



RUSIA

Defence and Security Book Reviews

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We are grateful to publishers for the books reviewed in this issue. The additional books listed are available for voluntary reviewers. We ask for the book to be returned to us – as a quid pro quo we will send you one of our duplicates in pristine condition.

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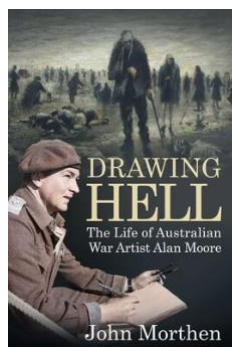
John Morthen, *Drawing Hell: The Life of Australian War Artist Alan Moore*

Newport NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2025
Paperback, 368pp, RRP: \$34.99

Helen Ennis, *Max Dupain: A Portrait*

Sydney: Fourth Estate, 2024
Paperback, 544 pp, RRP \$23.99

Reviewer: Mike O'Brien



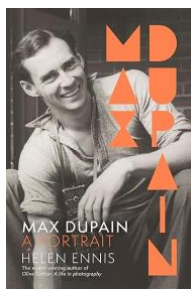
These two volumes make valuable contributions to the Monash Memorial Defence Library collection, enriching its holdings of stories about individuals engaged in photography and art, particularly during the Second World War.

John Morthen was a talented artist. Fortuitous timing helped him being offered a position as an Official War Artist under the aegis of the Australian War Memorial. He was assigned to depict RAAF subjects on the ground and in the air. His first tasks were in the tropics, an environment not at all well suited to watercolours. He adapted well, producing sketches, photographs and oils in difficult conditions. Though commissioned as an AIF officer, he frequently found that his role aroused curiosity and even occasional hostility. His job had administrative needs well outside RAAF norms.

Morthen had become a war artist in December 1943. His active service started in Milne Bay, and later Goodenough Island. He witnessed the battle on Los Negros Island. After returning to Australia, he sailed to Cairo to illustrate RAAF activities, including Malta and Bari. By December 1944 he was in northern Italy. After being sent to London and later to Eastbourne to sketch the reception of the Australian prisoners of war, he asked to travel to Germany to sketch the prisoner of war camps. While accompanying British troops he saw the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp in April 1945. His harrowing paintings, drawings and photographs of the hellish scenes in this

concentration camp are perhaps his greatest legacy.

Though Morthen may be less known than other war artists, his output was artistically very significant. This adequate but sparse book is welcome for bringing more attention to his works. The absence of an index is hard to justify.



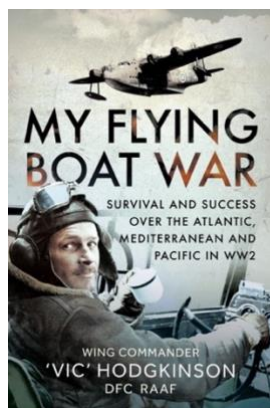
The second of these books covers Max Dupain, Australia's best-known photographer. This first full biography covers his brief but important role in support of the war effort. From 1942 to 1945 he was seconded as a camouflage officer to the Royal Australian Air Force,

working for the Department of Home Security. He designed and built camouflage for air bases in places like Darwin and photographed their effectiveness. He was also sent to New Guinea to report on the camouflage work being done there. These activities form a small but significant part of this extensive and well-documented biography. War experience helped Dupain achieve the range of photographic competence and consequently his unmatched reputation. When photographs become icons like his 'sunbaker' and 'meat queue' the artist and photographer proves that he deserves a biography of this high quality.

Wng Cdr 'Vic' Hodgkinson DFC My Flying Boat War: Survival and Success over the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Pacific in WW2

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2025
Paperback, 256pp, RRP: \$34.99

Reviewer: David Rees



This autobiography focuses on the extraordinary aviation career of Australian Vic Hodgkinson, tracing his progression from RAAF cadet in 1937 through wartime service on military flying boats, to a distinguished postwar

career with British Overseas Aircraft Corporation (BOAC), and later dedication to restoring historic aircraft after his 1972 retirement.

Vic Hodgkinson's life in aviation is described in an autobiography compiled by his son, Richard, using the ex-Wing Commander's detailed notes, diaries, and logbooks. The book provides a wealth of information not only for historians but also for aviation enthusiasts. It includes flight notes and aeronautical engineering details about the aircraft Vic Hodgkinson piloted. Enhanced by over 200 black-and-white photographs and a detailed Index, this work offers a broad view of an air force officer's remarkable career.

