

## Foreword to Revised Edition

The original edition of *Lake Boga at War* was published in 1995 by the author, the late Brett Freeman. It was a remarkable book that met a massive public appetite for a wartime history of an otherwise obscure inland flying boat base that was classified “top secret” for most of the war years. The book was reprinted in 2017 and in total has sold 5,000 copies – a wonderful result for a first-time author of a self-published book. *Lake Boga at War* is surely one of the most successful Australian aviation history books of its era.

Such a work can only be forthcoming from an author with a lifetime of passion and research in respect to the subject at hand. Brett was an eleven-year-old local boy who witnessed the establishment of the Lake Boga base in 1942 and then all of the subsequent activity until its disbandment in 1947. In the decades since Brett ran a business in Swan Hill and was hence able to know personally many dozens of those that had worked at the base during the war or who had visited it as aircrews. The latter comprised members of the RAAF as well as Dutchmen and Americans from both the USN and the USAAF.

Brett’s work was based on the Operations Record Books of No. 1 Flying Boat Repair Depot (No. 1 FBRD) which in the pre-internet days were only accessible by visiting archives in Canberra. However, the beauty of his work was the matching of these detailed records with a vast amount of oral history gleaned from his multitude of contacts. With the passing of time, such an approach is impossible today.

The original edition of *Lake Boga at War* was a 296-page hardback, and today it is uneconomic to republish the book in that form. This revised edition is somewhat smaller, to enable it to reach a new generation of readers. The approach has been to retain Lake Boga-specific material wherever possible. The biggest changes are the omission of the original Chapter 1 and the Epilogue. The original Chapter 1 covered the period 1939-1941, prior to the establishment of No. 1 FBRD in 1942. The Epilogue covers activities after 1947, mainly pertaining to the post-war fates of various aircraft that had passed through the base and associated personnel. In addition, some commentary on the general war situation and the wider biographical details of certain personnel has been omitted. Some additional photographs, not available to the author in the 1990s, have been added.

Sir Richard Kingsland wrote a forward to the 1995 edition which ended with the following lines which remain prescient today:

How easily this story could have been lost. Allied flying boat air and ground staff owe a great debt to Brett Freeman for his labours.

This new edition has been produced with the kind assistance and cooperation of Sally Fearn (Brett’s daughter), Lois Freeman (Brett’s wife) and the Lake Boga Flying Boat Museum. I trust it preserves the best of the original edition and serves to stimulate ongoing interest in a fascinating yet little-known part of Australia’s wartime history.

Peter Ingman - editor  
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