

**In this edition:**

New Identifications

*

Crowd Funding Appeal

*

I Gave A DNA Sample. What Now?

*

Wollondilly Anglican College

*

The International Soil Project

*

A Mosaic to Honour Fromelles

*

Western Front Association

*

Notice of Annual General Meeting

*

Lest We Forget

TWO MORE SOLDIERS IDENTIFIED.**MORE ARE ANTICIPATED.**

The identification of two more soldiers interred in Pheasant Wood Cemetery at Fromelles is the culmination of research carried out by members of our Association, and families spread far and wide. Even so, The Fromelles Association of Australia is a part of a much larger effort to identify the soldiers of Fromelles, and we are deeply honoured to work with, and for families to achieve identifications. It is highly appropriate that the unstinting leadership of the Australian Government, Army and particularly the staff of the Unrecovered War Casualties Section - Army, Fromelles Project Team are acknowledged as an example of their commitment to our fallen coppers.

Since 2013 we have devoted tens of thousands of hours and donated much money to our efforts. See for example, the chart of donors listed in our Newsletter for March, 2017, and in Facebook in April, 2017, for those who have come forward or been identified as suitable candidates for Y-DNA or Mt-DNA.

We together with family – have identified suitable donor/s for the following soldiers:-

- 2825 Pte Alfred Thompson, 55 Battalion – Victoria
- 795 Pte Claude Yeo, 30 Battalion – NSW

Both now have headstones at their last resting places, and some details about each are set out below.

We are also anxiously awaiting news of other possible identifications, and any further announcements will be broadcast at the appropriate time.

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**Claude (also known as Claud)
YEO
Regimental Number 795 - Served
with 30th Battalion.**

This 39 year old auctioneer from Randwick, with no previous military service, and who had no family of his own, enlisted at Liverpool NSW on 1 July, 1915. His next of kin was his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth yeo, of West Maitland NSW.

He was reported missing at Fromelles, 20 July 1916. After a Court of Enquiry was held, he was listed as Killed in Action, 20 July, 1916.

Statement by Pte C.B. DAWSON: 'Pte Stan Stevens, IX Pl, C. Co. was standing close to him when a shell burst near him. When the smoke cleared there was no trace of Yeo. Stevens looked for him but could not find him. Stevens concluded he had been blown to pieces. This occurred at Fleurbaix on July 20th.'

Statement, Red Cross File No 3040205, 759 Pte F. SCHOLLES, Machine Gun Section, 30th Bn (patient, No 6 General Hospital, Rouen), 7 December 1916: 'Informant says he saw Yeo killed by a shell just as they were starting for the attack at Fromelles on the 19th July.'

Second statement, 145 Pte C.R. DAWSON, C Company, 30th Bn, 15 January 1917: 'Pte. Stan Stevens, IX Pl, C. Co., was standing close to him when a shell burst near him. When the smoke had cleared there was no trace of Yeo. Stevens looked for him but could not find him. Stevens concluded he had been blown to pieces. This occurred at Fleurbaix on July 20th.'

Third statement, 713 Pte J. McWILLIAM, C Company, 30th Bn, 19 February 1917: 'I saw Claude Yeo shot through the chest and killed outright over on the German barbed wire at Fleurbaix, about 7 p.m. on 19th. July. The body had to be left when we came back next morning. He belonged to C.X.' He was awarded the following Medals: 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal.



Alfred THOMPSON
Regimental number 2825
- Served with 55th Battalion.

This 22 year old farmer, a single man with no previous military service enlisted at Warwick Farm near Liverpool, NSW on 5 August, 1915.

His next of kin was his mother, 'Mrs E Thompson, Frenchs Forest, Manly, Sydney, New South Wales'.

He was initially reported missing but later recorded as Killed in Action 20 July, 1916.

His records reveal the following information:

Communicated by Foreign Office, 3 October 1916: 'Identity disc and Pay-book forwarded through Berne to Foreign Office 27 September 1916. Previously reported MISSING, 20/7/16, now reported KILLED IN ACTION 20/7/16.'

Note on file: '... australische, Kriegegefangene Thompson, Alfred, Sold. D.Kp. 55. austr. Bn. am 20.7.16 veratorben ist.'

Note on Red Cross File No 2730104: 'Identity disc received from Germany and despatched to N/K. 24.1.17.'

Note on file: 'No trace Germany. Cert. by Capt. Mills 10.10.19.'

Note on file: 'Central Enquiry Office, Royal Prussian War Office: This certifies that we hold a death card Ref: 111, which states that the Australian Prisoner of War Pte. Alfred Thompson, D. Coy. 55th Battn, died on 20/7/16. Notified by Army Corps 6.'

