Major-General Gordon L. Maitland AO OBE RFD ED

An eminent banker and citizen-soldier, when he died on 18 October 2018 aged 92 years, Gordon Lindsay Maitland was an Honorary Life Member and Councillor Emeritus of the Institute, who had been its President from 1995 – 1998, and for many years had been the doyen of the veteran community in Sydney.

Gordon Maitland was born in Sydney on 25 August 1926. After leaving school, he joined the Commonwealth Bank and began part-time economics studies at the University of Sydney.

In 1944, aged 18, he enlisted as a private in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF). He was posted to Intelligence and undertook a Japanese language course at Point Cook. Following the Japanese surrender, in September 1945 now 19-years-old, he was deployed to the Netherlands East Indies to locate, identify and question potential Japanese war criminals. In February 1946, he returned to Australia to be an interpreter at the Darwin war crimes trials. On 19 August 1947, now a sergeant, he was demobilised. He resumed his banking career in the Commonwealth Bank and, in 1948, married Dorothy Gunn who would be his wife for 69 years. They would have three children, six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Gordon became a respected banker. He rose through the ranks of the Commonwealth Bank, eventually becoming chief manager. He guided the bank’s lending business, particularly home loans, transformed its image via a public relations campaign and oversaw the introduction of automatic teller machines. Following retirement from the bank, he became chief executive of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales and became widely respected throughout the state’s agricultural community.

Gordon had joined the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales in 1951, and it had become a life-long commitment which included service as a Councillor, Vice-President and President (1995 – 1998). The culmination of his presidency was his leading of a tour by Institute members of the Great War battlefields of northern France and Flanders in July 1998, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the Battle of le Hamel (4 July 1918) and the launch of the allied counter-offensive at Amiens on 8 August 1918. He subsequently served on the Institute’s Council as a Past-President for another decade, delivering the Blamey Oration in 2005, before becoming a Councillor Emeritus, a role in which he continued to counsel and support the president of the day. For his sustained distinguished service to the Institute, he was elected an Honorary Life Member.

Gordon also supported many veterans’ organisations, especially ones involved with commemoration of Australia’s sacrifice in war. He had attended his first Anzac Day Dawn Service aged 14 and towards the end of his life would establish the Sydney Anzac Day Dawn Service Trust, the Battle for Australia Committee and the Families and Friends of the First AIF. Other organisations he supported included the Military History Society of New South Wales and the Centenary of Anzac Advisory Council.

He was farewelled with a military funeral at St James’ Anglican Church, Sydney, on 29 October 2018, attended by the Governor-General and the Governor of New South Wales. It was a dignified occasion befitting an eminent citizen, soldier and servant of Australia.

David Leece