Key highlights of Vic Hodgkinson's experiences in the RAAF include his Second World War service, beginning in December 1939, with postings to the UK and his role in establishing Number 10 Squadron, RAAF. As a member of the Squadron, he flew Short Sunderland flying boats for vital missions under the control of RAF Coastal Command. These included anti-submarine hunting, maritime patrol, and air-sea rescue operations from RAF bases such as Calshot and Mount Batten in England, Pembroke Dock in Wales, and Oban in Scotland.

The book describes how Vic Hodgkinson and his crew picked up many survivors from torpedoed merchant ships in the Atlantic Ocean and flew them back to base. The aircraft also dropped depth charges on a few German submarines and even engaged in a gun battle with a German FW200 Condor flying boat, which crashed into the ocean. Vic accidentally crashed his own Sunderland flying boat in April 1941 by flying into the Irish Sea while returning in fog to Pembroke Dock. Unfortunately, six of his eleven crew members perished. The remaining five were rescued from their dinghy twelve hours later.

At other times, he was deployed to the Mediterranean to help evacuate Allied troops from Crete or to fly supplies to Malta. In April 1942, he returned to Australia and flew Consolidated BPY Catalina flying boats with 20 Squadron RAAF, dropping bombs on Lae and other places in Papua New Guinea. He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross in 1944 after setting up 40 Squadron RAAF at Port Moresby. He was demobbed from the RAAF in 1946 and immediately joined BOAC as a pilot flying 'Hythe' aircraft - a civil version of the military Short Sunderland flying boat. When BOAC stopped using flying boats in 1950, he converted to flying BOAC's Argonauts, Britannias, Comet IV and B707 airliners until 1972.

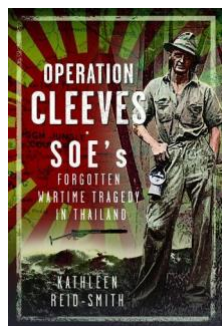
This book should appeal to those who are interested in aviation and war history. It is an engaging book which is easy to read and has abundant technical information about aircraft and flying.

Kathleen Reid-Smith, Operation Cleeves: SOE's Forgotten Wartime Tragedy in Thailand

Barnsely, South Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword, 2025

Hardback, 224pp, RRP: \$80.00

Reviewer: David Rees



Operation Cleeves details how 50 British Special Operations Executive (SOE) members, many from southern Thailand's tin mining industry, sabotaged tin installations in December 1941 to deny resources to the Japanese army before it invaded Thailand and Malaya. Sir

John Killery, Head of SOE (Far East), and his staff planned the covert mission, code-named Cleeves.

Neither the Commander in Chief of the Far East (CICFE) at the time, Air Marshal Sir Henry Brooke-Popham, nor the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, General Sir Arthur Percival, was pleased with the proposed plan for Operation Cleeves. For strategic reasons, they did not want to provoke Thailand or Japan into war, even though intelligence sources indicated that Japan's aggressions tended to be confined to areas far removed from British Hong Kong, Malaya, or Burma. Nevertheless, by September 1941, it seemed Thailand had moved further away from Britain and was leaning toward its newfound friend, Japan. The threat of an invasion of Northern Malaya via Thailand grew stronger, and the CICFE drew up new plans for the defence of Malaya, including Operations Sandwich, Matador and Etonian. These catered for the provision of additional army and air forces from India, Australia and Britain to counter any Japanese landings at Singora and Patani in Thailand, and at Kota Bahru in Malaya.

The author spent five years researching Operation Cleeves. In this book, the narrative focuses primarily on the experiences of SOE members in Thailand and Malaya after the

Japanese invasion on Monday, 8th December 1941. It also provides a general background to the kerfuffle between the competing ivory towers and inflated egos of the military and diplomatic corps in coordinating British operations. However, most of the battles involving Japanese, British, Australian, Indian and Malaysian forces are only briefly described. The loss of HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales* on 10 December 1941 receives just a few lines. Unfortunately, the sole map of the Malayan Peninsula is too small to read easily. Nevertheless, the story of how SOE members sabotaged the tin mine workings before the Japanese troops arrived is a very enlightening tale. Unfortunately, many of those captured were shot, bayoneted or decapitated by Japanese soldiers and have no known graves. An Appendix lists the names of over 50 of the SOE members involved in Operation Cleeves. It was interesting to read that some of the communication problems the SOE members faced due to inadequate radio transmitters were overcome by using the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation to transmit coded radio messages at planned times. For example, advice about a Japanese landing in less than ten days would be indicated by playing the tune *Abide with Me*, if zero hour was within 24 hours, the *Abide* tune would be followed by the song *Keep the Home Fires Burning!*

