



Roll of Honour: Schooling & The Great War 1914-1919

Barry Blades

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The Great War was the first 'Total War'; a war in which human and material resources were pitched into a life-and-death struggle on a colossal scale. British citizens fought on both the Battle Fronts and on the Home Front, on the killing fields of France and Flanders as well as in the industrial workshops of 'Blighty'. Men, women and children all played their part in an unprecedented mobilisation of a nation at war. Unlike much of the traditional literature on the Great War, with its understandable fascination with the terrible experiences of 'Tommy in the Trenches', Roll of Honour shifts our gaze. It focuses on how the Great War was experienced by other key participants, namely those communities involved in 'schooling' the nation's children. It emphasises the need to examine the 'myriad faces of war', rather than traditional stereotypes, if we are to gain a deeper understanding of personal agency and decision making in times of conflict and upheaval. The dramatis personae in Roll of Honour include Head Teachers and Governors charged by the Government with mobilising their 'troops'; school masters, whose enlistment, conscription or conscientious objection to military service changed lives and career paths; the 'temporary' school mistresses who sought to demonstrate their 'interchangeability' in male dominated institutions; the school alumni who thought of school whilst knee-deep in mud; and finally, of course, the school children themselves, whose 'campaigns' added vital resources to the war economy. These 'myriad faces' existed in all types of British school, from the elite Public Schools to the elementary schools designed for the country's poorest waifs and strays. This powerful account of the Great War will be of interest to general readers as well as historians of military campaigns, education and British society.

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