

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 Symons St Resident

My name is Rebecca McCormack 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 Symons 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.

Symons Street, South Mackay

Named in honour of:

Pte Charles (Willie) Symons

Service No. 2256

47th Battalion AIF

Killed in Action in Belgium on 12 August, 1917

Aged 25

Charles was born in Mackay in 1882 and was the son of Mary and the late Henry Symons of 'Springfield', Mackay. He was known by his second name, Willie, or Bill, and worked as a lino typist for the Mackay Daily Mercury newspaper.

After his enlistment on 21 February, 1916 he embarked Australia in August and was killed almost one year later to the day in Belgium. Bill was taken on strength into the 47th Battalion in France on 2 February, 1917 and fought in the Battles of Bullecourt & Messines.

He was with his battalion in the front line at Gun Farm near Wytschaete in Belgium and was acting as a HQ signaller when he was killed instantly on 12 August, 1917 by a shell which landed in his dugout, killing seven men in total. Sgt Warfield wrote of the incident,

"These men were killed by one shell that blew in a dugout on them in the front line at Gun Farm Wytschaete. I had a party of men to dig them out. They were killed outright."

The Battalion Diary for that day notes the event and its effect, stating, *"An unlucky shell fell on Coy Headquarters this morning, killing 7 other ranks & wounding 10. Mostly signallers, trained men who are very hard to replace. Rather unfortunate as we have had no casualties for 3 days."* Bill was 25 when he was killed and is buried in Derry House Cemetery, Belgium, along with the other six men who died with him.



Derry House Cemetery was named after a farm which had been nicknamed "Derry House" by soldiers of the Royal Irish Rifles.

It was begun among the ruins of the farm in June 1917 by a field ambulance unit and it was used as a front line cemetery until December 1917.

The cemetery contains 163 First World War burials



Willie Symons is buried in the third grave from the left in the second row.

Charles' Commemoration

Charles was the subject of my major History assignment this year and I have undertaken a great deal of research into his life as a soldier.

I was honoured to commemorate Charles at his gravesite in Derry House Cemetery on 25 September this year during our overseas pilgrimage.

It was an emotional time for me, especially when I began to talk directly to him in my eulogy:

Bill, you are so fortunate that you have a grave, and I am so honoured to be standing right in front of you today not only on behalf of myself, but on behalf of your country, your home town and a street that is named after you. You aren't just a soldier, an assignment, or a street. You have become a friend, a hero and most defiantly a memory. I will never forget you and you are always going to be in my heart. Rest in peace.

