

Book reviews

Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam

Jeannine Baker

New South Publishing: Sydney, 2015, 260 pages

ISBN: 978-1-7422-3451-9

\$39.99



Reviewed by Dr Stephanie Koorey, Deakin University

By the end of the first page of *Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam* by Jeaninne Baker, it is clear why this book was originally a prize-winning doctoral dissertation. Baker has built on the tradition of women writers cleverly uncovering untold stories of trailblazing women, revealing treasures of unconventional lives. Baker explains and explores the impact Australian women war reporters' unusual work had—or not. The book explores relatively uncharted waters in women's literature, a suffrage over the right to confront, describe and understand conflict by writing about it. For those wondering, she avoids feminist diatribe.

Like the early 20th century works of American Martha Gellhorn, as well Eleanor Mills' and Kira Cochrane's more recent short stories of courageous women journalists in *Cupcakes and Kalashnikovs*, *Australian War Reporters* provides a counter-narrative to the prevailing view of women's lives and interests as residing mostly in social events and domesticity. This counter-narrative is still needed. This book does not glorify women war reporters as being better than their male counterparts. It provides a story about their experiences, their motives, and the political, social and ideological contexts of their career choices.

A particularly refreshing element of this work is that it retains integrity as an even-handed analysis of the women's reporting. It avoids sentimentalism, and instead reveals the differences in women's reporting, both in content and style, and reflects on this as a combination of personal, social and political influences. Baker points out how difficult it was for many of the women prior to Vietnam to fight such an expectation—both societal and editorial—and how long it took for women to get to the front line as readily as male journalists.

A refrain from many of the reporters was to try and avoid entirely, or dwell purely on, war from 'the women's angle'. 'The women's angle' was 'soft' or human interest news, while the male angle was the 'hard' or military nature of the wars. Yet this is not necessarily a problematic delineation of responsibilities. While early women war reporters wrote human interest stories because they had limited access to the frontline, they also recognised that their contributions helped to expose the nature of war. Indeed, the human interest side of conflict—such as the current sensational headlines of drowning deaths of those fleeing Islamic State—is now mainstream reporting.

Where human interest stories proved problematic was demonstrated by the unintentional fallout from Tilly Shelton-Smith's coverage of Australian forces in Malaya in World War 2. She was restricted to only being able to cover the social aspects of the deployment. After her portrayal of their barracks being 'more comfortable than home', photos of troops dancing with Asian women, and cringe-worthy headlines such as 'I Go to Curry Tiffin with 400 of AIF', were as much the AIF's poorly-conceived idea of a morale-boosting publicity exercise as an error of editorial judgment.

The work is arranged chronologically, starting with the 1899-1902 Boer War in South Africa, where Australian nurse Agnes Macready, 'an outsider ... as an Australian and a woman', whose duties as a nurse—one of the few career choices for a woman at the time—ran parallel to her desire to be a journalist. She wrote for the *Catholic Press*, which had an anti-British and anti-Imperial bent, and her contributions drew uncomfortable similarities between the 'freedom loving' Boer and the Australian bushman.

Baker's book reveals there is no pre-determined gendered response to women's views on war. Many of Baker's women reporters—a number of them engaged by 'women's' magazines such as *The Australian Women's Weekly*—are constrained to the human interest topics—and, indeed, Shelton-Smith's seemingly-frivolous coverage of Australians in Malaya left a bitter legacy for other women journalists for decades. Many others raised questions about the extreme violence and futility of war, while others are strong patriots. Baker's section on the extraordinary reportage of Lorraine Stumm, covering the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima, portrays a sterling example of unwavering patriotic news reporting.

Lorraine Webb's reasons for going to Vietnam as a war correspondent reflect the greater liberation and higher education of women a generation later. Having grown up in an educated and politically-aware family, her reasons for going to Vietnam were to understand the conflict as a 'hot' war in the midst of a 'Cold' one. She also took practical steps to avoid being a burden to male counterparts—'if you don't ask where you plug in your hairdryer, you have no problems'. Yet Dorothy Jenner also proved the benefits of being a woman journalist. Interned in Stanley internment camp in Hong Kong in World War II, she kept a clandestine war diary written on toilet paper hidden in the heel of her shoe.

