

Dr Tom Lewis & Peter Ingman. *Zero hour in Broome: the untold story of the attacks on Northwest Australia in 1942*, Kent Town, SA, Avonmore Books, 2010, ISBN 978 0 9577351 5 6, soft-cover, ill. (some col.), facsim., maps (some col.), ports. (some col.), 184 pages. \$44.95



Japanese fighter planes attacked Broome in the north west of Western Australia on 3 March 1942 killing at least 88 people. Only the raid of Darwin just two weeks earlier inflicted a greater death toll from enemy action. *Zero Hour in Broome* is a comprehensive account of the second most deadly air attack on Australian soil. Zero fighters destroyed 15 flying boats at Broome, some of them packed full of women and children evacuees from Java. Sadly, they made up most of the casualties.

Zero Hour in Broome is a profusely illustrated colourful book with extensive maps and diagrams, ship and aircraft profiles. In 1942, Broome was a refuelling point for aircraft on route between the Netherlands East Indies and major Australian cities. Japanese fighters based in Timor attacked Broome three days after the Japanese landed on Java and five days before the Dutch broadcast that resistance had ceased. The text covers the attack from both the Australian and Japanese perspectives, the organization and command. The raid occurred during the period that the theatre boundaries were being changed at the highest level and no one was taking responsibility for northwest Western Australia.

The authors presented a most interesting chapter on the 'Java evacuation myth' supported by a detailed appendix of known aircraft movements to Broome with the qualification that there was only limited information for many aircraft. The official historian Douglas Gillison wrote in *Royal Australian Air Force, 1939–1942* that Broome became a 'clearing station for thousands of refugees from the Netherlands East Indies ... As many as 57 aircraft arrived at Broome in one day, and in 14 days between 7,000 and 8,000 passengers passed through the base.' The authors suggests that gives the wrong impression as to the number of refugees who they estimate is closer to 1350 but Gillison cannot be blamed for the author who interpreted this as 'And with as much as 57 aircraft carrying 8,000 evacuees arriving in a single day'. As well as providing a modern and fresh narrative and analysis of this significant attack on the Australian mainland examining myths always adds to our understanding of history. The authors are commended for an outstanding publication.

Anthony Staunton