

Endurance and the First World War: Experiences and Legacies in New Zealand and Australia. Edited by David Monger, Sarah Murray and Katie Pickles. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2014. 330pp. ISBN: 9781443860284.

WHETHER EDITED COLLECTIONS of conference papers sink or swim depends to a substantial degree on the effectiveness of their overarching theme. In selecting a focus for this volume about New Zealand and Australia in the First World War, David Monger, Sarah Murray and Katie Pickles have pulled off a masterstroke. Endurance is a flexible-enough concept to incorporate a wide array of topics, but one whose various meanings are sufficiently intertwined to give the book a strong sense of cohesion and purpose. Moreover, as Monger observes during his well-crafted introduction, endurance already occupies 'a quiet, yet underlying and central place' (p.1) in many aspects of First World War historiography. The manifold stresses, hardships and prejudices that were exacerbated by the conflict undoubtedly taxed many people's powers of endurance beyond the limit. Yet there were other New Zealanders and Australians who, by means of coping strategies, such as an unshakable belief in the empire's cause or a meaningful form of remembrance, managed to endure all the trials and tribulations that came their way.

The volume showcases work from a mix of established and emerging scholars, and is divided under the headings of 'Institutional Endurance', 'Home Front Endurance', 'Battlefield Endurance', 'Race and Endurance' and 'Memorials'. Its 15 individual topics are as diverse as they are intriguing, ranging from the wartime activities and legacy of the ubiquitous Red Cross organization, to the experiences of the small number of Anglo-Indians who joined the New Zealand forces; and from the portrayal of dominion and imperial subjects in British propaganda, to the impact that promotion to non-commissioned rank had on the survival chances of ordinary New Zealand soldiers.

What is most impressive is that so many of the chapters either tackle an original area of research, or supply fresh perspectives on topics that have already received some scholarly attention. While the New Zealand public's reaction to the November 1918 armistice has been widely documented, Imelda Bargas provides a fascinating look at how those celebrations were dwarfed by the now largely forgotten community events that greeted the signing of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. In her essay, Charlotte Bennett profitably expands existing analyses of how children were integrated into the New Zealand war effort by considering how the adolescents themselves reacted to the conflict and to the subsequent influenza pandemic. Whether through accident or design, there is a wonderful juxtaposition between the chapters by Steven Loveridge and Gwen Parsons. The former demonstrates how a great deal of the endurance displayed by people on the New Zealand home front stemmed from the widespread belief that the conflict was worth fighting, while the latter cautions that this mood of determination should not be mistaken for jingoism or an unthinking 'war enthusiasm'.

Many chapters also provide tasters of what could easily, and hopefully will, become books in their own right. Katherine Moody's compelling look at Antarctic explorers begs the question of how other pre-war narratives of endurance and fortitude were employed during the conflict. Likewise, the valuable insights provided by John Crawford in his snapshot of James Allen's 1915 'year from hell' (p.18) make it all the more remarkable that New Zealand's Minister of Defence and Acting Prime Minister still has no published biography.

Amidst these many triumphs, there are a few quibbles that might be raised. Although the title of the volume suggests a reasonably equal focus on New Zealand and Australia, just two of the chapters discuss the latter country in any significant depth. In addition, the book contains 32 apt and handsomely presented images, but the fact these are clustered in only six of the essays leaves the other nine equally deserving chapters looking somewhat neglected.

However, these two issues do very little to diminish what is an excellent, informative and highly readable volume. As the centenary of the First World War starts to wind down, it would be easy to feel some regret at the opportunities that have been missed, at the continued over-emphasis on the Gallipoli campaign, and at the fact a handful of simplistic narratives still exert such a profound influence on how the conflict is popularly understood. But reading a book such as this provides a powerful reminder of the superb work that has been, and is still being, carried out by academic and public historians to expand and develop our knowledge. The last four years have demonstrated that First World War scholarship in New Zealand is in exceptionally good health. Long may it endure!

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Phoney Wars: New Zealand Society in the Second World War. By Stevan Eldred-Grigg with Hugh Eldred-Grigg. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2017. 427pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN: 9780947522230.

THE HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR is, inevitably, more complicated than the bright clarity of Anglosphere mythology. Consequently, beside episodes underwriting conceptions of the ‘finest hour’, ‘the noble crusade’ and ‘the good war’ are more ambiguous aspects and unglamorous realities. Boldly revisionist, *Phoney Wars* focuses on the murkier facets of New Zealand’s relationship with the war. It aspires to ask hard questions, to look at things afresh and to consider possibilities alongside occurrences. These aspirations deserve to be taken seriously; however, the method and manner of the book’s arguments are decidedly sophistic.

Phoney Wars revolves around three specified ambitions. The first is to challenge ‘the assumption that the Axis was “bad” and the Allies “good”’ (p.10). The stated position is that the book ‘does not question the immorality of the Axis powers or the need to defeat them ... [but] does question the morality of the Allies and the character of their victory’ (p.11). Much of this case builds on familiar points of revisionist scholarship; notably the realities of Allied bombing campaigns and charges that Allied claims of defending freedom and democracy were duplicitous given that they possessed empires maintained by illiberal rule and social orders that did not fully realize these ideals. Curiously, this ambition to ask whether New Zealand was ‘really on the side of the angels’ decidedly underplays the realities of Soviet totalitarianism (blurb). Moreover, revising the morality of the war while leaving Axis immorality unquestioned decontextualizes many of the condemned behaviours and effectively