



Royal United Services Institute of Western Australia

Newsletter

April 2013 Edition

Promoting National Security and Defence

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2013 PROGRAM

APRIL

**9 April 2013
12:00 noon**

Luncheon Series – British and Commonwealth Orders, Decorations and Medals - The RUSI WA Medal Collection by Captain Wayne Gardner RFD, Assistant Manager Army Museum of Western Australia

MAY

***Tentative date
May 2013***

Blamey Oration – LTGEN David Morrison, Chief of Army has been invited to deliver the 2013 Blamey Oration.

The next Newsletter will be published on 1 May 2013

Copy Deadline 15 April 2013

The RUSI WA Medal Collection



Captain Wayne Gardiner (centre) with Roger Lee, Head Australian Army History Unit (right) and a WW Two Veteran

The Royal United Services Institute of Western Australia has an impressive and significant collection of British and Commonwealth medals. Captain Wayne Gardiner, RFD, the Assistant Manager of the Army Museum of Western Australia, will speak about the evolution of the RUSI WA Medal Collection then on British medals. He will then focus on a few specific medal groups and individual medals in the collection.

Since 1995 has been the “military expert” commentator for the ABC TV broadcast of the ANZAC Day Perth Parade. Captain Gardiner is currently President of the Military Historical Society of Australia (WA Branch) having been a member since 1971. In 2006 he was awarded the Deputy Chief of Army’s Commendation in recognition of meritorious service to the Army Museum of WA & Australian Army History Unit.

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The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire



The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire is an order of chivalry established on 4 June 1917 by King George V. The Order is composed of five classes in civil and military divisions. In descending order of seniority, these are:

- *Knight Grand Cross or Dame Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (GBE)*
- *Knight Commander or Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE or DBE)*
- *Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE)*
- *Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE)*
- *Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE)*

The Distinguished Service Order



The RUSI WA Medals collection contains several medals groups which include the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). The DSO is a military decoration of the United Kingdom, and formerly of other parts of the British Commonwealth (including Australia) and Empire, awarded for meritorious or distinguished service by officers of the armed forces during wartime, typically in actual combat.

Instituted on 6 September 1886 by Queen Victoria in a Royal Warrant published in the *London Gazette* on 9 November, the first DSOs awarded were dated 25 November 1886. It is typically awarded to officers ranked Major (or its equivalent) or higher, but the honour has sometimes been awarded to especially valorous junior officers.

The order was established for rewarding individual instances of meritorious or distinguished service in war. It was a military order, until recently for officers only, and normally given for service under fire or under conditions equivalent to service in actual combat with the enemy, although it was awarded between 1914 and 1916 under circumstances which could not be regarded as under fire (often to staff officers, which caused resentment among front-line officers).

After 1 January 1917, commanders in the field were instructed to recommend this award only for those serving under fire. Prior to 1943, the order could be given only to someone Mentioned in Despatches. The order is generally given to officers in command, above the rank of Captain. A number of more junior officers were awarded the DSO, and this was often regarded as an acknowledgement that the officer had only just missed out on the award of the Victoria Cross. In 1942, the award of the DSO was extended to officers of the Merchant Navy who had performed acts of gallantry while under enemy attack.

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The QSA and KSA

The RUSI Medal Collection includes an extensive display of medals awarded to Western Australians for service in the Boer War 1899 to 1902. Per capita, Western Australia provided the largest number of volunteers from Australia.



The Queen's South Africa Medal (QSA) was awarded to military personnel who served in the Boer War in South Africa between 11 October 1899 and 31 May 1902. Units from the British Army, Royal Navy, colonial forces who took part (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India and South Africa), civilians employed in official capacity and war correspondents.

The QSA (without bar) was also awarded to troops who guarded Boer prisoners of war at the POW camp on the island of St. Helena. Troops on the Mediterranean islands were awarded the Queen's Mediterranean Medal, and some personnel on troopships got the Transport Medal. The QSA was the medal issued to all who served up to the end of the war in May 1902.



The King's South Africa Medal (KSA) was awarded to all troops who served in the Boer War in South Africa on or after 1 January 1902, and completed 18 months service before 1 June 1902. The medal was not issued alone but always with the Queen's South Africa Medal or QSA.

The KSA was awarded only to those troops who fought in 1902, and who had served for 18 months. Service did not have to be continuous, but even with continuous service the recipient would have had to serve from December 1900 to have 18 months service before the war ended in May 1902 (and commencing before the death of Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901). Hence the majority of participants qualified for the QSA only.

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Australia and Afghanistan – Withdrawal Timetable

Australia has announced two-thirds of its troops in Afghanistan will be home by the end of the 2013 when the international military base at Tarin Kowt in Uruzgan province closes. The defence minister, Stephen Smith, said at least 1,000 of the 1,550 Australian troops in Afghanistan would be withdrawn by the end of 2013. Australia has the 10th largest national force in Afghanistan and is the largest military contributor outside NATO. Australia also has the largest number of special forces in the campaign after the United States and Britain.

Military involvement is supported by both the Australian government and opposition but its popularity among the Australian public has plummeted as the war has dragged on for 12 years. In that time 39 Australian troops have died and 249 have been wounded. International forces have a deadline to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2014, leaving Afghanistan responsible for its own security nationwide. The decision by the US-led International Security Assistance Force to draw down and close the base at Tarin Kowt was made after consultation with Australia and Afghan authorities and was in line with the timetable to give Afghan security forces full responsibility for the province by the end of the year.

