



December, 2014

## Special points of interest:

- DNA Update
- Our first AGM
- Accommodation Options 2016
- Fromelles Museum opens.

**President: Royce Atkinson : [royceatkinson@hotmail.com](mailto:royceatkinson@hotmail.com)**  
**Secretary: Geoffrey Benn : [gvb456@gmail.com](mailto:gvb456@gmail.com)**  
**Treasurer: Bill Irvine : [blirvine@bigpond.com](mailto:blirvine@bigpond.com)**

## **STOP PRESS: 12/12/2014**

### **Important information for DNA Donors and their Families**

We have been advised by The Fromelles Project Team (UWCSA), Australian Army, that DNA **donation and collections** will be carried out during the period February to December 2015.

**Announcements regarding soldiers identified** via this process will be made to coincide with the centenary i.e. in 2016.

We are advised that the reason for this change is that the “sunset clause” on all donor documents has now been reached, and thus all current “donor consent” forms are invalid. UWCSA advise that they will need to gain new consent documents from donors.

### **Comment from your management team:**

*This change will undoubtedly be felt by all members as many, many folk are waiting anxiously for their DNA samples to be taken, and many more members of families are waiting to see if a “match” can be made with a long lost loved one.*

**We have recently had a nominated and registered donor pass away, and that family was fortunate that another donor was available to ‘fill in’.** Given that this delay will place more folk at risk, we request your confidential advice should you wish, or wish a donor to be placed for a February/March collection. Please contact Royce Atkinson: [royceatkinson@hotmail.com](mailto:royceatkinson@hotmail.com), or 02.49753563.



## **OUR FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

This was held at Parramatta RSL Club on 19 July, 2014. After a minute’s silence, we had a presentation “Battle Tactics – Fromelles and the Present Day” given by Brigadier Allan Murray, Commander 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade. This was followed by “the Battle at Fromelles” presented by Lt. Col. Jim McGann, Commander 2/17 RNSWR. A number of slides and pictures of the Fromelles area were presented to the group, and a number of questions were taken from the audience. We look forward to renewing contact with the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the months and years to come.

Following on from these presentations, we had some ‘civilians’ give us a presentation of their travels. Firstly there was Terry Morahan who travelled to Villers Bretonneux with the Sydney Male Choir for Anzac Day in April 2014, and his travels to Vignacourt, and then to Fromelles to visit the Pheasant Wood Cemetery. Terry presented a number of photographs taken at the Pheasant Wood Cemetery.

**AGM .... CONTINUED**

Then we heard from our Treasurer, Bill Irvine who was in Fromelles ahead of the official opening of the Battle of Fromelles Museum. Again, a number of photos were shown to the meeting.

Official Business following involved the election of office bearers, who are:

President: Royce Atkinson

Secretary: Geoffrey Benn

Treasurer: Bill Irvine.

We were then able to formally move for the adoption of the proposed Constitution of the Fromelles Association of Australia Incorporated, and it was adopted without opposition.

May They have  
the dignity of  
their own  
marked  
graves.

**ACCOMMODATION IN FROMELLES FOR 2016.**

While we have not opened a travel agency, a number of possible accommodation places have been identified by some of our intrepid researchers. We can provide you with some suggestions and contact details as follows:

**Mercure Lille Centre Grand Place France.**

<http://www.mercure.com/gb/hotel-0802-mercure-lille-centre-grand-place/index.shtml>

**Ibis Lille Centre Gares**

<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-0901-ibis-lille-centre-gares/index.shtml>

**Ibis Lille Centre Grand Place**

<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-0902-ibis-lille-centre-grand-place/index.shtml>

**Novotel Lille Centre Grand Place Hotel**

<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-0918-novotel-lille-centre-grand-place/index.shtml>

**Best Western Premier WHY Hotel**

<http://www.why-hotel.com/fr>

**Suite Novotel Lille Europe Hotel**

<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-5240-suite-novotel-lille-europe/index.shtml>

**Crowne Plaza Lille – Euralille**

[http://www.ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels/us/en/lille/lilbl/hoteldetail?cm\\_mmc=GoogleMaps- -cp- -FREN- -lilbl](http://www.ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels/us/en/lille/lilbl/hoteldetail?cm_mmc=GoogleMaps- -cp- -FREN- -lilbl)

We can only suggest if you want to travel to Fromelles in 2016, that you contact the hotels, and check out what they have to offer. We hope you can use the information to secure your place to stay for the commemoration in 2016. Alternatively, other sites such as [www.trivago.com](http://www.trivago.com) are easy to use in finding accommodation.

