



RUSIA

Defence and Security Book Reviews

Issue 3/26

August 26

secretary@rusivc.org.au

We are grateful to publishers for the books reviewed in this issue. The additional books listed below the reviews are available for voluntary reviewers. We ask for the book to be returned to us – as a quid pro quo we will send you one of our duplicates in pristine condition.

In this Issue

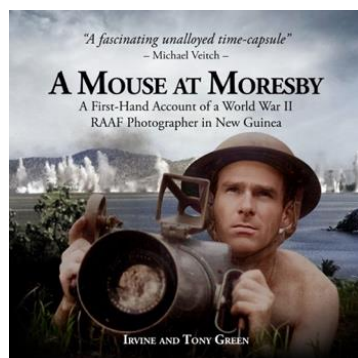
A Mouse at Moresby
Code of Silence
From the Skies

Sister Bullwinkle
The Laws of Yesterday's Wars
Wings over Malayan Jungle

Irvine and Tony Green, *A Mouse at Moresby: A Firsthand Account of a World War II RAAF Photographer in New Guinea*

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2025
 Paperback 272pp RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: Robert Dixon



Irvine Green – the author's father – was a member of the RAAF's photographic unit located in Port Moresby from the end of December 1941 through to early February 1943.

While the book does include biographical material (including many photos) about his activities in the period before and after he was posted there, the core of the book is based on Irvine Green's diary entries, letters and photo-

graphs taken by him during the period he was in Port Moresby. The author writes that the very large number of photos included in the book 'give a fascinating glimpse into Port Moresby at the time as well as war events. While he spent most of his time in a lab processing film for reconnaissance photos ... he also took pictures both in the field and in the air'. The photo section worked for RAAF HQ, so it was located close to the town rather than at any of the airstrips.

The title of the book is a reference to a Radio Tokyo broadcast which referred to the Australians in Port Moresby as the 'Mice of Moresby', little brothers of the 'Rats of Tobruk'. The sub-title repeats a common mistake that people make. Port Moresby was never part of (the former German colony) New Guinea, instead it was at that time the capital of Papua, an Australian territory.

Irvine Green was in Port Moresby during a quite eventful period of time from the point of view of military history. He was there when the Japanese bombing raids began, resulting amongst other things in the sinking of the MV Macdhui in the harbour in June 1942 and when the first RAAF fighter squadron (75 Sqn which flew P-40 Kittyhawks) to be based in Port Moresby arrived in March 1942. He was in Port Moresby at the time of the naval battle of the Coral Sea and also when there was much

fighting on the Kokoda Trail and also at Buna and Gona and Milne Bay. All of these events are briefly mentioned in the text but only the Japanese bombing raids on Port Moresby are the subject of a number of photos. The other events which I have just mentioned are not accompanied by photographs. Thus, the publisher's claim on the back cover of the book that *A Mouse at Moresby* contains many previously unseen images of 'the struggle by Australian servicemen against the Japanese onslaught in New Guinea' gives the false impression that the book contains images of the fighting on the Kokoda Trail and the other locations mentioned above. It does not.

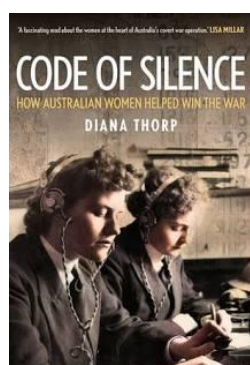
Having lived in Port Moresby for five years in the 1970s I found some of the photos in the book interesting. I particularly liked the aerial photo of Hanuabada, a large coastal village which is especially striking as it consists of a large number of houses built on wooden stilts out over the water and connected by precarious walkways. The book also contains photographs of the road which leads from Port Moresby to the start of the Kokoda Trail including a photo of Ruona Falls.

The text of the book is very well written and there are very informative captions for each of the numerous photos. Overall, I think the book is best seen as a family album rather than military history. As such it is hard to know who would want a copy of the book other than the relatives of Irvine Green and people interested in the history of Port Moresby during the Second World War.

Diana Thorp, *Code of Silence: How Australian Women Helped Win the War*

Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2025
Paperback 336pp RRP: \$37.99

Reviewer: Neville Taylor



'Reading the tea leaves' better than most, Florence Jean McKenzie, Australia's first female electrical engineer, had set up the Women's Emergency Signals Corps (WESC) to provide signals training to women in Sydney's CBD before war had broken out. This included sending and receiving Morse code, flag signalling and send-

ing Morse with lamps. She even organised a uniform for WESC members. As women reached proficiency in signalling, they be-came the next generation of instructors. [See *Radio Girl* David Duffy, Allen & Unwin, 2020.]

The Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) was the only women's service in existence when the Second World War broke out. In June 1940 the Women's Australian National Service (WANS) was launched in Sydney and the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) was formed the next month. By 1941 there became a desperate need for more males to join the war effort. After much government wrangling, it was agreed women could serve in the armed forces as well as move into occupations that had been the sole prerogative of males. 1941 saw the formation of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in March, the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) in April, and the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) in August. The Second World War saw seven percent of Australian service roles filled by women.

Whilst many served as cooks, clerks and orderlies, as their additional skills were recognised they became drivers, anti-aircraft gunners, and workers in ordnance, electrical, mechanical and intelligence units. WAAAF members worked with their male counterparts maintaining and arming aircraft, radar operators, driving trucks and as drill instructors. Selected women were interviewed for classified roles in communications and were required to sign the Official Secrets Act thus acknowledging the security required in their work.

After initial training in their chosen service, the women who were usually between 18 and 30 years of age, were posted into an intelligence or communications role in all Australian states. Frequently they, intentionally, were not aware of the work done by those in the room next door. From messages from Southwest Pacific coast watchers being relayed to the War Room in Victoria Barracks, Melbourne to provide intelligence for the planning and execution in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea; to messages relayed overseas to Bletchley Park (UK), it was all in a (combined) day's work for these women who provided an immense contribution to the war effort. For most it was their first time of not living at home, and the freedom and responsibility for oneself greatly accelerated their maturity.

Code of Silence tells the stories of women, who have until recently, kept their war work a secret from their families, peers and partners. Experiences in all services and capital cities have been recounted. Working in city apartments, mansions, garages, and girls' schools as well as HMAS *Harman* (ACT); varying their daily travel routes to and from

work; overcoming war-time shortages, and social life before and after the arrival of American service personnel have all been presented to the reader. The return to post-war life has not been overlooked.

Diana Thorp has presented a most readable account of the lives of special women in a service environment, coping with war-time society, and transitioning back to life as a civilian. It is a much-needed work to assist in the completion of our World War history. There has been a generous imbedding of photographs of these 'silent service' personnel. An exhaustive bibliography and notes are indicative of the research done by the author. A very readable account of war that does not involve any elements of combat yet is a most valuable contribution to Australia's military history.

Karyn Markwell, *From the Skies: Australian air power in humanitarian aid and disaster relief since the Second World War*

[Australian Air Power Series #11]

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2026
Paperback 368pp RRP: \$39.99

Reviewer: David Rees



This book examines the role of Australian Air Power in delivering humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) in the Asia-Pacific region and, at times, elsewhere. The author, Flight Lieutenant Karyn Markwell is a RAAF Reservist as well as a history and heritage

writer and this is her first book in the RAAF Campaign Series. There are currently twelve books in this series, each by a different author. The series aims to give readers a deeper understanding of the RAAF's evolving operational capabilities. To achieve this for the HADR role, the author has divided her book into three clear parts.

Part 1 explains some of the reasons why countries become involved in HADR. They are often based on a philosophical and altruistic concern for assisting people in distress, regardless of the people's nationality. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) requires

countries that engage in HADR to follow four principles. In summary, the principles are that:

1. Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found.
2. Humanitarian action should not take sides.
3. Assistance must be provided on an impartial basis and in accordance with the greatest need.
4. Aid and disaster relief must be autonomous and free from political, economic or military objectives.

Part 2 outlines how, since the end of WW2, the RAAF and Qantas used air power assistance in more than 35 HADR operations worldwide. The operations include as an example, the delivery and air-dropping of relief supplies to people in Western Australia following tropical cyclone *Ellie* in 2023. The evacuation of personnel from disaster areas in which 5,300 Australians were evacuated from Lebanon during its war with Israel in 2006. The aerial search and rescue operation in the Southern Indian Ocean which involved the long search for the missing Malaysian Airliner MH370 in 2014, and the transport of personnel for HADR to New Zealand following the earthquake that struck Christchurch in 2011. These operations and others are described in detail in the book and feature stories from some of the dedicated and courageous ADF personnel who participated in such operations.