The Australian defence force chief, Lieutenant General David Hurley, said there were still decisions pending on the further use of Australian special forces in Afghanistan after 2014. The Australian military's main focus in Afghanistan is to train an Afghan army brigade to take responsibility for security in the province. Since November 2012 all four infantry battalions, known in Afghanistan as kandaks, within the brigade had been operating independently without Australian advisers in the province. Australian troops no longer conduct joint patrols with Afghan units.

Australia operates two camps within Tarin Kowt: Camp Russell and Camp Holland. Camp Russell is where Australia's special operations troops are based. Camp Holland is a larger area where the remainder of Australia's military and civilian personnel in Uruzgan are based as well as the Tarin Kowt headquarters. Planning has commenced to transfer all of Camp Russell and a portion of Camp Holland to the Afghan government by the end of 2013.

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An Unwinnable War: Australia in Afghanistan, by Karen Middleton

Reviewed by Chris Saliba

<http://chrissalibabookreviews.blogspot.com.au>

Canberra Press Gallery journalist Karen Middleton has turned out a well researched and detailed history of Australia's response to the war on terror, covering the period 2001 to 2011, with special concentration on Afghanistan. She shows how John Howard took Australia to war in Afghanistan, the intention being a short campaign and a swift exit. Ten years on, Australia is still militarily engaged in Afghanistan with no end in sight. This is a war Australia's political leadership desperately wants to get out of, but can't figure out how to without loss of honour.

Karen Middleton is Chief Political Correspondent and Canberra Bureau Chief for SBS television, and has also written extensively for such publications as *The Age*, *Herald Sun* and *Canberra Times*. *An Unwinnable War*, published by Louise Adler at Melbourne University Press, is her first book.

An Unwinnable War's pessimistic title doesn't really reflect its contents, and was probably thought up more as an attention grabber or sales gimmick. This is no anti-war polemic, but more a balanced and fair Australian political history of the so-called war on terror period, from 2001 to the present date. While *An Unwinnable War* advertises itself as an exclusive analysis of Australia's involvement in the Afghanistan war, that subject probably only takes up about half of the book (maybe even less). The rest is made up of detailed chapters on Iraq, Australia's federal elections and Australia's political and military leadership. There's also a substantial amount that deals with America's diplomatic dealings with Australia.

Middleton is impressive in her attention to detail and sheer volume of research, presenting it all in an accessible and engaging style. Readers of whatever political persuasion will find her work illuminating and instructive, shedding much light as a journalistic insider on how the political and military machinations work when a major alliance partner like America asks Australia to support – whether it be in moral or practical terms – one of its wars. Middleton provides plenty of fascinating interview material with the major players, many of them reflecting back on their key decisions. Coalition figures like John Howard, John Anderson and Alexander Downer discuss in 2011 the thought processes and intellectual positions that led them to the actions they took in the 2001 to 2003 period. There are a few interesting minor changes of heart on how Australia went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq from these main players, but by and large they stand by their decisions.

While *An Unwinnable War* is not an anti-war tract, the overall picture it paints of Australia's involvement is of a country that more slipped into war than actively saw it as an imperative for national defence. Australia didn't really go to war in Afghanistan, but rather maintained its alliance with America. Giving limited military support to America's war in Afghanistan, and backing that up with full and unequivocal moral support, was seen as a good insurance policy for Australia. In effect, we could piggy back our security onto America's huge military capability. The cost benefit analysis of this was seen to be overwhelmingly in Australia's favour.

Interestingly, John Howard, who committed Australia to war in Afghanistan, saw the country's involvement as being strictly limited to a short, sharp military campaign. Howard was strongly opposed to any notion of nation building. The last thing he envisaged was Australia being in Afghanistan for over ten years. Once that initial phase of the military

engagement had been performed in 2001, Australia's presence turned into a single desk non-military role. From 2002-2005, Australia basically forgot about Afghanistan, while it got involved in Iraq.

Then from 2005 Australia, at the request of the Americans, became re-engaged in Afghanistan, dramatically stepping up our military presence in the area. After John Howard had entered Afghanistan with the intention of only being there in a very limited capacity, and for a very short time, Australia found itself nation building for the long haul. This was the very opposite of what John Howard had intended in 2001. In 2011, Australia remains in the country for the unforeseeable future.

An Unwinnable War presents an Australian political and military leadership that seemed to have convinced itself that it could go into Afghanistan for a very short and on its own terms. Ten years down the track, the tone is one of confusion, regret and helplessness that Australia is stuck in Afghanistan. Australia's political leadership doesn't really believe in the war in Afghanistan, hence its limited and qualified terms of engagement, its grudging attitude. This is all quite amazing, when you consider that Australians have died in a war that its leaders would run a mile from if given the chance.

Karen Middleton has put together a first class history of Australia's wars in Iraq and specifically, Afghanistan. The amount of detail is fascinating, and the extensive interview material is quite often revealing. The final picture is of a semi-deluded leadership who genuinely thought they would be in Afghanistan for a short time, and had no real interest in rehabilitating the country or liberating its people. This is the price of alliance with a great power.

An Unwinnable War: Australia in Afghanistan, by Karen Middleton. Published by Melbourne University Press. ISBN: 978-0-522-85766-5

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