

Preface

This volume is part of a larger project intended to make available to a broader readership the research activities and lesser known publications of David C.S. Sissons, a Fellow in the Department of International Relations at The Australian National University from 1961 until his retirement in 1990. This project was instigated by Professor Arthur Stockwin, Emeritus Fellow at St Antony's College at Oxford University, who was Sissons's first PhD student (1961–64) and Keiko Tamura who co-edited this volume.

Sissons was productive throughout his academic career, but much of his work was either never completed or failed to find its way into major journals or hard covers. He left numerous unpublished, but almost publishable, papers, not counting others that were published only in relatively obscure places. He was an extreme perfectionist, too often prepared to sacrifice an important article for want of the last detail, which was sometimes untraceable anyway. He expended great effort in composing correspondence, memos and notes, extensively recapitulating his research findings while articulating areas where he sought further information, and which amount essentially to brief research notes in their own right.

Sissons's research, over 40 years, was concerned with various aspects of Australian–Japanese relations. The greater part was devoted to the history of Australian–Japanese diplomatic relations, but he retained a strong particular interest in the Australian war crimes investigations and trials that ran between 1942–51. He served as a court interpreter in the Australian trials at Morotai in early 1946, and as an interpreter with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces (BCOF) in Yamaguchi in 1946–47. His research covered a myriad of matters, including such diverse topics as Japanese immigration to Australia; Japanese pearl divers in northern Australia; 'Japanese acrobatic troupes touring Australasia, 1867–1900'; 'Japanese prostitutes in Australia, 1887–1916'; Japanese military intentions towards Australia at the outset of the Pacific dimension of the Second World War in 1941–42; and, the breakout of Japanese prisoners of war at Cowra in 1944. His work on the Diplomatic Special Section (D Special Section) during the Second World War, the subject of this volume, highlights a critically important aspect of the relationship between Japan and Australia at its most adversarial. It is anticipated that his work in these other areas will be collected and edited for subsequent publication by this press.

Sissons had planned to publish an account of the role of the D Special Section, together with a top-secret report on its cryptanalytical activities that was written after the end of the war, and which he managed to obtain after immense perseverance. This project was not quite finalised when he died in October 2006.

He continued to explore particular aspects of the Special Section's activities until his incapacitation, having planned to publish further work on the subject. This material had lain dormant since 2006, until resuscitated by Stockwin and Tamura in 2011.

D Special Section was the most secret of the Allied code-breaking organisations in Australia during the Second World War. Its primary role was breaking the codes and cyphers that were used in Japanese diplomatic communications. The British and Australian governments sought to maintain the secrecy concerning the Section's activities and, indeed, its very existence, for half a century after the war ended.

By the 1980s, 40 years after the war, Sissons, on the other hand, was persuaded that it was time for the story of the Special Section to be told. The US authorities had already broken ranks with their counterparts in London and Canberra, and had declassified large quantities of documents concerning the subject, including actual decrypts of Japanese diplomatic traffic, which during the war had been called *Magic*. This book is the product of his quest.

It consists of four parts. First, an essay by Desmond Ball describes Sissons's quest and outlines its historical importance. Second is the unpublished account of 'the origins and history' of D Special Section, which Sissons wrote in 2006. Third is the postwar *Report of Special Intelligence Section, HQ Australian Military Forces, Melbourne [on] Japanese Diplomatic Cyphers: Cryptographic Survey*, as lightly edited by Sissons in 2006. The fourth part is an Annex consisting of notes, interviews, and correspondence concerning D Special Section and its activities, either written by Sissons, or his colleagues in response to his entreaties, or otherwise directly related to his endeavours. It is an invaluable record, contributing immensely to appreciation of the critically important role that interception and decryption of Japanese diplomatic communications played during the war.