



MEDIA INFORMER

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History Students To Honour ANZAC Spirit at Villers-Bretonneux Dawn Service, France

Roseville College Year 12 History students, Rose Davidson, Cassandra Smith, Harriet Hodge and Caitlin Byrne, will represent Australia and honour the ANZAC memory by participating in the Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux, France, on ANZAC Day 2012 during their upcoming school History Study Tour.

The four students will present a Bible reading or a soldier's epitaph at the Dawn Service, which is scheduled to broadcast live to Australia on the ABC channel.

Rose Davidson, Roseville College's Vice Captain and HSC Modern History candidate, will read the Book of Wisdom 4:7-15. She says this opportunity has inspired her to learn more about her family, especially from her grandmother, Joan McLean, whose uncle, Ernest Roy Kingsman Roberts, is memorialised at Villers-Bretonneux. Ernest Roberts was 30 years old when killed instantly in battle by a single machine-gun bullet wound to the head.

"I'm looking forward to linking what I've learnt [at school and about my family] with the actual places where they happened," says Rose.

Cassandra Smith, Prefect and Captain of Public Speaking and Debating, looks forward to Modern History coming alive as she prepares for her HSC exams later this year. Her great grandfather, Gordon Roy Asprey, received a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his services in France.

"Not only has it been really interesting to discover more about my family history, but it also brings a significant part of Australian history into a personal context", adds Cassandra. "I've been inspired to investigate more about my great grandfather and, while away, hope to discover more about him and his time in France during WWI."



Photographs this page (more photographs over page):

top Roseville College ANZAC tour Year 12 students, Harriet Hodge, Caitlin Byrne, Rose Davidson and Cassandra Smith.

this page bottom Roseville College Year 12 student and Vice Captain, Rose Davidson, will read a Bible verse at the Villers-Bretonneux ANZAC Dawn Service.

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Harriet Hodge, studying both HSC Modern and Ancient History, will think of her great great grandfather, Arthur Round, as she reads a soldier's epitaph. A member of the 40th Battalion from Hobart who fought at Villers-Bretonneux, Arthur was 28 years old and already married to Harriet's great-great-grandmother, Maud, when he enlisted.

"He served for four years and [we learnt from the National Archive medical records that he] was gassed in 1918 just before he came back. Still, he lived until he was 86 years old – luckily for me – and is buried here in Australia," Harriet explains. "This will be an amazing life experience for me; I had no idea it was such a big deal when I first said 'yes'. I am most excited that my Pa, Trevor Hodge [living in Hobart], will watch me on TV and be there with me in spirit – it is the trip *he* always wanted to make."

Caitlin Byrne is also studying Modern History for her HSC and believes that the Study Tour is an experience that will outlast her final year of school. Her great grandfather, who served as a Doctor in the trenches at Iper and received a Military Cross for Valour, fought on the Western Front as did his three brothers.

"For me, being there will make the impact of war on my family more tangible – the graveyards, the war museums (including preserved trenches that show visitors what it may have been like) and the war memorials themselves," she says. "I've always wanted to attend a Dawn Service abroad and I'm honoured to be involved and connect with part of my family history in this way."

Head of History, Mrs Stephanie Binsted, one of five teachers accompanying the students on the Study Tour, says the students' awareness about Villers-Bretonneux is now enriched by such personal family stories – their own and those of their peers.

"The Service was already on our itinerary; but now history is really coming alive for the students, and this has become an even more significant experience," she believes. "One of the purposes of a study tour is to heighten awareness of historical legacies. In this case, the girls have connected in a real and personal way with their family histories and our national heritage."

The students depart Sydney on 12 April. For more information about the Villers-Bretonneux 2012 services, contact the Department of Veteran Affairs or visit their website at http://www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/commemorations/commemorative_events/anzac_day/Pages/france.aspx

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Photographs this page (more photographs prior page):

this page top Roseville College Year 12 student and prefect, Cassandra Smith, who is also Captain of Public Speaking and Debating, will read a soldier's epitaph.

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