



FLOWERS OF THE FOREST, THE: Scotland and the First World War

Trevor Royle

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Today we are as far away from the First World War as the Edwardians were from the Battle of Waterloo, but it casts a shadow over Scottish life that was never produced by the wars against Napoleon. The country and its people were changed forever by the events of 1914-1918. Once the workshop of the empire and an important source of manpower for the colonies, after the war, Scotland became something of an industrial and financial backwater. Emigration increased as morale slumped in the face of economic stagnation and decline. The country had paid a disproportionately high price in casualties, a result of the larger numbers of volunteers and the use of Scottish battalions as shock troops in the fighting on the Western Front and Gallipoli - young men whom the novelist Ian Hay called 'the vanished generation [who] left behind them something which neither time can efface nor posterity belittle.' There was a sudden crisis of national self-confidence, leading one commentator to suggest in 1927 that 'the Scots are a dying race.' Royle examines related themes such as the overwhelming response to the call for volunteers and the subsequent high rate of fatalities, the performance of Scottish military formations in 1915 and 1916, the militarisation of the Scottish homeland, the resistance to war in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, the boom in the heavy industries and the strengthening of women's role in society following on from wartime employment.

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