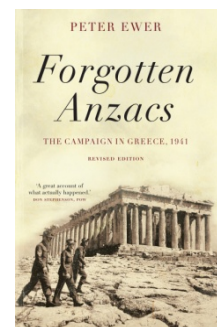
If there are any criticisms of the book, they are minor. The book might have benefitted from a different structure. The evolutionary listing of different women reporters' experiences, interspersed with analysis, becomes a little cluttered, especially in the middle sections on World War Two. A structure along thematic lines might have saved such repetition.

Further, citing Enloe from 1983, Baker's reference to women being able to 'observe' but not 'be the military' is dated. The women in Australia's armed forces, including an increasing number of star-rank officers, are testimony to the breadth and depth of Australian women's interest in 'being' the military. Also, the title is not quite accurate, as the final short chapter—admittedly titled the Afterword—is an update on women foreign and war correspondents of the early 21st century.

Stories of these adventurous women's lives should be known by Australians young and old. *Australian Women War Reporters* is a good bookshelf companion to Australian classics such as Myles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* and *My Career Goes Bung*, and stories of women's experience of war as portrayed by international classics such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. *Australian Women War Reporters* tells us much about Australian women, and a great deal about Australian culture and values.

Forgotten Anzacs: The campaign in Greece, 1941

Peter Ewer
Scribe: Melbourne, 2016 (revised edition), 448 pages
ISBN: 978-1-9253-2129-6
\$49.99



Reviewed by Jim Truscott

It is an unforgivable part of Australia's involvement in the campaign in Greece that a medal was not struck when it was the second time in history that an Anzac Corps had been designated. When you read this book, you will find that it was all due to perfidy by Churchill and ignominy by Blamey. For Churchill, it was the opportunity to land troops on European soil nine months after Dunkirk, even though he knew that Greece was doomed and that, at best, an expeditionary force could only achieve a small delay to German occupation. Sadly, it also gave Germany the chance to send reinforcements to North Africa.

Worse still, the Australian, New Zealand and Greek Governments were not privy to the British War Cabinet's assessment that Greece would fall within one week of a German attack. The force that the British wanted to send did not meet the fundamental standards of modern warfare. The Greeks simply did not have enough ammunition, there were not enough ships to move the necessary force, and the mountains

would provide no barrier to the Germans. Furthermore, the British were deceitful in advising Blamey that Prime Minister Menzies had been briefed.

To compound matters further, Blamey pulled the 6th Division back from Libya even though the 7th Division was ready, because he hated its commander, Lavarack. When the transport of the expeditionary force began in March 1941, there were only enough ships for one brigade per week and the force was never established in full by the time the Afrika Corps struck in North Africa. There was a massive onslaught by the Luftwaffe on Greek ports and residential areas as the force was getting organised, so much so that the 2/6th battalion had to come ashore in small boats.

The Greeks and the allies fought hard, bitter and fanatical battles in the snow, cold, mud and frostbite, and the campaign turned into a blocking force on a wide frontage to stop a blitzkrieg. In one instance, a staged withdrawal by the 2/8th Battalion became a rout. The British failed to use tanks in force and were decimated. The force faced constant encirclement and the book contains many accounts of tactical actions at platoon through to corps level.

The battle of Pinios Gorge features scantily in the pantheon of the Anzac legend but it was an epic and successful fighting withdrawal. There was meagre air support and no Australian Air Force at all but the Anzac Corps was steady under air attack during the race to the beaches of southern Greece and our Anzac Dunkirk, where the German Stukas nearly turned the evacuation convoy into a maritime morgue.

Hence the ensuing battle of Crete was as much a battle against military privation as well as against the Germans. Accordingly, the cost of Churchill's propaganda efforts to impress American public opinion and uphold British honour was high, and the chance to finish the war in North Africa in 1941 was lost. It is a thoroughly damning, wistful and enjoyable read.

