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# The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918

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women serving near the front and Pyle wrote of them too!) His subjects come to life with their stories and hopes of the future. Where are you today Percy Gill, Gordon Uttech and Alvin Tolliver? Did your dreams come true? So alive and vital did Pyle make the people who fought World War II that you cannot help but wonder where these people are and what they are doing now.

For those who read Ernie Pyle and those who have never had the opportunity, it's here now. *Ernie's War* is a chance to gain or renew that opportunity. David Nichols has done us all a favor.

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Travers, Tim. *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1987. 309pp.

Tim Travers, professor of history at the University of Calgary, has reassessed British grand strategy not merely at the tactical or the political level, but rather along the entire spectrum by working his way up from tactics and operations to strategy. Specifically, he has evaluated the British performance at the Somme in 1916 and at Passchendaele in 1917 from the ground up, and has offered comments upon the reliability of the British *Official History* of the Great War.

Travers' thesis is that Douglas Haig and the Edwardian army really

fought two wars in France. The external, or what Liddell Hart termed the "real war," is well-known. The second, or "hidden internal war," constitutes Travers' unique contribution. He shows that men such as Haig fought a "war" that pitted prewar ideas (cult of the offensive, the psychological battlefield) and prewar army structure against the demands of modern technological warfare. Rather than echoing the sterile conundrums as to whether Haig was brilliant (John Terraine) or plain stupid (David Lloyd George), Travers suggests instead that Haig was too rooted in prewar Staff College training, in Edwardian upper and middle-class moral certainties and social structure to be able to adapt to the leveling nature of modern warfare. Attitudes that were rooted primarily in the British social system (especially the personalized system of protector and protégé) tended to prevail over the "remorseless evolution" of modern, mass, industrial warfare. To be sure, the result was a certain paradox: while British army officers were perfectly willing and able to accept the new weapons of war such as the tank, they proved strangely unable to understand the tactical and command changes necessitated by the new technological warfare. Their view of warfare, like British society in general, remained strangely ordered, centralized, and rigid.

Travers' second major contribution is toward our understanding of the writing of the *Official History*, especially by General Sir James

Edmonds. In meticulously worked-out detail, Travers shows that much of that history was an artificial collage of what British officers in the 1920s and 1930s wished that contribution to look like to future generations. Not history *wie es geschehen* (Ranke), but rather as it ought to have been. Travers' work here is solid, refreshing, and convincing.

The author has combed the major archives and libraries of the United Kingdom to piece together his story. Apart from the official War Office records that he consulted at the Public Record Office, Travers also has gleaned valuable materials from the files of the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Imperial War Museum, the National Army Museum, the West Sussex Record Office, Churchill College at Cambridge, the Liddell Hart Center at London, and the Staff College at Camberley as well as the Royal Artillery Institution at Woolwich. In short, the research is massive, and the book will long remain a standard against which future work in the field will be measured.

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Turner, Maxine. *Navy Gray: The Story of the Confederate Navy on the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola Rivers*. Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1987. 357pp. \$24.95

*Navy Gray* by Maxine Turner is a solid addition to the literature on the

Confederate Navy. Each part of Turner's book deals with some aspect of Confederate shipbuilding and ironclad construction in southwest Georgia and northwest Florida. She provides clear introductory chapters on the local historical background and delves into the nature of naval activities in Columbus, Georgia, the site of an extensive Confederate shipbuilding complex, and Apalachicola, Florida. Turner focuses first on Apalachicola, one of the first ports to fall to the Union Navy's Gulf Blockading Squadron. She explores briefly the impact of the blockade on the port, the way the tightened Union cordon forced the suspension of operations, and the flight of Confederate military personnel and civilians to safer inland points.

But Turner devotes the greater part of her book to the "business of war" at Columbus, Georgia. This is perhaps the best part of the study, as she centers attention on Chief Engineer James H. Warner, CSN, and Lieutenant Augustus McLaughlin, CSN, and their attempt to create an ironclad fleet from scratch. Using local pay vouchers, labor reports, and official and unofficial correspondence, Turner chronicles the operations of the Columbus Navy Yard and the Columbus Iron Works. She concludes, as have other naval historians, that the Confederate Navy's activities in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee area consisted "of frustrated efforts and potential never realized." Still, she rightly gives Warner, McLaughlin,