

# 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 Gardiner St Resident

Our names are Keeley Prouse and Michaela Sauer 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 Gardiner 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.

## Gardiner St, West Mackay

Named in honour of:

Pte James Gardner

Service No. 1087A

25th Medium Trench Mortar Battery AIF

Killed in Action (accident) in France on 8 November 1917

Aged 27

James was the son of James snr who lived in Evans St in Mackay. He was working as a farmer when he enlisted on 3 March, 1915 into the original draft of the 5th Light Horse. He served with this unit at Gallipoli from 14 Nov. to the evacuation in late Dec. before being transferred as a driver to the 5th Divisional Ammunition Column in Egypt in April, 1916.

After arriving in France with this unit on 30 June, James was transferred again, this time to the 5th Division Trench Mortar Brigade & it was whilst fighting with this unit that he received the Military Medal for bravery on 20 Oct. His citation for this award reads, *“On night 6/7 October during a raid on enemy trenches near Frelinghem. For devotion to duty & total disregard of danger, assisted Cpl Maumill in serving his gun when it had been accurately located by hostile gun-fire, & though wounded himself assisted in carrying away a wounded comrade, out of the line of fire, & then returned to his mortar.”*

James was killed on 8 Nov. after a terrible accident whilst working a trench mortar with his comrade, Gunner Donald Graham, who also died as a result of the incident. According to Graham’s Red Cross Files, the two were killed after a tragic mishap with one of the mortar shells they were using, with one source indicating that Graham was, *“killed by a misfire of his gun ... he was blown to pieces and his remains were recovered.”* Gnr Jennison reported, *“On Nov. 8 at Armentieres, Graham was on a 6 inch Stokes gun, which misfired. They had to tip up the gun, Graham was 2nd man on the gun, and was supposed to catch the bomb, but it slipped through his hands, hit the ground, and exploded, killing him instantly.”* J

ames was the other man on the mortar & clearly suffered the same fate as Graham, who, according to the report, simply dropped the primed mortar shell when they tipped the barrel upside down to get it out. The Official Court of Inquiry concluded, *“Soldier was killed through a faulty cartridge which resulted in a miss fire. Soldier was on duty at the time & is in now way to blame.”*

After this tragic incident, James & Donald were buried beside each other in Cite Bonjean Cemetery in the French town of Armentieres.

Cite Bonjean Cemetery in the Northern French town of Armentieres was started in October, 1914 and continued to be used right up until April, 1918.

There are 2604 soldiers buried in the cemetery with 473 of these being Australians.

James is buried in Plot 4, Row A, Grave 41.



### James' Commemoration

We were honoured to commemorated James at a special gravesite service at Cite Bonjean Cemetery on 30 September this year during our overseas pilgrimage.



James' grave



Michaela (left) and Keeley at James' grave.