CHIEF OF AIR FORCE’S READING LIST 2011

Air Marshal Geoff Brown, AM
4 July 2011
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Preface

Not all readers become leaders.
But all leaders must be readers.

Harry S. Truman

Following on from last year’s Chief of Air Force’s Reading List, the Air Power Development Centre (APDC) has developed the 2011 list in an effort to improve the level of professional mastery of the members of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) by providing a ready reference of books that have contributed to the history and development of air power.

The 2011 Chief of Air Force’s Reading List comprises three sections. Section One contains a list of 18 books—of which most have been published within the last five years or so. Section Two is titled ‘The Essential Books of Air Power Professional Mastery’, and its contents include a broad selection of books that should be in every airman’s personal library. The first section has been updated with new books and this will continue to be done annually into the future, while the second section will be more steadfast. The ‘essential’ list may also increase as time goes by. As this year’s reading list is the second such document, the 2010 list is included at Section Three for the sake of completeness, and the inclusion of previous lists will be another feature of the publication into the future.

Section One is divided into the following themes: Air Power Concepts, Strategy and Doctrine; Contemporary Air Power Issues; Air Power History; Command, Leadership, Management and Ethics; and Royal Australian Air Force History. It is hoped that members of the RAAF and the broader defence community will avail themselves of the recommendations to improve their understanding of air power. Many of these titles are also available in audiobook and e-book formats. Two books are downloadable for free from the APDC website.

Nine of the 21 books in Section Two are downloadable at no cost from the provided URLs. Indeed, two RAAF history classics—The Third Brother by Dr Chris Clark and Going Solo by Dr Alan Stephens are now available in soft copy from the APDC’s website to ensure that everyone can have access to these important texts.

Like last year, this reading list is unashamedly Air Force and air power focused. The Chief of Navy and Chief of Army have similar reading lists that are recommended if you desire or require a broader knowledge base. Also, the Chiefs of the Royal Air

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Force and United States Air Force publish annual reading lists of great quality that are also recommended.

Any suggestions in terms of future inclusions will be readily considered.

Good reading.

R.J. Keir, AM, CSC
Group Captain
Director, Air Power Development Centre

July 2011
Foreword

To be a successful soldier you must know history. Read it objectively, dates and even minute details of tactics are useless. What you must know is how man reacts. Weapons change, but the men who use them change not at all. To win battles you do not beat weapons, you beat the soul of every man.

General George S. Patton

Renowned as a determined and courageous warrior and commander, General Patton’s advice in a letter to his son on D-Day reflects a deep intellectual understanding of warfare, the adversary and the value of reading that many may not normally associate with him. However, a passion for professional reading and learning is a characteristic of many great military commanders and the need for learning is no different for airmen. General Creech, a four-star United States Air Force leader and fighter pilot who flew combat missions in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, once noted, ‘what I have tried to do in my own life and what I have seen in those who turn out to be the most successful in rising to senior leadership positions is that they never, ever stopped their intellectual growth.’

In essence, what Patton and Creech recognised was the value of reading and self-education in developing one’s own military professional mastery and I share their perspective. Last year, the RAAF’s first Chief of Air Force’s Reading List was introduced to help guide and motivate all RAAF members in their professional military development. It has been gratifying to see that the initiative has received positive feedback from respected international and Australian military leaders and ADF personnel alike, and therefore I am particularly pleased to see the release of this year’s list.

As we celebrate the 90th birthday of the RAAF, I am delighted to note the presence of four books concerning the history of our proud Service spanning from its Australian Flying Corps lineage through World War II to our recent history with the F-111 aircraft. These books reinforce the fact that, as the second oldest air force in the world, we have inherited a distinguished record of serving the nation and have a responsibility to honour our former airmen by projecting the RAAF forward into the future in defending Australia’s national security. It is also particularly

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pleasing to note that two RAAF officers (Mark Lax and Hugh Dolan) authored two of the books in the list.

The 2011 list again contains a fascinating mix of air power theory, strategy, command and leadership books. I also flag the two contemporary books on cyber and space. The importance of these two issues to Australian national security was identified in the 2009 Defence White Paper, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*. More importantly, as airmen, we have a specific need to understand cyber and space as they are closely aligned to air power and Air Force has a leading role in their development.

The 2011 CAF’s Reading List therefore provides a diverse but focused and relevant selection of books that should be of interest to all Air Force members. My intent is not for you to read every book on the list. My intent is that you read a selection of books from the list that are interesting, thought-provoking and that will enhance your professional development as members of the RAAF.

