

## INTRODUCTION



*A portrait of Admiral Sir  
Victor Alfred Trumper Smith  
AC KBE CB DSC MiD RAN.*

LOOKING AT THE PLAIN weathered face, left, you see an Ordinary Aussie bloke of the best kind. Not handsome by any means but dependably solid, a mate who would stand by you. A neighbour that would rush to your aid and remain calm, perhaps almost laconic, in the face of stress or danger. But if you look a bit closer there is an encompassing assessing glance in his eyes, a determined line to the mouth, a long-faded scar on the cheek, and you begin to wonder if he is quite so ordinary after all. As your eye moves across the uniform he wears comfortably, the sleeves with stripes of gold braid seemingly reach towards his elbows and the badge on the shoulder proudly proclaims Australia as his country of service. Perhaps he was indeed a man of consequence?

When your eye then drops to the five rows of medal ribbons under the wings of a naval aviator on his left chest you recognise that he cannot be, in any sense, ordinary after all. You find yourself anticipating the varied stories from his life of service to the nation that each of those medals represents.



*VAT Smith's medals.*

### Retirement Day: 23 November 1975

On this day Admiral Sir Victor Alfred Trumper Smith AC KBE CB DSC MiD RAN retired from his appointment as Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee. In this position - nowadays titled Chief of the Defence Force - Sir Victor had, for half a decade, guided the Navy, Army and Air Force of Australia through both war and peace. Widely known as the “Father of the Fleet Air Arm”, he was the first graduate of the Royal Australian Naval College to achieve four-star Admiral’s rank.

Fittingly his Defence Force Service Medal, awarded for long service in the Australian Defence Force, had on the obverse the Naval anchor, Army crossed swords and Air Force eagle superimposed above a boomerang to represent all three armed services. The medal ribbon, in the traditional national colours of blue and gold, sported the rarely seen two silver Federation Stars to signify the six clasps awarded for more than 45 years of service. Admiral VAT Smith had served continuously in the permanent armed forces of Australia for almost 49 years, a unique span that will never be equalled because no longer does the nation call on children of thirteen to don naval uniform as the young Victor had 17,826 days previously.