

Liz McBride, *Tidenham Remembers: the men who fell in the Great War* (Tidenham Historical Group 2018). 63 pp., many b/w ill., 1 map. Cardcovers, £7.00 [ISBN: 9780992872212]. **Reviewed 11.2018**

The privately published *Tidenham Remembers* has been well designed by Nigel Nicholson. A clear layout and plentiful illustrations invite the reader into the early-twentieth-century world of the large parish of Tidenham, Gloucestershire, ably described by Liz McBride. Tidenham is fortunate to have several memorials to the men who gave their lives in the First World War, as well as those who came home, and it is fitting that the book opens with an introduction to these. The map that faces a description of the parish ensures that the places mentioned in the book are easily identifiable. A brief reflection on the changes that war brought to Tidenham and the surrounding area includes notes on local hospitals and shipyards, as well as the two families of Belgian refugees supported by the parish.

The author draws on her lifelong connections with Tidenham to recreate the stories of the men who fell, assisted along that journey by several others whom she gratefully acknowledges. Liz McBride has extensively used the original records available from websites such as Ancestry, Find my Past, the Long Long Trail and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as well as several regimental war diaries. However, it is important to ensure accuracy - Private John James Ellis lived in a seven-roomed house in 1911; it did not have seven bedrooms!

Around sixty per cent of Army records from the First World War were lost to enemy action in the Second World War meaning that the service details of many of Tidenham's casualties are no longer extant. The author's use of personal correspondence and regimental war diaries helps to overcome this deficit. The story of Lieutenant Henry James Ball of the Royal Flying Corps (the Royal Air Force from 1 April 1918) illustrates how much information can be gleaned when full records survive, and the image of the Sopwith Pup reminds readers of the type of aircraft he was teaching others to fly.

Tidenham Remembers recounts the parish's losses year by year. Pictures of the men and their memorials bring home the enormity of their individual and collective contributions throughout the world, and it is pleasing to find additional information within the narratives, and as separate text. The author's visits to the trenches at Sanctuary Wood and its indoor museum (Ypres Salient), and several of the other battlefields, cemeteries and memorials on the Western Front, signal a very deep appreciation of the tragic consequences of a war that affected millions of families worldwide.

Writing up service histories is no easy task and an author should always bear in mind that the reader may turn straight to that of their own ancestor before any others. *Tidenham Remembers* will not necessarily be read cover-to-cover and for this reason, my personal preference is to avoid abbreviations and accurately state the full title of the regiment and the battalion etc at the beginning of each man's story. Another difficulty is that of personal names with many men known by their middle name, and care should be taken to ensure consistency within the text. Just one example is Guardsman Albert Walter Blatchly who was known as Walter; his photograph and the image of his grave are captioned Albert. Perhaps a page index of the men would have been useful given that their deaths are recorded chronologically.

The book ends with the narratives of men linked to Tidenham and known to have died on active service who do not appear on any of its memorials, and also of four German prisoners of war who lost their lives either through accident or as a result of pneumonia. Through such inclusivity, Liz McBride has ensured that *Tidenham Remembers* is a fitting tribute to all its First World War servicemen, and Keith Underwood's delightful illustration on the front cover should help to attract good sales of this very readable book.