

1-1-2002

Review of Blindfold and alone : British military executions in the Great War

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Recommended Citation

Russo, Michael F, "Review of Blindfold and alone : British military executions in the Great War" (2002). *Faculty Publications*. 59.
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LJ Review Cover Sheet and Survey

Your name: Michael F. Russo

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Title of the book: *Blindfold and Alone: British Military Executions in the Great War*

Author or editor of the book: Cathryn Corns & John Hughes-Wilson

This book is recommended for: public & academic libraries

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Review

Author: Cathryn Corns & John Hughes-Wilson

Title: *Blindfold and Alone: British Military Executions in the Great War*

Publisher: Cassell & Co.

Release date: December 2001

Number of pages: 352 pages.

Features: B & W photos, index, 3 appendices, glossary of abbreviations, end notes

Format: (Hard cover/Paperback/Cloth)

ISBN: 0-304-35397-3

Price: \$29.95

It hardly seems fair to place a man in Hell and then to punish him when he shows fear. Yet this was standard procedure in the British army in World War I. Using recently released court martial records, Corns and Hughes-Wilson attempt to explain Britain's use of the ultimate punishment in terms of the military, medical, and social mindsets of the time.

The book begins and ends well, with essential background information at the front and ruminative discussion at the back. In between, however, is a tedious bog. Here, the authors summarize case after miserable case, each reported in exactly the same numbing, repetitive pattern. The authors have not reported all 346 British military executions—it just seems like they have.

Words like “heart-rending” and “poignant” are sometimes used, but such emotions never really emerge from the page. There's no flesh on these old bones, and, though it is clear the authors themselves see their subjects as individuals, the men who were shot remain only names.

Nevertheless, this is an important work and a valuable resource and is recommended for both public and academic libraries.

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