



In the Highest Traditions of the Royal Navy: The Life of Captain John Leach MVO DSO

Matthew B Wills

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On 10 December 1941, the Royal Navy battleship HMS Prince of Wales was sunk by Japanese bombers in the South China Sea. Amongst the several hundred men who went down with her was her Captain, John Leach, who had fought against frightful odds and to the very end made the best of an impossible situation with courage and calmness. He embodied the best of the service, and truly was 'in the highest traditions of the Royal Navy'. In this book, Matthew B Wills tells the story of John Leach, and analyses the influences which shaped him and led him ultimately to his heroic end. He traces his life from his time at Royal Naval College Osborne and Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth, his relationship with his loyal wife Evelyn, his baptism of fire in the service when he survived a direct shell hit to the bridge where he was standing, and his time as Captain of the Prince of Wales. He describes Leach's role as commander during the Battle of the Denmark Strait, during which the damage Prince of Wales inflicted on the Bismarck forced the latter to retreat to France, and later during his ill-fated mission to Singapore as part of Force Z, an attempt to intercept Japanese landings in Malaya. *In the Highest Traditions of the Royal Navy* presents an authoritative portrait of one of the service's finest, which will be of great interest to the general reader and students of the period.

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