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## Those Ragged Bloody Heroes: From the Kokoda Trail to Gona Beach, 1942

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be a truly good reference work like Clay Blair's *Silent Victory*, which deals with U.S. submarine operations in World War II. However, if one reads this work carefully, its impact will endure when one considers submarines of the past and how those of the future might be used.

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Brune, Peter. *Those Ragged Bloody Heroes: From the Kokoda Trail to Gona Beach, 1942*. Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin, 1991. 309pp. A\$34.95

Peter Brune, a school teacher, has provided the first study of the Australian ground phase of the Battle of the Coral Sea since Victor Austin's *To Kokoda and Beyond*, published in 1988. However, unlike Austin, who focused specifically on the Militia's 39th Battalion, Brune discusses not only the Militia but the units of the Australian Imperial Force's (AIF) 7th Division, which thwarted the Japanese advance and eventually cleared the northeast coast of New Guinea. He has provided a more detailed description than Austin of the men who fought and the conditions they faced, in contrast to Austin's greater detail about the engagements.

The Japanese advance to take Port Moresby and the direct threat to Australia was stopped by the Coral Sea naval action in May 1942. But the naval engagement did not eliminate

the land threat to the Allies' key position at Port Moresby. Not to be denied, the Japanese planned an overland advance to take the key port.

While the Japanese advanced from the Bona-Gona area on the northeast coast, they intended to push through the mountain station of Kokoda and eventually strike Port Moresby from the land side of the Owen Stanley Mountains. Fearing this, the Australian and Southwest Pacific (SWPac) Commands had B Company, 39th Battalion, moved to Kokoda. The terrain offered the worst conditions for fighting a war: mountains, thick jungle, and ridge gradients beyond belief. There was no worse place to fight a war. The awesome Japanese force numbered 13,500 (10,000 were seasoned combat troops). On 21 June 1942 the Japanese landed on the coast and began their advance. On 23 June the first shots were fired. The Australians fell back to within thirty-two miles of Port Moresby but eventually went back to the northeast coast and drove the Japanese out of Gona.

Brune has included many more photographs of the men who fought than has any other work on the subject. One gets a true sense of their struggle and the hostile environment in which it took place. They show how the battle quickly turned the young into old. He offers an excellent analysis not only of the battle but of the repercussions that followed, such as the commanders who got sacked and the firing of General Harding at Buna.

This work will leave the reader saddened, but proud of those few who began the comeback trail from the dismal days of Pearl Harbor.

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Hyslop, Robert. *Aye Aye, Minister: Australian Naval Administration, 1939–1959*. Canberra: Australian Government Pub. Service, 1990. 262pp. \$29.95

This is a continuation of the author's earlier work, *Australian Naval Administration, 1900–1939*, published in 1973. Some readers might be put off by the title, but in spite of some forays into administrative minutiae, this book is not without its value to those with an interest in the history of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

The author covers a large number of topics related to the history of the RAN during this crucial period. These include internal naval administration, naval aviation, supply, naval operations, and relations with other navies. The chapter on naval supply is especially revealing as to how the RAN has merged the Royal Navy's practice of employing largely civilians to provide shore support and the modern U.S. Navy logistics system needed to support its guided missile destroyers and guided missile frigates.

If a criticism is to be found, it is on the subject of the RAN's relations with some of the navies discussed, particularly in an operational sense.

To be sure, much information related

to this subject remains classified; however, one would have hoped for a more detailed assessment of the character of these service relationships, particularly in the case with the U.S. Navy. Fortunately, the author's treatment of the influential role played by the Royal Navy over the years is solid indeed and reveals many aspects of this complex relationship.

Despite these minor criticisms, the work provides a detailed study of the RAN through the use of a wide array of primary source material. Any student of the RAN, both in the historical and contemporary senses, would be well served to read carefully Robert Hyslop's work.

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Hellyer, Paul. *Damn the Torpedoes: My Fight to Unify Canada's Armed Forces*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990. 306pp. \$29.95

The decision by the government of prime minister Lester B. Pearson (1963–1968) to unify the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), the Canadian Army, and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) into one service was one of the most contentious issues that ever faced Canada's Parliament. Now, more than twenty years after the enactment of the Canadian Forces Reorganization Act, the minister of national defence at the time, Paul Theodore Hellyer, adds his perspective to the debate in this work.