

**SOUTH PACIFIC AIR WAR**  
**Volume 1 The Fall of Rabaul**  
**December 1941 – March 1942**

Review by John Baxter

First reaction on flicking through my pre-publication copy was – “Wow!!! Extensive research, easily and highly readable, informative and brilliant graphics.” Then I read it through carefully and did not doubt my initial reaction. Happily I'd become aware of this publication about two months before it was due for release and was very privileged to receive a pre-publication copy about four weeks before release. Now I can't wait for the following volume(s). This is just a sooo good book for those interested in the RAAF operations in New Guinea, northern Australia and the South West Pacific, although this volume deals mainly with Rabaul, as the sub title suggests.

This first volume on the South Pacific Air War is yet another beauty from Avonmore Books (remember *Zero Hour in Broome* and *Carrier Attack Darwin 1942* and others?). It's a day by day account of the air war covering the operations by Australian, Japanese and American participants, and it's not restricted to just aerial activities as land and sea operations in concert with the air ops are also very well integrated. It really is very well done. The research by Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman is quite extensive and the presentation is easily readable – it does not get bogged down with acronyms or jargon or just overcomplicated and lengthy sentences, as I've just written! In addition, it was informative and dare I say, enjoyable.

Within the 252 pages there's a wealth of information, some I knew but much I'd not known before, especially from the Japanese side. All actions are well presented and the losses incurred by the men fighting were not all attributed to return fire. Mother Nature and the tropical environment also played a significant role, often with fatal results. It's very well illustrated with 6 colour and 63 b&w photos (only two I'd seen before), 15 3-view colour aircraft profiles, 33 colour side profiles, 8 impressive colour maps (so important) and 15 exquisite colour cgis.

It finishes with an interesting Conclusion followed by the four appendices, bibliography and index.

This is an impressive book for any enthusiast of Australian military operations in the SWPA during WWII at a very competitive price – recommended retail is \$40. It is available from Hyland's Bookshop in Melbourne [hylandsbookshop@gmail.com](mailto:hylandsbookshop@gmail.com) or 03 9654 7448; or from Avonmore Book ([www.avonmorebooks.com.au](http://www.avonmorebooks.com.au)). ISBN 9780994588944.

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