

**“A POIGNANT AND BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED TRIBUTE TO OUR  
FALLEN PEOPLE”**

*The following is an appreciation of the book 'In Memoriam' published by Adrian Earp and Melbourne Historical Research Group, commemorating the men of Melbourne who died in The Great War.*

The First World War began in August 1914 and by the Armistice of 1918 nearly a million soldiers, sailors and airmen from Britain and her colonies had been killed. Their names were recorded on memorials across the land but gradually faded towards obscurity.

One hundred years later, in 2014, historical groups began to reflect this turning point in British history with commemorative publications. Most were worthy. Some were dull and methodical. A few were inspiring. These successful few contained a combination of outstanding historical research and a tangible sympathy for the men who served so loyally and paid such a price.

*In Memoriam* is such a book. It seeks to provide the reader with a historical context for the long lists of recorded deaths, to flesh out the brief memorials in churchyards or in the military cemeteries of Flanders.

It tries to tell the sad, short stories of these men and recreate and explain the world they left. It has an immense amount of research documenting the peacetime lives of those who died and a sure grasp of historical detail which brings alive the Melbourne of 1914, a place of boot and shoe factories, market gardens, domestic servants, trades, quarries and farms.

We glimpse a steady, traditional England of hard work, social hierarchy, patriotism and order, a world before the military butchery and social upheaval which were to follow. We see the "boot clickers", lime workers, domestic servants, gardeners, quarrymen and tradesmen.

We see Melbourne as a place of established family names, steady industry, gardening and agriculture. Melbourne men married their sweethearts, rented their houses and raised their children in the same town we recognise today. Their names are familiar. They lived in the streets we know, worked at places we half-remember and many of their surnames are still on the electoral register. Mr. Earp describes our own people before they marched off to die for King and Country.

This book dignifies the memory of these men by giving them real lives, real homes and real families. The tragedies of their deaths are thus more tangible, particularly in the case of those who survived the bloody trenches only to succumb to the Spanish Flu epidemic or who died from their injuries after the war had ceased.

A name taken at random from the book is Wallace Hatton, a market gardener living with his wife and baby son in Commerce Street before joining the one million men who volunteered for the Army in 1914.

He joined a local battalion of The Sherwood Foresters and went to Ireland during the Easter Rebellion of 1916. From there Private Hatton went to the Western Front and the blood tub of Passchendaele before being seriously wounded and captured

in the last, desperate German attacks of March 1918. He had suffered shell splinters in both eyes, his shoulders and arm. He was operated on initially by a German doctor when a prisoner of war.

Repatriated to hospital in Leicester after the Armistice, it seemed like Private Hatton might survive his terrible ordeals. However, septicaemia from the splinters in his eye killed him on December 2, 1919. In an awful tragic irony his son, also called Wallace, was old enough to be ready to leave Melbourne for the next war. He was killed in 1940 in France.

Adrian Earp and the members of the Historical Research Group are to be congratulated. The authors have produced a poignant and beautifully illustrated tribute to our fallen people.

***JOHN WILLIAMS – review printed in the **Village Voice** October 2015***