## **ACCOMMODATION 2016 ... CONT.**

If you are looking for a comprehensive tour option including guided tours, transport accommodation and extras please see the options below.

### **Australian Military History Tours**

[http://www.militaryhistorytours.com.au/site/Fromelles\\_Poziere.asp](http://www.militaryhistorytours.com.au/site/Fromelles_Poziere.asp)

### **Battlefields Tours**

<http://www.battlefields.com.au/index.php/tours/68>

You can also find some great information about the local area from sites such as:

### **TripAdvisor**

[http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Tourism-g187178-Lille\\_Nord\\_Nord\\_Pas\\_de\\_Calais-Vacations.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Tourism-g187178-Lille_Nord_Nord_Pas_de_Calais-Vacations.html)

### **Expedia**

<http://www.expedia.com.au/Hotels>



Happy searching.

## **ANCESTRY.COM**

We are hoping to progressively load information into Ancestry, in the hope that future investigations will be assisted in tracing of ancestors and descendants.

## **ACCESSING BIRTH, DEATH AND MARRIAGE REGISTRIES.**

We have had some success in obtaining access to state registries in NSW, Victoria and South Australia for re-search purposes. If anyone is doing research on a soldier's family, and needs information (but not formal certificates – sorry) from one of these sources, please pass your request for access to Royce Atkinson at first instance. We will then have the information sourced so the research can proceed further.

## **SOME GENERAL COMMENTS REGARDING DNA AND IDENTIFYING EXHUMED BODIES.**

Many people have given samples of their saliva for DNA matching, and hopefully a successful identification of a recovered soldier. Frustratingly, once the donation has been made, many people don't have any further contact from Army, and others are contacted in what seems like an 'out of the blue' experience. To make the process more understandable, we have put together the following information for possible clarification for all involved:-

Our Association is made up of folk, who have an interest in, or have a relative who fought at the Battle of Fromelles. Many members of our Association voluntarily undertake research to identify living relatives of soldiers who **may** be buried at the Pheasant Wood Military Cemetery (PWMC) – Fromelles.

All 250 soldiers exhumed from a mass grave have provided viable DNA and can only be identified by seeking DNA donors from family members. Two types of DNA are required, one is mitochondrial (Mt) - passed on by mothers, but also held by sons, and the other - Y strain - passed on by fathers to sons (it's more complex - but that's a "rough" outline). As at March 2014, 144 of the 250 have been identified via DNA matching.

*For those lost so far from home.*

## SOME GENERAL COMMENTS REGARDING DNA ... Continued

***Material collected by Researchers***

Most of the documentation collected is freely available from genealogical sites, and forms the basis of our outcomes. We do use these sites to store material, and maintain records, though it should be noted that living people are not identified. This material is available to donors and family spokespersons. No material will be released to others, unless with the agreement of the donor/spokesperson.

Once the family pedigree is drafted, it is sent to the potential donor for verification, and/or is peer reviewed by another researcher. Once a “confirmation of accuracy” is received, it is sent to the Unrecovered War Casualties Section - Australian Army (Fromelles Project Team) together with all relevant information.

At that point of time, **the Association’s involvement and knowledge of DNA collection and testing ceases**, because the matter comes under Australian Federal Privacy Legislation.

***Australian Army Procedures***

Within Australia, the Army staff will discuss and verify the information with the donor (generally via phone) and arrange the DNA donation process.

Outside Australia, the Army has requested the Association gains the donor’s written agreement to donate DNA.

