**Essays on Mount Crosby - Perrett the Soldier**

Some time ago an old friend of mine produced a photograph she described as, "Mr Perrett with his son at the school" - a nice old photograph it was, too. I detected in the way she spoke that she thought I would recognise him, and that was interesting because even she had not been taught by Mr Perrett (headmaster at Mount Crosby State School 1908-1922) but must have inherited her knowledge of him from her mother's generation. It was a clue that the Perrett's have a story of the type others are ready to tell.

Frank Perrett was headmaster in the dark days when the old world was blasted away by the guns of the Great War. He was a constant when there were few constants, except the deepening pain of war. It was already enough to ensure the Perrett's good name, and then their son went off to war.

Young Fred Perrett enlisted on the last day of 1914 and embarked from Australia in April, which meant he was going to the shores of Gallipoli. After three months of fighting, suffering from a debilitating illness, he was transferred to the Australian Hospital in Cairo before returning to Anzac Cove again on 17 September. He stayed there until the last days of the Anzac evacuation in December 1915.

But the war had just begun for Fred; he was transferred to France with the 9th Battalion in early 1916 just as the enormous military build-up broke and released hell upon the fields of Picardy and the Somme valley. On 20 April 1916, his gallantry under heavy shelling at Rouge de Bout was recognised in a commendation sent to his parents at Mount Crosby - who must have been at once both proud and worried by their son's achievements. Fred stayed in France until September 1916 before being nominated to train for a commission (at Trinity College, England). Having qualified for a commission in the AIF infantry battalions, he returned to France in January 1917 where he was promoted to Lieutenant. He fought through the long year in which experts said peace would arrive, but instead the massive stalemate just went on causing casualties on an industrial scale.

In January 1918, Fred was seconded to train as a pilot in the fledgling Australian Flying Corp. He trained with the AFC at Wendover (Buckinghamshire) until October 1918, battling vertigo and nausea that, combined with the impending Armistice, brought an end to his flying career. I see that his medical examination has a margin note that states quite matter of factly that he was, "not keen on flying", which I suppose could be true. I presume he wasn't keen on years of shelling and mud either, but he faced up to all this for the King and us.

On the second Saturday of August 1919, the largest gathering ever assembled at Mount Crosby welcomed home eleven brave soldiers, including Lieutenant Fred Perrett; each with good reason to be remembered.

Col Hester