

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 Ford St Resident

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

This year, our group undertook 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 Ford 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.

Ford St, South Mackay

Named in honour of:

Pte George Ford

Service No. 1947

9th Battalion AIF

Killed in Action 23 February, 1917

Aged 25

George was a labourer who lived in Evan St, Mackay. He enlisted on 15 January, 1915 and joined the 9th Battalion at Gallipoli on 10 July of that year. He fought through with the battalion until he was evacuated due to illness in September. He was transferred to England and the recurring nature of his illnesses meant that he didn't rejoin the 9th Battalion until December, 1916.



George survived the harsh winter of 1916 / 17, however his luck ran out early in 1917 when he was killed instantly by a shell fragment as he manned a machine gun post in the front line near Warlencourt on 23 February.

Red Cross Wounded and Missing files provide some eyewitness accounts of his death and subsequent burial:

Pte F. Russell stated, *"I was an eye-witness of this man's death. He was killed almost instantly by a shell at Factory Corner near Flers on Feb. 23rd."*

Pte M. Campbell takes up the story, *"I took up Ford's disc and pocket book, taken from his dead body, to HQ. He was buried the same night. I have seen his grave with name and no. in a military cemetery to the right of Warlencourt."*

George still lies in this cemetery which is, today, Warlencourt British Cemetery.

Warlencourt British Cemetery is situated on the old Somme Battlefields and was actually started during the war. Today, the cemetery has 3505 burials, however only 1682 of these are known burials. The rest are "Known Unto God".

George is one of 477 Australians buried in the cemetery and he lies in Plot 2, Row A, Grave 29.



Georges' Commemoration

On 1 October this year, I was honoured to commemorate George at his gravesite in Warlencourt British Cemetery. Even though I am not related to George, I found it a very emotional experience.