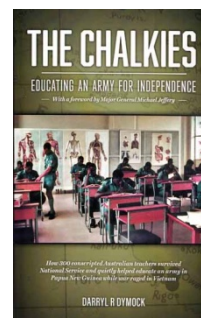
The Chalkies: Educating an Army for Independence

Darryl Dymock

Australian Scholarly Publishing: North Melbourne, 2016, 208 pages

ISBN: 978-1-9253-3377-0

\$39.95



Reviewed by Gregory J. Ivey

The 1965-72 conscription period saw 300 'nashos' posted as education instructors to the then Territory of Papua and New Guinea (PNG). The Australian Army, in a rare example of intelligent conscript deployment, allocated recruits to a role making the best use of their civilian qualifications. At that time, the Australian Army was engaged constructively not only in the (long-term) defence of PNG but also in the preparation of the PNG Army for a model role in the future nation. A few, well-placed Australian senior officers saw conscription as an opportunity to accelerate an education scheme of national importance. During this conscription era, about 40 teachers ('chalkies') were selected each year, after recruit training, to educate servicemen across the five military bases in PNG Command.

This book covers new ground by analysing the military experience of 73 of these chalkies and by summarising the experience of some of the wives who joined them. Dymock has relied on government, Army and private records, as well as published material and interviews of more recent times. He places the chalkies' personal recollections of events and people within the prevailing political and military context. There are flaws in relying on the memories of circumstances and opinions from 50 years ago but the author has acknowledged this. These then-young professionals appear to have retained detailed recollections of pivotal events (like Army training) and career firsts (like teaching English as a second language), supplemented by their photographic records.

Dymock describes sequentially the chalkies' conscription and induction into the Army; their selection for PNG service; their adjustments on arrival; their Army roles, experiences and attitudes; their Army

discharge; and the consequences for their characters and careers. These stages are fleshed out with personal examples and anecdotes, either serious or humourous in nature. Dymock provides carefully-crafted quotations from named individuals such that the reader is able to appreciate both the emotion and the meaning portrayed.

Where consistencies occur across place or time, the author weaves the presented facts together to allow the reader to perceive patterns in military behaviour. For example, while there are persistent features in Australian Army recruit training over the generations, this mixture of professional conscripts and lowly-educated Regular instructors was demonstrably a dangerous collision in the 1960s. Dymock draws on his own experience, and that of scores of chalkies, to record some abuses, stressors, victims and achievers in the Army recruit training culture of that conscription era. It was a far cry from comedian Barry Humphries recollection of recruit training during the 1950s National Service scheme:

In the evenings, as it cooled down a bit and the foul-smelling dust (of Puckapunyal) settled, it was almost pleasant to sit beside the tent on an upturned box reading, or teaching myself to smoke a pipe.

The 1950s conscripts were exempt from fighting overseas, whereas the destiny of the 1960s conscripts was, in many cases, South Vietnam and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The author provides a discussion on the evolution, indeed revolution, of the PNG chalkies scheme and gives credit to its political and military advocates. The reader soon appreciates that credit is also due to the nasho teachers who first implemented the project successfully in difficult circumstances. As the scheme developed, geopolitical and ministerial changes occurred, yet the Australian Army commanders and the Royal Australian Army Education Corps held resolutely to their vision and their trust in the educational skills of these nasho sergeants working in a very different context.

Dymock presents opinions of the PNG chalkies which differ from his survey results, such as those of author Mark Dapin and PNG serviceman Dennis Armstrong. Dapin interviewed about seven PNG chalkies during a break from researching the experiences of nashos in the South Vietnam war. His 2014 article raised some issues which Dymock responds to in his book. Dennis Armstrong conducted a psychological study of 113 PNG chalkies for his master's degree while working in PNG Command. His study provides a challenging juxtaposition to the Dymock data as it indicates a different view of the chalkies' attitudes to PNG people and the chalkies satisfaction after PNG service. Yet Armstrong's conclusions may not be as contradictory as they first appear and may have been worthy of more discussion.

