

# 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**

**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](mailto:mickg@mackay.net.au)

**Website:** [www.macknortshs.qld.edu.au/ANZAC/index.html](http://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



## *Footsteps of Honour*

### 2012

## Commemorative Tour



## *Street Memorial Project*

Dear Donaldson St Resident

Our names are Mikaela Smith and Rupert Saunders 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 Donaldson 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.

## Donaldson St, West Mackay

Named in honour of:

Driver Robert Donaldson Service No. 66

11th Brigade Australian Field Artillery

Killed in Action in France on 29 September, 1918

Aged 28

and his step brother:

Private William Donaldson Service No. 2651A

9th Battalion AIF

Killed in Action on 27 December, 1916

Aged 20

**Robert** was the son of Jemima & stepson of Lumsden Donaldson of Wellington St, Mackay.

He enlisted into the 5th Light Horse Regiment on 6 Jan., 1916 & was transferred to the 4th Australian Field Artillery as a driver on 23 August after he had arrived in England. He served in France with this unit until he was transferred again, to the 11th AFA, on 1 June, 1917. He was accidentally injured on 12 August whilst exercising a horse. He was admitted to hospital with a laceration to his upper cheek, indicating a kick from the horse.

On his release from hospital, Robert served with the 11th AFA right through to late Sept., when he was killed in action on the 29th, only six days before the AIF's last action of the war. WE Cox, OC of the 111th Howitzer Battery, explained Robert's death: *"Driver Donaldson was one of a team, taking up ammunition to the gun position, just prior to the big attack launched against the Germans on 29th Sept 18. The enemy was shelling heavily all along the road, which our drivers had to travel. A piece from one of these shells struck Dvr Donaldson, killing him instantly."*

He was buried in an isolated grave near the road where he was killed & his body was found after the war & re-interred into Templeux le Guerard British Cemetery. In reply to an army letter informing her of this, Jemima

replied, *"I must thank you immensely for your memo dated 5th Dec. concerning my son Dvr R S Donaldson. I can't tell you how happy I am to hear his body has been exhumed & buried in a cemetery, thanking you again."*

We honoured Robert in a special service at Templeux le Guerard British Cemetery on 5 October.



**William** was working as a labourer when he enlisted on 22 July, 1915. He initially joined the 25th Battalion, however after embarking Aust. on 21 Oct., 1915 & then arriving in England, he was transferred to the 9th Battalion.

William arrived with his new unit in France on 3 April & fought through the Battle of Pozieres only to be killed in action two days after Christmas on 27 Dec., 1916 as the 9th manned the front line trenches around Flers during the infamous winter of 1916/17. William was the only man killed on this day, with shellfire the most likely cause. The battalion had been in the line for six days, enduring some of the worst conditions face by Australian troops throughout the war. Men were mostly killed by shellfire & the day before William died, five men died after their dugout collapsed on them.

His body was buried in the field and re-buried in Beaulencourt British Cemetery after the war. Understandably, his parents were devastated, as a letter written by Jemima to the army on 21 Feb., 1917 shows: *"My dear son No. 2651A Pte William Donaldson ... was killed in action on 27th Dec. 1916 in France, & it is the dearest wish of myself & family that any effects including a wristlet watch, belonging to my Dear Boy might be returned to his sorrying Parents & Sisters, & I now ask you to please endeavor to carry out this little act of kindness."*

William was honoured at his gravesite in Beaulencourt British Cemetery on 3 October.

