

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY READING LIST

---

SUPPLEMENT – MARCH 2010

The Lord gave us two ends to use  
One to think with and one to sit with  
The outcome depends on which way we choose  
Heads we win – tails we lose.

Admiral Chester Nimitz, US Navy

# PROFESSIONAL READING

---

## Australian Naval History

### ***The Search for the Sydney: How Australia's Greatest Maritime Mystery was Solved***

by David L Mearns

published by HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney, 2009

The loss of the Australian cruiser HMAS *Sydney* (II) stands alone in the annals of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Early in World War II she became famous for her exploits in the Mediterranean under the command of Captain John A Collins, RAN, during which she destroyed the Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni*. For many, she was considered a 'lucky ship' and she held a special place in the hearts and minds of an adoring Australian public. In November 1941 *Sydney* encountered the largest of Germany's auxiliary cruisers, *Kormoran*, disguised as a Dutch freighter operating off the coast of Western Australia. Following a fierce engagement both ships were lost, *Sydney* with all hands. The shock and intrigue surrounding her loss was the subject of debate for decades until March 2008 when the wrecks of both ships were discovered. That discovery enabled a thorough investigation and inquiry into the loss of *Sydney* to proceed. *The Search for the Sydney*, by search director David Mearns, recounts the effort to research, plan and execute the successful search for HMAS *Sydney* (II). Complete with detailed drawings, charts and underwater photography of the wrecks it will be of interest to all with a passion for Australian naval history.

### ***A History of Australian Strategic Policy since 1945***

edited and introduced by Stephan Frühling

published by Department of Defence, Canberra, 2009

Despite the perception that each Defence White Paper is a shining example of modernity full of new initiatives and planned efficiencies, much of Australia's defence policy is indeed enduring. *A History of Australian Strategic Policy since 1945* is a collection of fifteen declassified strategic guidance documents which set the scene for Australia's defence between 1945 and 1976. Frühling's introduction provides an intellectual framework for the collection but the primary value arises from the detail contained within the original source material. Today, although some specific threats have been replaced by new threats there is significant continuity with the past. Our defence force still needs to operate at home and globally, undertaking military, constabulary and diplomatic tasks, against opponents who could be global nuclear powers, medium and/or regional powers, failing nation states, insurgents or criminals in addition to humanitarian or disaster relief tasks undertaken in benign environments. Such tasks have evolved over time but it was the relative priorities given to each circumstance and the resulting allocation of Defence resources that has driven defence policy and capabilities. This collection is

more than a history, it is an important sourcebook of Australian strategic policy ideas and constructs. It is a useful reference work for everyone who contributes strategic policy in the Australian Defence Organisation as well as for members of the public, academics and defence media who need to understand Australian strategic policy.

## International Sea Power

### *Ancient Egyptian Sea Power and the Origin of Maritime Forces*

by Gregory P Gilbert

published by Sea Power Centre - Australia, Canberra, 2008

While many commentators on maritime strategy point to Australia's unique geographical circumstances and the inevitability of a maritime approach to security the reality is that we still have much to learn from observing other nations and how they used and profited from a strong maritime force. *Ancient Egyptian Sea Power* looks at the less complicated and temporally remote example of events in ancient Egypt in the belief that it might inspire some to think about what maritime forces can do in the Australian context and whether Australia is or should be a sea power. While a unique and important comparative historical work it is also recommended for anyone who just wants a good read about events that occurred long ago on the Nile, the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea.

### *Japanese Sea Power: A Maritime Nation's Struggle for Identity*

by Naoko Sajima and Kyoichi Tachikawa

published by Sea Power Centre - Australia, Canberra, 2009

As one of our largest trading partners and a close regional ally, Japan is critical to our understanding of international relations in the Asia-Pacific century. *Japanese Sea Power* presents an historical background and a contemporary view of modern Japan, its navy, and its role in maritime affairs. Written by two Japanese scholars, the work examines the highs and lows of Japanese sea power from earliest times to the present, and offers insight into the Japanese understanding of naval strategy and maritime defence. This book is an excellent source of historical and contemporary material on Japan. There are many parallels between the physical and economic environments of Australia and Japan but there are also significant social differences. For instance, although the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) and the RAN were allies during World War I, it was a matter of national pride for the Japanese to retain strategic level command and control of their ships while there was at first a reluctance to deploy IJN warships outside the Pacific. RAN ships, however, were deployed globally under the strategic direction of the British Admiralty.