We are the professional masters of an increasingly challenging profession and, thus, we must be knowledgeable on the wider challenges facing the RAAF. Likewise, we have a responsibility to learn from our past and honour our forebears. Ignorance and lack of time are not valid excuses for inadequate self–professional development and professional mastery. Find the time to read: self-education and reading are important means to augment your professional military education and training and, thus, enhance your professional mastery.

In this respect, embrace the advice from great military figures, such as Generals Patton and Creech, to read and learn, and take this opportunity to enhance your professional mastery. It will directly enhance your professional development, your value to the Air Force and, thus, our Service as a whole.

I commend the books in this list to you.

**G.C. Brown, AM**
Air Marshal
Chief of Air Force

July 2011
READING FOR PROFESSIONAL MASTERY

The point is often debated about what descriptor best fits the military: science or art, profession or craft, trade or patriotic calling? The consensus view generally appears to be that there is such a thing as the ‘profession of arms’, a category which includes all those from any of the individual Services—Navy, Army or Air Force—who make the military their primary occupation in life. There may be no basis for arguing that being an air power practitioner qualifies for separate status, but there is every reason for regarding it as a valid subset within the wider profession of arms.

That being the case, those who specialise in generating and delivering air power capabilities to further Australia’s security and national interests have the duty and obligation to be a professional expert in their field—Government requires this, and the Australian community expects it. The obligation is on every member of the Air Force to have intimate knowledge of the activity which forms the basis of their employment, at least commensurate with their level and function within the Service. All should be deserving of the label ‘professional master of air power’, to a greater or lesser extent.

What knowledge should reasonably be expected of those who wear the Air Force uniform on a daily basis? Accepting that air forces are inherently highly technical and complex organisations, the answer to that question will firstly reflect the particular mustering or specialisation to which the member belongs. Beyond that, there are more general matters about the nature of the organisation they serve, what it is capable of doing, and how it goes about its affairs. These are aspects that most readily establish in the minds of the public whether an Air Force member really knows their job.

The expectations on the air power professional are actually the same as those placed upon any true profession. The question of what constitutes a profession, and sets it apart from a trade or a business, boils down to three things: a distinct body of practice that is unique or different to others; a body of thought and ideas, going beyond processes that can be transmitted purely by training; and a capacity to evolve by drawing on precedent and experience. Think about it. The professions of law and medicine both meet these criteria, and looked at broadly, this is also the way that the profession of arms should and tries to operate.

This understanding reflects not just an Australian experience. It was highly instructive that Colonel John Olsen from Norway, already well established as an original thinker in the international field of air power, told the Chief of Air Force Symposium in Melbourne in February 2011 that:
If our profession is about the utility of air power … this requires excellence in three interconnected fields: technology, leadership and conceptual thinking. … [It] comes from matching machines, people and ideas. It calls for bringing together the material (body), the moral (soul) and the intellectual (mind).

There are two conclusions that derive from this analysis. First, there is a strong need for an historical underpinning to any attempts to acquire professional mastery. We learn best—or, at least, at less risk of disastrous consequences—by examining the lessons of past experience. Knowing what we have tried previously, and how well it worked, and why, in which particular set of circumstances, is often the only guide we will have in judging how to respond to some new challenge that comes our way. This is a thought that adds new meaning to Shakespeare’s observation in The Tempest, that ‘What’s past is prologue’.

Clearly, not just any history will do—we need analytical histories. But by the same token, we must also be prepared to read what is provided to us with an inquiring mind and an inquisitive mindset. The challenge is not merely to view every statement or idea offered with uninformed scepticism, but to have, on tap in our minds, a broad reservoir of previously acquired information against which to compare and measure each new thought or concept we encounter. For many of us, such knowledge can be acquired over the course of a long and active lifetime, but most of us need as much wisdom as we can muster much earlier in our working lives. How to acquire it? The most obvious means is through reading.

The second conclusion derived from contemplating what professional mastery can, or should, mean also concerns the obligation that rests with each of us individually. The Air Force does attempt to provide new members with basic information about the nature of the organisation they have joined, its history, traditions, ethos and values. Through its Professional Military Education and Training program, the Air Force also attempts to teach the basics of air power theory and practice. Beyond that, we have published doctrine and courses which attempt to lift the level of understanding across the Service.

