



## Air Battles over the Baltic 1941

This is the first in a new series devoted to the Eastern Front air war. It deals with just one day of the air battles in the East, and covers only a small sector of this huge front, but what a book! Mikhail Timin is one of the most notable Russian authors on the Eastern Front air war and his deep research is based on Soviet archival data. The author's comments are somewhat critical of Western attempts at covering the subject. Just about every Western book dealing with the opening rounds of Barbarossa has, of course, relied heavily on German sources and Timin disputes some of this body of literature in his writings.

The first half comprises a long introduction assessing the preparedness or otherwise of the opposing forces and includes biographies of commanders and formations of the Baltic special military district and Luftwaffe Air Corps, as well as describing the principal opposing aircraft types. It is evident that the Soviet re-equipment with modern types was proceeding apace months before the German invasion. The events of 22 June 1941 kick off on page 209 with an account from the CO of JG 54 and comprise a detailed reconstruction of the three major waves of air raids on Baltic airfields.

The translation can be a tad clunky and long-winded in places. The extensive photo and artwork sections are good, particularly the profile artworks and maps, and the glossy paper is superb. A beautifully presented and important analysis of a challenging subject. (reviewer: Neil Page) **Mikhail Timin, £49.50 plus p&p, Helion & Company, www.helion.co.uk**



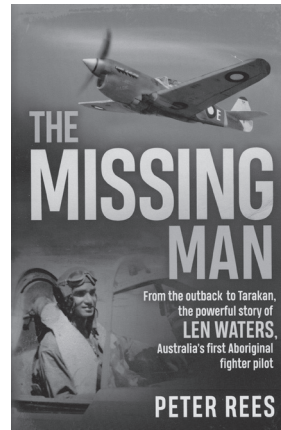
## That Lucky Old Son

Within the first few pages of this book, written by the son of a Canadian rear gunner, are several words that may cause the reader to cringe: "creative non-fiction".

A cynical response, yes, but its roots are in the knowledge that those who weren't there will never, ever know what it was truly like. This applies to this author, but he's come as close to understanding the experience as any of us ever will. Rather than rush into an unfamiliar subject out of a desire to get the story told, he has taken the time to get to grips with Bomber Command.

A Halifax rear gunner with 158 Squadron RAF, Len Cote flew with several crews and, as was the wont of a bomber crew, was regarded as one of the family. He was shot down well into his tour and became a POW.

Throughout, the wartime narrative resembles a well-paced, well-researched novel. Conversations, emotions and reactions are clearly imagined, but all are seamless, never heavy handed, and based on the author's decades of learning and, of course, what he remembers of his father. An important tool is recounting a memory of Cote Senior after the war as seen through the eyes of his young son. These are cleverly linked to a wartime experience. The author was eight years old when his father died, but he is able to reflect on how the war made him the man he knew. This is almost impossible to put down. A pleasant surprise. (reviewer: Andy Wright) **Mark Cote, from CDN\$20.57 plus p&p, www.thatluckyoldson.ca**



## The Missing Man

This new biography, perhaps the most important of 2018, traces the story of Leonard (Len) Victor Waters, the only known Australian Aboriginal fighter pilot of W.W.II.

Peter Rees' meticulously researched book draws on interviews with the Water's family, Len's logbook, his hand-written autobiography, and the short biography by his daughter, the late Kim Orchard, as well as first hand interviews by Doctor Robert Hall and Ken Llewelyn.

Although Len finished school before completing Grade 8, the war presented him the opportunity of becoming a pilot. While Aboriginal men were excluded from military service, the Air Force took a different approach.

Len enlisted on 24 August 1942 and trained as a flight mechanic. He was later accepted for pilot training before being posted to 78 Squadron to fly Kittyhawks. The reader is left in no doubt he was accepted as an equal and respected as both man and pilot. However, his experience post-war was very different.

When businessman Norman Howe proposed they set up a regional aerial taxi service, Len applied to the Department of Civil Aviation for his civilian pilot's licence. After his fifth rejection, Len concluded it was because he was an Aborigine. His life subsequently became a struggle, with the only work available being shearing. This later part of Len's life is recounted with compassion and sensitivity.

This is the story of a unique Australian airman whose entire life was largely unknown until now. It is indeed unfortunate Len's legacy was not fully recognised until after his death. (reviewer: Dr Mary Anne Whiting) **Peter Rees, \$32.99 plus p&p, Allen & Unwin, www.allenandunwin.com**



## Spitfire

"You can't fly a Spitfire and forget about it. It stays with you forever", said the late Geoffrey Wellum, one of the former Spitfire pilots who feature in a new cinematic tribute to the famous fighter. The feature length documentary, 'Spitfire', has been widely acclaimed and this companion book is a natural, welcome addition.

This is not a comprehensive look at the type, but a thoughtful and artistic addition to the overall tribute to an aeroplane that has come to symbolise so much, to so many, over the years. It also serves as a platform for the filmmakers to provide some insight into the background of why/how the film was made and by whom.

The absence of gloss paper stock is immediately evident and unusual, given this is essentially a photo book. It works well with the subject matter, however, and the mix of period images and modern photography in a landscape format (a great way to present any photographic work) is particularly effective. It's the quotes and recollections from the veterans themselves that add the necessary emotion and gravitas, though. These remind the reader that the Spitfire was a machine of war and, regardless of the beauty that's popularly appreciated today, it was a weapon.

This is a wonderful companion to a very emotive motion picture experience and isn't just been thrown together to take advantage of the film's success. It's a solid piece of work and should be a consideration for anyone with an interest in the subject. (reviewer: Simon Jakubowski) **John Dibbs & Iain Dougall, £30.00 plus p&p, British Film Company, www.britishfilmcompany.co.uk**