

In the Fight: Australians and the War in Burma 1942-1945



CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Saturday 16 November 2024 (Caulfield RSL, Elsternwick)

8:30 – 9.00 am **Conference Registrations**

SESSION ONE | AUSTRALIANS and the WAR in BURMA

9.00 - 9.10 am **Welcome
Opening of the Conference
Major-General Jim Barry AM MBE RFD ED
(Rtd) MHHV Patron**

Session Chair **Introduction of Keynote Speaker
LtCol Mike Buckridge RFD (Rtd)
President, MHHV**

9.10 – 10:00 am **Keynote Speaker: In the Fight: Australians
and the War in Burma 1942-1945
Peter Stanley
Research Professor, UNSW Canberra and Fellow of
the India-Australia Institute**

10.00 – 10.30 am **Morning Tea**

SESSION TWO | CORRESPONDENTS, COMMANDOS AND COMFORTERS

Session Chair: **Peter Stanley**

10.30 – 11.45 pm

10.30 – 11.15 am **Presentations**

- War Correspondents - *Peter Holmes*
- Commandos and the SOE - *Karl James*
- VADs, the ARC and ACF - *Meghan Adams*

11.15 – 11.45 **Discussion and Q & A**

11.45 – 12:45 pm

Lunch

SESSION THREE | ARMY and AIR FORCE

Session Chair:

Peter Stanley

12.45 – 1.45 pm

12.45 – 1.15 pm

Presentations

- On Active Service - *Andrew Kilsby*
- The War in the Air - *Daryl Moran*

1:15 – 1:45 pm

Discussion and Q & A

SESSION FOUR | QANTAS, ARTISTS and SAILORS

Session Chair:

Peter Stanley

1:45 - 3.00 pm

1.45 – 2.30 pm

Presentations

- Double-Sunrise Flights - *David Mitchelhill-Green*
- War Artists - *Anthea Gunn & Alexandra Torrens*
- The war at sea with the RAN – Andrew Kilsby for *Tom Lewis*

2:30 – 3.00 pm

Discussion and Q & A

3:00 – 3:30 pm

Afternoon Tea

SESSION FIVE | SPORTSMEN, WOMEN’S AUXILIARY and POW

Session Chair:

Peter Stanley

3:30 – 4:45 pm

3:30 - 4.15 pm

Presentations

- Sportsmen - *Ian Wilkinson*
- The Wasbies - *Jacqueline Dinan*
- POW in the Rangoon Jail - *Daryl Moran*

4.15 – 4.45 pm

Discussion and Q & A

4.45 – 5.00 pm

Closure of the Conference

Major-General Jim Barry AM MBE RFD ED
(Rtd), MHHV Patron

This conference is based on the contributed chapters to *In the Fight: Australians and the War in Burma 1942-1945*, edited by Andrew Kilsby and Daryl Moran. (Big Sky Publishing 2024). The book will be launched by Professor Peter Stanley at The Shrine on 17 November.

Speaker Profiles

Keynote Speaker

Peter Stanley FAHA is one of Australia's most active and prolific military historians, a winner of the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History (2011, for his *Bad Characters*) and a Big Sky author. He was Research Professor at UNSW/ADFA 2013-23 and Principal Historian at the Australian War Memorial (where he worked from 1980 to 2007). Prof. Peter Stanley has spent more than four decades as a 'public historian' and is well known from his media appearances. Peter has published more than 45 books, mainly in the field of Australian military-social history, though he has also published in British imperial military history.

CORRESPONDENTS, COMMANDOS AND COMFORTERS

Peter Holmes has worked in the Defence Department, ONA, US Government, international agencies and the AWM, with postings in Ireland, Thailand, Indonesia and PNG. He has published *Dispatches from the Front: a profile of 20 War Correspondents from Sudan to Vietnam* (PHP 2015); *The Road to Sphakia – Crete 1941* (PHP 2015), and *A Magnificent Anzac* (PHP 2013). In 2024 Peter contributed the chapter 'In the Thick of it: War Correspondents' to *In the Fight*.

Dr Karl James is the Head of the Military History Section at the AWM, Canberra. He has worked as a historian at the Memorial since 2006. His research focuses on Australia's involvement in the Second World War. His publications include *Kokoda: Beyond the Legend* (as editor, CUP, 2017), *Double Diamonds: Australian Commandos in the Pacific War, 1941-45* (NewSouth Books, 2016) and *The Hard Slog: Australians in the Bougainville Campaign, 1944-45* (CUP, 2012). In 2024 Karl contributed the chapter 'Special Operations: In India, Burma, China and Malaya' to *In the Fight*.

