

2008 Chief of Army's Military History Conference

The Military, the Media and Information Warfare

The 2008 Chief of Army's Military History Conference was held at the National Convention Centre, Canberra on 9 and 10 October 2008. The theme was *The Military, the Media and Information Warfare*, and the conference showcased some of the world's leading authorities and practitioners on the study of the complex interaction between the military and the media. The Australian Army and Army History Unit are deeply grateful to the Conference Sponsors for their support of this world class event, and particular thanks are extended to **Defcredit**, the Conference's Major Sponsor, and to the **Department of Veterans' Affairs** as Proceedings Sponsor.



The evening of 8 October saw Conference guests assemble at the Royal Military College Duntroon Officers' Mess for the traditional Chief of Army's History Conference Dinner. Sponsored by Point Trading Group, the evening was a very relaxing and enjoyable start to the Conference festivities. The food and drink were excellent and the Chief of the Australian Army, **LTGEN Ken Gillespie** presented the 2008 CEW Bean Prize to Dr Kirsty Harris for her PhD thesis "Not Just Routine Nursing!: The Roles and Skills of the Australian Army Nursing Service during World War I." It was great for guests and speakers alike to relax before the formal start to the Conference.



Chief of Army, LTGEN Ken Gillespie opening the Conference

The Conference was opened on the morning of Thursday 9 October by LTGEN Gillespie who spoke of the difficulties in capturing, storing and retrieving operational records and personal experiences in Army's current operational environment. He was particularly concerned at the lack of strategic planning in capturing personal experiences like emails and information from *Facebook* and other social networking sites used by soldiers to communicate with friends and family

LTGEN Gillespie then introduced the Keynote Speaker **Prof Stephen Badsey** (University of Wolverhampton). Prof Badsey is a world authority on the military/media relationship and has published extensively in this field and consults for the BBC. Prof Badsey's paper explored the relationship between the military and media in the past and looked at this relationship for the future.



Prof Stephen Badsey delivering the Keynote address

He gave the topic some immediacy by outlining the circumstances surrounding the exposure of Prince Harry's deployment in Afghanistan in early 2008 and the role the media played in firstly keeping this confidence and later exposing the presence of Harry in his military role.

Prof Badsey's paper was extremely well received.



Dr Richard Trembath on Australian WWI war correspondents (L); and Roger Lee presenting John Williams' paper on German reporting of Gallipoli

After breaking for morning tea, the next session engaged the military/media relationship during WWI with papers by **Dr Richard Trembath** (University of Melbourne) on Australian War Correspondents in the Great War, and **Roger Lee** (Head AHU) delivering **Dr John Williams'** (Hobart) paper on German reporting of Australia in the Great War.

Lunch followed and the early afternoon session looked at specific elements of the conference's theme during WWII.



Peter Sekules (L) speaking on the Department of Information; and Martin Hadlow (R) enjoying his paper on the 'Mosquito Network'

Peter Sekules (Canberra) presented a paper on the role of the Australian Department of Information and their relationship in disseminating war news and information, while **Assoc Prof Martin Hadlow** (University of Queensland) gave a very interesting presentation on the American military's 'Mosquito Network' of radio transmissions in the South-West Pacific.

Prof Hadlow peppered his paper with his own experiences meeting these military broadcasters in the United States and brought along the very microphone banner that was hanging on the microphone from the Mosquito Network station on Guadalcanal in 1944-45!



Prof Lyn Gorman on Australian reporting of the Cold War

The final afternoon session on the first day saw **Prof Lyn Gorman** (Charles Sturt University) give a presentation on the Australian perspective of the Cold War, specifically focussing on Australian news media coverage of the Korean and early Vietnam conflicts.

Prof Gorman showed two video clips of newsreel and media coverage of both conflicts to draw out some assessments of the changing role of the media in reporting the exploits of the military.

The second day, Friday 10 October opened with a short session on the Cold War in Europe featuring **Dr Peter Busch** (Kings College, London). Dr Busch presented a paper on military-media relations in the German *Bundeswehr* 1955-1965 that explored in part the relationship between the wartime *Wehrmacht* and the post-war *Bundeswehr*.



Dr Peter Busch discussing the Bundeswehr



Dr William H Hammond on media reporting of Vietnam

After a short morning tea break, the late morning session engaged the media's coverage of the Vietnam War. **Dr William H Hammond** (US Army's Center for Military History) presented a stimulating and passionate paper engaging and exploding the enduring myths surrounding the media's influence on the outcome of the Tet Offensive and the broader war.

Following this paper, **Karen Middleton** (SBS Television) stepped in only 48 hours from the conference start for Greg Sheridan who had to withdraw. Ms Middleton spoke of her experiences in Afghanistan reporting on the 'War on Terror' and her relationships with the military and the demands of her job in the media.

It was extremely interesting to hear the experiences of a current Australian practitioner.



Karen Middleton shared her experience as a journalist in Afghanistan



Prof David Welch on media coverage of the Northern Ireland troubles

In the afternoon, **Prof David Welch** (University of Kent) gave a presentation on the military, the media and the propaganda war in Northern Ireland. Rather than focussing on the IRA, Prof Welch focussed on the reporting of the war and how the media coverage changed to try to bring about peace by reducing the focus on the British Army's involvement.

The final presentation of the conference was by veteran journalist, author and *New York Times* bestselling author **Mr Joe Galloway** (McClatchy Company). Mr Galloway enthralled the audience for an hour recounting his own experiences reporting the war in Vietnam through to the first and second Gulf Wars and his personal and professional exchanges with GEN Norman Schwarzkopf. Joe described his own relationship with the military across this period and these conflicts and how technological changes impacted on the speed and dissemination of information to the public from war zones.



Joe Galloway reminiscing on his experiences reporting Vietnam to Iraq

The conference enjoyed strong attendance (which was encouraging in this time of financial stringency) and excellent support from serving uniformed members. The organisers would like to thank everyone who attended this year's conference. In light of current global economic issues, your support of these conferences is appreciated and ensures that they will survive into the future.



*Three of the Conference Organisers, L-R:
Prof Jeffrey Grey, Roger Lee and Dr Andrew Richardson*

The Army History Unit would like to thank Mr Roger Lee, Prof Jeff Grey, Prof Peter Dennis, Ms Denise Penfold, Mrs Tania Hampson, Ms Keanne Stephenson and Dr Andrew Richardson for their invaluable assistance in organising the Conference and the speakers.

In addition, Dr Jean Bou, Mr Phil Parkinson, LTCOL Bill Houston, WO2 Stan Albert and WO2 Ian Kuring provided excellent support in bringing the elements together. AHU would also like to thank the National Convention Centre, Staging Connections and the Crowne Plaza Hotel for accommodating the conference, the speakers and technical support.

AHU must acknowledge the wonderfully generous support of our sponsors - Major Sponsor **Defcredit**; Conference Dinner Sponsor **Point Trading Group**; Printed Proceedings Sponsor **Department of Veterans' Affairs**; Networking Drinks Sponsor **Defence Health**; and ID Sponsor **ID Warehouse**.

AHU appreciates the attendance of all of the Museum staff who were able to make it to Canberra to attend the Conference and enjoy the atmosphere of an extremely successful event. The 2009 Chief of Army's Military History Conference theme is ***Raise, Train and Sustain: Delivering Combat Power***. The dates and venue will be announced soon.

The published papers from this conference will appear in a professionally edited and produced volume early in 2009. Conference delegates received a copy free as part of their registration. All other interested readers can purchase a copy from The War Book Shop, Ph: (02) 9542 6771 or email: warbookshop@bigpond.com; www.warbooks.com.au.