There appear to have been variations in the chalkies attitudes to the local PNG population and this could be explained by the 'degrees of separation' phenomenon. Some single chalkies are likely to have found continuity between the prevailing Army culture and the values in PNG society. The village basis of PNG society prized physical strength, skill and cunning which the Army also traditionally valued. Single chalkies lived on base and lived in the Battalion/Depot Sergeants Messes with well-trained and Westernised PNG men. Such PNG servicemen were respected by these chalkies, whose regard for them increased in patrol or social situations. For other chalkies, mixing often with lesser-trained or less-Westernised people, their attitudes towards indigenous people may have become different.

It seems likely that the chalkies also experienced 'degrees of separation' from the Army in PNG and this may be related to their varying post-Army attitudes to their service. For example, Murray Barracks chalkies displayed the full range of Army proximity/distance. Some of those chalkies worked embedded in education administration, some taught servicemen on or off the barracks, some taught non-servicemen at Iduabada or Bomana and some even wore civilian clothing daily. Married chalkies at Murray Barracks lived off the barracks with their wives, while single chalkies lived in a Sergeants Mess with civilians and servicemen. So some chalkies did fulfil the 1969 promise of RAAEC Major Henry Dachs that 'they did (psychologically) leave the Army when they joined the (PNG) Education Corps'. For some other chalkies, Army constraints seemingly remained psychologically present until they removed their uniform at discharge, which may explain some of the scathing assessments they made about their service at discharge, and later.

One interesting theme running through the book is the compulsion for these nashos to transition from the familiar to the unknown, both geographically and culturally. For example, many of them had to move interstate for recruit and/or infantry training, where the cultural differences were also highlighted. Then,

they transitioned from raw recruit to corps member in yet another location. Later, they travelled to PNG to carry out their selected role with Pacific Islands soldiers. While this last transition was held to be the most challenging, it was arguably more so for their wives. The chalkies continued to work in PNG within a now-familiar Army culture—only their rank, location and students were different. Their wives, however, had to adjust to leaving home, arriving in a new country, married accommodation issues, husbands away on patrol, and employment issues in many cases.

Because the PNG chalkies scheme is relatively unknown in the military and general community, there are new perspectives for the reader. This book is the first attempt to comprehensively cover this scheme. By bringing to publication these previously-unavailable stories, Dymock has done a service for the participants and the interested public in Australia and PNG. Yet readers may have been interested also in seeing some period letters or published memoirs. This book also opens the door to further research, which might include a survey of the surviving RAAEC students in PNG from that era or a comparative survey of the chalkies who served as instructors in Australia and Vietnam.

The format of the book is user-friendly: the endnotes, bibliography and index are comprehensive; the colour photos are representative of the lives of the subjects; the list of military abbreviations is welcome; and the appendices are useful. The foreword by a former Governor-General provides an additional Commanding Officer's perspective on PNG and the chalkies scheme. The text has been written perceptively yet objectively by an experienced author. In the same way that art attaches meaning to life's experiences, Dymock provides meaning to those diverse experiences which befell these nasho chalkies—the good, the bad, the unexpected and also the memorable. He has also channelled the spirit of acclaimed historian A.J.P. Taylor, as its readers will 'feel impelled to turn the page'.

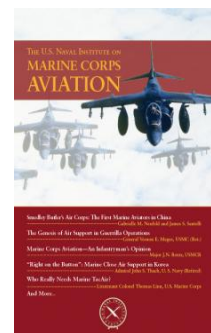
The US Naval Institute on Marine Corps Aviation

Thomas J. Clutter (ed.)

Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2016, 165 pages

ISBN: 978-1-6824-7041-1

US\$19.95



Reviewed by Air Commodore Mark Lax, OAM, CSM (Retd)

The US Marine Corps has always prided itself in providing a complete combat package to US military expeditionary operations. Part of that package is Marine aviation. This publication by the US Naval Institute Press is a compendium of previously-published articles expounding the history and contribution of Marine aviation to Marine operations as whole for almost a century.

