



FROMELLES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

For those lost so far from home

February
2016

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DIFFERENT ORGANISERS,

DIFFERENT TARGET AUDIENCES.

It is now February, 2016, and in less than 4 months we will be commemorating the centenary of the Battle of Fromelles. Many of us will be at Fromelles for the first time; many have already been but cannot attend this event. We are all united in one way: the respect we feel that our ancestors deserve as a result of being involved in this, as in any other Battle, and to be given that respect on their internment.

Against this background many of you would have recently read reports published online, but mainly in the British press, that Australia was excluding the British from participating in the Fromelles commemorations. The tone of the articles was alarmingly jingoistic, one commentator even referring to Australians as "Colonials" in his article.

From what we now know, the reports about excluding non-Australians were quite misleading, and probably deliberately so, but definitely sensationally alarmist. Never therefore let the facts get in the way of a good story.

The truth of the matter is that, as pointed out (on our own Facebook site in response to the above article being posted on our Facebook page) by our friends in the UK, *Spirit of Remembrance Battlefield Tours*:

that to keep things in perspective, and as a counter balance on this story, only UK and France citizens can attend the Somme Commemoration on 1 July which is being organised by the UK. Fair enough. Both Telegraph and the Daily Mail (their version a shocker of a story) forget to mention this.

If an event is organised by one country that country is duty bound to look after its own citizens first as both Australia and the UK are doing with their own ceremonies in their particular cases. Also DVA is NOT limiting to just Australians. If they have space left after the application period closes for official tickets (for Australians first) they will open to other than Aussies.

Special points of interest:

- Ticket Allocations
- Travel to Fromelles
- Message to DNA Donors
- Recognition for the Battle of Fromelles
- Badges and Pins

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This is covered in detail at: <https://www.facebook.com/SpiritofRemembrance>.

We have also been informed by **Spirit of Remembrance Battlefield Tours** as a timely comment here that many of you are probably not aware of:

“The official ceremony for the Battle of the Somme on July 1 this year was a ballot for tickets to attend the ceremony at the Thiépval Monument to the Missing. Tickets were ONLY AVAILABLE to people who lived in the UK.

The ballot is only open to those who are resident in the UK: England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man and to those who have a BFPO address.

You are Not eligible to attend if you were an Aussie, Kiwi, South African, Indian and so the list goes on... Quite Sad all of this.”

The commemorations at Fromelles, at Pheasant Wood and VC Corner cemeteries are being organized by Australia. What is happening is being done in accordance with a protocol adopted between the various countries involved in ceremonies commemorating World War 1 events.

We should perhaps take time to remember that the British have also lost many soldiers in Fromelles.

We became involved in this area of the Western Front only in July 1916. In his excellent book *The Lost Legions of Fromelles*, Peter Barton traces the history of events in 1914, in 1915, and in 1916 at Fromelles.

If I may quote from Peter’s book at page 55:-

“The Bavarian narrative states that ‘Burying the British dead took a week’. So it had after the action of December 1914, and so it would in July 1916. British 8th Division losses in the attack at Rouges Bancs on 9 May, 1915 were 4682. In their assault upon the Sugar Loaf the 2nd Northants lost 426 men.”

“The combined casualty count for both 9 May attacks was over 11,500 killed, wounded or missing. In July 1916 the Australian casualty figure would reach 5333. An aggregation of losses in 1914, 1915 and 1916 makes the sector astride Rouges Bancs a candidate for the title of the bloodiest battleground of the Western Front.”

Then at p. 57:

“Over 1300 (British) men remain missing as a result of the May 1915 action; but no memorial marks their passing, or indeed the importance and legacy of the engagement.”

And further:

“Although not one among their ranks would have known it, the Australians who stepped out upon No Man’s Land on the evening of 19 July 1916 and advanced over the sprawled mortal remains of hundreds of their British comrades were playing directly into the hands of Bavarian tacticians.”

It is unfortunate that the invitations to attend are being arranged along the lines they are, but whether we are Australian, British, Indian, South African, or New Zealanders, we are all united in one way: the respect we feel that our ancestors deserve as a result of being involved in this, as in any Battle, and to be given that respect on their internment. Let us therefore also be sympathetic of those from other countries who have not been able to receive the same opportunity as ourselves.

TICKETS AND TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.

If you applied for and received tickets to attend the services at either Fromelles and VC Corner, or Pozieres, you will have been advised that if you are leaving Australia before June, 2016, that you need to contact Ticketek on 1300 364 002 for advice on other arrangements to collect your attendance pass in France. Please don't miss this essential step, because we are looking forward to meeting up with you in Fromelles.

