

# 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**

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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



## *Footsteps of Honour*

### 2012

## Commemorative Tour



# *Street Memorial Project*

Dear Porter St Resident

Our names are Amanda Goodwin and Cornelia Khalu 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 Porter 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.

## Porter St, Mackay

Named in honour of:  
Corporal Robert Porter  
Service No. 486  
25th Battalion AIF

Killed in Action in France on 25 August, 1916  
Aged 41



Robert was born in Brighton, England & came to Australia with his family at the age of eleven. He was the son of George Porter, of Tennyson St, Mackay & was working as a baker in Mackay when he enlisted into the original D Company of the 25th Battalion on 17 February, 1915. He was 40 when he enlisted, which was a rather advanced age for men to join up. Robert's military career didn't start well, as he went absent without leave from his army camp in Brisbane for five weeks. He was given two days detention for this after he voluntarily surrendered. The fact that Robert was later promoted to Corporal showed that he did have ability as a soldier, though. Robert did embark Australia with his battalion & he arrived at Gallipoli with the 25th on

25 Sept., along with numerous other Mackay men. He was promoted to Lance Corporal on 3 Nov. but was then struck down with severe enteric fever & was evacuated to Malta on 24 Nov. He was listed as seriously ill & was moved on to hospital in Egypt & was not discharged back to duty until 3 March, 1916.

He then travelled to France with the 25th & was promoted to Corporal on 18 August after the disastrous actions fought by the battalion at the Pozieres Windmill. Ironically, after having survived these major actions & having been promoted, Robert was killed a week later on 25 August whilst on a working party digging trenches at Pozieres. Battalion diary records state that between 22 - 26 August the battalion camped at the Brickfields, just behind the main Pozieres front line & that, *"During 4 days spent here every available man was on duty as working party nightly with Engineers digging new saps & trenches at Pozieres Ridge & improving communication trenches, making roads etc. Parties had a march of 7 miles to reach place of work."*

Robert was one of three of his battalion killed on the 25th & while there is no definite record of how he died, that fact that his fellow battalion member, Pte D. S. Brown was killed on the same night after being buried in the trench he was digging shows that Robert was no doubt killed in a similar manner, either buried by a shell explosion or killed outright by a shell. Robert was buried in the field &, unlike most men who suffered this fate, today he has a known grave - of sorts. He lies in Serre Rd No. 2 Cemetery in grave XII. K. 4/5. This unusual grave reference is explained in a letter sent to his brother in Feb., 1928, twelve years after his death: *"...during the work of exhuming the bodies of British soldiers buried in isolated graves in the vicinity of Pozieres, the remains of two Unknown Australian Soldiers were found at map reference 57dX.4.a.5.8 & they have been buried in graves 4 and 5, Plot 13, Row K, Serre Rd Cemetery No. 2. When these remains were found a disc was recovered, & from investigations made it has been ascertained that this disc belonged to Cpl R W Porter, 25th Bn, AIF, but as it was not possible to say which of the remains were those of this soldier a joint cross is to be erected over these two grave commemorating the name of Cpl Porter and an Unknown Australian Soldier. The identity disc referred to is enclosed herewith. This memento, though now somewhat impaired by long exposure, will double be valued on account of its former intimate association with your brother, and I trust same comes safely to hand."*

This is a very unusual burial situation but at least Robert has his name on a headstone.

Serre Rd No 2 Cemetery is the largest CWGC Cemetery in France. It is situated on the old Somme battlefields and contains the graves of 7127 Commonwealth soldiers.

Of these, only 2183 are identified



### Robert's Commemoration

We were honoured to commemorate at his gravesite in Serre Rd No. 2 Cemetery on 2 October. We also laid a poppy on the grave of the unknown soldier next to Robert - as it just may be him.



Amanda (left) and Cornelia at Robert's grave.

