

Sidney (or Sydney) Basil Marsh

Sidney (or Sydney) Basil Marsh was born in Southampton, the son of Thomas and Matilda Marsh. He was 3 years old at the time of the 1891 census, when the family were living at 110 Millbank Street, and Thomas was a carman (possibly barman, the record isn't clear). Matilda came from Brockenhurst. By 1911, the family were in Jerretts Lane, where Thomas was a labourer for a timber merchant. There were two younger siblings, Dorothy and Thomas.

Sydney was at school, which would most likely have been the old school in Horns Drove. The Rownhams School record books, like many similar school records, provide a wonderful insight into the changing nature of village life. The headmaster at the time of WWI enlisted, although he came home with trench fever. He recovered, then returned to action, but was later invalided back to Blighty with shell shock. Having viewed the original books, I found it sobering to see the difference in his handwriting pre and post war, from a firm confident hand to a spidery one.

Sidney served with the 1st Battalion Hampshire Regiment who were in trenches southeast of Baupaume, in sub zero temperatures on 18th February, 1917, the day he was killed in action, aged just 19. He is buried at Fins New British Cemetery, in the district of Sorel le Grand.

Ann Laird - Rownhams June 2014