# General Reading

---

## Leadership and Command

### *At War at Sea: Sailors and Naval Combat in the Twentieth Century*

by Ronald H Spector

published by Viking Press, New York, 2001

By the author's own admission, this is an eccentric look at naval warfare in the 20th century. Rather than relating a comprehensive account of the major navies and their strategies, the major battles and campaigns, and the technological changes that occurred, the author takes a far more ambitious approach. He relates selected events and eras through the eyes of those that experienced them, and, by doing so, shows the nature of naval warfare as a very human endeavour. His major theme is that, contrary to the perceived wisdom, navies are progressive, adaptive, and fast-changing organisations. They are quick to accommodate new technologies and, importantly, the drivers for change are largely internal. As a history, *At War At Sea* is accessible and enjoyable, as a commentary on navies and how they think, learn, adapt and behave, it is essential reading.

### *Navy Strategic Culture: Why the Navy Thinks Differently*

by Roger W Barnett

published by Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2009

*Navy Strategic Culture* looks at the US Navy and maritime strategy in the 1980s and compares it to later strategies. The author was involved in the writing of the Reagan-era Maritime Strategy whilst in uniform; he retired from active service 25 years ago and has viewed the subsequent development of US Navy strategy from an academic's stand-point. The author's closeness to the Maritime Strategy of the 1980s is a boon for the rich detail he can bring to the subject, and for his depth of understanding of the cultural thinking that fostered such a strategy. Although the book does not completely satisfy its sub-title's claim to answer 'why the navy thinks differently', it is overall a valuable commentary on navies, on maritime thought and on the US Navy's view of the world. *Navy Strategic Culture* is a valuable touchstone for how our navy, and our defence force, should conduct ourselves as maritime forces operating in a maritime environment under a maritime strategy and it should encourage us to think more about our own 'navy strategic culture'.

***The Great Edwardian Naval Feud: Beresford's Vendetta against 'Jackie' Fisher***

by Richard Freeman

published by Pen &amp; Sword, Barnsley, 2009

The last few decades have seen major reforms in the administration of the RAN and it is perhaps a sign of modernity that we can anticipate more changes in future. History can provide useful examples of the skills required to manage significant change and the approaches taken by individuals who wish to bring about such change. *The Great Edwardian Naval Feud* is a well written portrayal of two famous British Admirals, Fisher and Beresford, whose struggle to implement naval reforms led to public displays of disrespect and subsequent failures in command, discipline and leadership. Beresford may not have been as incoherent as the author of this book suggests, but he clearly was a product of the British society of the time. Although not known as an intellectual some of his comments hit the mark, 'it will always be a moot point as to where the line between Discipline and Patriotism should be drawn'. This book is more than a simple history, it is the story of resistance against the key naval reforms of the 20th century. It is packed with moral and ethical lessons. It is a hard book to put down.

**General Naval History*****The British Naval Staff in the First World War***

by Nicholas Black

published by The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2009

A British General Staff was created in 1904 and subsequently was able to exert influence on British strategic policy before World War I. Remarkably the Admiralty did not feel the need to form a staff until 1912 and even then the British Naval Staff was given an advisory role not command at the military strategic level. This shortcoming perhaps contributed to the British decision to fight a continental war centred on the Western Front, instead of adopting a traditional maritime strategy coupled with economic warfare. *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* is a detailed study of naval administration and strategic decision making at a time when short-sighted limitations in staff numbers and a reluctance to recognise the importance of Naval Staff led to widespread criticism, by the public, politicians and others within the Royal Navy. One of the numerous misconceptions that are over-turned in this book is the supposed incompetence of the Naval Staff in its decision not to introduce convoy until 1917, Black's examination of the archival material, however, demonstrates that this decision was entirely rational being based upon the data then available. The work of the Trade Division and the Anti-Submarine Divisions of the War Staff was in fact of the highest standard. Despite such setbacks, the British Naval Staff evolved from a small group of overworked and under-resources naval professionals into an efficient organisation of naval civilian and service staff that contributed substantially to the victory of 1918. This book provides many insights for those working in staff positions within the RAN today and is especially recommended for anyone who works within Navy Strategic Command.

