

CHAPTER 9

NO. 5 SQUADRON AND OTHER UNITS

The RAAF's No. 5 Squadron was the second unit to use the Boomerang in the army cooperation role. It was established at Laverton, Victoria, on 9 January 1941, equipped with Wirraways. The squadron moved to Toowoomba in Queensland in May 1942 and continued its training, including exercises with Army units, TacRs, photography and cooperation with anti-aircraft batteries. Further moves took the squadron to other locations in Queensland and further training with land forces units, including the 1st Australian Armoured Division, the US 40th Division and the 2nd Australian Corps. The unit accepted its first deliveries of Boomerangs in October 1943 while based at Mareeba in Far North Queensland. The type subsequently made up the majority of the squadron's aircraft, without completely replacing the Wirraway.

No. 5 Squadron finally moved to frontline service in November 1944 at Torokina on the island of Bougainville. Nominally part of New Guinea, Bougainville is geographically part of the Solomon Islands, where a bloody and distinct campaign had been fought since August 1942 by advancing American and New Zealand units. Bougainville's military importance was due to its location less than 400 kilometres southeast of the immense Japanese base at Rabaul on the island of New Britain.

As the war turned against the Japanese, American planners looked to establish air bases on Bougainville that could be used in the campaign to neutralise Rabaul. American forces landed at Torokina in



Pilot Officer C Rasmussen from No. 5 Squadron in the cockpit of his Boomerang named Recce Robin at Mareeba in March 1944.



Boomerangs and Wirraways of No. 5 Squadron lined up at Mareeba in mid-1944.