A MESSAGE TO ALL POTENTIAL DNA DONORS

In the past weeks we have become aware that many of our donors have not been contacted by the Australian Army, via mail, nor have they received FRS (DNA donor) kits. Naturally, this has caused concern amongst donors, especially those in frail health. At this time, we do not know who has, and who has not, donated DNA.

At this time, we can only advise that if you have not received a 'DNA kit', your name will be placed onto the Army register for the collections (currently) set down for late 2016. The following is an extract from our "Advice to Donors" document:

It is appropriate to confirm that the Australian Army, Fromelles Project Team undertake all activities regarding the prioritising, collecting and reviewing the results obtained by the DNA laboratory. Thus, we in the Fromelles Association are unaware of who may be selected as a candidate donor, or when the sample might be collected. Though, we do advise donors of the current information made available to us.

If, after our submission has been made, you are concerned that you haven't been contacted by the Army, or:

- *an FRS kits has not arrived, by the time advised*
- *you have not been advised of the outcome of your FRS test*
- *a change has occurred with your address or contact details*

then please direct your enquiries to the Army Fromelles project Team. Individuals can call 1800 019 090, or contact via their web site; <http://www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Unrecovered-War-Casualties-Army/Fromelles/The-Fromelles-project> and follow their link to "Register For The Australian Fromelles Relatives Data Base Click Here".

RECOGNITION OF THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES

We resolved at our AGM in July, 2015, to pursue the recording of the battle of Fromelles as a Battle, and for it to be inscribed as such in Australian war memorials. We are currently preparing a plan of action to pursue that resolution. We will let you know when we are ready to advise you of the details so that you can be involved in the action itself.

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FROMELLES ASSOCIATION

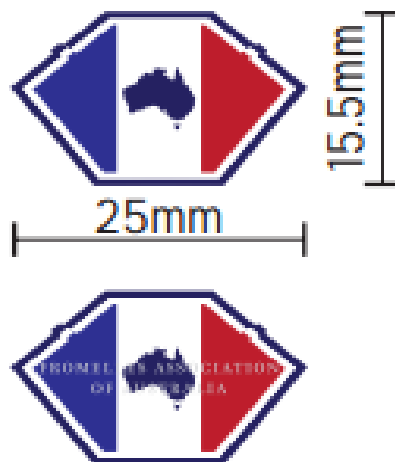
18 JULY, 2016

We are looking for a venue to hold our AGM this year in Lille, France, ahead of the events on 19 July. We will pass on more information when we have located a venue.

FROMELLES ASSOCIATION BADGES AND PINS

We have a logo, and it would be great to be able to wear something displaying it, at Fromelles when we travel there in 2016, or anywhere else we may be. We have therefore made some enquiries with producers of badges and pins.

We settled for now on obtaining embroidered badges which you can sew onto your chosen polo shirt or jacket, and also on hat/lapel badges.



The hat/lapel badge will be 25mm x 15.5mm, and will have the words “Fromelles Association of Australia” as a watermark through the logo itself.

We will need a run of 250 to get the cost down to \$3.85 + GST.

Postage will be extra depending on where you are.

We can get embroidered badges with our logo and with "Fromelles Association of Australia" included. The size is approximately 90mm x 55mm, so a fair bit smaller than a normal beer coaster.

But it is a good size to stitch onto the chest of your choice of polo or t-shirt if you intend to take one over. The cost is likely to be \$6.60 + GST and postage if we order 50; but \$4.30 + GST and postage if we can order 100.



We are ALSO exploring offering polo shirts, exclusively for sale to members, already inscribed with our logo emblem on the front, and the Fromelles Association of Australia text on the back (as in the banner on page 1 of this Newsletter). Purchase price will be approximately \$35.00 each **plus** postage and handling - all at cost. Any residues from these sales,



will be donated to the Museum at Fromelles. As a production run with minimum numbers for orders is required for these shirts, your interest should also be expressed as a matter of urgency. Final design and exact cost will depend on the level of interest expressed by members. Monies will need to be paid **up front**, as we simply do not have the ability to carry this cost.

If there IS something you would like to explore, you could post in your suggestions or quotes.

Send us an email to gyb456@gmail.com, so we can get an indication of how many of each of the items you are interested in before we commission an order, **no later than Sunday 20 March, 2016, so we can get them organized before the centenary in July.**



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OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

We will place information on the Facebook page progressively, and we welcome your own contributions to the page itself.

We will also upload a Membership Application form to our Facebook page so you can get your “friends” to download and complete one.

YOUR FAMILY’S STORY IS WAITING TO BE TOLD

If you have a family member who fought at Fromelles, let us have your account of what you have discovered, how it made you feel, and what you have done since you have taken on this journey.

We would love to publish it for you.



The Fromelles Association of Australia was 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.

The Fromelles Association of Australia

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