



Memorial homecoming for casualties of war

By Xanthe Dines, Media and Public Affairs Branch

The epitaph on the new Gladstone District Police Memorial plaque reads “to live in the hearts and minds of those we leave behind is not to die”.

It is a simple tribute but also a poignant reminder of why National Police Remembrance Day is perhaps the most significant day on the police calendar.

Of the 135 names on the Queensland Police Service (QPS) Honour and Remembrance Rolls, 30 were officers killed on active service in World War I. During the war, police officers were able to take leave of absence to join the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF).

Among the brave men who fought and died, the Gladstone district

lost two police officers during World War I.

Constable William Dumbrell served with the 41st Battalion and was killed near Sailly-le-Sec on The Somme, France on April 19, 1918.

Constable Frederick White served with the 25th Battalion and was killed with his brother Albert at Morlancourt on The Somme on June 10, 1918.

The stories of these brave men are historically significant for not only the nation but the QPS as well.

Inspired by these historical events, officers from the Gladstone and Townsville police districts undertook a pilgrimage last year to bring the memories of these fallen police back home.

The journey took the officers through Europe, Africa and the Middle East where they placed a memento on all 30 war graves.

In preparation for the dedication in Gladstone, a second memento was temporarily placed on the graves of Constables White and Dumbrell before it was brought back to Gladstone to

form part of the new memorial.

The culmination of the trip, which involved three years of research and planning,



Constable Frederick White

was the dedication of the newly constructed memorial outside the Gladstone Police Station on September 5.

Fifty police officers, their families and community members gathered for the dedication.

Proud of their family heritage and the link to the QPS, relatives of Constable White and a friend of Constable Dumbrell's son were also in attendance.

The Reverend Frank White, a great nephew of Constable White, helped police chaplain Father Michael Vercoe to deliver the service.

In a special touch, the memorial was blessed with holy water from the River Jordan in Israel, which had been collected during last year's journey to visit the war graves.

Roger White, another great nephew of Constable White, travelled from

Brisbane to attend the service. He said the memorial would keep Constable White's memory as a soldier and a policeman alive.

“I think the creation of a local memorial for police killed at war is a good idea, as the only other memorial besides that in France, is at the National War Memorial in Canberra.”

Mr White thought it was important to remember and honour the men who died fighting in the war as well as honour their service with the Queensland police.

Central Police Region Assistant Commissioner George Stolz spoke at the ceremony and laid a wreath on behalf of the QPS.

Mr Stolz's father served in the 41st Battalion with Constable Dumbrell during the first years of the war and was repatriated to Australia in 1917 after being wounded at the Battle of Messines Ridge in Flanders, France.

Fittingly, just three weeks after the dedication, the new memorial was the site for a moving candlelight vigil on the eve of National Police Remembrance Day.

So now, despite the tragic circumstances of history, the Gladstone police officers who gave their lives during World War I will live on in the hearts and minds of generations to come.



Constable William Dumbrell