

Michael John Claringbould. *Pacific Adversaries, Volume Four. Imperial Japanese Navy vs The Allies. The Solomons 1943-1944*. Kent Town, S. Aus.: Avonmore Books, www.avonmorebooks.com.au, 2021. 108 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography. AUS \$34.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-6489262-2-1.

War is an incredibly complex and all-encompassing experience. In the end, for most people, it often turns major historical moments into small focused studies, which become snapshots or windows through which we see the past. Given the vast scale of military operations, these windows can be incredibly fascinating, in part because there are so many areas that have not yet been studied in any depth. An excellent example of this is the myriad of air battles that occurred over the Solomon Islands. A hotbed of activity, the Solomon Islands group saw the first US invasion of the war and some of the most hotly contested airways as Japanese and American fighters and bombers engaged in almost constant combat. Australian diplomat, contributing editor for *Flightpath* magazine, and prolific author Michael Claringbould, in the fourth volume of his Pacific Adversaries series opens a number of windows into the air war of the South Pacific.

In 108 pages, Claringbould presents 15 different views of aerial operations in 1943-44 from both the Japanese and Allied sides of the conflict. Weaving together narrative and primary sources, Claringbould sheds light on the collective experience of war in the Pacific. An excellent example of this is his discussion of the loss of USS *Chicago* in the first chapter, aptly named “Especially Regrettable.” *Chicago* was lost in January 1943 south of Guadalcanal. Damaged and limping to base for repairs, the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft and sunk. Lost due to errors on the American side, *Chicago* represented a significant naval asset and its loss was felt for some time. In this case, the author helps to fill in the Japanese side of the experience detailing issues like flight organization, aircraft limitations, and even modifications that were made after the battle to improve aspects of their aircraft, like turret performance.

Each succeeding chapter presents a surprising array of unique stories covering different aspect of the war. The realization that these are only fifteen of what are surely hundreds of thousands of windows into the war gives the reader a distinct sense of how much more work needs to be done. There are three major limitations in a text like this: first, is the brevity of each entry. While not as dramatic as the Battle of Midway, for example, individual events in the Solomon Islands campaign do not happen in a vacuum and the context around them is important if they are to be understood. While interesting, none of these chapters really provides enough context or detail to make it truly valuable. Second, many factors such as aircraft design, training, doctrine, etc.

are not discussed, further limiting the use of the chapters. Finally, there are no notes and they really do matter. When you are producing a history, the citations and the paper trail they provide for the reader are important, if not essential. Claringbould's lack of footnotes leaves the reader without a link to his original sources, making it difficult to judge the validity and accuracy of his information.

The issues with brevity, lack of context, and an absence of citations makes this book an enjoyable read but of limited research value. I would not recommend this for anyone with a serious interest in the subject. It makes a useful "starter" book, but it should certainly be paired with additional research to produce a more complete history for the reader.

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Neil Cossons (ed.). *Chatham Historic Dockyard. World Power to Resurgence*. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press and Historic England, www.HistoricEngland.org.uk, 2021. 136 pp., illustrations, index. UK £19.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-800085-949-4.

Chatham Historic Dockyard covers the history, study, preservation, and repurposing of the Chatham Historic Dockyard district from the final closure of Royal Navy facilities in 1984 to the incarnation as a historic dockyard immediately after. It gives an overview of the dockyard's history, covers the transition into an historic property, and demonstrates and explains how and why the dockyard continues to function. The work takes the form of an edited volume with contributions from experts in the various aspects of the Chatham, including its history, function, and present status.

One of the greatest strengths of this work is the expertise of the collected authors. Each chapter is written by one intimately familiar with the subject at hand. Prominent historians, like Andrew Lambert and Jonathan Coad, discuss the history of the dockyard and its place in the wider history. Paul Jardine is very familiar with the workings of historic preservation and the combined efforts of the private and public sectors of historic preservation. Richard Holdsworth, Neil Cossons, and Paul Hudson have all been active in the creation, maintenance, and growth of the Chatham Historic Dockyard. This collected base of expertise allows for unique and detailed insight into the events centred around the dockyard.

Chatham is a small space with a global historical impact. Ships constructed, repaired, or maintained here served across the world and had a direct impact on British, and global, history. The combination means that an English town,