Part 3 reviews projected developments in future HADR operations and evaluates the potential impacts on the ADF's aircraft selection. The current aircraft fleet operated by the RAAF which can, if necessary, be used for HADR operations, consists of **8** Boeing C-17A Globemaster III strategic airlifters, **10** Alenia C-27J Spartan tactical transport aircraft, **12** Lockheed Martin C-130J Hercules tactical airlifters, **7** Airbus KC-30A multi-role tanker transports, **6** Boeing E-7A Wedgetail airborne early warning and control aircraft, and **13** Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft. The fleet also includes several Boeing CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift and Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk/Sea Hawk medium-lift helicopters. In the future, up to **4** unmanned Northrop Grumman MQ-4C Triton surveillance aircraft are planned to join the fleet.

Australia has a proud history of aiding people affected by humanitarian crises, and the people in the Asia Pacific region are 5 times more likely to be affected by a national disaster than elsewhere in the world. There is therefore greater demand for Australia to remain a good international citizen and to continue providing HADR in its regions of interest.

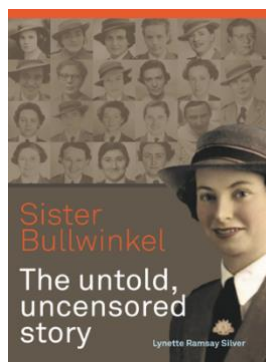
The book is a good historical reference for humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations by the RAAF and Qantas and is an interesting

read. It is well supported by a large bibliography, an index and maps of the regions where Australian HADR operations have been conducted.

Lynette Ramsay Silver, *Sister Bullwinkel: The untold uncensored story*

Richmond, VIC: Hardie Grant, 2025
Paperback 272pp RRP: \$39.99

Reviewer: Janet Roberts Billett



Lynette Ramsay Silver examines the life, wartime service and post-war legacy of Australian Army Nursing Service nurse Vivian Bullwinkel, particularly relating to her experiences following the collapse of Allied defences in Southeast Asia during the Second

World War. The book focuses on both the events surrounding the fall of Singapore in February 1942 and the long period of silence that followed for those Australian women who became prisoners-of-war of the Japanese.

The narrative opens with an outline of the strategic assumptions underpinning British and Australian defence planning in the region and the rapid disintegration of these assumptions following the Japanese advance through Malaya. Silver describes the atmosphere in pre-war Singapore, including prevailing beliefs in imperial military superiority and confidence in the city's defences. This context frames the abrupt shift from relative security to mass evacuation, capture and imprisonment.

Central to the book is the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke*, which was evacuating nurses and civilians from Singapore, and the subsequent massacre of the nurses on Radji Beach, Banka Island. Of the 22 women captured, only Vivian Bullwinkel survived. Silver reconstructs these events through archival records, war crimes trial material and personal testimony, demonstrating how much of what occurred was excluded from official accounts for decades.

The key theme of the book is censorship and omission. Silver traces how Bullwinkel's testimony was shaped by military and political authorities in the post-war period, particularly regarding the sexual violence in the treatment of the nurses prior to their deaths. Bullwinkel was compelled to maintain the authorised

version of events for most of her life, disclosing the full circumstances only late in life to a trusted confidant. The author also examines missing or altered records, including redacted medical files, diary pages removed and erased interview material, suggesting the deliberate suppression of evidence by military and political authorities.

The middle sections of the book follow Bullwinkel's survival and early captivity, before broadening to describe the experiences of other nurses and internees across several prisoner-of-war camps. These chapters detail daily life under Japanese control, the effects of starvation, disease and forced movement, and the limited reach of international humanitarian protections. The gradual physical and psychological decline of internees as the war progressed towards its end is noted and documented in detail, forming an important record of internment.

The final chapters turn to the post-war period, documenting Bullwinkel's rehabilitation, her return to nursing, and her testimony in the war crimes trials at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Silver also charts Bullwinkel's later career in the Army Reserve, her involvement in professional and memorial organisations and her life-long efforts to ensure collective recognition of the nurses killed on Radji Beach. The book concludes with Bullwinkel's later life, death in 2000, and subsequent public memorialisation.

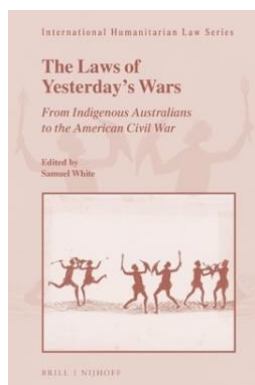
Supplementary materials include timelines, biographical details of the nurses, maps, and an extensive bibliography, supporting the reconstruction of events and the broader historical setting. Overall, the book presents a biographical study that intersects personal experience, institutional memory and wartime violence, with sustained attention to the consequences of silence and delayed disclosure in Australia's military and social history of World War II.

