

REVIEW BY Bob Treloar

DASHER - THE KEVIN WHEATLEY VC STORY

By **MICHAEL C MADDEN**
Big Sky Publishing, Newport, NSW;
RRP \$29.99

WARRANT OFFICER WHEATLEY, a member of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV), was killed while protecting a fellow soldier and friend against a Viet Cong attack in South Vietnam on 13 November 1965. *Dasher – The Kevin Wheatley VC Story* is the biography of this outstanding soldier.

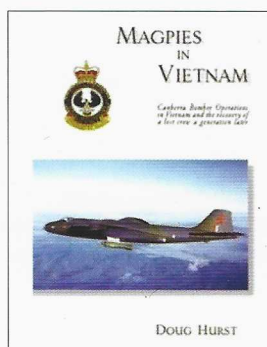
Dasher joined the Army in 1956, aged 19. Well-liked by his fellow soldiers, he became a legend on the rugby field where he earned the nick name Dasher. He served in 3RAR from 1957 to 1959 where he completed a tour of duty in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency and developed his considerable skill and expertise fighting in the jungle.

Dasher joined the AATTV in 1965 and was deployed to the Quang Tri Province where he worked alongside U.S. Army and Marine advisors assisting the 1st Division of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. During a search and destroy mission, they were ambushed. Dasher and Warrant Officer 'Butch' Swanton became isolated from the platoon they were supporting when the platoon members withdrew from the fight.

Despite several pleas from the platoon medic, Dasher refused to leave a wounded Butch, moving him to the security of the jungle. The pair were subsequently overrun and killed.

Dasher – The Kevin Wheatley VC Story is well written and draws the reader into the action and the life of a distinguished soldier, providing an insight of a person who held service and friendship in high esteem. It provides a sobering description of the environment in which they fought.

It is well written and is the first book to recount the story of Australia's first winner of the Victoria Cross in South Vietnam.



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MAGPIES IN VIETNAM

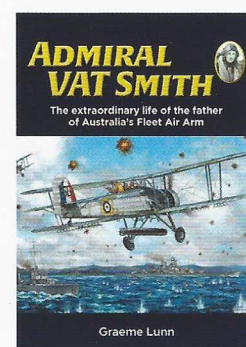
By **DOUG HURST**
Barrallier Books, Geelong, Victoria;
RRP \$79.95

MAGPIES IN VIETNAM is the account of No 2 Squadron in Vietnam. It is presented in two parts: Part 1 addresses the role and activities of the squadron in the Vietnam War, while Part 2 addresses the recovery operations undertaken to find and retrieve the remains of two aircrew whose aircraft disappeared during a medium level bombing sortie over Vietnam on 3 November 1973. The book takes its title from No 2 Squadron's call sign, *Magpie*.

Part 1 addresses No 2 Squadron's deployment to Phan Rang in 1967 and subsequent operations during which the squadron lost two aircraft, the first in 1970 and the second in 1971. The two crew members of the second aircraft were successfully recovered from the jungle after their aircraft was shot down by a surface to air missile. The first aircraft disappeared without trace and despite an extensive search, neither it nor its crew were found.

Part 2 addresses the subsequent post-war search for the aircraft and the remains and recovery of Mike Herbert and Bob Carver, which were returned to Australia in 2009 and buried with full military honours. It is a poignant story that will cause the reader to pause and consider the sacrifices of servicemen and women, and the distress their loss causes to family, friends and to many beyond the service.

Magpies in Vietnam is very well researched and Doug Hurst has an eloquent writing style, acknowledging the support of the many veterans who made the book possible. It will appeal particularly to veterans and those interested in Australian military history. There are beautifully presented colour photographs throughout the book and it contains a nominal roll of those who served in No 2 Squadron in Vietnam.



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ADMIRAL VAT SMITH - THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF THE FATHER OF AUSTRALIA'S FLEET AIR ARM

By **GRAEME LUNN**
Avonmore Books, Kent Town, SA;
RRP \$49.95

OFTEN DESCRIBED AS the "father of the Fleet Air Arm," Admiral Sir Victor Smith had a lengthy and distinguished career in the Navy: he was shot down twice and sunk twice and carried out many a hair-raising attack on his country's enemies.

Smith oversaw many changes in the Navy, not least of which was the acquisition of aircraft carriers and the transition from propeller to jet aircraft. One of the first RAN members to be promoted to full Admiral, he was known for his dedication to those serving with him and as a great man-manager through his 49 years in uniform.

When learning to become a navigator, he flew in Swordfish biplanes. When war came, he was involved in the attack on the German battlecruiser *Scharnhorst*, for which he was Mentioned in Despatches and was on board the carrier *Ark Royal* when it was torpedoed and sunk. Later, he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for service in 807 Squadron, the citation reading "...for outstanding zeal, patience and cheerfulness and for setting an example of wholehearted devotion to duty".

He was tasked to begin plans for a two-carrier force for Australia after the war and was part of HMAS *Sydney*'s crew when they flew operations in the Korean War.

This very handsome work from Avonmore is a lengthy publication that captures all of this very interesting naval officer's life. It's copiously illustrated with almost a picture for every double page. A hardback book, it has a high attention to detail, and at 248 pages is of quite a length, but Graeme Lunn's writing style is such that the reader's attention never flags. An impressive release and highly recommended.