

Rewriting the First World War

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Lloyd George, Politics and Strategy
1914–1918

Andrew Suttie

palgrave



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Preface and Acknowledgments

It seems that the further the First World War recedes into history, and as gradually but inevitably all personal memory of the conflict disappears, interest grows on all levels. More people are attending and observing commemoration ceremonies such as Armistice Day and Anzac Day at Gallipoli; books are being published by academic and independent historians at an increasing rate (at least it seems so), and the history of the war is being taught in all its facets in universities in many countries. There is even now a specialised Master of Arts in British First World War Studies being offered at the University of Birmingham.

The First World War was, arguably, the seminal event of the twentieth century, shaping even more than the Second World War the Europe we know today, the way we view war, and even changing the language we use. For Britain, as for most of the major belligerents, it was a cataclysm: the casualties were unprecedented and a national trauma which is felt to this day. Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* played an important role in helping to shape what became the popular view of the war, as one of military incompetence, waste and futility. His portrayal of the British generals as blinkered and strategically inept, and of their negligence regarding the lives of the men under their command, made for powerful reading, and reinforced the message of other more literary war – or rather anti-war – books which were beginning to appear in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Lloyd George's message could only be given added *gravitas* by his status as a former Prime Minister and by the inclusion in his memoirs of masses of official documents. Given these factors, it is perhaps to be wondered that a book-length study of Lloyd George's *Memoirs* has not until now been published.

I could not have successfully completed the thesis upon which this book is based without the help of many people. Thanks are due first and foremost to my thesis supervisor, Associate Professor Robin Prior, who suggested this topic, pointed me in the right direction for sources and offered sound advice drawn from his great fund of knowledge of the First World War. I am grateful that he was able to maintain his confidence, when my own was faltering, that the project would one day be completed. No graduate student could hope for a better supervisor.

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My thanks to the following libraries and archives: the Australian Defence Force Academy Library; the Curators of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library; the British Library; Clerk of the Records, House of Lords Record Office; Keeper of the Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum; Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge; Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London; and the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge. Copyright material from the Ramsay MacDonald papers in the Public Record Office, Kew, is reproduced by permission of the grand-daughter of the late Malcolm MacDonald, and extracts from the Sylvester papers are reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

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