The nine articles included in this slim edition are of varying lengths, written and published well beforehand in the Institute's *Proceedings* between 1949 and 2008. They selectively cover a wide range of aspects of Marine air with a focus on ground attack and close air support—perhaps what the Marines do best. While six papers are historical in nature, three provide opinion including one from a US Air Force major.

The first use of Marine Air occurred in August 1919, when the Marines attacked insurgent camps in Haiti. From this early operation, the Marines developed dive-bombing techniques to support their infantry colleagues in close quarters, and the requirement for indigenous air was quickly cemented in Marine doctrine. Amphibious combined arms operations were developed soon after.

From these beginnings, the concept of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) rapidly evolved. But it was success in the five-year Second Nicaraguan Campaign in the late 1920s and early 1930s that really reinforced in the minds of Marine generals the need for 'on call' air support. General Megee's paper covers this campaign and its lessons admirably, and the campaign is still taught in their Service schools.

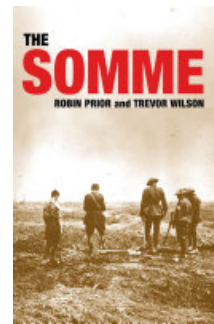
Chapters cover the Korean War, Lieutenant Joe Foss (who was the first Marine 'Ace in a day'), Marine Air's contribution to NATO in the 1980s, and the China campaign in the 1930s round off the historical contribution. In this regard, the book is an easy read, although I found General McCutcheon's 66-page history of Marine Air in Vietnam a little tedious—and perhaps better left for the serious historical researcher.

The most surprising chapter I found is called 'Stop Quibbling and Win the War'. It was penned by US Air Force Major John Valliere, a student at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in 1990. His short but incisive paper discusses the vexed issue of command and control of air assets—the fight between the MAGTF commander and the Joint Force Air Component Commander—essentially, who should 'own' the air. He points out that in 1986, the US Marine Corps and US Air Force signed a Joint Chiefs of Staff Omnibus Agreement which clearly gives the MAGTF commander operational control of his organic air assets during joint military operations. What followed was an exchange of letters clarifying what the Joint Chiefs of Staff actually meant! Despite the letters, and later Gulf War experience, this debate clearly continues.

The book is in paperback format of 165 pages with a short index and no photos. According to the preface, this publication is one in a series the US Naval Institute has commissioned to 'reintroduce readers to significant portions of this [the Institute's *Proceedings* and *Navy History Magazine*] virtual treasure trove'. With this publication, I think they have succeeded. Recommended.

The Somme

Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson
NewSouth Publishing: Sydney, 2016, 358 pages
ISBN: 978-1-7422-3502-8
\$39.95



Reviewed by Commander Robert Woodham, RAN

In the centenary year of the Battle of the Somme, this book provides a timely challenge to the view of the five-month battle, and perhaps of the war on the Western Front in general, as a visitation of slaughter on the masses by military commanders who were hopelessly out of touch with the realities of modern warfare, and who were beyond the control of politicians. Perhaps such a caricature was the only way, then as now, that the horrific loss of life for such seemingly paltry gains could be understood.

On the first day alone, for example, the British Army suffered 57,000 casualties for a gain of three square miles. Selection and maintenance of the aim seemed to follow the simple formula of attrition to the point of capitulation—and the generals could apparently think of nothing more imaginative than repeated frontal attacks by infantry, conducted at a slow walking pace. Perhaps popular culture, from Siegfried Sassoon to Eric Bogle, to 'Black Adder Goes Forth', has embedded the concept in our minds.

Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson challenge this view, at least in part, by strongly making the case that the British Government, through the War Committee, provided regular control and oversight of the most senior military commanders not only for the Somme but for Britain's participation in the war from its earliest days. Political control continued throughout the months of the Somme battles, during which time the progress, or lack of it, was well understood and much debated by senior government figures.

