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David Jones and Peter Nunan, *U.S. Subs Down Under: Brisbane, 1942-1945*. Annapolis MD : Naval Institute Press, 2005. 297pp., photographs, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index.

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U.S. Subs Down Under takes us into the lesser known world of U.S. submarines based in Australia during World War Two. Australian historians, and authors, David Jones and Peter Nunan bring to light this often forgotten and overshadowed aspect of the war in the Pacific. By blending first-person accounts with a well researched and flowing narrative they have managed to breathe life into a story that may have otherwise been left by the wayside.

The book begins with the outbreak of the war and details the sad state of affairs for U.S. submarines. Obsolescent and underpowered, but with dedicated crews, the S-Boats were the first U.S. subs to try and hold back the Japanese tide. Fighting and retreating, these boats were pushed from their bases in the Philippines back to Perth, Darwin, and eventually settled in the well suited port of Brisbane, Australia. This is where the bulk of the story takes place, with occasional accounts out of Fremantle and eventually from forward bases such as Milne Bay and Manus Island. Brisbane is also where we first meet the U.S.S. *Griffin* and her crew. This tender played such a large role in Brisbane submarine operations, and becomes such an important “character” in the story that at times its activities can overshadow those of the submarines. Later we meet other important tenders like *Fulton* and *Euryale*. Throughout the first months of the conflict the *Griffin* helped to transform the new sub base, New Farm Warf, into a world class dry dock, refit, and re-supply station. It was during this time that the city of

Brisbane itself was dealing with the growing pains of becoming a major wartime military port. The influx of service men into this sleepy southeastern Australian city provides some of the funnier anecdotes and more touching romantic stories to come out of this theater of the war.

As the war progressed new boats start to arrive in Brisbane and the S-Boats were relegated to more of a training and special operations role. With the arrival of P class and Gato class boats, submarine operations out of Brisbane begin to have a telling effect on Japanese shipping. However, many of these “main” operation, or patrols, take a back seat to one of the more interesting stories of the war. The relationship between the Brisbane boats and the various groups of coastwatchers is now legendary. Some of the stories dug up by Jones and Nunan vary from harrowing to down right hilarious. However humorous the tales might be, one can not dispute the courage of the coastwatchers, or the submarines that supplied them.

As the war turned in favor of the Allies, the front moved further from Brisbane and so did the subs. With the departure of the subs to more forward bases came the inevitable decline of the New Farm Warf facility and its support structure. Brisbane had been an ideal base of operations throughout the war, and through the hospitality of the Australian people, a home away from home for servicemen.

The Australian people are well represented in this book. Jones and Nunan_ paint them as warm, friendly, and overly eager to welcome foreign servicemen into their homes and their hearts. Many families took in a lonely sailor and fed him a home cooked meal on more than one occasion. Many Americans found Australian sweethearts and wives and brought them back to the United States after the war. Not only did they do their share at home, the Australians that manned the dry dock and refit facilities were renowned for their work ethic, commitment and expertise.

In the last sections of the book, the authors briefly cover the arrival of the British and their XE boats. These miniature subs were used for various special operations and

used the Brisbane facilities until the end of the war. By December of 1945 the last of the Royal Navy's ships had left and New Farm Warf returned to commerce.

Jones and Nunan have done an outstanding job of storytelling with *U.S. Subs Down Under*. Not only do they explain some of the more technical intricacies of submarine warfare, but they humanize the corresponding stories that in turn give the reader a real connection with the sub crews. They do a fair job of relating everything from command structure, and strategy to engineering and sub tactics. *U.S. Subs Down Under* is a must read for anyone interested in sub warfare or World War Two naval history in general.



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