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Lucas Jordan, *The Chipilly Six: Unsung Heroes of the Great War*

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Lucas Jordan, *The Chipilly Six: Unsung Heroes of the Great War* (Sydney, NewSouth Publishing, 2023), 307pp. Paperback. A\$34.99. ISBN: 978-1-7422-3809-8.

Books about war often reflect the nature of military history in general; huge, sweeping sequences of conflicts, reinforced by unit names, minutiae about weaponry, and the command directives of officers. *The Chipilly Six – Unsung heroes of the Great War* manages to break the mould of these types of accounts by focusing on the individuals that participated in the critical action at Chipilly Spur in the First World War and to share their experiences from home after the war.

The story of the Chipilly Six is fascinating as a small snapshot of a moment within the wider First World War. The actions of the men on 9 August 1918, are outlined in great detail; they are effective in painting the hopelessness of the First World War, as well as the awesome achievements of these men in spearheading the combined allied offensive of August 1918. This assault led to the eventual collapse of German resistance on the Western front; in short, this was a strongly contributing factor to winning the war in the west. These were men from a different time, fighting a war of a different period, and yet the author helps us to feel engaged and empathetic unlike many other military historians.

The significant difference between this book and others associated with the First World War is the heavily focus of developing the characters of these men. Again, in traditional military histories a cursory effort is made to highlight the interesting background of the main participants. Lucas Jordan, however, has made a significant commitment to explaining the background of the soldiers, giving us a greater appreciation of the lives that they had lived before the war. Similarly, Jordan also provides an excellent biographical account of the soldier's experience in the post-First World War world. Too often, we read about the heroic achievements of the soldier without the understanding of the lives lived after. In this instance, however, we see the effects of military service on the Chipilly Six; physically, psychologically, and emotionally. It follows their lives into the civilian space and talks about the difficulties in resuming civilian life as well as the challenges of life during the Great Depression.

The story of the Chipilly Six extends to their community activities after the war, such as the establishment of rival organisations to the Returned Service League (RSL). Lucas credits them with the development of the Dawn Service ritual on ANZAC Day, which is difficult to verify, though entirely plausible, as the decline of Returned Soldier and Sailor clubs in the 1970's and 1980's have meant that the official narratives offered are monopolised by the RSL and tend to exaggerate their influence in post-First World War circles.

The Chipilly Six is an excellent, well written book that helps the reader understand the implications of military service and heroism on the veteran. It is an engaging read and provides a small snapshot into the wider history of the first half of Twentieth century Australia. Suited to both an academic as well as a non-academic audience, it is a fantastic contribution to our understanding of the military in Australia.

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