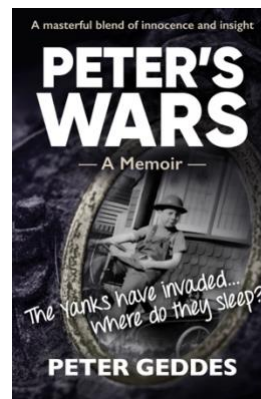
The book is easy to read, with a good Bibliography, 28 pages of endnotes, and some old black-and-white photographs. It's a pity there is no Index.

Peter Geddes, Peter's Wars: A Memoir

Newport, NSW: Big Sky Publishing, 2024
Paperback, 280pp, RRP \$32.99

Reviewer: Mike O'Brien

This is a rollicking and ribald yarn of a child's life in Melbourne during the Second World War and its aftermath. It is written from a child's forgiving perspective. There was much that deserved forgiveness.



Themes include the rivalries and prejudices between Catholics,

Protestants, Masons and coloured persons, the outbreak of the war, fashion, the overwhelming arrival of the American forces, food and rationing, the class divide in a 'classless' society, marital infidelity, alcohol consumption and suburban life.

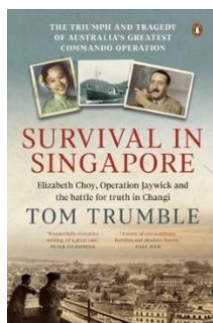
For a factual account of wartime Melbourne, refer to a text like Kate Darien-Smith's *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945*. For an entertaining romp, try this one!

Tom Trumble, *Survival in Singapore: The triumph and tragedy of Australia's greatest commando operation*

North Sydney, NSW: Penguin Random House, 2025
Paperback, 512pp, RRP: \$36.99

Reviewer: David Rees

This book provides a fascinating and tragic account of what it was like in WW2 to be a civilian internee or prisoner of the Japanese Imperial Army in Singapore after the British Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, General Officer Commanding Malaya, surrendered to the Japanese on 15th February 1942. The author describes in particular how two people, a British diplomat named



Robert Heatly Scott and a Chinese school teacher named Elizabeth Choy, experienced and survived the torture and cruelty of the Japanese Military Police (Kempei Tai) from 1942 to 1945. Both Scott and Choy had been leading citizens of Singapore before being interned.

The author focuses on their background and civil activities before they were tortured to extract confessions about their alleged involvement in Black Market activities to obtain food, and the successful sabotage raid in September 1943 by a small group of British and Australian Commandos who had sailed on a captured Japanese type fishing boat from Exmouth Bay in Australia to Singapore. The raid known as Operation Jaywick was led by Scottish Major Ivan Lyon, of the Gordon Highlanders and thirteen officers and men of the British Special Operations Executive and Australian Special Reconnaissance

Department. It resulted in the commandos secretly damaging six Japanese merchant ships in Singapore harbour. They used limpet mines placed on the hulls, using only three folboats (a type of two-man canoe), and blew the mines up remotely. All the commandos escaped the harbour and secretly returned to Australia on their fishing boat. However, they kept the details of the operation secret. Three of the damaged Japanese ships eventually sank on 26th September 1943.

The Kempei Tai believed that a Singaporean resistance group had carried out the Jaywick raid. So, on the Double Tenth (10th October), the Kempei Tai raided all the camps and prisons like Changi, Outram goal and YMCA goal and beat up several suspects to death in trying to extract confessions. They also reduced the daily food rations, and many internees suffered from dysentery and beriberi as well as broken and damaged limbs.

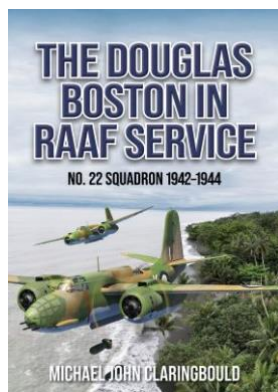
Both Scott and Choy devoted themselves to caring for their fellow prisoners in horrible conditions and at the end of the war were repatriated. However, it took them ages to recover their health completely. Rob Scott appeared as a key witness in the 'Double Tenth' military trial of his Japanese captors in March 1946. During the trial, the world was astounded by the reported extent of the Japanese atrocities. Eight of the captors were sentenced to death. Elizabeth Choy decided not to attend any of the trial proceedings.

