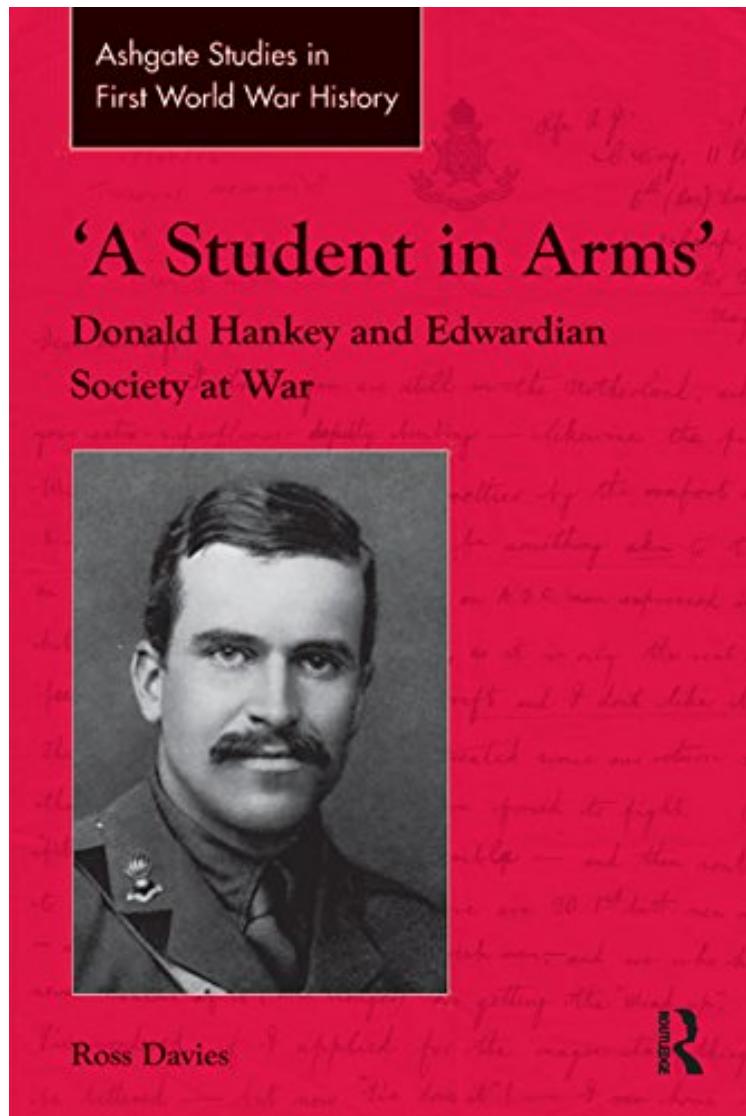


(Read now) 'A Student in Arms': Donald Hankey and Edwardian Society at War (Routledge Studies in First World War History)

## **'A Student in Arms': Donald Hankey and Edwardian Society at War (Routledge Studies in First World War History)**

*Ross Davies*

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**Ross Davies : 'A Student in Arms': Donald Hankey and Edwardian Society at War (Routledge Studies in First World War History)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 'A Student in Arms': Donald Hankey and Edwardian Society at War (Routledge Studies in First World War History):

Donald Hankey was a writer who saw himself as a 'student of human nature'; and peacetime Edwardian Britain as a society at war with itself. Wounded in a murderous daylight infantry charge near Ypres, Hankey began sending despatches to *The Spectator* from hospital in 1915. Trench life, wrote Hankey, taught that 'the gentleman'; is a type not a social class. In one calm, humane, eyewitness report after another under the byline 'A Student in Arms', Hankey revealed how the civilian volunteers of Kitchener's Army, many with little stake in Edwardian society, put their betters to shame nonetheless. A runaway best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic, Hankey's prose vied in popularity with the poetry of Rupert Brooke. After he was killed on the Somme in another daylight infantry charge, Hankey joined Brooke as an international symbol of promise foregone. British propaganda backed publication in the-then neutral United States, yet at home Hankey had to dodge the censors to tell the truth as he saw it. This, the first scholarly biography, has been made possible by the recovery of Hankey papers long thought lost. Dr Davies traces the life of an Edwardian rebel from privileged birth into a banking dynasty that had owned slaves to spokesman for the ordinary man who, when put to the test of battle, proves to be not-so-ordinary. This study of Hankey's life, writing and vast audience - military and civilian - enlarges our understanding of how throughout the English-speaking world people managed to fight or endure a war for which little had prepared them.

'... breaks new ground as a literary biography of its subject, presenting and analysing a wealth of previously unknown material focussing on Hankey as a writer ... this is an excellent piece of scholarly writing, contributing significantly to our understanding of *A Student in Arms*. While Donald Hankey continues to defy simplistic labelling, Ross Davies' work has made him much less of an enigma.' In *History* 'From the first chapter, the richness and uniqueness of the source material for this biography of a 'lost' soldier-writer is striking. Through a large collection of letters to and from Hankey, diaries, drafts of articles and press cuttings, assembled by the author from different family members, Davies depicts an exceptionally rich and in-depth portrait of David Hankey.' In *Histoire Sociale* 'This biography is overdue. It is immensely valuable to all those interested in grasping the realities of the Great War, as it was lived and fought by a deeply thinking, totally unorthodox man, who had wanted to be a priest but could not stand the Church of England, disliked military bureaucracy, and who believed in comradeship across all ranks as a matter of intense conviction... This is a superb book, sharply written and dedicated in its purpose.' In *About the Author* Ross Davies's previous books include two studies of soldier-poets, Drummond Allison: *Come, Let Us Pity Death* (2008) and F.W. Harvey: *Poet of Remembrance* (2010), as well as *Vauxhall: A Little History* (2009). In preparation: a study of First World War poetry and a biography of the author, film and theatre star and SOE agent Stephen Haggard. Dr Davies has written for *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph*, as well as the *Evening Standard* and the *Financial Times*.