

The Live Bait Squadron Bulletin



Bulletin-17 22 September 2021

INTRODUCTION, BY YOUR VIRTUAL CHAIRMAN

Dear all,

This Bulletin-17 is dated 22nd September 2021, a special day for us all, exactly 107 years after the disaster off the Dutch Coast. Today we remember the men on the three cruisers, they are not forgotten.

A fine day perhaps to view the documentary again

<https://www.dutchmaritimeproductions.com/portfolio-item/live-bait-squadron/>. Enjoy!!

At this moment it seems the hardest (covid)times have passed. This (brief) Bulletin is a restart, I am back again, safe and sound. To start with: my best wishes to you all. And: as always looking forward to your reactions.

The (more extended) Bulletin-18 is scheduled next Christmas, covid-19 allowing.

Henk H.M. van der Linden
Chairman

A SPECIAL APPEAL

As time goes by I realise that my book 'The Live Bait Squadron' lacks a final chapter. I did not investigate the aftermath of the disaster for the families. We all know that the qualification 'Missed at sea' meant 'no pensions'. With your help I trust I can add this chapter to my book. Please write me about what happened to your family in the days and years after the fatal date of 22nd September. I'll do research too and have me assisted by relevant historians. In my next Bulletin-18, I'll report about the results of this appeal.

I'll be back!

Henk (h.van.der.linden@tip.nl)

A FINE BOOK ABOUT THE CRUISERS

Member of the Frestern Front Association (WFA) I am of course a reader of their magazines. Last month (!!!) I read their January-edition, and to my great surprise met with an article about 'our' ships, the Cressy-class. Of course I ordered the book, but until now it did not arrive, so I cannot confirm nor contradict this review. But I trust the WFA, so here it is.

REMARKABLE REFERENCE (From: *'Stand To'*, The Journal of the Western Front Association). January 2021, Number 121, by Robin Brodhurst.

Andrew Choong: *Armoured Cruiser Cressy: Detailed in the original builder's plans*. GBP 30. Seaforth Publishing (with the National Maritime Museum). 120pp. Illustrated throughout, bibliography. ISBN 9781 5267 6637 3.

It is not often a reviewer starts salivating when a book arrives through the post, but I have to confess that I was completely blown away by the standards of production and reproduction in this volume. It is part of a long running series of builders' drawings of famous and less-famous ships, not all belonging to the Royal Navy.

Builders' plans were produced, usually once a ship had been completed, to ensure the Admiralty and the dockyard had a permanent record of the ship. The drawings are massive – many, for large capital ships, are over twelve feet long, and for the most part drawn from the superb collection held by the National Maritime Museum. As a result, they are completed in very great detail, in full colour. To these Andrew Choong has added close-ups and enlargements, extensive captions and explanations and an introductory essay covering the background of the design, its principle characteristics and a short career summary.

If known at all to members of the WFA, HMS *Cressy* will be known as one of the three sister cruisers (*Aboukir* and *Hogue* were the other two) sunk on the early morning of 22 September 1914 by *U-9* in the space of 90 minutes. Although not helped by the actions of the royal Navy captains concerned, the incident ranks as one of the most remarkable submarine achievements of all time. Nearly 1,500 men were lost from the 2,000 strong ships' crews. The Admiralty was firmly blamed by many for maintaining the patrol by the older cruisers without destroyer support in rough weather in what is known as 'The Broad Fourteens' of the Dutch coast.

The loss of what was unofficially known as 'The Live Bait Squadron' became virtually synonymous with public perception of the Admiralty's unpreparedness for the realities of modern warfare, unfair as that was. The blame should probably be laid at the door of Vice Admiral Sturdee. Chief of the War Staff, who over-rode the 'suggestions' of both Churchill and Battenburg. Although justified, Churchill's interference had been ignored.

The Plans of HMS *Cressy* are fascinating. To give one of the myriad possible examples, there are three pages of double spread diagrams of the ship's watertight arrangements with very detailed appended notes. There are also two gate-legged diagrams over three pages, the main one of the *Cressy* in profile and another of its rig. Nothing is left out – and the volume is what might be called 'a rivet counter's delight'.

It is quite possible that not many members of the WFA will want to acquire this volume. However, it is a superb word of reference for naval historian, which will hold an honoured place on my shelves. This is a book I shall return to, not just when I read about the tragedy of September 1914, but also when I want to remind myself of how a reference book should be delivered.