This is all well and good, but there is only so much in professional mastery that is truly teachable. Real mastery resides in the way that Air Force people think, not just what they know. Armed with a comprehensive understanding of air power, our people can advise governments and influence the national defence debate. This reflects why the RAAF places such an importance on valuing its people. Those members who really appreciate the business which lies at the core of the Air Force’s reason for being, provide value almost beyond measure to the Service and the nation.

Acquiring a true state of professional mastery entails moving beyond all the easy means available for gaining knowledge of air power theory and practice. All the courses and publications which the Air Force is capable of producing help establish
a common basis of excellence across the Service, but more is required. While the shape and peculiarities of future conflicts remain essentially unknowable, perhaps the key asset any air force has will be the mental and intellectual agility of its people at every level. A pattern of wide, selective and critical reading is the only way that members can exercise their minds and prepare themselves for tomorrow’s challenges.

Dr C.D. Clark
RAAF Historian
Section One: The 2011 List

Air Power Concepts, Strategy and Doctrine

Global Air Power
John Andreas Olsen (ed.)
560 pp., bibliography, hardback
ISBN: 9781597976800

This book is a follow-up to the enormous success of the editor’s earlier work A History of Air Warfare, which is also in the 2011 CAF’s Reading List. This book brings together a comparative study of the development and evolution of six major air forces in the world. It also provides some insights into selected smaller air forces in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America. In a holistic manner, the book provides a wide perspective of the development of air power and indicates the political, social and economic influences that have shaped individual air forces and made them into unique military forces. The chapters cover the organisational, strategic and doctrinal issues that these air forces have faced and overcome, and provide a brief insight into the emerging challenges that air power confronts. By examining the underlying ethos of different air forces, the book allows the airmen of today to better understand the principles that govern the application of air power, especially in the current environment of coalition operations. This book is a must read for anyone interested in the application of air power particularly and for students of the art of war generally. While it is a large book, its structure allows one to read specific chapters as they wish.

Making Sense of War: Strategy for the 21st Century
Alan Stephens and Nicola Baker
Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2006
291 pp., bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9780521676649

Alan Stephens, one of Australia’s most respected military writers, joins with Nicola Baker, a lecturer at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force
Academy, in presenting this clear and concise introduction to strategy in the 21st century. In the first half of the book, Stephens explores the nature of strategy in his typical clear and easy-reading prose. He surveys the principle strategic theories that have prevailed over time providing a very good baseline synopsis of strategic thought, combining traditional land, maritime, air and nuclear concepts with more conceptual ideas such as coercion, shaping and strategic paralysis. Meanwhile, in the latter half of the book, Baker examines the nature of warfare in the 21st century. Overall, the book provides an excellent and easy-to-read introduction to strategic thought and its application to warfare in the 21st century.

**The Art of Air Power: Sun Tzu Revisited**
Sanu Kainikara
Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2009
462 pp., bibliography, paperback
ISBN: 9781920800345

Two thousand years ago, Chinese warrior-philosopher Sun Tzu compiled his classic book popularly known as *The Art of War* to better understand how organisations can (or should) operate in times of conflict. Now, a modern writer on strategy has re-interpreted the great Master’s treatise, to redefine elements of thinking relevant to a world where military strategy has to take into account an aerial dimension—something that was not even a dream when Sun Tzu was writing. In *The Art of Air Power*, Sanu Kainikara, a former Indian Air Force fighter pilot who has been working as an air strategist for the RAAF for the past five years, re-examines Sun Tzu’s terse, often aphoristic statements. Using a large number of currently available translations, commentaries and reviews, he has made a detailed study of the old paradigms in a contemporary context, while considering the changed nature of security and conflict in the 21st century. Sun Tzu’s thinking is only the starting point for Dr Kainikara’s text, which seeks to build on universal truths about the application of military power that transcend time and operating dimensions. Dr Kainikara also updates the old philosophy—of achieving invincibility on the battlefield, triumph without physical battle, and unassailable strength of the nation, through observation, calculation and a clear understanding of politics, psychology and doctrine of conflict—all in a way aimed to be more readily comprehensible to readers with an interest in military strategy.
Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes
Patrick Porter
256 pp., bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9780231154147

This book provides an excellent analysis of the current trend in western military thinking to be more culturally aware and focused in the application of force. The concepts and prevalent misunderstandings are illustrated through several case studies, notably the military thinking between the two World Wars, United States appreciation of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the Israeli experience against the Hezbollah in the 2006 conflict. The author outlines the relevant cultural aspects as well as pitfalls in understanding and articulating an alien culture in a military environment. This book also provides a sort of warning against the perception of ‘them’ and ‘us’ as clearly different entities when analysing military operations. There is also an underlying theme that points towards the drawback of the propensity to typecast ethnicities and their warfighting capabilities. The book is well written and contains original insights that add to the understanding of culture and its impact on the conduct of conflict.