Silver is to be congratulated for her empathy, courage and perseverance to produce this account and uncover the truth hidden from Australians for so many years. In doing so she has given the nurses who were massacred and Vivian Bullwinkel their voices back and the recognition they deserved.

Samuel White (Ed), *The Laws of Yesterday's Wars: From Indigenous Australians to the American Civil War*

Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publications, 2021
Hardback 236pp RRP: \$194.00

Reviewer: Neville Taylor



This very impressive collection of papers examines the development during the last two millennia of codes for the conduct of military conflicts in eight different cultures over that period. Rather surprisingly, there emerged similarities in terms of 'fair treatment' in a

number of instances.

Indigenous Australians have fought in different situations – from 'payback' situations, conducting raids and occasionally major battles. Normally the 'rules' were established before the opposing sides confronted each other – often with agreement that a first wounding or death would see the end of belligerent activities. A wounded fighter was not pursued to be killed. Ill-feelings were usually not harbored and sometimes a combined hunt followed by a corroboree would follow.

In the New Zealand Wars in the mid-19th century the Māori people attempted to observe their humane approach to those outside the realm of physical warfare but were confronted by colonial opponents who committed numerous extreme atrocities. There were many chivalrous actions and in later years massive reparations have been made by successive governments.

The Aztecs Empire (1428 – 1521) fought with the aim of capturing or kidnapping suitable sacrifices to their gods in raids on villages. Non-targeted personnel were not to be harmed or possessions or property to be looted. Those captured were taken into the home of their captor for almost a year to be clothed, fed and treated as if a guest. On the eve of their sacrifice, they were revered and prayed for by their captor.

Late Middle Ages in Northern Europe (1250 – 1500 AD). Wars were either private or feudal, including religious disagreements. Killing of opponents was approved while burning,

plundering and ransom was forbidden. Those stepping outside these guidelines were subject to being tried by a Court of Chivalry established by a ruling prince, with there being severe penalties for transgressions.

The Renaissance (circa 1300 – 1600 AD). War was to be declared by the sovereign. Prohibited conduct against an enemy included treachery, harm to those captured, use of poison, while the protection of non-participants involved protection of children, old men, non-residents, madmen and farmers. There was to be no harm to property.

The Viking Age 750 – 1050 AD. Their belligerent acts were based on swiftly-striking raiding parties on villages with a view to gaining wealth, slaves and hostages. There was loyalty shown to brothers, but no mercy whatsoever to those attacked. There are no written records of 'does and don'ts'.

Pirates and Privateers in Elizabethan England (1558 – 1603). This was an age PEW-M [private economic warfare (maritime)] which thinly disguised the activities of privately sponsored merchant vessels. The issue of letters of reprisal to strike 'enemies of the realm' made Sir Francis Drake for example – a corsair, not a pirate). There was an enforcement rationale to suppress unacceptable activities while coffers were boosted, and the development of a potent maritime force took place.

The Code of Necessity emerged during the American Civil War (1861 – 1865). There were two primary concepts for Laws of Armed Conflict (LOAC):

Henry Dunant's concept was to 'restrict and limit the use of military force for humanitarian interests', and Francis Lieber's idea was to 'provide a set of rules and guidelines to legitimize the use of force between combatants generally.'

President Lincoln issued the Final Emancipation Proclamation on 1st January 1863. This enabled the Union Army to recruit black personnel. The Lieber Code, issued as General Orders No. 100 on April 24, 1863, by President Lincoln was the first comprehensive codification of the laws of war. It established 157 rules on military necessity, treatment of prisoners, and protection of civilians. The Lieber Code has since been used a strategic form of 'lawfare strategy' as LAOC is now termed. Lieber was looking to defeat the Confederacy by the most efficient path possible whilst providing a natural arbiter between two sides but aligned with the side with the most just or morale cause. Article 14 of the Code states 'a military can take any action under the laws of

war that was considered 'indispensable' to secure military victory'.

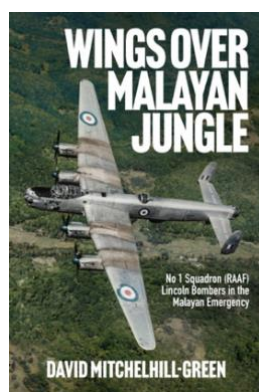
This is well written and easy to read. The contributors have diverse backgrounds and provide extensive footnotes. The Index has been divided into chapter sections in alphabetical title order.

A must-read for those who wish to examine wars in different periods with a view to comparing the differences and the similarities in how they have been conducted.

