Murdoch Nish MACKAY

Murdoch Nish Mackay was born on 8 February 1891 in Bendigo. He was schooled at Gravel Hill State School and St Andrew's College Bendigo, with fellow Bendigonian Alan Hyett, also on our Board. He commenced studies at Melbourne University at the age of 16, where he excelled, receiving first class honours and the Supreme Court prize in 1911. Mackay completed his LLM at the age of 20. He signed the Bar Roll on the 1st of May 1912 and had a busy career at the Bar, including appearing before the High Court prior to his departure overseas. He was farewelled by the Bar with a gift of field glasses.

Mackay was gazetted as a captain in the 22nd Battalion on the 1st of May 1915, three years to the day from his admission to practice. On that very same day, the 1st of May 1915, he married Miss Margot Watson. Mackay departed for Gallipoli exactly one week later on the 8th of May.

Mackay arrived with the 22nd Battalion at Gallipoli in September 1915 and they stayed until all ANZAC troops were withdrawn from the Gallipoli peninsula. In his diary, which can be found at the Australian War Memorial, Mackay wrote about his time in Egypt, in March 1916, before departing for the Western Front.

On succeeding days "Doch", as he was known, was president of a board of Court Martial and the following day he acted as 'next friend' to two lieutenants without much success. The 22nd Battalion arrived in France in April 1916, and their first main action was at Pozieres in July 1916. Bean, in his *Official History of Australia in the War* (Vol III) tells in dramatic detail Mackay's actions on the 4th of August 1916. In rallying the Australian soldiers attacking German trenches, Mackay, now a major, was shot through the heart by machine gun fire. He was mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig's dispatches for "distinguished and gallant service and devotion to duty" for his actions at Pozieres.

His death was widely reported and the Chief Justice (Madden) led the tributes in praise of Murdoch Mackay calling him "brave and brilliant".

Portrait image courtesy of Melbourne University Law School. Poppies in the WW1 Australian War Memorial panel in Canberra.