



# **Writing the Great War: Sir James Edmonds and the Official Histories, 1915-1948 (Military History and Policy)**

*Andrew Green*

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Begun within months of the war's outbreak, and not completed for a further 33 years, the writing of the Official Histories of World War I was a venture of unprecedented scale and complexity.

Who, then, was responsible for producing such an enterprise? Did it aim to inform or did it have darker political motivations? Did the authors, who alone had access to records that were to remain classified for decades to come, seek to lay the facts and lessons of the war truthfully before the public? A number of critics have claimed that, on the contrary, the Official Histories were highly partial accounts written to protect reputations and cover up the true scale of British military incompetence.

Andrew Green directly challenges these views, examining the progress by which official history was written, the motives and influences of its paymasters, and the literary integrity of its historians. The book focuses on four official volumes covering arguably the most contentious battles of the war: Gallipoli, the Somme, Third Ypres (Passchendaele) and March 1918. What emerges from this is both a story of these great campaigns and an insight into the political intrigues and conflicting constraints that influenced the official writing of the Great War.

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