A Barbed Wire Peace

The long awaited first instalment in the sequel to ‘In The Shade of a Willow’, Chris Todhunter’s thought provoking book about the First World War

In addition to the millions of soldiers killed in World War I, many more returned home with physical and mental scars that would define them for the rest of their lives. On such is Philip Oakley, the hero of ‘In The Shade of a Willow’. Severely wounded at the end of 1917, Philip survives and returns to England, but he struggles to settle back into his previous life as a provincial solicitor.

Lloyd George has pledged to make Britain a land “fit for heroes to live in”, but is doing little to deliver on the promise. Philip is determined to do more for the men who fought with him, and shares the determination of many that a war on such a scale should never be allowed to happen again. The book follows the trials and tribulations of Philip’s progress.

Abandoning his legal career, Philip joins the Foreign Office and plays his part in the efforts to restabilise Europe. As Germany struggles with the after effects of defeat, Philip is sent to Berlin in an undercover role to assess the mood, and to evaluate the developing power struggle between the communists and the emerging National Socialists.

Once again Philip becomes frustrated, and he gives up the Foreign Office to stand as an MP and to continue his crusades in Parliament. Despite struggling with the debilitating effects of his wounds, he campaigns relentlessly for the men and women who survived the war only to find themselves destitute. In comparison to them, Philip is from a privileged background and he exploits his social circle to advance their cause; despite running into resistance and opposition at every turn.

But Philip doesn’t realise that he too is being exploited, and far from being the master of his own destiny he is really the pawn of a much more skilful chess master, Sir Wifred Bembridge! But what game is Sir Wilfred playing? And what is the Agricola Solution?