The Army’s timing of the DNA collection is usually done in one block/time frame and is not known to the Association. Please bear in mind that:

- ◆ **ONLY** if a match is made, will donor/s be informed, by the Army, in March/April each year. However we are aware that successful identifications have been made up to 4 years after the submission of DNA. Thus we are reluctant to notify folk of a “result” when a) the process may take some time, and b) the process is totally under the management of the Australian Army.
- ◆ Federal Privacy Legislation (a): Please note that the Australian Army does not communicate with the Association regarding a donor, or the status of the DNA process, once we have made a submission. Thus, the only way we may be aware of the status of the DNA process – **will be if you contact us.**
- ◆ Federal Privacy Legislation (b): Please note that you may be donating in 2014, 2015 and beyond. Some donors made donations of DNA in 2010. It is vital to acknowledge that the value of your DNA is (at the least) equal to any earlier donation. It is suggested that DNA donors ask the Army for contact details of other donors and family members as this may bring families together. **If a successful identification is made, then either both donors, or an elected family spokesperson, must agree on a set of words for the headstone.**
- ◆ The Australian Army only releases the names of those soldiers identified once per year. In 2014, the announcement was to coincide with Anzac Day but for reasons unknown, was deferred. The Association receives no “early notification”, and we too, await the formal announcement.

You can also  
check out our  
Facebook  
page under:  
Fromelles  
Association of  
Australia.  
Click on  
Recent Posts.

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***Donation and management of DNA.***

The actual donor process only requires 2 “scrapings” to be taken from the inside of the mouth by a swab (“cotton bud”), the swabs are then inserted into sterile tubes and sent by mail to the laboratory. Instructions come with the DNA kit.

Your DNA record is kept in a secure facility and access to any data is restricted to the actual geneticist and approved Australian Army staff.

Australian Army policy does not allow any person or entity (other than those identified above) to access DNA data. This includes the actual donor.

All enquiries about DNA, and the process should be directed to the Australian Army, Fromelles Team: 1800 019 090, or via their web site: <http://www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Unrecovered-War-Casualties-Army/Fromelles/The-Fromelles-project>

There are no costs associated with our research - or with the DNA donor process.

***There are a number of sites which may provide useful information:***

The NAA site - search WW1 under the soldiers name and his details

The Red Cross Missing & Wounded lists for WW1 – (under AWM site)

The Battle of Fromelles, any search using Google

Fromelles Project - the exhumation, re-burial, DNA testing and management, and the work of UWCS-A - see the Australian Army site

The Fromelles Association - again, via a Google search.

DNA – via a Google search (remember; Y DNA – only passed from father to son; Mt DNA only passed on by daughters, but is also present in sons.)

Should you have any questions what so ever, please contact (Royce Atkinson), or a member of the Association Research Team, and we shall attempt to provide you with any required information.

As an update to this information, we have been hoping that Army will be issuing DNA kits to interested donors, by Christmas 2014 but at present, we are still waiting for confirmation that all interested donors have been issued with their kits.

**IDENTIFICATIONS**

We were delighted to be part of 20 identifications of soldiers announced earlier this year. Clearly there are a lot of active researchers looking for family connections and chasing down leads. As at 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 we had submitted our 35<sup>th</sup> soldier submission to Unrecovered War Casualties Section – Army (UWCSA) for the current year.

While this is an outstanding effort, we do still need as many helpers as is possible, so if you can spare an hour or two occasionally, please let us know....

While we always hope to be able to identify a recovered soldier's remains, many, many bodies lied unrecovered in No Mans Land. Many were also buried in the mass grave at VC Corner Cemetery.

