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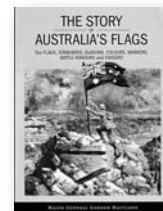
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BOOK REVIEWS:

The story of Australia's flags: our flags, standards, guidons, colours, banners, battle honours and ensigns

by Major General Gordon Maitland

*Playbill/Military: Sydney; 2015; 366 pp.; ISBN 978-0-9925154-1-6; RRP \$45.00 (softcover)*¹



Australia's Flags tells the story of the development of flags for identification of military forces from Roman times, through the Middle Ages and up to the present. It then traces the development of Australia's flags, both military and civilian, before providing a comprehensive description of the flags our nation has adopted.

It is a companion volume to *Honours and Awards of the Army*, Gordon Maitland's 2014 book, also published by Playbill/Military. It has been produced by the same team that produced the earlier volume and has been put together with the same consummate skill and attention to detail. The high quality of the art work is a feature of the book's appeal.

Gordon Maitland, on the threshold of his ninth decade, has been a life-long collector of military information and he has drawn on his vast collection to produce these two books. For *Australia's Flags*, he has also drawn on T. J. Edwards (1953), *Standards, Guidons and Colours of the Commonwealth Forces* (Gale and Polden: Aldershot); and A. N. Festburg (1972), *Australian Army Guidons and Colours* (Allara: Melbourne). This is his sixth book and it exhibits the same easy-to-read writing style and attention to detail, leavened by relevant, frequently humorous,

anecdotes, that his dedicated readers have come to expect.

Many will use this as a reference book, but I read it from cover to cover and found it a fascinating story, well worth the time invested. Each page revealed some intriguing fact of which I was previously unaware. Unfortunately, though, some 'gremlins' have slipped through the editing process. While a few are merely layout issues, others are more significant, such as the reference in the glossary to the upper hoist quarter of a flag as the 'cannon', whereas the word should be 'canton' (p. 15); and the reference to the crown on the Regimental Colour of the Royal New South Wales Regiment as the 'Imperial Crown' (presumably a reference to the Imperial State Crown), whereas it is the St. Edward's Crown (p. 128).

The book is a quality reference work, but is not encyclopaedic. It describes representative flags of each type, but not every approved flag. These limitations notwithstanding, this book makes a valuable, up-to-date (2012) contribution to the literature on Australia's flags. Flags are important symbols in Australian life and the book deserves a place in every Australian public library. Indeed, I commend it to every Australian.

David Leece

¹Online purchases: shop.playbill.com.au/books/