

South Pacific Air War Volume 2
The Struggle for Moresby
March-April 1942
Review by John Baxter

Usually when you start a book series you can be left with one of two choices – 1) it's a good series and you really want to collect the remainder because of the subject matter and/or the information and style of writing within; or 2) it's not a bad book but do you really want to continue and collect the remainder simply because you purchased book 1?

Happily, this one falls into the first category simply because its topical, it deals with Australian military history, its informative, its very well-illustrated and well written. It's also easily readable despite the depth of data presented so well that the reader is never overwhelmed by this wealth of information. It's objective in its approach and covers both sides of the antagonists in detail reminiscent of Christopher Shores, Brian Cull and the like. It's not always a simple matter to provide such information and detail and yet make it easily readable. Well, authors Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman have done just that.

This 232 page volume continues the struggle for New Guinea, leading up to the Battle of the Coral Sea and covers the air war to secure the way for the invasion of Port Moresby. It introduces the famous Tainan Air Wing (whose probably most recalled member was Japanese air ace Saburo Sakai) but prior to their arrival covers the No 4 Kokutai (Imperial Japanese Navy air group) and its exploits from Lae to Port Moresby and the forces committed against it.

Pictorial content is excellent with 22 colour cgi, 10 colour three-views, 63 colour profiles, 7 colour maps and 78 b&w photos (of which I'd only seen seven before). I was impressed with the cgi in the first volume – this one's content is even better! And it's always refreshing to view photos never presented previously and have full and informative captions. I recall a certain book on the Regia Aeronautica with photo captions saying simply 'An Italian fighter getting airborne in the desert'. No identification of aircraft type, pilot, squadron, date nor site location! That's not acceptable. Not a problem with this series!

There are five appendices – Aircraft Losses and Fatalities (Allied and Japanese); Arrivals of US aircraft into Australia by sea; aircraft three-views and specifications; Allied aircraft profiles; and Japanese Army and Navy aircraft profiles. Finally, there are 'sources and acknowledgments' and an index.

This is a very desirable book to acquire if you have any interest in aviation history to our immediate north in World War Two. I found these first two books enthralling and look forward to the third volume, perhaps later next year.

It is certainly a great book for any WWII aviation enthusiast at a competitive price. It is available from Hyland's Bookshop in Melbourne hylandsbookshop@gmail.com or 03 9654 7448 or from Avonmore Books in Kent Town, South Australia www.avonmorebooks.com.au or shop@avonmorebooks.com.au for rrp of \$45.

Many thanks to Peter Ingman of Avonmore Books for the review copy. ISBN 9780994588975