

INTRODUCTION

THERE is no doubting that the Royal Australian Air Force's operational use of Lockheed Hudsons was widespread. Three squadrons operated under Royal Air Force control, two in the Far East and one in the Middle East, whilst in the South West Pacific Area there were no less than six front-line squadrons in action against the Japanese at various stages of the Pacific War. The story of the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern squadrons has already been told, leaving this volume to concentrate on Hudson operations in the South West Pacific Area. From front-line usage some of the surviving Hudsons were used as transport aircraft and air ambulances and the history of these aircraft follows, whilst the last chapter covers their post-war fates.

Perhaps surprisingly there are still four complete, or near complete, former RAAF Hudsons in existence, and although they are presently not all on public display, there should be enough survivors to ensure that the importance of the Hudson aircraft to Australian military history is not forgotten.

Unfortunately, though, the number of surviving Hudson personnel is decreasing rapidly. Sadly, many of these men who were with me at the beginning of the journey are not alive now to see the end result, a situation that is sincerely regretted.

Hudson restorer Malcolm Long, was another of the casualties along the way. Malcolm supported this project right from the beginning and I was particularly disappointed that by the time his health deteriorated in 2007 this book was still some way from completion. Not only did Malcolm have an ongoing interest in the subject matter but his purchase in the 1970s, restoration and preservation of not one, but two of the last four Hudsons makes his contribution to the history of Hudsons in Australia unique. I have dedicated this book to Malcolm's memory.

I have been surprised to learn in the process of researching this history of my own family's connections with Hudsons or Hudson personnel during the wartime period. The only member of the family to fly Hudsons was an uncle, Syd Vincent, and that was only in operational training in the UK (a friend of Syd's was Aub "Strawb" McEgan, some of whose historic photos appear in this volume). My father, Jack, an airframe fitter, did not serve in any Hudson-equipped units either, but mixed with a number of former Hudson groundstaff veterans from both Darwin and the Far East at No. 6 Service Flying Training School at Mallala. There were other indirect connections too; whilst in training in Melbourne in 1940, he was one of the hundreds of RAAF personnel who were ordered to line the streets as the funeral cortege for the Victorian victims of the Canberra air disaster passed by. Later he was based at Sattler with No. 452 Squadron, one of the airfields named in honour of Hudson aircrew killed or posted missing. My father's twin brother, Russ, was accepted for pilot training and learned to fly at Parafield, where his flying instructor was "Tiny" Karutz, later a Hudson pilot with No. 2 Air Ambulance Unit. Russ was eventually

posted to No. 467 Squadron, but he and his crew were posted missing after the first round of major attacks on Berlin on the night of 23rd/24th August 1943. The loss of the Vincent crew was the first operational loss suffered by the squadron since Wg Cdr J. R. "Sam" Balmer, formerly 13 Squadron's first CO, took command only a few days earlier. Balmer and his crew later also became casualties of air operations over Europe.

So many people helped me in one way or another with this project it is truly going to difficult for me to include all their names here, but let me start by acknowledging that this book could not have been written without the support of my wife, Claire, whose preparedness to accept the challenges that book writers present has gone beyond the call of duty. To the rest of the family too, particularly our son Mark, thank you for your ideas and help. Next, to my old friend Ken Merrick who, despite mixed health, offered help and advice over the long gestation period of the entire project. This extended to providing pictorial material (the rear endpaper illustration has been taken from one of Ken's photos) and proof-reading; thank you very much. It was also through Ken that I had the good fortune to meet Mark Nelson, the designer of this book. Mark was confident he could come up with a fresh look for Book Two and I will be surprised if readers are not as pleased with the finished product as I am.

When it comes to agencies that assisted, my first vote of thanks goes to the staff at RAAF Historical Records Section. Much of the preliminary research for this volume was done when personal visits to record repositories was the only way to access material. In those early years the help of Bob Piper and David Wilson from 'RAAF Historical' made me aware of the extent of available records, much of which I subsequently accessed, although in some cases not until the material was transferred to the care of National Archives of Australia. I have not credited extracts from RAAF unit history sheets in this volume because there are so many references to them, but thank you to all who have assisted in the Department of Defence and National Archives of Australia in either answering specific questions or providing copies of records. The strength of this volume, I feel, is the pulling together of a vast amount of new material provided by these agencies.

A special thank you must also go to the Australian War Memorial, who, as mentioned in the Introduction to Book One, provided a Grant-in-Aid to help me achieve my goal of writing as complete a history as possible of RAAF Hudson operations and Hudsons in Australia. That was a long time ago now, 1986. In those days information from Japanese records was limited, but the AWM have been a prime mover in seeing this rectified with their publication in 2007 of *Japanese Army Operations in the South Pacific Area: New Britain and Papua Campaigns, 1942-43*, a volume based on extracts of the Japanese War History Series. Prior to this the War Memorial was already the major holder of ATIS (Allied Translator and Interpreter Service) documents, for example interrogation