

ANZAC DAY REFLECTION - FAMILIES WHO LOST MORE THAN ONE SON



During World War One **HENRY FOOT [1894-1899]** and **ALEXANDER FOOT [1904-1908]** were both killed at Gallipoli. A third brother, **GEORGE FOOT [1896-1899]** was wounded, in what was referred to as a GSW [Gun Shot Wound] in the thigh and repatriated to Australia in 1917. Alexander Foot has left us a fascinating but poignant reminder as to the horrors of war in a series of letters written to his family from the battle-fields. In them, for example, he writes of meeting a former school chum, Sergeant Kay, while on training in Egypt. (**JOHN KAY [1908-1910]** was killed at Noreuil in France in March 1917.) In a letter written the day before he was killed [22 November 1915] Alexander Foot writes: *"I felt some excitement yesterday when five bullets just missed me as they tried to snipe men when getting salt water on the beach. Later in the day I was shovelling when a 75 burst right through the sandbag parapet beside me and plastered the possie with bits of shell etc. By a marvellous fluke I was not hit but the concussion knocked me down and deafened one ear. I am still quite deaf in that ear but the Dr expects my hearing will improve..."* It is interesting to note that **HENRY DAINTREE FOOT [1927-1931]**, named after his uncle, who was killed at Gallipoli, was the first student in Grammar's history to attend the same school as his father. H.D. Foot went on to fly seventy-one missions for the RAAF in Africa in World War Two and became the first allied airman to fly a German Stuka Bomber.

The **Mehan Brothers** are the closest to matching the Foot Family in World War One. Although only one brother, **ALFRED MEHAN [1908 and 1911]**, was killed, all three brothers won medals for bravery. Alfred was awarded the Military Medal while **JACK MEHAN [1900 and 1903]** won the Military Cross and **DODD MEHAN [1903-1904 and 1908-1910]** was awarded the Military Medal.

Another highly decorated family from World War One was **RONALD HENDERSON [1889-1894]** and his half-brother **JOHN WHITE [1890-1891]**. Henderson studied medicine at Edinburgh University and in Dunedin, New Zealand. After becoming a widower Henderson enlisted at the age of thirty-seven and was killed aged thirty-nine, the oldest past student to be killed in any conflict. He was awarded the Military Cross in 1917 for *"Conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He displayed great courage and determination in tending to the wounded under very heavy enemy fire. His devotion to duty saved many lives."* John White enlisted in England with the 33rd Middlesex Regiment and won the MC, DSO and CdeG during the conflict. The last record of White the School has is that he was still serving with the British Army in India in 1930.

The recent discovery of the wreck of the Hospital Ship Centaur hopefully may have brought some peace to the Johnston family. **RODERICK JOHNSTON [1930-1934]** was a doctor on the ship when it was sunk off the coast from Brisbane. His younger brother **LEO JOHNSTON [1931-1935]** was a sergeant in the RAAF 405 Squadron and his plane was shot down over France in 1941. His body was never recovered and, like his brother, there was no final resting place for the family. Roderick had a twin brother, **ROBERT JOHNSTON**, and legend has it that they drove the then Headmaster, P.F. Rowland, to distraction in his Latin classes. Rowland nick-named the boys Faith and Charity with Roderick being Charity.

The **Macleod Brothers** both attended Grammar in the early 1930s. They were both talented sportsman and represented Townsville at Cricket and Rugby League. **KEITH MACLEOD [1928-1930]** became part of the legendary group of soldiers termed the *Rats of Tobruk* and he was killed in the deserts of Libya. He is buried at a cemetery to the west of Tobruk. **ERIC MACLEOD [1931-34]** was a member of the RAAF 158 Squadron and was shot down over Germany in 1944 and he is buried at Hanover in Germany.

The **Tippett Brothers**, like the Macleod Brothers were day students. **HAROLD TIPPETT [1935-1937]** was serving with the 2/26 Australian Infantry Division in Siam when he contacted a tropical disease from which he never recovered. He died in November 1943 just a month after his younger brother **GEOFFREY TIPPETT [1938]** was killed in a flying accident on the Isle of Man while serving on secondment to the RAF. Geoffrey was aged twenty at the time of his death and was the second youngest past student killed in World War Two.



G. Tippett H. Tippett

There are records of other Past Grammarian families who had more than one son or daughter serving but, fortunately, none of these families were to suffer the sadness of the families written about above. May all the fifty-nine Grammarians killed in the various conflicts rest in peace. Their sacrifice is best summed up in the words of P.F. Rowland, Headmaster from 1905 to 1938 in the poem he wrote and which now adorns the World War One Cenotaph on Townsville's ANZAC Park:

*The Moment pass; but ne'er shall die,
The Memory of our Honoured Dead,
Who marching wither Duty led
With Death not Immortality*

*The names of those who paid the Price
For us, and for the land we love
Be Beacon-firs to all who move
On lowlier ways of sacrifice.*

**Boni intraverunt; meliores exiunt
Good men have entered
Better men have gone out**

**MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist**