OBITUARY

Major-General Gordon L. Maitland AO OBE RFD ED

An eminent banker and citizen-soldier, when he died on 18 October 2018 aged 92 years, Gordon Lindsay Maitland was an Honorary Life Member and Councillor Emeritus of the Institute, who had been its President from 1995 – 1998, and for many years had been the doyen of the veteran community in Sydney.

Gordon Maitland was born in Sydney on 25 August 1926. After leaving school, he joined the Commonwealth Bank and began part-time economics studies at the University of Sydney.

In 1944, aged 18, he enlisted as a private in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF). He was posted to Intelligence and undertook a Japanese language course at Point Cook. Following the Japanese surrender, in September 1945 now 19-years-old, he was deployed to the Netherlands East Indies to locate, identify and question potential Japanese war criminals. In February 1946, he returned to Australia to be an interpreter at the Darwin war crimes trials. On 19 August 1947, now a sergeant, he was demobilised. He resumed his banking career in the Commonwealth Bank and, in 1948, married Dorothy Gunn who would be his wife for 69 years. They would have three children, six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Gordon became a respected banker. He rose through the ranks of the Commonwealth Bank, eventually becoming chief manager. He guided the bank's lending business, particularly home loans, transformed its image via a public relations campaign and oversaw the introduction of automatic teller machines. Following retirement from the bank, he became chief executive of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales and became widely respected throughout the state's agricultural community.

Gordon is arguably better known for his parallel career as a citizen soldier. When the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) were raised in 1948, Gordon joined the 45th Battalion, St George Regiment, at Arncliffe. He was commissioned in the battalion and served with it for 12 years, then transferred to the Royal New South Wales Regiment after it was formed on 1 July 1960. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1962 and appointed second-in-command of the 3rd Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment (Battle Group), and then, from 1965 to 1968, was commanding officer of the 4th Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment. For this service, he was appointed an Officer in the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

In 1969, he was a CMF observer for a month attached to the 9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in South Vietnam. Staff appointments followed, including service as *aide-de-camp* to two governors-general. In 1974, on promotion to major-general, Gordon became commander of the 2nd Division. In 1978, he became Inspector-General of the Army Reserve (the re-named CMF) and, from 1979 to 1982, Chief of the Army Reserve, a posting that coincided with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and an expansion of the Reserve from a strength of 20,000 to 30,000. For this service, he was appointed an Officer in the Military Division of the Order of Australia (AO).

After retiring from the Army, he became Regimental Colonel of the Royal New South Wales Regiment and, after relinquishing that role, in 1989 represented the Regiment in Wales at ceremonial activities marking the tercentenary of an allied regiment, the Royal Regiment of Wales. He also turned his attention to military history, writing six books on Australian Army history, most notably a two-volume battle history of the Royal New South Wales Regiment and a separate volume detailing the deeds of each of the Regiment's 24 Victoria Cross winners. In researching and writing these books, he was ably assisted by his wife Dorothy and by the librarian of the Royal United Services Institute, Ursula Davidson.

Gordon had joined the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales in 1951, and it had become a life-long commitment which included service as a Councillor, Vice-President and President (1995 – 1998). The culmination of his presidency was his leading of a tour by Institute members of the Great War battlefields of northern France and Flanders in July 1998, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the Battle of le Hamel (4 July1918) and the launch of the allied counter-offensive at Amiens on 8 August 1918. He subsequently served on the Institute's Council as a Past-President for another decade, delivering the Blamey Oration in 2005, before becoming a Councillor Emeritus, a role in which he continued to counsel and support the president of the day. For his sustained distinguished service to the Institute, he was elected an Honorary Life Member.

Gordon also supported many veterans' organisations, especially ones involved with commemoration of Australia's sacrifice in war. He had attended his first Anzac Day Dawn Service aged 14 and towards the end of his life would establish the Sydney Anzac Day Dawn Service Trust, the Battle for Australia Committee and the Families and Friends of the First AIF. Other organisations he supported included the Military History Society of New South Wales and the Centenary of Anzac Advisory Council.

He was farewelled with a military funeral at St James' Anglican Church, Sydney, on 29 October 2018, attended by the Governor-General and the Governor of New South Wales. It was a dignified occasion befitting an eminent citizen, soldier and servant of Australia.

David Leece