Letter, mother to Base Records, 8 May 1917: '... I also want to ask about my Sons deferred pay. I am told here I can't get it till his papers come through. I did not trouble about the pension as I did not sell my Son's life but he gave it of his own free will, and it is only fair [underlined] that I should have what he earned. The flower of this country have been taken while the pleasure seeker & shirker stay behind. They will reap there (sic.) reward from a higher power than ours.'

Copy of letter, mother to Base Records, 27 September 1921: 'Enclosed are 2 slips showing that my son's body was taken by the Germans, as when the stretcher bearer went back to look for him, after takeing (sic) his mate (George Orchard) to the station his body was no where about. I found out the name of the place where my son's division was in action on the 19th July 1916 - (Fermelles) I don't know the correct way to spell it.' Note attached: 'Killed 20.7.16 at Fromelles and buried by the Germans.'

He was awarded the following medals: 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal.
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At this time of great joy for some, we are also thinking of the many, many families who dared to hope for identification, but who are now sad and grieving. It is probable that those not identified, lie at VC Corner and other Cemeteries.

But as you will also know, we will not stop searching for the identities of those who have yet to be identified.



**FROMELLES: FOREVER
UNIDENTIFIED
- FOR THE SAKE OF
A FEW DOLLARS.**

In February 2018, we sent an email to everyone with whom we have had contact at any time, regarding the search for soldiers' relatives. We have decided to pursue further research using an appeal via the Crowd Funding site 'GoFundMe'. A shortened and edited, version of that email is set out below.

Harry Moffit, Downie Dodd, William Allison Clark and 96 other soldiers, from the Battle of Fromelles, remain unidentified mainly because, since 2010, family members, researchers, authors and our own volunteers have tried to identify DNA donors for these men, without success. Obviously, financial help is needed for archival searches in UK, Ireland and Scandinavia/Europe.

Sadly, time is probably running out. We must accept that the Australian Government will eventually decide to cease funding our Fromelles Project. Our last hope is to seek out competent local genealogists in villages, towns and cities in the areas mentioned to find living DNA donors. Only then, can we say that we did our best.

Background: The Battle of Fromelles and the The German Death List (GDL). The Australian War Memorial reports:

"Over 5,500 Australians became casualties. Almost 2,000 of them were killed in action or died of wounds and some 400 were captured. This is believed to be the greatest loss by a single division in 24 hours during the entire First World War. Some consider Fromelles the most tragic event in Australia's history."

For those lost so far from home.

The battle occurred on the 19/20th July 1916 and involved soldiers of the 5th Division, 1st AIF, and troops from the British 61st Division. After the battle, 1335 Australians were missing. In 2009, a mass grave was found at Fromelles containing the remains of 250 Australians buried by the Germans shortly after the battle. The Germans had provided a list to The Red Cross of 190 names at the time of the mass burial, along with recovered ID tags or other small personal items. The list came to be known as the *German Death List* or just 'GDL'.

When the bodily remains were uncovered, DNA and other forensic evidence was taken, and all were reburied in individual graves in the new Pheasant Wood Cemetery in 2010. Since then, 150 have now been identified through family DNA, and other items found with the remains. The others still await identification.

There are two types of DNA in every person:

(i) *Y DNA* is from the direct male line - it will pass from one male to a descendant male to another. So a son passes on the Y DNA of his father. It does not pass from father to daughter.

(ii) *Mt DNA* is from the direct female line - it can be passed from one female to a descendant female to another. But it can also pass down to the male offspring of the female, but no further. So while a daughter can, her son cannot pass on his mother's Mt DNA.

Our Search for the Unidentified.

We are searching for family of the unidentified particularly those on the GDL. This means profiling individual soldiers from the GDL and others, who died near the German trenches. We expect that search costs will amount to approximately \$AUD1000.00 per soldier.

In March 2018, we intend to concentrate initially on 10 soldiers from the GDL across all geographic search areas, hence the first target of \$AUD10,000.00. At the conclusion of those 10 searches we will provide a comprehensive report on the individual search outcomes, and with your vital financial support will then move on to another group of soldiers. The first group of soldiers who will be the subject of our search are listed below.

Group 1: The first 10 from the GDL.

