

Mackay North State High School Lest We Forget Commemorative Project

Mackay North High's Lest We Forget Project is an on-going 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 7 commemorative tours - in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 & 2012. In that time 181 students have travelled to Gallipoli, the Somme and Flanders, Thailand and Singapore and have honoured 669 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



Footsteps of Honour

2012

Commemorative Tour



Street Memorial Project

Dear Duncan St Resident

Our names are Laura Thompson and Alex Stevenson and we are members of the Mackay North SHS Footsteps of Honour 2012 Tour Group.

This year, our group embarked on 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.

In pairs, we all '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.

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

Duncan St, West Mackay

Named in honour of:

Pte Charles Duncan

Service No. 44

52nd Battalion AIF

Killed in Action in Belgium on 23 September, 1917

Aged 21 (killed on his 21st birthday)



Charles was born to James & Elizabeth Duncan at Farleigh on 23 Sept., 1896. He grew up in the Mackay region, attending Coningsby State School, & was the youngest of six children, with his two older brothers also serving in WW1.

Charles was working as a labourer when he enlisted on 6 Dec., 1915. He was initially allotted to the 14th Light Horse Regiment & he embarked with this unit on 13 May, 1916. After arriving in England he was transferred to the 52nd Battalion

& joined his new unit in France on 14 Dec.

He fought with the battalion through numerous actions, including the Battle of Messines in June, 1917, however his luck ran out in the battalion's next major engagement, the Battle of Passchendaele. On the morning of 23 Sept., the 52nd moved into the front area trenches along Westhoek Ridge, east of Ypres. That afternoon, as Charles & his section manned a Lewis gun post, a shell landed in the post, killing Charles and four others. All of the 5 men were buried by the shell. In a tragic twist, it was Charles' 21st birthday.

Charles' battlefield burial was not located until 1925. His body was found at map reference 28.J.3.c.20.97 & he was identified by his army disc, which was sent to his family with the following note, *"This momento, while impaired to some extent through long exposure, will doubtless be highly prized on account of its former intimate association with the late Private Duncan."*

Charles was buried in Bedford House British Cemetery, which, at that stage, was one of the few 'open' cemeteries in the Ieper area.

Bedford House Cemetery is located 2.5 km south of Ieper and is situated virtually on the old front lines that encircled the town during WW1.

Today it has 5139 burials, with 3011 of these being unidentified.

Charles is buried in Enclosure 4, Plot V, Row F, Grave 13.



Charles' Commemoration

We were honoured to commemorate Charles at his grave site in Bedford House Cemetery on 28 September.



Alex (left) and Laura at Charles' grave.