For example, a month into the Somme offensive, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, pointed out to the committee the feeble progress made towards ephemeral objectives with unrealistic plans envisaged for future operations. The Commander-in-Chief in France, General Sir Douglas Haig, in rebutting Churchill, tried to put a positive spin on results but, as the authors point out, the substance of this rebuttal merely admitted that little concrete progress had been made and foresaw the likelihood of a continuing operation into the following year.

If the War Committee was dissatisfied with progress on the Western Front, they could have provided alternative direction or even recommended the replacement of Haig, as had been done with his underperforming predecessor. The fact that they did not shows tacit approval, at the very least, of operations on the Somme.

This is not to say, however, that the military leadership, particularly Haig, did not display significant shortcomings, as the book makes very clear. Prior to assaults on the German line, even basic computations of the required artillery support were not made. Instead, the approach seems to have been to cobble together as much artillery as possible, then hope it would be sufficient. There was also a lack of coordination along the front, which resulted in assaults being conducted on limited sections of the front, without flanking units being ordered to provide support or diversionary activities.

The value of the creeping artillery barrage was established early on, and this tactic seems to have been generally very effective when it was used, but all too often the coordination of the barrage with the infantry advance was severely lacking. Incidentally, it was the creeping barrage which produced the popular misunderstanding, alluded to earlier, that the infantry were expected to advance at a slow walking pace to their deaths; when they were walking slowly, it was usually because they were following a creeping barrage, and hence their chances of survival were much better than if they were not closely behind the artillery curtain.

Reading the book reminded me that of all the belligerent nations who participated in the Great War, Britain should have been best prepared for its conduct, having had the opportunity to learn the key lessons, albeit on a smaller scale, in the Boer War. One of these was that frontal assaults against entrenched infantry armed with high velocity, magazine-loading rifles and machine guns resulted in heavy casualties for the assaulting troops. The balance seemed to have tipped strongly in favour of the defenders.

This lesson seems to have eluded General Haig, who had been chief staff officer to the cavalry commander during the Boer War. In that earlier conflict, he did learn the importance of artillery preparation, improving the field artillery and increasing its calibre, as well as the vital need for an efficient staff system to ensure that planning, coordination between forces, and logistic requirements were met. By the time of the Somme, however, these lessons seem to have been only partially remembered.

During the course of the book, an image of Haig emerges which is not flattering. His repeated predictions that German morale was on the brink of collapse, based on nothing more than optimism—and repeatedly proven wrong—and his expectation that a breakthrough in the German line would be exploited by cavalry, indicate a delusional man. He was also prone to inflated estimates of German casualties, sourced from who knows where. Haig was a cavalry officer, but then so was Winston Churchill, and Churchill knew that 'letting loose the cavalry in the open country behind' (the German line) was a fantasy. Haig seemingly did not.

The way in which Haig dealt with subordinates, particularly the Fourth Army Commander, General Rawlinson, was often ineffectual. The direction that he provided could be contradictory or else merely consisted of bromides. The book gives examples of situations where Rawlinson simply followed the direction that he thought reasonable and ignored the rest. Haig also interfered at the tactical level and did not allow sufficient time for effective planning in the subordinate headquarters.

The book is not aimed only at the strategic level. It contains a detailed, day-by-day account of the battle throughout its course, well supported by clear maps. One fascinating section contains a description of the six basic types of employment faced by infantry units: training/resting, in reserve, in support, in close support, holding the front line, and attacking. The realities of each are explained, along with typical rotations through the six categories.

The book also describes the various personalities involved, notably the divisional commanders, as well as tactical innovations such as the use of tanks, and it explains the impact of weather and terrain on the progress of the fighting. I found that this amount of detail helped me appreciate what the Somme was really like for the average soldier, as well as its progress at a broader level.

