

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 Ferguson St Resident

My name is Ellie Rickman 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 Ferguson 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.

Ferguson St, South Mackay

Named in honour of:

Pte Robert Ferguson

Service No. 5087

15th Battalion AIF

Killed in Action in Belgium on 1 July, 1917

Aged 43

Robert was born in New Galloway, Scotland and was the son of Samuel and Margaret Ferguson. He served as a professional soldier in the Indian Frontier Wars and the Boer War before emigrating to Australia when he was 29.

He was working as a labourer when he enlisted in Townsville on 25 November, 1915 at the age of 39 and he embarked with the 16th Reinforcements to the 15th Battalion on 31 March, 1916. He arrived in Egypt in May, 1916 and spent the rest of the year in hospital in Egypt and, later, in France with a number of ailments, including bronchitis and influenza.

He joined his unit in January, 1917 and spent some more time in hospital before re-joining the 15th in Belgium in April.



Robert's death shows how life for a soldier was dangerous even when not in the front line. He was killed when a German shell landed directly in his trench whilst the 15th Battalion manned reserve line trenches at Ploegsteert Wood in Belgian Flanders on the 1st July, 1917. The shell also killed Mackay man, George Waters.

Robert and George now lie buried side by side in Messines British Cemetery in Belgium.

Robert's Commemoration

On 25 September this year, I was honoured to commemorate Robert at his gravesite in Messines Ridge British Cemetery, which is situated on the outskirts of the town of Messines, near where Robert was killed. Even though I am not related to Robert, it was still an emotional moment for me. Part of my eulogy read:

“Robert was 43 years of age when he died. He had experienced the wonders of travelling the world but he still had a family awaiting his arrival home, yet that day never came. Robert was a man who had a broad knowledge of life and the challenges it posed. Like many brave soldiers he paid the ultimate sacrifice so we as a country can live in peace, we can live in a society of freedom and independence. Robert Ferguson was a courageous soldier, a selfless individual and a typical Anzac. His sacrifice will be remembered and cherished by all.”

