

Sans peur et sans reproche: The Retirement,  
Death, and Mourning of Sir Douglas Haig,  
1918-1928.

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Daniel Todman

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### Abstract

The death of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in January 1928 was the occasion of great public and private mourning throughout the United Kingdom, marking it out from the passing of other Great War generals. This article examines the scale and character of that mourning and suggests that they were the result not only of his wartime victory, but also of Haig's postwar activities and the chronological location of his death in the context of postwar bereavement and remembrance.

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## “Sans peur et sans reproche”: The Retirement, Death, and Mourning of Sir Douglas Haig, 1918–1928

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### Abstract

The death of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in January 1928 was the occasion of great public and private mourning throughout the United Kingdom, marking it out from the passing of other Great War generals. This article examines the scale and character of that mourning and suggests that they were the result not only of his wartime victory, but also of Haig's postwar activities and the chronological location of his death in the context of postwar bereavement and remembrance.

**F**IELD Marshal Sir Douglas Haig enjoys an iconic status in British popular culture. For many, his name is a byword for military incompetence. If the ordinary British soldier of the Great War has come to be represented as a victim, it is of Haig more than any other figure. From *Oh! What a Lovely War* to *Blackadder Goes Forth*, his figure hangs over modern popular representations of the war: a butcher and a bungler, a

\* My thanks to Professor Jay Winter, Professor Alex Danchev, Dr. Peter Martland, Dr. Jenny Mackay, and Mr. Michael Orr for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper, versions of which have been presented to the Society for First World War Studies at its colloque at Lyons, France, in September 2001 and the WarDiG at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, United Kingdom, in March 2002. My thanks also go to the trustees of the National Library of Scotland; the Imperial War Museum; the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Kings College London; and the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, for permission to use material in their possession.

Daniel Todman recently completed his Ph.D. dissertation on “Representations of the First World War in British Popular Culture, 1918–1998.” He taught at the War Studies Department at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst before becoming Lecturer in Modern British History at Queen Mary, University of London, United Kingdom. He is co-editor of *War Diaries 1939–1945, Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2001), and *Command and Control on the Western Front* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, forthcoming).



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[+1 \(410\) 516-6989](tel:+14105166989)  
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