Meghan Adams is an historian at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. She worked in the Military History section of the Australian War Memorial for three years to 2024. Meghan is completing her PhD at UNE, which examines veteran suicide in Australia in the years after WWI. She has written biographies for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and has contributed to the AWM's website and *Wartime* magazine. Her primary areas of research interest include women's services during WWII; the psychological and emotional impacts of war; repatriation and the social impacts of war. In 2024 Meghan was a contributor of a chapter 'Proud of their Part: Volunteers in Ceylon' to *In the Fight*.

ARMY and AIR FORCE

Dr Andrew Kilsby is an independent professional historian with a focus on military, business biographical history. He is the 2024-25 La Trobe Society Fellow at the State Library of Victoria. In 2024 Andrew contributed the chapter 'On Active Service: With the British and Indian Armies' to *In the Fight* and was co-contributor,

with Daryl Moran, of the chapter 'The Air War: Over Land and Sea'. Andrew's other military titles include: *The Reservists: A History of the DRA 1970-2020* (2023); *The Case of Eichengruen-Edwards and Continental Tyres* (2019), *The Riflemen: A History of the NRAA 1888-1988* (2013) and *The Forgotten Cruiser: HMAS Melbourne I 1913-1928*, with Greg Swinden (2013). He is currently writing, with Daryl Moran, *Resolute: Australian aircrew in the Burma Theatre 1942-1945*.

Dr Daryl Moran is an independent military historian who had had a long career as a professional educator in the public school system, including a two year posting to a private school in India. He has published *Empire's Noble Son* (ASPG 2019) and in 2024 co-contributed the chapter 'The Air War: Over Land and Sea' to *In the Fight*, with Andrew Kilsby. Daryl is currently writing, with Andrew Kilsby, *Resolute: Australian aircrew in the Burma Theatre 1942-1945*.

QANTAS, ARTISTS and SAILORS

David Mitchelhill-Green is based in Melbourne. His books include *Desert Diggers* (BSP 2024), *Tobruk: Fiercely Stand or Fighting Fall* (BSP 2021), *Air War Over North Africa* and *Hitler's War in Africa* (Pen & Sword 2021) and *Fighting in Ukraine* (Pen & Sword 2016). David won first prize for literature in the 2021 RAAF Heritage Awards: *Wings Over Malaya: 1 Squadron RAAF* will be published in 2025. In 2024, David contributed the chapter 'Double Sunrise: Qantas across the Indian Ocean' to *In the Fight*.

Dr Anthea Gunn is Senior Curator of Art at the Australian War Memorial, where she has worked since 2014. With a PhD in art history (ANU) Anthea previously worked as a curator at the National Museum of Australia (2008-13). She has published in the *Journal of Australian Studies* and the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, among others. She was a Partner Investigator for the ARC Linkage Project 'Art in Conflict'. She was lead curator of the online exhibition, 'Art of Nation: Australia's official art and photography of the First World War' and the travelling exhibition 'Art in Conflict'.

Alexandra Torrens has been employed in a curatorial capacity for more than 20 years. She is a Senior Curator of Art at the Australian War Memorial, where she has worked since 2009. A graduate of the ANU and the University of Canberra, Alex was previously Curator at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. In 2024, with Anthea Gunn, she contributed the chapter 'Strokes of the Brush: War Artists' to *In the Fight*.

Tom Lewis, a well-known naval historian, contributed the chapter 'Warships: the RAN and the War at Sea', by Dr Tom Lewis, to *In the Fight*. This section will be presented on Tom's behalf by Andrew Kilsby, editor of *In the Fight*.

SPORTSMEN, WOMEN's AUXILIARY and POW

Dr Ian Wilkinson has been a volunteer in the Melbourne Cricket Club Library for the past decade. He has a strong interest in sports history and his published works include *The Fields at Play: A history of sport at Caulfield Grammar* (Playright Publishing 1997). He has also published on aspects of educational history of both Australia and New Zealand history. At the library he is a main contributor to game

fact sheets for AFL games played at the MCG. In 2024, Ian contributed the chapter 'Play the Game: Cricketers and other Sportsmen' to *In the Fight*.

Jacqueline Dinan is a writer with an interest in women in war. Her other publications include *A Woman's War: A Mother's homefront battle* (2010) and *Between the Dances: World War 2 Women tell their stories* (2015). She has also published *Racing the Boys* (2016) about thoroughbred trainer Granny McDonald. Jacqueline conducted several oral history interviews with former 'Wasbies' and their descendants. Notes from these interviews contributed to the fiction book *The Last Reunion* - by Kayte Nunn (2021). In 2024, Jacqueline contributed the chapter 'Women at the Front: The Wasbies' to *In the Fight*.

Dr Daryl Moran contributed the chapter 'In the Rangoon Jail: Prisoners of War' to *In the Fight*. Daryl is currently writing, as co-author (with Andrew Kilsby) *Resolute: Australian aircrew in the Burma Theatre 1942-1945*.

