

The Veterans' Tale

This is a unique account of the ways in which British veterans of the Second World War remembered, understood, and recounted their experiences of battle throughout the post-war period. Focusing on themes of landscape, weaponry, the enemy, and comradeship, Frances Houghton examines the imagery and language used by war memoirists to reconstruct and review both their experiences of battle and their sense of wartime self. Houghton also identifies how veterans' memoirs became significant sites of contest as former servicemen sought to challenge what they saw as unsatisfactory official, scholarly, and cultural representations of the Second World War in Britain. Her findings show that these memoirs are equally important both for the new light they shed on the memory and meanings of wartime military experience among British veterans, and for what they tell us about the cultural identity of military life-writing in post-war British society.

Frances Houghton is Lecturer in Modern British History at the University of Manchester. She has contributed chapters to several edited volumes and her work has been published in the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*.

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The Veterans' Tale
*British Military Memoirs of
the Second World War*

Frances Houghton
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For my grandpa, Kenneth Austin Houghton,
whose courage, kindness, and sense of humour
touched so many lives, especially my own.

Per Ardua Ad Astra

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1 Motive and the Veteran-Memoirist	27
2 Penning and Publishing the Veteran's Tale	53
3 Landscape, Nature, and Battlefields	71
4 Machines, Weapons, and Protagonists	103
5 'Distance', Killing, and the Enemy	137
6 Comradeship, Leadership, and Martial Fraternity	169
7 Selfhood and Coming of Age in Veteran Memoir	205
8 History, Cultural Memory, and the Veteran-Memoirist	245
Conclusion	272
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
<i>Index</i>	291

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Abbreviations

BNB	British National Bibliography
CO	Commanding Officer
CW	Commission Warrant
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
FEPOW	Far East Prisoners of War
GHQ	General Headquarters
HF/DF	High Frequency Direction Finding
LMF	Lack of Moral Fibre
Me.109	Messerschmitt Bf. 109
MEF	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force
MC	Military Cross
MM	Military Medal
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MTB	Motor Torpedo Boat
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
ORB	Operational Record Book
OTU	Operational Training Unit
POW	Prisoner of War
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAFVR	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RN	Royal Navy
RNVR	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
SAS	Special Air Service
VC	Victoria Cross