## General Military History

### ***Zombie Myths of Australian Military History***

edited by Craig Stockings

published by University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2010

Over the years many books on Australian military history have given rise to a host of such ‘zombie’ myths – myths that refuse to die. A great many have a strong commemorative and celebratory tradition and aim to entertain or memorialise the gallant deeds of past Australian service men and women. Such accounts are often heavily overlaid by the national mythology of Anzac and imagery of indomitable Australian national character. Leading Australian military historians tackle ten of the most enduring historical zombies that have staggered their way through the annals of this nation’s military history. It revisits the mistaken ideas that there was no Aboriginal resistance to occupation, that Gallipoli was a near success, that the tragic loss of HMAS *Sydney* somehow involved a conspiracy, that the Japanese tried to invade Australia during World War II, that the fighting on the Kokoda trail saved Australia in 1942, and that Australian interventions in East Timor were planned humanitarian assistance operations. This book attempts to lay these zombies to rest once and for all, but will it succeed?

### ***In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia***

by Ronald H Spector

published by Random House, New York, 2007

The events of World War II tend to dominate most histories of the 1940s but for many in our region the conflict did not end with the Japanese surrender. It was a time of civil war, insurrection and terrorism, where death and destruction continued despite the United States’ attempt to provide regional security, a time when the United States was recognising its status as a global power, and a time when Japanese soldiers were even employed by the Allies as security forces to help maintain stability in colonies that were seething with new power struggles. The role of Australians in the occupation of Borneo is one highlight of what would otherwise be a black story indeed. *In the Ruins of Empire* is a skilfully written and well researched work that helps to illuminate the formative period for the Asia-Pacific region and one that has important parallels in the 21st century strategic environment.

### ***Generation Kill: Devil Dogs, Iceman, Captain America and the New Face of American War***

by Evan Wright

published by Berkley Caliber, New York, 2005 (and later reprints)

Initially a series of articles in *Rolling Stone*, *Generation Kill* gives a unique insight into the nature of both modern military personnel and modern warfare by documenting three adrenaline fuelled weeks at the outset of the 2002 Iraq War. Journalist Evan Wright eschews the lofty voice adopted by so many of his peers in favour of a more accessible style to honestly portray his time embedded with the marines of First Reconnaissance Battalion. The battle scenes are visceral and realistic, highlighting the fog of asymmetric

war and the problems brought about by ever-changing rules of engagement. Yet more harrowing than driving through the numerous ambush alleys is the helplessness these young marines feel at being unable to bring about meaningful change. The First Recon marines are eager to fight and are exceptional at their job but behind the machismo is a desire to be a force for good; a desire that, for one reason or another, proves quixotic. With books on war, especially one as divisive as the Iraq War, there is the danger of the author prolytising, by providing excellent background Wright avoids the soapbox to recount lucidly a time that was anything but. In doing so, the reader is allowed to draw their own conclusions. The Hunter Thompson-esque prose combined with Wright's unfettered access to the marines leads to some immature and profane, albeit hilarious, depictions of the marines' time in country, however, the base moments make the profound ones - of which there are many - more so. Herein is *Generation Kill's* true strength: its ability to mix the serious with the seriously entertaining. The subsequent mini-series by HBO is highly recommended as a companion piece as the visuals perfectly offset the book's more in-depth strategic discussions.

## Technology and Future War

### *Network-Centric Warfare: How Navies Learned to Fight Smarter Through Three World Wars*

by Norman Friedman

published by Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2009

*Network-Centric Warfare* is a vital first step in a long overdue reassessment of the dramatic changes in the command and control of naval operations in the 20th century. Dr Friedman's work shows how fundamental communications networks and information systems were to commanders afloat and ashore in fighting the war at sea and that victory went to the possessor of the more comprehensive picture of the maritime battlespace. The increasing complexity of the issues that navies faced in their continual struggle to exploit new developments is very thoroughly conveyed in a book whose author consistently demonstrates an understanding of both the theoretical science and the practical technology which underpinned that revolution. This book is recommended for all sailors, soldiers, airmen and civilians who want to understand how modern naval conflicts are fought.