*For those lost so far from home.*



## OPENING OF THE NEW BATTLE OF FROMELLES MUSEUM IN JULY, 2014.

Commentary from Paul Cobb, author *Fromelles 1916*



- ♦ Twenty five years ago when I first became involved with locals at Fromelles in activities such as battlefield archaeology, researching the battle and creation of the museum in the Town Hall the village was still little known and, to an extent, off the beaten track for most visitors to the Western Front. Now it is firmly on the tour circuits thanks to the opening of a new museum adjacent to the recently established Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemetery.
- ♦ Over the weekend 18/19th July 2014 there were various events arranged including commemoration of a further twenty newly identified soldiers, all casualties of the Attack at Fromelles 98 years ago.
- ♦ On Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> July guests gathered by the museum to hear speeches from Senator Michael Ronaldson, Minister for Veteran Affairs, Australia, His Excellency Ric Wells, Australian Ambassador to France, Jean-Gabriel Masson, Mayor of Fromelles, Martial Delebarre, President of the Communauté de Communes de Weppes and, for many years a key player in recording the events of July 1916 plus various other representatives from the regional councils who contributed to the 600,000 euro project. Once these were completed (on a *very* hot day!) guests were given a guided tour of the new museum.
- ♦ Visitors to the original museum will recall that the rooms were crammed with artefacts found on the battlefield plus mannequins dressed in a variety of uniforms as well as many items from private collections. It was certainly one of the better museums on the Western Front and achieved its objective of recording the experience of Fromelles and its inhabitants (both at home and on military service) during the Great War.
- ♦ Recognising the modern trend for the use of technology and fewer exhibits would the new museum be a worthy successor to the one it has replaced and would it provide visitors with an adequate overview of the July 1916 action? In short, the answer to both question is 'yes'.
- ♦ On entering the museum there is a small café which would be a handy rest area for weary battlefield visitors, a shop, toilets and then the exhibition area. Several battlefield scenes have been created including a Bavarian communications post and a Royal Engineer at work in a dugout. The story of several soldiers is given along with a display of photos of a further selection including a Victorian Naval Reservist who was one of a group that served as infantry becoming part of 30<sup>th</sup> Btn. Various artefacts are displayed and there are audio-visual presentations running. In another part of the museum are mannequins with uniforms of the main combatants and a table with imaginative projected moving images of the battle with units shown and the phases explained.



*For those lost so far from home.*

### Opening of Fromelles Museum ... Cont.

- ◆ There are a few minor errors that, I understand, will be corrected; for example a soldiers "identity disk". Rectifying them is to be commended and other locations on the Western Front would do well to ensure that translations are validated before displays are produced.
- ◆ On Saturday morning there were a couple of short commemorations, firstly, at the Australian Memorial Park and then at VC Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial. Both were attended by the Australian Ambassador to France, the Minister for Veteran Affairs, local dignitaries, guests and a strong contingent from the Australian Defence Force plus the Shrine Guard from the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.
- ◆ Later that day the headstone dedication service was held in Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery in the presence of the same representatives as at the museum opening plus many families related to newly identified casualties. Twenty soldiers were commemorated in a short but dignified service and it is thought that these may be the last group to be identified. Now, 144 soldiers have headstones bearing their details in place of one recording an unknown soldier.
- ◆ This is a remarkable achievement by those involved in the project since the mass grave was identified.
- ◆ The new museum is a worthy addition to battlefield visit itineraries. It is open on Monday, Wednesday-Friday from 10.30 to 17.30 and on Saturday, Sunday and public holidays from 13.30 to 17.30. Entry fees are 6.50 euros for adults, concessions cost 4 euro and group and school party rates are available. Contact can also be made via [contact@musee-bataille-fromelles.fr](mailto:contact@musee-bataille-fromelles.fr) or +33(0)3 59611514.

(Paul also took photographs of all named headstones at the new Fromelles Pheasant Wood Cemetery, and these are likely to be posted to Facebook in the coming months, but if you would like a photograph of a particular headstone, please email to Geoffrey Benn at [gvb456@gmail.com](mailto:gvb456@gmail.com) and we will send a copy to you, but please note this will only be those soldiers headstones which were identified in time for July, 2014.)

### NSW ANZAC CENTENARY EXHIBITION UNTIL APRIL, 2015.

State Records is proud to honour the Centenary of World War I and Anzac with an exhibition and website that draws from the archive's vast collection to look at New South Wales life during the war years, through the key themes of:-



- ◆ **In Service** – enlistment and the response of the Government and people of NSW.
- ◆ **On the Home Front** - what day-to-day life was like for people in Sydney and NSW during the war years.
- ◆ **In Remembrance** – how the war was commemorated across NSW, in particular through war memorials.

