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# RUSI-VIC NEWSLETTER

Volume 8 Issue 1 – March 2009

Editor: Martin Holme

ISSN 1446 – 4527

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\*\*\*\*\* New!! \*\*\*\*\*

RUSI AUST (inc Victoria) [www.rusiaust.org](http://www.rusiaust.org)

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RUSI Whitehall [www.rusi.org](http://www.rusi.org)

Dept of Defence [defence.gov.au](http://defence.gov.au)

Aust Strategic Policy Institute [www.aspi.org.au](http://www.aspi.org.au)

Australia Defence Association [www.ada.asn.au](http://www.ada.asn.au)

## **LUNCHTIME ADDRESS**

**Victoria Barracks – St Kilda Road  
1200hrs – Shedden Auditorium**

**THURSDAY, 26<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2009**

## **LTCOL STUART YEAMAN**

**Commander 4<sup>th</sup> Reconstruction Force - Afghanistan**

**“Protected Reconstruction –**

**Uruzgan Campaign – an Australian Perspective”**

Stuart Yeaman commanded 4<sup>th</sup> Reconstruction Task Force in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, from April to October 2008. During this deployment RTF 4 built key infrastructure in Tarin Kowt and Sorkh Margab and undertook innovative operations to seize key terrain in the Baluchi Pass. They also re-constructed two Taliban destroyed bridges, after a hazardous 400km re-deployment, moving through three Provinces in the process.

This will be a fascinating first-hand account of the often dangerous but much lauded work carried out by our forces in that troubled land.

**Time: 1130 hrs (Tea/Coffee) 1200 hrs Address**

**Admission: Members and Guests: \$5.00**

Lunch may be purchased from the adjacent “Barracks Bistro” afterwards.

**Security issues require that you advise the office on 92825918 (email –[martin.holme@defence.gov.au](mailto:martin.holme@defence.gov.au)) by 24 March, if you or any guests are attending. Remember to bring a photo ID with you for ease of access.**

## From the Secretary: Captain Martin Holme

The office is well and truly up and running and I join with the President in wishing all members a Happy New Year. Those of you who have not yet visited the office and Library, at Victoria Barracks, are encouraged to do so. If you are interested in making a visit, it is advisable to check beforehand to ensure that the office will be manned.

The Christmas Drinks at the end of last year was a successful and enjoyable occasion, with more members attending than in previous years.

As can be seen further on, we are pleased to welcome some new members, many of whom were recruited through the efforts of Vice President CMDR Warren Kemp. Two new recruits resulted from the President's morning tea presentation in the Officers Mess.

The Chairman of the Library Committee, MAJGEN Mike O'Brien, has mentioned the pleasing donations of books to the Library and more have been received recently. We are becoming adept at creating space to house them, though I wonder if I will be able to fight my way into my office if your generosity continues!

I am very grateful to LTCOL Ian George who has volunteered to help in the office. He is currently assisting Treasurer FLTLT Neville Wright and coming to terms with the complexities of all that Neville does. We have also received assistance from Jill and Glen Doyle who helped with the last mail out., and I thank both most sincerely.

You will now be able to recognize and pounce upon Office Bearers and Councillors at Lunchtime Lectures and other occasions as they have been issued with smart lapel badges.

Council, at its last meeting, agreed to invite MAJ Bob Prewett to become a Councillor Emeritus in recognition of his former long and meritorious service as a Councillor. We are pleased that Bob has accepted.

Along with many other members I attended the funeral of CDRE Dacre Smythe AO, a long time member and supporter of the Institute. An obituary may be found later in this Newsletter.

## Program Dates for 2009:

26 Mar Lunchtime Lecture – LTCOL Stuart Yeaman  
23 Apr Lunchtime Lecture – SQNLDR Hugh Dolan  
28 May Lunchtime Lecture – Speaker TBA  
25 June Lunchtime Lecture – Speaker TBA

Since our last issue we have sadly lost some Members. We have also gained some new ones. For the record, their names are listed below:

### Vale

We record with deep regret the passing of:

CMDRE Dacre Smyth AO  
FLTLT I.F. Southall AM DFC

### New Members:

We welcome the following new Members:

LT J.L. Champion  
WGCDR J. Crowley  
CMDR D.J. Doidge RFD  
LT C.F. Fargher RAN  
CAPT K.J. Greig  
FLGOFF N.L.C. Henderson  
LTCOL H.C. Howard  
LT Vikki McLeod  
Mr J.J. Moore  
WO 1 J.W. Myers  
LT J.F. Nestor  
MAJGEN Prof J.V. Rosenfeld  
LTCOL P.A.Stokes  
Mr S. Windler

### Memorable Quotes:

'There are 2,000 years of experience to tell us that the only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is to get an old one out.'

Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart



## **From the President : Brigadier Ian Lillie**

A belated Happy New Year to all of our members.

As you all know, Victoria has been faced with the most devastating bushfires and our condolences go out to those who have lost family and loved ones. It is certainly on Melbourne's back door. The efforts of the emergency services, volunteer and professional fire fighters and the communities involved are all to be commended and thanked for their tireless and often heroic efforts to save lives and property. The military has again been activated to assist and while not front line fire fighting, they are doing hard and dangerous work and at times these young men and women will be faced with the most confronting sights. We wish them all well in their continued efforts and for the inevitable clean-up and rebuilding phase.

The global economic downturn is affecting the Australian economy more and more each day. The repercussions could be extensive for industry and businesses, including for the defence sector; and of course for employment prospects, not to mention self-funded retirees. The decline in government revenues will also be significant and it will affect all Government programs over time and Defence will not be immune from these circumstances. We must guard against any drastic cuts and remind the government, that we still have many service men and women currently serving overseas in harms way, who deserve the full support of the government and citizens. Random cuts to projects may be attractive financially but as we know, short term savings often have long term impacts on capability.

I am concerned with the delayed release of the Defence White Paper, now not likely to see the light of day until April this year. While it is acknowledged that the Government needs to give this great and detailed attention, it is a pity that it seems to take so long, which must make high level planning in Defence difficult. The White paper is a significant strategic document for the future of the ADF. Let's hope that the media reporting of the outcomes of the paper cover the issues in a balanced and thorough manner and avoid the tendency to 'sensationalist' coverage. No doubt Neil James of the Australia Defence Association, and others, will provide accurate commentary.

As I announced in the December Newsletter, the National Council of the RUSI will meet in Melbourne this year, probably about September. We will keep you informed of developments in the program and events for National Council, although it will not involve many of the membership.

I hope we can bring another year of diverse, interesting and entertaining speakers in 2009. Of course, we have already heard from RADMRL Peter Briggs in February, speaking on the future submarine capability. I am afraid work meant that I missed the presentation, but I understand that it was very interesting and topical. This project actually appeared in the press recently as possibly our most expensive capital project ever! Next we will hear from LTCOL Stuart Yeaman, who commanded the Reconstruction Task Group last year in Afghanistan and he will talk about his experiences there. This is to be followed by SQNLDR Hugh Dolan, who will talk to us about the air war over Gallipoli, close to ANZAC Day, which again should prove most informative. I hope to get a politician and an analyst to comment on the White Paper when it is released. I am also keen to have MAJGEN O'Brien talk about his continuing work at Fromelles. For those who attended the annual dinner, Mike gave a fascinating talk about his work thus far. I hope he can speak to a lunch group to bring us up to date, around Armistice Day.

Again, as I said in the last Newsletter, if you have suggestions for speakers from Defence, academia or industry, then feel free to contact Martin or me and we will follow them up. We try to stick to the themes of military history, current operations, strategic analysis and major projects and activities. Obviously, I also try to strike a balance amongst the three Services to ensure a broad based, interesting and informative program.

With regard to recruiting, we hosted a morning tea for the members of the Victoria Barrack's Officers Mess, on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February. I spoke to a group of maybe 100 or so, about RUSI. I would like to thank the PMC, LTCOL Nagy Sorial, who kindly allowed us the opportunity to speak to the members, and who was present on the day with a number of other senior officers.

Regards,  
Ian

**Note : Not the Royal Australian Air Force**

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE BULLYING REPORT - THE RAF ARE THE WORST OF THE THREE SERVICES.**

A recent report by the Equal Opportunities Audit Team has found that allegations of 'a culture of widespread bullying and brutality' within the British Forces are, in the most part, unfounded.

The audit team, which travelled to every Defence establishment across the UK and abroad, interviewed staff from all three services, they found surprisingly few cases of unfair treatment and bullying within the Navy and Army. When it came to the Air force, however, the report told a different story.

Complaints to the EOAT came from a total of 3,557 RAF members, compared with three from Navy and just one from Army. While this statistic is alarming in its own right, it becomes horrific when one considers that each complaint represents a sad story of abuse, mistreatment and neglect. As one senior RAF officer put it, 'Each story is, in itself, a sad indictment on the RAF. When taken as a whole, however, they demonstrate a reprehensible lack of regard for personnel on the part of RAF managers at all levels.'

One young pilot told of having to spend two nights in tented accommodation, despite the fact that there was an empty five-star hotel just one mile away. Another said that he had been forced to endure a grueling fitness test every year since he joined in 1997.

One airwoman alleged that she had been overlooked for promotion on numerous occasions, simply because she was fat, lazy and stupid.