The book is very informative and is written in two parts. The first part covers the period before the raid, and the second part covers the period after the raid. It is well supported by endnotes, a large bibliography, an index, and 74 photographs of the people, boats, and areas mentioned in the book, as well as maps of the SW Pacific and Singapore. It is a good read and illustrates it is almost unbelievable how the human spirit can sometimes overcome the most brutal behaviour of fellow humans.

Michael John Claringbould, *The Douglas Boston in RAAF Service: No. 22 Squadron 1942-1944*

Kent Town, SA: Avonmore Books, 2024
Paperback, 148pp, RRP: \$39.95

Reviewer: Neville Taylor



In early 1942 the Dutch government, in exile in Britain, secured an order for 32 Douglas Boston (light) bombers from the United States to be ultimately based in Java. The Dutch capitulation of the Netherlands East Indies on 8 March 1942, saw the first consignment of six airframes captured, with the remainder being diverted to Australia. After considerable political to-ing and fro-ing, eventually one Dutch squadron (18 Sqn under RAAF command) and 22 Sqn RAAF shared and assembled the aircraft.

After initial training with the Bostons, 22 Sqn flew missions that included anti-submarine patrols off the NSW coast before preparing to move north to Wards aerodrome in Port Moresby in October.

Additional Bostons continued to be flown in for the squadron, while initial combat missions were against Japanese holdouts and troop positions in the Buna/Gona area. Several aircraft were lost due to faulty bomb release mechanisms causing instantaneous detonations – this fault was hastily rectified. Japanese barges were used to resupply very distressed Japanese ground forces, and these became targets on being detected among the mangroves bordering the coastline. Attacks were launched against Lae in late January 1943 and included the areas around Salamaua, Komiatum, Sanananda and Mubo.

It was found the Bostons required considerable maintenance to keep them in the air. Fortunately, they had been serviced in time to lead the attack against a convoy containing reinforcements numbering 8000 for Lae and Salamaua. Allied codebreakers knew the timing and route of the very large convoy, and a formidable Allied air assault ensured the convoy was decimated in what became known as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea.

For the next five months 22 Sqn supported ground forces as they continued to take ground from the retreating weakened Japanese troops. On 18 March 1943, Flight Lieutenant Bill Newton was shot down near Salamaua, crash landing and swimming ashore with one of his two crew. Both were captured the next day and executed on 29 March. Bill Newton

received one of the two Victoria Crosses awarded to RAAF personnel in the Second World War.

With the continuing buildup of Allied aircraft, aerodromes at Port Moresby had almost reached capacity. In July 1943, 22 Sqn relocated to Vivigani (an island just north of Lae), placing them closer to Rabaul and having no need to cross the treacherous Owen Stanley Range. In November they moved further north to Kiriwana, being even closer to Rabaul for the next eight months. Their co-tenant on Kiriwana was 75 Sqn equipped with Bristol Beaufighters. Since its formation, 22 Sqn had had their Bostons modified or replaced with newer versions. Great controversy and much waging over the faster aircraft resulted in a race over a 76-mile course that saw the Beaufighter finishing just ahead of the Boston. The retaking of the Philippines being uppermost in General MacArthur's military aims, 22 Sqn was moved 1250 miles to Noemfoor Island in July and then a further 500 miles northwest to Morotai in November. The Japanese flew numerous raids against Morotai, the most successful being on 22-23 November when 22 Sqn's effectiveness was almost totally destroyed. The squadron was on the cusp of converting to Bristol Beaufighters after returning the Bostons to the US Army Air Force, and this occurred during December. The last Boston flown by the RAAF was two aircraft on a liaison flight from Morotai to Archerfield in Queensland.

Michael is a highly-acclaimed author/illustrator who has virtually 'lived and breathed' the history of aviation in the Southwest Pacific. He has been instrumental in locating downed aircraft and identifying lost crews of both sides of the conflict. Michael has been involved in the recovery of aircraft, the subsequently restoration of some and placement in aviation museums.

He has spared nothing in producing a superb pictorial and word description of 38 profiles of the variants of the Bostons that 22 Sqn flew. Other US aircraft and four Japanese fighters have also been included. The narrative is meticulously detailed covering the operations of both 22 Sqn and the Japanese forces that opposed them. His work contains a Glossary an Abbreviations, two excellent maps of the theatre in which 22 Sqn operated, a list of Sources and an Index of Names.

Another superb contribution from Michael Claringbould.