

# Sutton Veny pupils commemorate centenary of ANZAC Day



*Sutton Veny Primary School pupils get ready to lay flowers on the ANZAC graves at the Church of St John for the ANZAC day commemoration on Friday. .Glenn Phillips 55491-7. (24267795)*

by Stefan Mackley

PUPILS at Sutton Veny Primary School and dignities from as far as Australia came together as one earlier today to commemorate the centenary of ANZAC Day.

The 172 students from the school laid posies and wooden crosses at the foot of ever ANZAC grave, before standing for a minute's silence to remember those killed during World War One and other conflicts.

The Gallipoli Campaign in 1915 is seen as the defining moment in the history of both Australia and New Zealand, after a combined total of more than 10,000 soldiers lost their lives from these countries.

Buried at the cemetery are 144 Australian servicemen as well as three nurses along with soldiers from the UK.

Headteacher at Sutton Veny Primary School, Rachael Brotherton, said: "It was very moving and we're very proud of the children because they just showed such heart and respect.

"I'm also proud of everyone at the school who worked to creating such a special day."

Sutton Veny and the surrounding area were used for training camps during The Great War, with the No. 1 Australian Command based in the village from December 1916.

The ANZAC Day service tradition is one Sutton Veny Primary School has carried out for decades but for some, this year's service was the first.

Five-year-old pupil Ben Matson was experiencing the service for the first time and said: "I thought it was brilliant because when we put the posies down we remembered the soldiers."

His mum Tess added: "It was his first ANZAC service and I think he was looking forward to it.

"We had to explain to him what it was but it helps to broaden his learning and broaden his education, like learning where Australia is, so I think it's quite important and this service is certainly very good for the village."

One of many Australian's to make the 9,400mile trip was former Royal Navy officer Mike Bennett, who will be attending another service at the Church of St John on Sunday and will be presenting Certificates of Appreciation from The Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott.

"I thought the service was inspiring and it made you feel very proud," he said.

"It was beautiful and so impressive the way it was run."

Also from Australia were Connecting Spirits, a group of teenage students from the Land Down Under who have been visiting Europe to see other ANZAC grave sites.

Tour manager Julie Reece said: "We were gobsmacked, it was very moving and so powerful."

The Rev Jane Shaw, who held the service at the Church of St John and will be holding Sunday's service, said: "It was very emotional and we had lots of people come, some who have been before and make a point of coming ever year but then we have had people who have come for the first time.

"All you need to do is look at the guest book to see people have come from as far as Australia and America."

*(Wiltshire Times – Saturday 25 April, 2015)*