the nickname 'Chinese Gordon' and honours from both the Emperor of China and the British.

He entered the service of the Khedive in 1873 (with British government approval) and later became the Governor-General of the Sudan, where he did much to suppress revolts and the slave trade. Exhausted, he resigned and returned to Europe in 1880.

When a serious revolt broke out in the Sudan, led by a Muslim reformer and self-proclaimed Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad, at the request of the British government, Gordon went to Khartoum in February 1884 to see to the evacuation of Egyptian soldiers and civilians.

After evacuating about 2,500 British civilians he retained a smaller group of soldiers and non-military men. As an ardent Christian evangelist he was determined to stand up to the Mahdi, his Muslim nemesis. In the build-up to battle the two leaders corresponded attempting to convert the other to their respective faiths, but neither would comply.

Besieged by the Mahdi's forces, Gordon organized a city-wide defence lasting almost a year that gained him the

admiration of the British public, though not the government, which had not wished to become involved. Only when public pressure to act had become too great was a relief force reluctantly sent. It arrived two days after the city had fallen and Gordon had been beheaded. In 1888 a statue of Gordon by Hamo Thornycroft was erected in Trafalgar Square, London. An identical statue was erected in a small park called Gordon Reserve, near Parliament House in Melbourne. Funded by donations from 100,000 citizens, it was unveiled in June 1889. Gordon stands, hand thoughtfully on his chin, armed only with a cane and a bible, standing on a shattered cannon. He was thought to reflect all the Victorian virtues – warrior, saintly virtues, and martyr. Inscribed on the memorial is "I have tried to do my duty" and

"This is the happy warrior. This is he that every man in arms should wish to be."

Stay Loose continued

For those who have served in the ADF, this will resonate well as the life of a career Infantryman is not an easy one, especially with deployments and training for them at any time, and especially over the period that the author served.

This is one of the best autobiographies of a modern-era Australian soldier I have had the pleasure to read. It presents most clearly what it is like to serve in the Infantry, and the author presents as the consummate professional in this field. His mix of passion, determination, historical context, situational awareness and high-quality writing enables the presentation of a gripping narrative where, as the cover aptly puts it '... a deeply personal journey finding humour and catharsis in extraordinary circumstances, proving that past experiences offer lessons, not life sentences'.

Adrian Hodges has presented a great product, suited to a wide range of readers. Serving and retired military personnel will especially enjoy this book because, in this reviewer's opinion, it is so accurate and illustrative. It also avoids the occasional trap that soldier stories can fall into of tending to exaggerate certain rank relationships. On the contrary, Adrian outlines the essential elements of enlisted/officer relationships that need to be in place for the successful implementation of command and good relationships between all ranks. I have rarely seen such quality expression on this aspect of a senior soldier's relationship with their officer at each level. This alone adds significant value to the book.

While I did not serve with the author, many readers probably did and will reach their own conclusions. After reading his book I have formed the opinion that I would have liked to have served alongside him at each of the levels of his service. *Stay Loose* is strongly recommended for both a casual read and retention in a responsible military history collection. Or gifting to a youngster with aspirations to join the ADF.

New Acquisitions (since March 2026)

Books reviewed in this *Newsletter* have not been included

Title	Author	Subject
<i>A Hidden Tragedy New Feller Master story.</i>	Andrew Campbell Michael Piggott	The sinking of HMAS <i>Goorangai</i> . Beyond the trenches: Australia's neglected WWI
<i>ANZAC Strike Wing Campaign Series Volume 12]</i>	John Quaife	Operations in the North Sea with [Australian Air RAF Coastal Command.
<i>Nursing Aids at War Medical Service in the Second World War.</i>	Jason Smeaton	The Australian Army Women's
<i>Commanders Eyes & Ears</i>	Glenn Wahlert	Australian Army combat intelligence in the Cold War 1945-1975.
<i>Supporting the Commitment</i>	Ian R Finlayson	Australian Army Logistics in South Vietnam, 1962–1973.
<i>I'll Walk Beside You</i>	Peter Mitchell	Love, loss, the Burma Railway and the human spirit.
<i>Solomons Air War Vol 2</i>	Michael Claringbould Peter Ingman	Guadalcanal & Santa Cruz October 1942.
<i>The Battle of the Coral Sea</i>	Tom Lewis	
<i>The Catalina Flying Boat</i>	Don Williams	In Australian service during WWII.
<i>Sailor, Soldier, Vicar, Farmer</i>	Daniel Reynaud Chaplain Walter Dexter.	The improbable life of Anzac
<i>The First ANZACs</i>	George Hulse and Jimmy Thomson	The incredible untold stories of Aussie and Kiwi combat engineers in WW1.
<i>The Unknown Warrior</i>	John Nichol	A personal journey of discovery and remembrance.
<i>Sisters Under Fire</i>	Colin Burgess	The extraordinary courage of two Australian nurses at war.
<i>Loyalty</i>	Nick Horden	Australians, Japanese and Espionage on the eve of the Pacific War.