

eye to the impact of local encounters on the overall battle. Both the Prussian and French leadership is studied in some detail as to their conduct and competence with lessons to be learned for the modern-day practitioner.

Fermer is an eminently readable author and his books well worth the investment. *Sedan 1870*, is an excellent study in hubris and hunger, doctrine and professionalism and the underlying motivation that drives troops, regardless of the quality of their leadership, to astonishing levels of self-sacrifice.

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Oliver Wilkinson. *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. pp. 308. ISBN: 978-110-719-942-2. Hardback. Price £75.00.

For nearly a century, scholars relegated prisoners of war to the margins of the First World War's history. In recent years, however, a once-neglected subject has become a dynamic field of research characterized by new interpretations of how combatants experienced the war. Oliver Wilkinson's recent examination of the 185,329 British prisoners held in Germany from 1914-1918 is no exception. While aiming to 'write the British POWs back into the history of the First World War', (p. 5) Wilkinson has delivered a significant contribution to the scholarship on military captivity and the British soldiers who fought the conflict.

Surrender was a disempowering ordeal that compromised a man's identity as an honourable soldier. This reality was underscored by prisoners' obligation to face a Court of Inquiry upon repatriation. The German camp system into which British prisoners were transferred was far from uniform, but as Wilkinson demonstrates, captivity did not alter the military hierarchy with which prisoners were familiar. In accordance with international standards, the Germans held officers and prisoners of other ranks (OR) separately. Officers enjoyed a range of privileges denied to OR prisoners, who were often utilised as a source of labour. The nature of a prisoner's captivity thus depended upon a number of factors, including rank, location of internment, and employment.

Life in captivity was psychologically challenging. Leaders accustomed to active duty confronted days of idleness that confirmed their status as disarmed captives.

REVIEWS

Wilkinson's analysis of camp routines reveals that camp communities helped prisoners deal with the emotional turmoil of captivity. Continuities with life at the front, such as military discipline, also provided comforting familiarity. The German military was content to allow the continuance of British military routines. Doing so ensured that camps ran in an orderly fashion and placed everyday management in the hands of senior captives. Still, discipline could not suppress hunger. Wilkinson argues that rations 'more or less kept men alive, although not without taking a physical and psychological toll' (p. 112). Without external aid, British prisoners in Germany would have starved. Prisoners also faced disease and supply shortages, but Wilkinson contends that poor conditions were not part of a systematic campaign of neglect. German soldiers suffered from similar deficiencies as food shortages crippled the German home front.

The book's second and most noteworthy part evaluates prisoners' responses to captivity. Linking numerous resistance techniques together under the term 'empowering resistance', Wilkinson insists that resistance went far beyond the escape narratives that dominate historical memory. Escape attempts were a clear sign of a prisoner's longing to re-join the fight, but sabotage and the refusal to work, both dangerous acts of defiance, allowed prisoners to imagine they were risking their safety for patriotic service. For working-class prisoners, resistance techniques learned in the pre-war workplace had prepared them to defy their captors collectively. Prisoners from diverse backgrounds found common ground when faced with their German enemy. The bonds formed through shared suffering and camp cultural activities created a comradeship that helped prisoners cope with the struggles of their plight.

Prisoners likewise drew strength from correspondence, which served as a 'bridge with home' (p. 243). Letters to the home front allowed prisoners to engage as fathers and husbands and parcels from relatives confirmed that prisoners were still cared for. When prisoners returned home at war's end, the military welcomed them as combatants. The reception of a new military uniform encouraged former prisoners to see themselves as soldiers, but surrender's stigma left many men unwilling to speak about their time in captivity. Integration into the larger community of veterans was therefore difficult. Escapers, who were happy to discuss their adventures, accordingly became the erroneous representation of the POW.

Wilkinson's work corrects this traditional narrative and uncovers the complexity of the POW experience. Although his study is not the first examination of British POWs in World War I Germany, it is the best to date and certainly the most comprehensive. Wilkinson's almost exclusive reliance on British sources raises questions as to how a consideration of German archival and secondary materials may complicate his findings. Overall, though, Wilkinson achieves his aim of writing captives back into the First

World War's history while forcing readers to consider how prisoners' pre-war lives influenced their responses to surrender and captivity.

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Alaric Searle, *Armoured Warfare: a military, political and global history*. London: Bloomsbury: London, 2017. pp. 269. ISBN 978-144-114-250-4. SOFTBACK. Price £21.99.

While there appear to be as many books on tanks as there are stars in the sky, as well as a similar number of books covering armoured warfare in specific wars, there are few books on armoured warfare in general. If you search *Amazon Books* for armoured warfare, 22 pages of results come up but very few of the hundreds of books listed survey armoured warfare as a whole. There are, of course, some excellent volumes on specific periods of armoured warfare such as Paul Harris' *Men, Ideas and Tanks* which covers the British Army's armoured forces in the Great War and the inter-war period but there are very few general surveys that cover the entire history of tank operations. Thus, Alaric Searle's new survey of armoured warfare from its beginnings in the Great War to fighting in the Gulf in the 21st Century manages to fill a gap in the literature that many, including this reviewer, will not have noticed needed filling. Once this lacuna is noticed, however, it quickly becomes clear that a book such as Professor Searle's is a really valuable addition to the literature on warfare in general and armoured warfare in particular.

Approaching the topic in a generally chronological fashion, Professor Searle carefully and diligently leads the reader through the first steps towards armoured vehicles prior to the Great War all the way through to the present day. Professor Searle reminds us that even a term like 'tank' requires some interrogation. For example, if we define a tank as an armoured vehicle with a movable turret, then the first tank did not appear in combat until 31 May 1918 with the debut of the Renault light tank, as previous tank models used by France and the UK did not have this essential feature. Chapters cover the First World War, the inter-war period, Blitzkrieg, the Eastern Front, other fronts in the Second World War, the Cold War, the Arab-Israeli Wars and the modern wars in the Middle-East. Perhaps the most innovative chapter in this interesting work is the final chapter entitled *The Political History of the Tank* (pp. 198-208). In this chapter he considers how the tank has moved from a symbol of victory, after the Great War, to a symbol of oppression in Soviet-occupied Europe during the Cold War.