

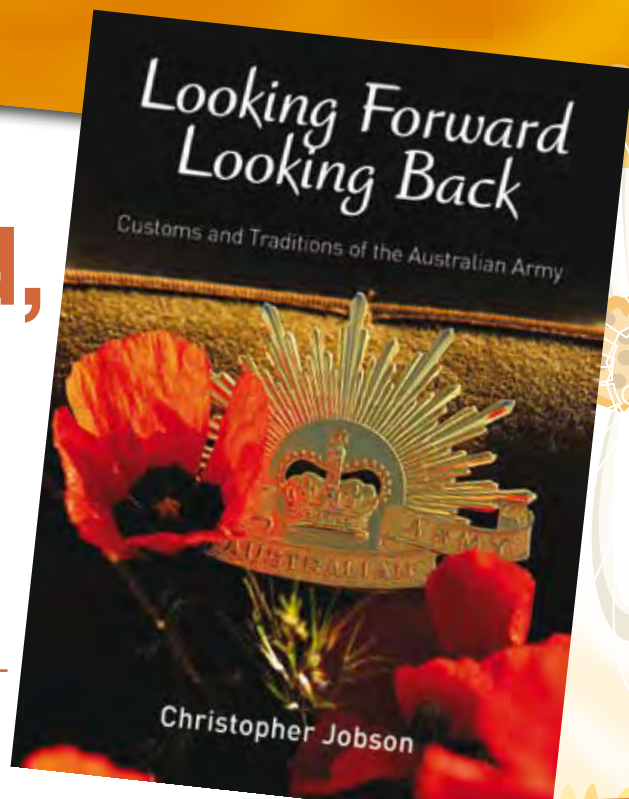
Book Review

Looking Forward, Looking Back: Customs and Traditions of the Australian Army by Christopher Jobson

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Reviewed: by Leila Fetter



It has often been said that an Army marches on its stomach. This may indeed be the case, but may actually be more true to say that an Army marches on the experiences and traditions of generations of Armies past.

To the outside observer, these can look like an incomprehensible, impenetrable mass of confusion - in fact, even for someone who has worked in this environment for a number of years, the origins of many traditions seem a mystery to the very people who are continuing them. Christopher Jobson's new book, *Looking Forward Looking Back*, gives light and clarity to this subject in a single handy volume.

The traditions in the Australian Army have long-standing historical antecedents - from basic things like uniforms, ranks and insignia to Unit formations and ceremonial accoutrements. Jobson has gathered the facts together from a wide variety of sources and arranged them in an easily-comprehensible order. So if you would like to find out the difference between a pace stick and a swagger stick, or if you'd like to know the reason the Pioneer Sergeant wears an apron and carries an axe - all these facts are explained and their history made clear. In many cases the historical antecedents of our current traditions go back centuries, and having explanations of the origins and facts behind the more bizarre examples is very helpful. It also provides a very interesting new perspective on the history of warfare and how war fighting has changed over the centuries.

The book can be used as a reference book or simply as a worthwhile cover-to-cover read - it is interesting, entertaining, amusing and often extremely touching. There is a level of assumed knowledge which is not always completely explained, and the amount of detail for entries varies quite a lot, presumably being dependent upon the availability of information. These are very minor criticisms, though - the book is well-researched and a gold mine of interesting facts and I would consider it to be a very useful addition to any library on Australian military history. I hope that we can soon add similar volumes on the culture and traditions of the Navy and Air Force, as this book clearly demonstrate that any subject, if studied in sufficient detail, can be absolutely fascinating.

GIVE AWAY...

d fm has one copy of *Looking Forward, Looking Back* to give away to a lucky reader. To enter the draw email or mail *d fm* with the subject of *Looking Forward*, including your address details, by January 13.



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