



The Killing Ground

Tim Travers

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This book explains why the British Army fought the way it did in the First World War. It integrates social and military history and the impact of ideas to tell the story of how the army, especially the senior officers, adapted to the new technological warfare and asks: Was the style of warfare on the Western Front inevitable?

Using an extensive range of unpublished diaries, letters, memoirs and Cabinet and War Office files, Professor Travers explains how and why the ideas, tactics and strategies emerged. He emphasises the influence of pre-war social and military attitudes, and examines the early life and career of Sir Douglas Haig. The author's analysis of the preparations for the Battles of the Somme and Passchendaele provide new interpretations of the role of Haig and his GHQ, and he explains the reasons for the unexpected British withdrawal in March 1918. An appendix supplies short biographies of senior British officers. In general, historians of the First World War are in two hostile camps: those who see the futility of lions led by donkeys on the one hand and on the other the apologists for Haig and the conduct of the war. Professor Travers' immensely readable book provides a bridge between the two.

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