



Arras, 1917: The Journey to Railway Triangle

Walter Reid

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A splendid book' - Niall Ferguson To Arras, 1917 is a biography of the author's uncle, Ernest Reid, who died in 1917, an officer in the Black Watch, of wounds sustained in the Battle of Arras. Born and raised in Paisley, educated at Paisley Grammar School, then Glasgow University, Ernest Reid intended to become a lawyer before he volunteered for war service. The author the climate in which he grew up, and the influences which formed him and his generation, the generation which supplied the subalterns of the Great War. As a result, although the book remains primarily a biography of its subject, it also explored the spirit in which Britain, still essentially Victorian, went to war in 1914. This is the true and poignant account of a young Scottish officer, pinned down and fatally wounded in No-man's land on the first day of the Battle of Arras, on Easter Monday 1917. The gripping narrative creates a mood of sombre inevitability. It does not simply set out the events of Captain Ernest Reid's life, but puts Ernest's life into its moral as well as its historical context and describes the cultural influences - the code of duty, an unquestioning patriotism - that moulded him and his contemporaries for service and sacrifice in the killing fields of France and Flanders. In retrospect, he and they seem almost programmed for the role they were required to play, and in this lies the pathos at the heart of this moving book.

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