David Mitchelhill-Green, *Wings over Malayan Jungle: No 1 Squadron (RAAF) Lincoln Bombers in the Malayan Emergency*

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2025
Paperback 480pp RRP: \$36.99

Reviewer: Robert Dixon



The Malayan Emergency (1948 – 1960) was an armed conflict between communist guerrillas on the one hand and the local British colonial administration together with British Commonwealth Military Forces on the other. The Australian contribution to the very successful

counter-insurgency campaign included the deployment in July 1950 of a squadron of (Australian built) Avro Lincoln Bombers to Tengah airbase on the western part of Singapore island. The squadron operated out of Tengah until July 1958 at which time they returned to Amberley. This book gives the background to the deployment of the squadron to Malaya and then provides a comprehensive account of their activities in the eight years they were operating there.

The long range and heavy payload of the four-engined Lincoln made it an effective bomber. Importantly, the Lincoln was also equipped with two 12.7 mm (0.50 inch) Browning machine guns in both the nose and tail turrets, and two 20 mm Hispano cannons in a dorsal turret. This meant that it was also ideal platform for strafing. Since it was usually impossible to see through

the tightly packed treetops in the jungle where the insurgents were operating from, a typical mission involved pattern-bombing a specific patch of jungle followed up by low level strafing of that area until all of the ammunition was expended. The author points out that 'the aircrews never see the enemy. All they see is a jungle which envelopes and protects him. So, they bomb the jungle' (p145). The author explains that the particular area of jungle to be attacked was often selected in the hope that any guerrillas in that location would be driven into a prearranged ambush site. Unfortunately, the thick jungle also made the effectiveness of the bombing and strafing hard to determine. Flying such a large aircraft in mountainous terrain required great skill as the missions almost invariably required flying the aircraft through mist-covered valleys and below the peaks of rugged mountains on either side of the aircraft.

The front cover of the book has an excellent coloured photograph of a Lincoln in flight. Unfortunately, inside the book we only have low-quality B&W photographs interspersed among the text. Even so a number of the photos are of special interest as they show a Lincoln in flight and photographed from side-on with its bomb doors open, enabling the viewer to gain an impression of the enormous size of the Lincoln's bomb bay. In addition to the photos the work has some very useful maps and diagrams, a 12-page bibliography, 14 pages of endnotes and a very detailed index occupying 12 pages.

I was surprised to read (on p 234) that a member of the squadron recalled that on the 13th of March 1954 'our Lincolns were bombed up and armed [in order] to ... bomb and strafe around the perimeter of Dien Bien Phu. ... The whole squadron was briefed in the early morning.' The text goes on to say that the strike was called-off that afternoon. The source is given as an article in *Vet Affairs* in 1997, a copy of which is in the National Library. The author reports this without comment, but I think the reader ought to have been told if this was corroborated by other sources.

Wings Over Malayan Jungle gives a comprehensive account of a much-neglected chapter of RAAF history. I enjoyed reading the book and I recommend it to anyone with an interest in the history of the RAAF and in counter-insurgency operations. The book would also be of interest to the relatives of the servicemen who were stationed at Tengah in the period of the Emergency.

About the Author

David Mitchelhill-Green began his career working abroad as a medical scientist in

London. A love of history and photography led to his making contributions to the UK magazine *After the Battle*. Returning home to Australia, David has written a number of studies in military history. His books include *Tobruk*, *Air War Over North Africa*, *Castles of the Samurai*, and *Fighting in Ukraine: A Photographer at War*. He

won first prize for literature in the 2021 RAAF Heritage Awards.

Additional Books available for review:

Charles Glass, *Soldiers Don't Go Mad: A story of brotherhood, poetry, mental illness during the First World War*

Tim Grady, *Burying the Enemy: The story of those who cared for the dead in two world wars*

Michael Piggott, *New Feller Master: Beyond the Trenches Australia's Neglected WWI Story*

Jason Smeaton, *Nursing Aides at War: The Australian Army Women's Medical Service in the Second World War*

Ian R Finlayson, *Supporting the Commitment: Australian Army Logistics in South Vietnam, 1962–1973*

Daniel Reynaud, *Sailor, Soldier, Vicar, Farmer: The Improbable Life of Anzac Chaplain Walter Dexter*

Colin Burgess, *Sisters Under Fire: The Extraordinary courage of two Australian nurses at war*

Dave Morgan, *Never Forgotten Vol 2: Honouring our Veterans. From Vietnam to Afghanistan*

Damien Finlayson, *The Hidden War: Australian Tunnellers and the Fight for the Western Front*

Andy White, *Outside the Wire: On the Front Line with the SAS in Australia's War in Afghanistan*