

Mackay North State High School Lest We Forget Commemorative Project

Mackay North High's Lest We Forget Project is an ongoing project of commemoration undertaken by Senior History students at the school.

The aim of the project is to commemorate and further publicise the sacrifices made by Australians in war and to make practical and respectful tributes to those Australians who have died for our country.

The project revolves around overseas pilgrimages to the battlefields, cemeteries and memorials where Australians have fought and died. These tours involve the search for individual graves and names and the honouring of these fallen soldiers on behalf of relatives in Australia. Photographs of the graves and names are taken and presented to relatives on each group's return.

The school has so far undertaken 6 commemorative tours - in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 & 2010. In that time 148 students have travelled to Gallipoli, the Somme and Flanders, Thailand and Singapore and have honoured 576 men and 33 nurses buried or commemorated in these areas.

"My final thoughts as I watched the silent headstones was that we have to live the life these soldiers gave us we have to live our lives to the fullest, love our friends and family to the utmost. It's the least we can do - live the life that these men never got."



For more information on the Lest We Forget Project

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(or Google - 'Mackay North Lest We Forget')

The Lest We Forget Project



Securing our future by respecting our past

Mackay North State High School



Anzac 2010

Commemorative Tour

Street Memorial Project



Dear Coyne St Resident

My name is Ryan Webb and I am a member of the Mackay North SHS Anzac 2010 Commemorative Tour Group.

Our group has recently returned from a 3 week overseas pilgrimage to the past Australian battlefields, cemeteries and memorials of Gallipoli, France, Belgium and Singapore.

One aspect of our research and commemoration centred around undertaking a local history study of Mackay streets which were named in honour of fallen Mackay soldiers.

Each student 'adopted' a street and the relevant soldier and, in the lead up to the tour, we researched the war service of "our" soldiers and learnt about the circumstances surrounding each man's death.

On the tour, we visited the graves or the memorials where each of these soldiers is buried or commemorated. At each site, we undertook a service which included the delivery of a eulogy, a recital of The Ode and the observance of a minute silence. We then photographed the grave or memorial name to bring this record back to Mackay.

I was honoured to have researched and commemorated the soldier after whom Coyne St is named. So as to provide you with a little history of your street, please find over information related to the soldier. I hope you find it interesting.

Coyne Street, South Mackay

Named in honour of:

Sgt David Coyne AM

Service No. 3347 31st Battalion AIF

Died of Injuries Accidentally Received on 15 May, 1918

Aged 22

David was the son of David and Annie Coyne and was born and raised in Marian. He was working as a farmer when he enlisted as a 19 year old on 25 January, 1916. He was allotted to the 7th Reinforcements to the 31st Battalion and he joined his unit in France in Dec., 1916. By 1918 he had risen to the rank of Sergeant.



David's death was particularly tragic and he has the distinction of being the only Australian to have been awarded the Albert Medal Gold. On the night of 15 May, 1918, David was testing grenades in the front lines trenches near Corbie in France. A live grenade fell back into the trench, which was occupied by six other soldiers. David tried unsuccessfully to find the grenade in the darkness and then, in an attempt to protect his mates, threw himself over the general area. One of the six soldiers, Pte Sullivan, wrote: "Sgt Coyne came into our trench & I heard him say he was going to test one of the bombs ... I next heard Sgt Coyne say 'Get out of the trench. I've dropped a bomb in it'. I next heard the explosion & asked 'Is anyone hurt?' Sgt Coyne replied, 'yes Sully, I've got the full issue of it. I lay on it. I didn't think you had time to get out.'" Luckily for all six men, David had covered the grenade with his body, however he was severely wounded. He was taken to the 61st CCS with, "multiple bomb wounds all over body. Legs. Arms. Chest & neck." He succumbed to these horrific wounds the next day & was officially classified as having, "died of injuries accidentally received." David was recommended for the Victoria Cross for his brave action, however he received the Albert Medal Gold as he was not actually "facing the enemy" at the time. He was buried in Vignacourt British Cemetery, where he lies today.



The Albert Medal Gold

Postscript:

David's Albert Medal is to be displayed for the first time alongside Australian Victoria Crosses in the newly refurbished Hall of Valour in the Australian War Memorial.

Vignacourt British Cemetery was situated well behind the front lines and was established next to a number of Casualty Clearing Stations that were set up in the town. The cemetery was started in 1918 and today it has 585 burials. David is buried in Plot 2, Row D, grave 6.

The cemetery also contains a monument erected by the village in honour of the Commonwealth dead, unveiled in August 1921. It is a statue of a French soldier, on the base of which are engraved the words: "*Freres D'armes de L'Armee Britannique, tombes au Champ D'Honneur, dormez en paix. Nous veillons sur vous.*" - "Brothers in arms of the British Army, fallen on the field of honour, sleep in peace; we are watching over you."



David's Commemoration

On 25 September this year, I was honoured to commemorate David at a his gravesite in Vignacourt British Cemetery. It was an emotional moment for me, especially when I began to talk directly to David as part of my eulogy:

"David, I am so glad I was given the opportunity to get to find out about you and your story. I now know you are more than just a name on a street sign in Mackay. You undoubtedly sacrificed your life in order to save those of your comrades around you. Although you lie here today so far away from home in a foreign land in the fields of France, back home, your legacy will never die, and you will never be forgotten, as I know this will not be our final Goodbye. Sleep well soldier, sleep well."