#### Exhibition - A Call To Arms

*A Call to Arms* highlights records from the declaration of war on 4 August 1914 up until September 1916, when the first plebiscite (public vote) was held on the conscription of young men into war service.

On display at the Western Sydney Records Centre Sept 2014 – April 2015.

#### Website - NSW Anzac Centenary

The NSW Anzac Centenary website features online research guides to help family historians retrieve their WW1 stories from government records. The guides identify research pathways for tracing the stories of NSW soldiers and nurses, and highlight resources from our collection that provide background information to life in New South Wales at the time of the war.

*For those lost so far from home.*

Content will be regularly added to the web site over the course of the Anzac Centenary, 2014-2018. Further information available from State Records NSW, 143 O'Connell Street, Kingswood.

### FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

Chris Clark reported to us that he was fortunate to secure a Last Post Ceremony for 3013 Pte. L. Broadhurst on 20 July, 2014. A link to the Australian War Memorial site is: <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/PAFU2014%2F242.01/>

Jill Byrnes also reported back on her family's trip to Fromelles in honour of her ancestor, 2560 Sgt. David Samuel Anderson, recently identified through the efforts of her family and our researchers. A video has been uploaded to Youtube and can be viewed on the website address of: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntPLCIKHGLA>.

Any other family experiences would be gratefully received.

**Why not  
Submit Your  
own story for  
inclusion in  
future  
Newsletters?**

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE FROMELLES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

It has been our pleasure to work with you during the searching and identification process.

Until now, to ensure that we can communicate with you during the validation process, and send you copies of our Newsletters, we have added your name to our mail out and "temporary" membership list.

However, from 2015 we will be sending out Newsletters only to Association members.

We would very much enjoy having you in our ongoing information updates, and for you to become one of our members.

Membership dues are \$5.00 p.a. for a single, and \$10.00 p.a. for a family. There is absolutely no obligation to retain membership. Details of our bank account are set out on our Membership Application form, which is being sent along with this Newsletter.

### TOUR DE FRANCE 2015.

Big News: the route of the **Tour de France** has been unveiled, and on **8th July 2015**, the race will cross Northern France, including the Somme, scarred by the First World War, and will remember and commemorate Australian and New-Zealander soldiers who fought during WWI.



*For those lost so far from home.*



**The Fromelles  
Association of  
Australia**

103 Bogalara Road  
Old Toongabbie NSW  
2146  
Phone: 02 9636 3415  
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gvb456@gmail.com

The Fromelles Association of Australia has  
incorporated in order:

- To champion the Sacrifice of the Soldiers who served at Fromelles, and their families.
- To promote, encourage, and document research designed to identify the missing soldiers of the Battle of Fromelles.
- To forge strong relationships with organisations and people interested in the Battle of Fromelles, especially families of soldiers, the Australian Army, and the citizens of Fromelles.



*To all our members, researchers, friends and families of the soldiers of  
Fromelles, may we extend to you our best wishes for the Christmas  
holiday period, and may we all have stories to share in 2015.*

*For those lost so far from home.*

## Application for Membership of the Fromelles Association of Australia

### Application for Membership from:

Surname:		First names			
Address:					
City/Town		State		Postcode	
Postal address:					
City/Town		State		Postcode	
Phone (H)		Phone (M)		Email:	
For Family Membership, Additional Members under 18 years of age:					
Surname		First names			
Surname		First names			
Surname		First names			

I hereby apply for Sole / Family Membership of the Fromelles Association of Australia Inc. and agree to abide by the Constitution of the Association

Signed:		Date:
Single member fee:	\$5.00	\$
Family member fee:	\$10.00	\$
Total payment:		

### Payment Methods

Cheque to: The Fromelles Association of Australia Inc.

Mail to: 103 Bogalara Road, Old Toongabbie 2146

Direct Deposit: The Fromelles Association of Australia Inc.

Westpac Bank, Goulburn

BSB: 032 721

Account No.: 310953

*For those lost so far from home.*