7 Deadly Scenarios: A Military Futurist Explores War in the 21st Century
Andrew F. Krepinevich
Random House, New York, NY, 2010
372 pp., bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9780553384727

Using the complex nature of security and conflict in the 21st century as a basis, this book examines plausible yet deadly scenarios that could threaten global and national security. The author uses vignettes that reflect contemporary political, economic, social and military/technical concerns to enhance realism and believability, mixed with a healthy dose of fiction to intrigue, stimulate and even provoke a certain level of fear in the reader. Accordingly, readers will readily identify with terrorism, state collapse, pandemic, nuclear and transnational threats and the geographical regions that form the seven deadly scenarios. While not attempting to predict the future, Dr Krepinevich argues that senior government and defence planners should consider these sorts of near-future 21st century events and scenarios, and not just focus on preparing to fight the recent/current wars. He
further concludes that defence forces should develop focused and aligned strategies and concepts of operations that address specific scenarios rather than only adopt general warfighting concepts.
Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and What to Do About It
Richard A. Clarke and Robert K. Knake
304 pp., bibliography, tables, notes, hardback
ISBN: 9780061962233

Author of the New York Times bestseller Against All Enemies, former presidential adviser and counterterrorism expert Richard A. Clarke provides a timely warning about the United States vulnerability to cyber war. Clarke, together with Robert K. Knake, argues that recent suspected cyber events between Israel and Syria in 2007, as well as during the Georgian conflict with Russia in 2008, hint at the potential for cyber war to devastate modern societies that rely on advanced information technology infrastructure. The book offers an insider’s view of the White House ‘Situation Room’ and guides readers through theories of cyber deterrence, the issue of collateral damage and problems with identifying exactly from where a cyber attack has been generated. Cyber War is a valuable addition to the growing cyber discussion. It identifies how cyber challenges could have political, military, social and economic impacts, and challenges readers to consider the effect on the nation in ignoring those threats. The book is recommended to those seeking to understand cyber and its application in national security.

Emerging Space Powers: The New Space Programs of Asia, the Middle East and South America
Brian Harvey, Henk H.F. Smid and Theo Pirard
Praxis Publishing, Chichester, UK, 2010
732 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9781441908735

Emerging Space Powers is a compilation of the histories of national space power development efforts by nations following behind the European Union, Russia and the US. Each national space history is written by a different author and captures the trigger points, the key personalities driving national space efforts, and details the national significance of each space mission. The authors identify the contributions from each mission success and failure that shaped space power for mainly Japan and India, but also Brazil, Iran, Israel, North Korea, and South
Korea. With space capabilities, products and services now firmly integrated in the Australian Defence Force's operating concepts, this is a book that provides useful insights into how small nations have successfully established and evolved space power to meet national needs, with narratives on each space mission, each indigenously developed technology, and the reasons that made the pursuit of each program important for each nation.
Air Power History

A History of Air Warfare
John Andreas Olsen (ed.)
Potomac Books, Dulles, VA, 2009
432 pp., bibliography, index, hardback
ISBN: 9781597974400

This book is a compilation of 16 essays, chronologically arranged to describe the evolutionary path air warfare has taken from World War I to the first decade of the 21st century. The authors are a respected who’s who of recent air power literature. Each short essay explores a significant period of air warfare development in a concise and entertaining fashion. Collectively, the essays blend together to form a comprehensive analysis of air campaigns over the last 100 years, revealing the strengths and weaknesses of air power from the strategic and operational military perspectives, as well as the role air power played in the political grand strategic setting of each period. While the book is largely Western focused, there are chapters on the Arab-Israeli Wars (1967–73), the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and a general chapter looking at air power in small wars. This book is both a celebration, and a critical examination, of the development of air warfare. While not providing any startling new analysis of air power history, the book provides the most comprehensive and best recent overview of air warfare development, making it an invaluable resource for modern warfare scholars, air power professionals and general readers alike.