An aircraftman stated he had been refused permission to wear civilian attire to work, despite the fact that his uniform clashed with his eye colour. Another had been forced to wear uncomfortable safety boots for periods of up to eight hours straight. An RAF clerk could not understand why she had been sent to work in a 'Joint military headquarters, 'I have been forced to work for horrid Army people who just don't understand what the military is all about. I feel the RAF has victimised me by forcing me to do this...I will be seeking compensation...'

Shockingly, RAF Senior Ranks are also subject to mistreatment. One SNCO Flight Sergeant stated, 'I was deeply upset when I was addressed as 'Flight Sergeant' by an officer. He knew my name was Robert. It was just horrible -I have never been more humiliated in my

life.' In response a senior RAF officer stated, 'the officer in question has been moved on...'

A number of personnel complained of having to attend courses that were not relevant to their jobs, such as rigorous ground combat courses and drawn-out lectures on occupational health and safety. To add insult to injury, a young corporal was even ordered to pack up chairs in the classroom after one such course.

The huge backlash against treatment of Air Force personnel should provide senior officers with a vital clue with regard to the massive retention problems being experienced by the RAF in recent times. Over the past two years, Defence has spent some 19.8 million pounds looking into the issue.

Not all of the Air Force's hierarchy, however, were upset by the revelations.

Said outgoing Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Errol Flynn, KCB CBE DSO ADC BSc(Eng) FRAeS RAF. 'I'm delighted with the result. I am very happy that our retention problems are due, in the most part at least, to something as harmless as bullying. I thought everyone was leaving because of me.

From a British Source



*"A very gallant gentleman."*

'A very gallant gentleman'

## Vale – Commodore Dacre Smyth RAN AO

It is with regret that we record the passing of a great Australian and longstanding member of RUSI VIC. This obituary by Gerry Carman published in 'The Age' on 9 December 2008.

### **DACRE HENRY DEUDRAETH SMYTH, AO**

OFFICER, ARTIST, AUTHOR 5/5/1923-3/12/2008

Commodore Dacre Smyth, who remarkably had a front-row combat seat at the beginning of the end of World War II in Europe at Normandy on D-Day as well as at the awesome finality in the Pacific, has died of prostate cancer at his home in Toorak. He was 85.

Smyth's 38-year career in the Royal Australian Navy also took him to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. In the former, he was involved in one of the most dangerous naval actions of that war when his ship, HMAS Bataan, sailed up the Chinnampo estuary in December 1950 under intense fire to cover an army evacuation after the Chinese entered the war.

Painting was a keen hobby during his time in the RAN, and when he retired in 1978, he transformed himself into a compelling artist – as a painter and maker of stained glass windows – and author.

More than 2800 of his paintings sold to eager buyers, and he self-published 14 books illustrated with his paintings and verse. His books all had themes, such as *The Bridges of the Yarra*, *The Lighthouses of Victoria*, *Historic Ships of Australia* and the autobiographical *Pictures of My Life*. All were painstakingly researched, and some, such as *Views of Victoria in the steps of von Guerard*, led to him becoming lost – when his Boy Scout survival training kicked in.

Smyth also served for 11 years (1982-94) as a respected member of the board of David Syme & Co. Ltd, then publisher of *The Age*, and was a long-time deputy chairman of the board of trustees of the Shrine of Remembrance. His many other honorary community positions included being patron of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital and the Australian Defence Association, and trustee of the Polly Woodside Maritime Museum.

Smyth was invited on to the board of David Syme in 1982 by then managing director Ranald Macdonald, a cousin of his wife, Jennifer. Another board member described him as "quiet", yet "an advocate of the editorial independence of *The Age*; he played a major role in keeping the company on a steady course after the Warrick Fairfax takeover in 1987".

Smyth was born in London into an aristocratic family with direct links to several kings of England, but had more immediate links with two greats of British military and social history. His father, Nevill, won a Victoria Cross under Lord Kitchener at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan in 1898, and was considered unlucky not to have been awarded a second VC during the Boer War. He went on to command the First Australian Brigade at Gallipoli – an experience that led him to emigrate with his family in 1925 and settle at the merino sheep farm Kongbool near Balmoral in Victoria's Western District. As well, his father's first cousin, Lord Robert Stephen Smyth Baden-Powell, was a hero of the 217-day siege of Mafeking in the Second Boer War from October 1899, and later founded the Boy Scout movement, in which Smyth was to have a leadership role in Victoria.

He had an idyllic early life growing up on the family farm; each morning he rode a horse to a tiny, 10-pupil state school. Then it was off to Geelong Grammar as a boarder. He enlisted in the RAN in September 1940 and after six months' training, he was posted as a midshipman to the cruiser HMAS Australia. In May 1942, he celebrated his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday in the midst of the defining Battle of the Coral Sea.

