

DOUGHTY MEMORIAL 23 JULY 2017

There is no greater sacrifice than to lay down one's life for one's country. One hundred years ago last weekend, Lieutenant Ralph Doughty did just that, whilst defending our way of life on a field in Belgium. Ralph was the quintessential ANZAC, a young Kiwi who was working in Australia at the outbreak of war. Rather than return home to enlist, Ralph signed up then and there to join the Australian Imperial Forces and shipped out for Egypt. It wasn't long before he was knee deep in the mud and blood of that brutal campaign we know as Gallipoli.

No sooner had the ANZACs extracted themselves from that harrowing experience than they were thrust into the tortured lines of the Western Front. Ralph served with distinction, earning the Military Cross for bravery after pushing his forward observation post out into no man's land to coordinate a highly effective artillery barrage. Two months later, on the 23rd of July 1917 near Passchendaele, he was cut down by a piece of shrapnel during that interminable artillery bombardment.

Last weekend, the relatives of Ralph Doughty gathered at Tin Can Bay for a memorial service in his honour. A host of Becks, Foxes and many others, marshalled by the indefatigable Wendy Braniff, descended on the sleepy coastal town to pay their respects to their distant ancestor. The Tin Can Bay Returned Services League generously put on a dinner for the weary travellers, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time; brought together by their familial bond to a fallen ANZAC hero.

On the following afternoon, a century after his death, the tribe gathered for a memorial service at the Standown Park Wall of Remembrance and laid a brick in his honour. There were no Doughty's present at the solemn event. It is a little considered fact that as well as sacrificing their lives, these young men also sacrificed their chance to raise a family. They died young, single and in their thousands to protect our way of life.

Therefore, it was the second cousins, great grand nieces and nephews and other distant relatives who came to honour this hero of the war to end all wars. In true ANZAC spirit they came from all over Australia and New Zealand to this pleasant corner of Queensland to pay their respects; to remember the fallen and their own Uncle Ralph, a true ANZAC legend.

So the next time you are passing a war memorial and glance up at the names of strangers writ there in stone, consider that in all likelihood, each and every one of them died before they could have children who would stand for them at the memorial services. It is we, the descendants of the survivors, who must stand in their place. It is our duty ... no ... our honour, to attend the marches on ANZAC day and remember the sacrifices of the fallen. They gave so much so that we could stand here today and still call this the lucky country.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.