War Over the Trenches: Air Power and the Western Front Campaigns 1916–1918
E.R. Hooton
Ian Allan Publishing, Hersham, Surrey, 2010
336 pp., bibliography, index, hardback
ISBN: 9780711034150

E.R. Hooton’s work is probably the most thorough and detailed analysis of air operations over the Western Front yet produced. In this scholarly history, the author examines how air power developed and evolved in response to the unfolding ground campaigns that it sought primarily to support, between the years 1916 to 1918. Based on extensive archival research in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium and the US, Hooton details the operational and tactical
application of air power in the various roles it came to conduct. From its first massed application over Verdun in 1916 through its use in reconnaissance, army cooperation, bombing, pursuit, and contact patrols, to its use in the final offensives in 1918, the author analyses in meticulous detail the course of operations and the events that shaped them. War Over the Trenches is a very substantial piece of work and not one easily read in one sitting, however, the depth of analysis and the detailed accounts of almost daily operations make it essential reading for those interested in the application and development of air power in the formative years of conflict in Europe during World War I.

Whirlwind: The Air War Against Japan, 1942–1945
Barrett Tillman
Simon and Schuster, New York, NY, 2010
400 pp., bibliography, index, hardback
ISBN: 9781416584407

Whirlwind, by prolific American author Barrett Tillman, is an entertaining and informative account of the air campaign waged against Japan predominantly by the US in World War II. This is a sweeping account that, somewhat unevenly, spans the course of events from the famous Doolittle raid on Tokyo in April 1942 to the final missions flown over Japan in August 1945 following the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tillman’s treatment of the topic provides a very readable account punctuated with anecdotal recollections of a number of aircrew who played their part in this grand theatre. Of particular interest to readers may be Tillman’s first and final chapters in which he outlines the theories of the early air power advocates Douhet, Trenchard and Mitchell, and air forces’ search for doctrine with which to prosecute air warfare, then in closing provides an even and considered assessment of the legacy of the turbulent years of conflict in the Pacific. While Whirlwind may prove insufficiently rigorous for military scholars, it is a very entertaining and enjoyable read that presents a fresh perspective on a number of aspects of the air war against Japan.
36 Days: The Untold Story Behind the Gallipoli Landings
Hugh Dolan
Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 2010
445 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9781405039857

The title of this book refers to the interval between the failed attempt by the British and French Navies to force passage through the Dardanelles on 18 March 1915 and the historic troop landings which commenced the nine-month Gallipoli campaign. So much has been written about the land campaign that one could wonder what is left to be said, but the author, himself a serving RAAF Squadron Leader, focuses on aspects in planning the landings that rarely receive much attention, such as logistics, intelligence and air power. The result is an account which, while not entirely new, is lively and informative, and shows that Gallipoli—apart from being the first opposed amphibious operation since Ralph Abercromby’s British troops went ashore at Aboukir in 1801—was not the muddled and amateurish venture often claimed. Rushed it may have been, to meet political imperatives, but it was more considered and professional than is generally realised today. This easy-to-read book provides a different perspective to the Gallipoli legend.
Command, Leadership, Management and Ethics

The Five Pillars of TQM: How to Make Total Quality Management Work for You
Bill Creech
Truman Talley Books/Plume, NY, 1995
548 pp., diagrams, epilogue, index, paperback
ISBN: 9780452271029

Don’t be put off by the title, first published in 1994 and since reprinted in a dozen languages, Creech’s *The Five Pillars of TQM* is a seminal book on leadership. In it he reveals what goes wrong in the majority of centralised organisations. His leadership philosophy, while mindful that most organisations are not democracies, is a variation on the golden rule embodying basic decency towards others as a core theme. His ideas of how any high performing organisation should be run resonates implicitly with how responsible and motivated personnel would like to be treated by their superiors. The power of inclusion rather than exclusion, the big difference in effectiveness between decreeing and persuading, and the central role of pride as a motivator are central to Creech’s philosophy. His classic quote ‘any organization will be only as successful as those at the bottom are willing to make it. Their focus, spirit, enthusiasm, objectivity, and motivation are matters that transcend all others ...’ is worth keeping in mind as we continually reorganise to look for efficiency gains. A must read for anyone aspiring to leadership positions in the RAAF.

