

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

Contact: Mr Mike Goodwin
Mackay North SHS – PO Box 8333
Mt Pleasant Qld 4740
Phone: 49 631729
Fax: 49 631600
Email: mickg@mackay.net.au

Website: www.macknortshs.qld.edu.au/ANZAC/index.html
(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 Grant St Resident

My name is Genevieve Richards 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 Grant 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.

Grant St, Mackay

Named in honour of:

Lt John Grant MM

15th Battalion AIF

Died of Wounds 22 May, 1918

Aged 30

John was the son of Alex and Mary Ann Grant of Mackay. He was the local Railway Station Master and he enlisted on 21 February, 1916 as part of the 22nd Reinforcements to the 15th Battalion.

He embarked Australia on 17 November, 1916 and, after spending time in hospital in England with mumps, he joined the 15th Battalion in Belgium on 15 July. On 26 September, John showed amazing courage and skill for someone in his first action and he was awarded the Military Medal for great bravery in attacking an enemy machine gun post at Polygon Wood. His citation states that he, *"showed conspicuous gallantry and brave leadership in action near Zonnebeke on 26 Sept. On one occasion his platoon met with stubborn resistance from an enemy post, he quickly appreciated the situation, rallied his section and got round on the flank of the post, cleared the situation up and the advance was continued with very little delay. Right through the operation he showed great dash and leadership of the highest standard."*

John's abilities as a soldier were very well regarded in the battalion as he was promoted from Corporal to 2nd Lieutenant in the field on 5 October, 1917. He was then promoted to full Lieutenant on 14 April, 1918. Unfortunately, he only held this rank for just over a month. In an all too common twist of fate, John, after having survived numerous battles, was killed in very unlucky circumstances on the night of 22 May, 1918. After manning the front line trenches east of Villers Bretonneux, John and his battalion moved to the back areas for a rest. The 15th Battalion History describes the subsequent event: *"The first night at Freschencourt proved disastrous for B Company. Billeted in the village, the four subalterns, owing to the hot weather, were sleeping in a tent at the back. An enemy aircraft visited Freschencourt this night and a bomb, landing at the entrance to the tent in which Lt's Mackay, Kunkle, Moss and Grant were sleeping exploded. Moss and Grant received injuries which proved fatal shortly afterwards."*

Amazingly, the two men nearest to the tent door and the blast escaped unharmed, whilst John and Lt Moss, at the back of the tent, were mortally wounded. John was hit by shrapnel in the head and left shoulder and died of his wounds at the 8th CCS situated near the village of Vignacourt. Today he lies in Vignacourt British Cemetery.

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. John is buried in Plot 2, Row C, grave 19.

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."



John's Commemoration

On 30 September this year, I was honoured to commemorate John at his gravesite in Vignacourt British Cemetery. Even though I am not related to John, I found it an emotional experience. The final part of my eulogy read:

"John, I stand here today at your grave to tell you that your hometown and my place of residence have never forgotten you. You are remembered on Grant Street in West Mackay. You, John are my inspiration for bravery. Like you, John I want to be a little braver when temptation bids me waver. Thank you John for everything you have done for me, I will always remember you. Sleep Well, Lieutenant."

