

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 Thorning St Resident

My name is Alice Tagney 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 Thorning 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.

Thorning Street, South Mackay

Named in honour of:
Pte George Thorning
Service No. 187
8th Battalion AIF

Killed in Action in France on 26 July, 1916
Aged 22

George was born in Cootamundra, NSW and was the son of Jane and the late Samuel Thorning of Mackay. He was working as a labourer when he rushed to enlist on 17 August, 1914.

He embarked with the 1st AIF contingent in November and landed at Gallipoli with B Company of the 8th Battalion on 25 April. George survived the early months of the campaign, but became seriously ill in July and was sent to hospital in Malta to recover from enteric fever before being moved on to England for further hospitalisation.



He rejoined the 8th Battalion at Varemme in France on 14 July, 1916 and was only with the unit for another 12 days before being killed in action at Pozieres on 26 July. George was killed after the capture of Pozieres village as his battalion manned trenches on its northern outskirts. The 8th Battalion diary states of 26 July: *“... all this day Battalion Headquarters and trenches were subjected to a terrific bombardment which completely destroyed our trenches. It was a great strain on all ranks but they stood it unflinchingly.”*

George was one of 37 men in the battalion killed by the shell fire on this day and his records state that he was buried in a battlefield grave NNW of the village. Unfortunately, this grave was later shelled into submission and George's body was lost.

Today, he is commemorated on the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux in France.



The Australian National Memorial is situated just outside the famous French town of Villers Bretonneux. It records the names of 10 952 Australians who died in France during World War One who have no known grave.

George's Commemoration

I was honoured to commemorate George at a special group service at the Australian National Memorial on 30 September this year during our overseas pilgrimage. Part of the eulogy I delivered for George reads:

“George, as a soldier of the Great War, you endured immense brutality and fought with great honour. Before this tour, you merely resembled a name of a street in the town of Mackay. Now however George, you are more than a name. You are a person and a soldier who left your family, your home, your life and paid the ultimate sacrifice. You gave your life in a country and place that was so foreign to you.”