Wolfram von Richthofen: Master of the German Air War
James S. Corum
University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2008
416 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardback
ISBN: 9780700615988

James Corum is a respected author (*The Luftwaffe: Creating the Operational Air War, 1918–1940* (1997); *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy* (2007); and *Air Power in Small Wars* (2003) who has been on the staff of both the US Army and US Air Force Staff Colleges. In this book, Corum returns to air power and the German Air Force in compiling a fascinating and comprehensive study of the lesser-known Richthofen (his cousin was the ‘Red Baron’, Manfred von Richthofen, during World War I). The book is a comprehensive study of one of Germany’s most important and successful
air commanders. Despite initiating his flying career late in the last year of the World War I, Richthofen finished the war as an ‘ace’. But it was his operational and command experience in the air campaigns of the Spanish Civil War and World War II (the Eastern Front, Western Front, Italy and the Battle of Britain) that provides the greater value to air power history. In this respect, this analysis provides a unique perspective of an influential master of air power who was instrumental in developing the Luftwaffe capability and then experienced success and failure in commanding that capability.

In this book, the Western ‘Just War Tradition’ is factually and clearly explained in only 46 pages. Readers with non-Christian religious beliefs should not be put off by the introduction or origins chapters. It is no surprise that religion plays a large part in the history of warfare. The central thrust of the ‘Just War Tradition’ is to control and limit war, sometimes even to forbid it, and always to remember the adversary’s humanity. The body of the book looks at the criteria for war, ‘the right to fight’ and ‘how to fight right’. These criteria are further explored, which provide the reader with suggestions on how they can be applied to the diverse sorts of armed conflict in the 21st century; a particularly important aspect given that the application of ethics in current conflict is increasingly challenging with changing societal norms and expectations, complex situations and an irregular adversary who fights with a different ethical basis. Overall, the book provides an excellent introduction to ‘Just War’ and is a must read for those just commencing their journey in understanding war, such as junior officers, officer cadets and non-commissioned officers.
Obama’s Wars
Bob Woodward
Simon & Schuster, New York, 2010
441 pp., bibliography, index, notes, hardback
ISBN: 9781439172490

Obama’s Wars offers an insight into the critical decisions by US President Barack Obama on the Afghanistan War, the secret war in Pakistan and the worldwide fight against terrorism. Leveraging off his unique access to the Pentagon and White House, Bob Woodward puts the reader in the box seat to provide a seemingly accurate picture of the behind-the-scenes discussions in the lead up to the US troop surge in Afghanistan. Based on narrative from White House advisers, politicians, senior military officials and the President himself, Woodward is able to critically analyse the options presented by the military to the Government and the difficulty of balancing national strategy against other domestic imperatives. The concept of civilian control of the military is a critical part of Western democratic thought. Accordingly, this book is a must read for those interested in understanding the decision process of using military force as an instrument of government policy and the political realities faced by civilian leadership.
The Private Air Marshal: A Biography of Air Marshal Sir George Jones, KBE, CB, DFC

Peter Helson
Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2010
404 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9781920800505


Peter Helson provides a long overdue account of the life of Air Marshal Sir George Jones, who was a RAAF Chief and held the longest continuous tenure in office—ten years, from 1942 to 1952. A former AFC ‘ace’, Jones became an original member of the RAAF in 1921. While his appointment to lead the Air Force 20 years later came as a surprise to many, he held the post through more than four years of the Pacific War (when the Service grew to its greatest size ever) and helped to lay the foundations of the RAAF as a modern air force. However, his tenure as the RAAF Chief is perhaps best known for the bitter and damaging rivalry he shared with Air Vice-Marshal William Bostock. Described as ‘a very complex man, full of contradictions’, he was hard to understand in many ways. Peter Helson’s biography shows that Jones was a man of purpose who concentrated on getting the job done, and whose considerable achievements were often not recognised by his peers. The book provides an important contribution to RAAF history.

From Controversy to Cutting Edge: A History of the F-111 in Australian Service

Mark Lax
Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2010
264 pp., illustrations, appendices, index, hardback
ISBN: 9781920800543

When the RAAF retired the F-111 in December 2010, after nearly 40 years of service in Australia, this book was launched to commemorate the event. The book serves more than a purely commemorative purpose, however, for it provides the first truly authoritative account of the impact that this amazing aircraft has had in transforming both Australia’s strategic policy outlook and the worldwide professional standing of the RAAF. The author (an Air Commodore who at one
time served on the type) has accessed and closely studied all available official records. Mark Lax details the controversy that surrounded the F-111 acquisition, the technical problems and the subsequent dramas. Despite all the controversies, the F-111 was still at the cutting edge of technology even as age finally caught up with its airframe. The book is a valuable addition to the history of the RAAF not only for its analysis of one of the longest serving operational aircraft in the RAAF but also to gain a better understanding of how the RAAF has matured as an air force in modern times.

Fire in the Sky: The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War
Michael Molkentin
Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2010
404 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, paperback
ISBN: 9781742370729

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