It would be all too easy for a book about the Somme to become a thoroughly-depressing read, cataloguing as it must a seemingly-unremitting tale of death and destruction for little gain. On the contrary, I found this book to be thoroughly readable, due to its lively style and fascinating insights on every page. Although it does not hold back from criticism, such comments are always well supported by clear evidence, based on the authors' meticulous research. This is a highly authoritative, scholarly and engaging read.

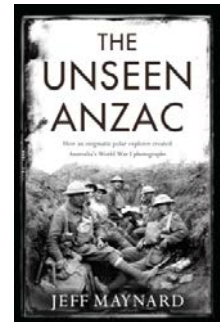
The Unseen Anzac: How an enigmatic polar explorer created Australia's World War 1 photographs

Jeff Maynard

Scribe: Melbourne, 2015, 296 pages

ISBN: 978-1-9251-0678-7

\$39.99



Reviewed by Jim Truscott

This is a truly remarkable book about Australia's only official photographer from any war to receive a combat decoration. George Wilkins was arguably Australia's greatest polar explorer and greatest war photographer, who produced the most memorable collection of Australian-focused photographs during World War 1—which have become a national treasure. He went over the top of the trenches with the Anzacs, was twice awarded the Military Cross and twice mentioned in dispatches, carrying a camera but never a gun.

Wilkins learnt his photographic trade during the Balkan wars against Turkey in 1912-13 and then, in 1913, went on the first of many polar expeditions for three years, where he thrived on adventure, hardship and uncertainty. He then enlisted in the Australian Flying Corps in May 1917, just as the Australian War Records Section also officially commenced.

When General Haig banned the taking of photographs on the Western Front in order to hide the bloodshed from the public view, he tasked his Chief of Intelligence to use two official British photographers for propaganda purposes. However, Charles Bean—who was Australia's official war correspondent—became so annoyed that Australia was not given recognition for the greatest battle in Australian history at Pozieres that he organized for Hurley and Wilkins to be appointed as official Australian photographers in August 1917; one for propaganda and one for a true record. By necessity, this book is as much about Bean, who remained a civilian journalist but was not allowed to carry a camera.

Wilkins had a sense of boyhood wonder about the whole experience and, after being well behind the lines at Menin Road and the battle of Passchendaele, decided to go over the top with the Anzacs. Wilkins soon met Monash, who later described him as the bravest man in the AIF. He was twice buried by mud thrown up from shell explosions, and Wilkins and Hurley saw more fighting than any staff officer. Bean recommended Wilkins for a MC and Hurley for a MID but these awards were denied by General Birdwood. Wilkins finally received his first MID for providing front-line intelligence during the German breakthrough in March 1918.

There are several coloured pages throughout the book that place Wilkin's photographic contributions to the Australian War Memorial collection into context, as most of the images in the official history are not attributed to him. Wilkins's photos are frontal, central and free of photographic trickery, with little moving footage. Wilkins was most productive in the period from April to May 1918, where he showed life during the war in all its humanity and horror. He crawled into no-man's land to get photos back to the Australian lines. He took photos of Germans in the act of surrendering and he brought back prisoners on several occasions himself.

It is incredible that he survived the war in the face of so much photography under fire. Finally, Wilkins returned to Gallipoli with Bean after the war to photograph the Turkish side. According to General Sir John Monash:

[Wilkins] was a highly accomplished and absolutely fearless combat photographer. Wounded many times and even buried by shellfire, he always came through. At times he brought in the wounded, at other times he supplied vital intelligence of enemy activity. At one point he even rallied troops as a combat officer. His record was unique.

Wilkins was clearly a brave but modest man as he asked Monash to cease praising him after the war. In subsequent life, Wilkins was knighted by King George V for flying across the Arctic. He also experienced a tickertape parade down Broadway. Wilkins had a weird relationship with his wife, who he never lived with in between his many near-continuous polar expeditions over many years. He also became involved with spirit mediums, which may explain the often contradictory stories in his own biographical notes. It was fitting that his ashes were scattered at the North Pole by a US submarine. This book is a long overdue record of the man behind a significant part of Australia's military photographic history.