One of his abiding recollections of the battle, as his ship was avoiding torpedoes and bombs dropped from Japanese aircraft, illustrates some of the black humour typical of Australian servicemen under fire. He was in the cramped transmitting room just below the waterline passing instructions to the 8-inch gun turrets on the ship when he noticed a wooden mallet swinging by the exit ladder.

He asked his superior what the mallet was for, only to be told: "When we're sunk, the compartment above will get flooded, so nobody will be able to open the hatch and let us out. We will have enough air in here to survive for a couple of hours while we're sitting on the bottom. In that time some of you might ... go around the bend. That mallet is for me to knock out anybody who cracks up." The mallet suddenly looked far more sinister to the 19-year-old than what the Japanese were serving up!

### *Vale Dacre Smyth continued*

Transferred to England, he was the gunnery control officer on HMS Danae, a cruiser bombarding Sword Beach near Le Havre on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He witnessed in awe the mightiest armada ever assembled and the fireworks that accompanied the Normandy landings. Later, he went ashore with royal marines to help in assorted duties.

He also flew several missions in the back seat of RAAF 455 Squadron Beaufighters as they fired their rockets at German coastal traffic.

Posted back to the Pacific, he was on HMAS Norman 160 kilometres east of Japan on August 6, 1945 when another office called him on deck to see a "spectacular sunset". Smyth immediately wrote a poem, of which the second verse says: "No cloud, I say, but yet the sun did light/ On towering columns all unreal yet huge/ Which waved and shuddered in grotesque delight/ In myriad hues of ghostly subterfuge." He didn't know it but he was describing the aftermath of the dropping of an atom bomb on Hiroshima. "It had a really shimmery effect, which was the dust in the distance from the atom bomb," he said. "We had no idea until the next morning; we'd never heard of an atom bomb."

An interlude on land included a year as aide-de-camp to Governor-General William McKell, before he was in battle again off the Korean coast. During the Vietnam War, he commanded HMAS Supply, the RAN's fleet replenishment ship.

Earlier, in January 1952, he married Jennifer Haggard, the granddaughter of Geoffrey Syme, who took over running *The Age* from his father, David, the newspaper's founder, 1908. Her father, Commander Geoffrey Haggard, was on the Australian submarine AE2 that passed through the Dardanelles on the original ANZAC Day and was sunk a week later; he and the rest of the crew became prisoners of the Turks.

During his time in the RAN, Smyth also served as aide-de-camp to the Queen in 1975-78.

In 1997, he was appointed an officer in the Order of Australia, and in June 2004, President Jacques Chirac awarded him France's highest military honour, the Legion of Honour.

He remained attracted to the sea. In 2005, he took Jenny on a cruise around the Marquesas Islands in the Pacific, not on a luxury liner like other octogenarians, but in a cargo ship that "catered for a few crazy passengers", according to their son, Os. "They regularly hopped on and off whaleboats in choppy seas, onto slippery stone piers and were lucky to return with their hips intact." Smyth is survived by Jenny, his wife of 56 years, daughters Benita Buchanan, Bronwen Atteridge and Bambi Smyth, son Osmond, and 11 grandchildren. Another daughter, Belinda, predeceased him.

## Visiting RUSI Interstate

when visiting interstate capitals you should consider paying our sister Institutes a visit. You are most welcome to attend lectures or just browse their libraries. Each of the libraries of the State based Institutes (not the ACT) contain unique books and military history information.

Similarly, if you are able to attend Lectures you may get to hear speakers that we cannot obtain in Melbourne. This particularly applies to the ACT which is able to tap into the pool of very senior foreign dignitaries passing through Canberra.

Another aspect is that lectures are held in interesting and often historic military surroundings that are worth visiting in themselves.

Details of topics, timings, when and where are on the RUSI AUST Website. [www.rusiaust.org](http://www.rusiaust.org)

Here are some brief details of venues together with contact telephone numbers :

**ACT Canberra** Contact: 02 6266 2167  
Russell Offices R1 (Ground Floor Theatre)

Australian Defence College, Weston

Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA)  
**NSW Sydney** Contact: 02 6377 2325  
Defence Plaza, 270 Pitt Street

**QLD Brisbane** Contact: 07 3233 4420  
Victoria Barracks, Petrie Terrace

**SA Adelaide**  
Keswick Barracks  
Contact: 08 8305 6378

**TAS Hobart** Contact: 03 6237 7181  
Anglesea Barracks

**Launceston**  
Patterson Barracks, St John Street

**WA Fremantle** Contact: 08 9311 2429  
Leeuwin Barracks

For security, seating and possibly catering it is essential that you ring and book your attendance.

Also remember to carry photo identification and your current RUSI VIC membership card.