

cousins John Jervis and William Parker: both rose to be Admirals of the Fleet, and both served with Nelson. *Anson's Navy* captures the contribution of an outstanding individual to the emergence of a dynamic, dominant fighting force, one that reflected his character, experience and aims. Perhaps the key to understanding Anson can be found in his works.

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John R. Muir. *Years of Endurance—Life Aboard the Battlecruiser TIGER 1914-1916*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2021. (Originally published 1937 by Philip Allan). 202 pp., illustrations, new introduction. CAN \$26.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-3990-1720-6. (E-book available.)

Notwithstanding the subtitle, the years of endurance of the title span from just after the preliminary First World War mobilization of May 1914 until January 1917 when the author is posted as the medical officer in charge of Wei-hai-wei. Between these two brackets we are given a unique and varied perspective on the naval war as viewed from the perceptive and sympathetic vantage point of a Royal Navy Staff Surgeon. The variety runs the gamut from medical organizational matters, commentary on the ship and the ship's company, through discourses on naval tactics, the mindset of "Jack at War," and events ashore, to the core subject of action at sea. In some ways it is very much a book of its time in the style of writing and perspective of viewpoints expressed, and yet it reads well and, in particular sections, with such an immediacy that the reader almost forgets that these events occurred over a century ago and were written eighty-five years ago.

The story begins with medical preliminaries involving the tumultuous setting up of a temporary hospital following the results of a preliminary mobilization preceding the actual declaration of war. In the spirit of the first three Naval Toasts of the Day, Muir devotes separate chapters to Our Ship, Our Sailors (Jack at War), and Ourselves (Our Officers).

The ship was HMS *Tiger*, a battlecruiser of some 28,500 long tons standard displacement and 703 feet length overall. Muir joined the ship at John Brown's, the builders yard, three days before the crew of 1500 arrived for the commissioning on 3 October 1914. He provides a fascinating glimpse into the chaos of taking a ship out of a builder's yard, with the colossal effort of getting the ship operational with a huge, unfamiliar crew (including a wartime augment of 600) wedged into a ship that the shipyard had delivered in a highly unsanitary state. There are some moments of levity in his discussion of his

role as the ship's censor, including one incident where he detects clandestine writing under the stamp and summons the sailor to explain the significance of SWALK or appear at Captain's Defaulters. He recounts that the answer ("Sealed With A Loving Kiss") occasioned much laughter and caused both the sailor and the censor embarrassment for a long time afterwards. More serious was the first real (not-for-exercise) experience of night-time action stations in which events led to a situation of panic. This then engenders some reflection on the part of the author regarding the nature of discipline, and the recall of this definition by one of his former senior officers: "discipline is intelligent obedience given to reasonable orders" – a rather modern definition for 1914.

The chapter "Jack at War" towards the end of the book is essentially a paean to the sailor, extolling his strengths, resilience, and resolve, but also sympathetically observing his weaknesses and prejudices. In fact, the sailor features large throughout the book, including an amusing sequence (59-69) in which a Stoker Second Class finds himself in front of a court martial for striking a superior, is discharged to the Depot for ten days in cells, and emerges re-incarnated as a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR). This anecdote actually appears in the chapter "Our Officers," which outlines the organization and routine of a ship, rank titles, and coloured cloth designations of the various specialist branches (although the p. 49 reference to the engineers' colour being "chocolate" vice purple is in error). The role and hierarchy of the executive branch is explained, from the captain down to the senior commander, then the first lieutenant. In passing, it is noted that the term "salt horse" refers to a seaman officer with no speciality, and there are interesting and amusing anecdotes concerning personal servants (71), chaplains and church services (76-80), and a suitable extolling of the unique character and capabilities of the engineer commander (80-83).

A number of chapters specifically describe *Tiger's* operations in the period concerned. The initial operations while *Tiger* was based at Scapa Flow give the author the occasion to discuss geographic and hydrographic issues relating to tactics and strategy. The lesson of the Scarborough raid – that the fleet was too far from the threatened northeastern coasts – led to battlecruisers being dispatched to and based at Rosyth for the remainder of the war. There follows a narration of the action on Dogger Bank. Interesting threads which run through the chapter are the effects on ship morale of ill-informed public perception of the inefficacy of fleet actions (Muir himself, in full naval uniform ashore, was mistaken on a train platform for a railway employee (110); the continuing presence onboard of dockyard workmen drawing "danger pay"; and the struggle to improve the social conditions of families when the sailors wages fell far short of unionized wages ashore. There was also the strain of contending with long periods of inaction and boredom.

The apogee of the narrative concerns *Tiger's* participation in the Battle of Jutland. The prelude captures well the nervous tension and anticipation of imminent contact with the enemy, and the mock insouciance of pre-battle banter (150). The battle itself is told from two perspectives: first, the imagined or second-hand perspective of the lieutenant in the armoured conning-tower, 120 feet above the sea (151-161), a blow-by-blow account of spotting and salvos exchanged, including the sudden and shocking loss of the battlecruiser HMS *Queen Mary*, next ahead in line. The second perspective is the parallel, but more personal one, in the chapter "MO in Action." This is, I think, the most interesting, natural, and gripping chapter of the book. There are not many narratives of naval surgeons, and fewer still that convey with such immediacy the stress, the din, the grinding fatigue, and the uncertainty of service in the medical officer's "distributing station," the modern counterpart of the orlop or cockpit of Nelson's day. In the aftermath of the battle, there is the return to Rosyth, with inevitable operational post mortems. Muir himself, having had ten days leave in the preceding two and a half years, is posted ashore (against his own wishes to remain with the ship for the duration).

The meat of the book is bracketed by two seagoing vignettes. The first is an amazing evocation of HMS *Tiger* at sea in a North Sea storm, amazing in the sense of how wet the ship is, and the violence of motion, in spite of the ship's size. The second vignette is of another night at sea, in a P&O liner headed east to his new posting. Muir is asked by an apprehensive passenger if he intends to turn in fully dressed (in consideration of the risk of being torpedoed). Muir answers in the negative, remarking, in a fitting epitaph to his experience in *Tiger*, "Look here! I've been so frightened for the past two and a half years that I cannot be frightened anymore. Good-night."

John Muir completed his RN service as a Surgeon Rear-Admiral. *Years of Endurance* was his first book, followed in 1938 by *Messing About in Boats* (a brilliant account of his many adventures under sail, republished in 2016 by Lodestar Books). When war broke out in 1939, Muir was 67 and too old to be called up to active service. Undeterred, he secured a commission as a temporary sub-lieutenant, RNVR, and was lost when HM Yacht *Campeador* hit a mine in June 1940. Indeed, he could not be frightened any more. *Years of Endurance* is a most worthwhile read, and the new edition includes an introduction by retired RN Surgeon Rear Admiral Mike Farquharson-Roberts.

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Nick Robins. *From War to Peace: The Conversion of Naval Vessels after Two World Wars*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com.