* 4155A Roy Allison **CLARK**, 54th Bat. - Y DNA needed (Edinburgh, Scotland);

* 494 James Joseph **CURRAN**, 31st Bat. - Mt DNA needed, (Doogan/Dugan from Donegal, Ireland);

* 4770 Private Downie **DODD**, 56th Bat. - Y DNA needed (Edinburgh, Scotland);

* 3819 James John **HARRIS**, 55th Bat. - Y DNA (Dublin, Ireland and UK) and Mt DNA (from mother Kate SMITH of Dublin) needed;

* 1624 Jack (John Thomas) **JOYCE**, 32nd Bat, - Y DNA needed (Wolverhampton/Lancashire), and early generations from Ireland;

* 470 James Lowther **MASON**, 31st Bat, Mt DNA needed (Lowther) from Penrith, (Cumbria, UK);

* Lt Harry Lowry **MOFFITT**, 53rd Bat. - Y DNA needed (Fermanagh, Northern Ireland);

* 728 Henry Oscar **NELSON**, 30th Bat. - Y DNA needed from Sweden, Mt DNA needed, (McCRACKEN) from Dublin (Ireland);

* 1312 Horace Frederick **ROBINSON**, 30th Bat.- Y needed. b. Gillingham Kent, lived at Aldershot where father John was in the army;

* L.Corp Harold Thompson **SMITH**, 8FC, Mt DNA (families – Leeming, Mawson & Waters) from Bolton Le Sands (England) needed.

All monies donated will be spent on genealogical searches, with a full accounting provided, and monthly updates of the research carried out. This reporting will be made on the Fromelles Association of Australia's Facebook page.

Further Information: The search does not exclude any other missing soldiers. So, please contact us if you have any interest in, or information about, ANY of the missing. To contact the Fromelles Research Co-Ordinator, go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/Fromelles-Association-of-Australia-400714926696817/>

Obviously we, the Fromelles Association of Australia are seeking funding. If you can make a donation, log onto the GoFundMe page and follow the prompts:

<https://www.gofundme.com/Fromelles-for-ever-unidentified>

You will see the details of all three groups of unidentified soldiers for whom we hope to locate living relatives.

As well as funding, we greatly value any knowledge, which will contribute towards research and we will add any information supplied about individual soldiers to the following page:

<https://www.ancestry.com.au/family-tree/tree/71398119/family/>

Type the name into "Find".

The missing soldiers identified by your assistance cannot say, "Thanks". However, we can and we do say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you", for helping us to identify an Australian soldier.

Royce Atkinson

AN UPDATE FROM MARG O'LEARY

On 27 March, 2018, we received the following update:

Hello everybody, the donations have now gone over \$4000.00, so thanks to all who contributed, large and small.

This now gives us enough to start the research for another [our 4th] soldier, 728, Henry Oscar Nelson, 30th Battalion, for whom we have contracted a professional genealogist in Sweden, to research his father Martin Nelson (Nilssen/Nielsen) to try to find a Y DNA donor. Keep fingers crossed. His mother was from Dublin, so we would have to research that also, but for the moment, will see if the Y DNA can be found.

Thanks again to everybody.

Cheers

Marg

I GAVE A DNA SAMPLE, BUT I HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING FURTHER!

“It is now over a year since I posted back my DNA sample. Still no correspondence or answer received to date. How do I follow this up? Is the soldier they are trying to identify a relative or not?”

This is a common question, even as a response from a mailout. We understand that people want to be updated, but we have to reinforce the information supplied to all donors when they embark on the process of (hopeful) discovery:

- ◆ We try to identify suitable DNA donors for both Y-DNA and Mt-DNA.
- ◆ When we have completed a peer review of the information available to us, we submit that information to The ARMY's Unrecovered War Casualties Section.
- ◆ The Army then contacts the hopeful donors, and thereafter liaises with the hopeful donors.
- ◆ We do not get any information on a progressive basis from The Army, and we therefore cannot advise anyone who has one of these questions to raise.
- ◆ No advice from the Army means that at that time there is no match. We understand that it is possible to get a match some years later, either from technological improvements in the testing or by the identification of others—which has the effect of “narrowing down” some ‘similar’ DNA profiles.

We are therefore, in effect, in the "same boat" as the person asking the question, and don't know whether there has been a successful result until the Minister for Veterans' Affairs makes the announcements, i.e. which soldier has been matched with DNA samples supplied by family.

Frustratingly in our view, The Army has a policy of ONLY announcing and informing relatives of successful identifications. Simply put, they do not, and will not tell us before any relative is informed. Sadly, therefore, the only method for a hopeful donor to follow is to contact Army on 1800 019 090 and ask “What is the status of my DNA donation?”

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YOUR INVITATION TO ATTEND THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ANZAC MEMORIAL AT WOLLONDILLY ANGLICAN COLLEGE, TAHMOOR.

An Invitation has been extended to the Fromelles Association of Australia and to friends and family by Wollondilly Anglican College, to attend the Opening of their ANZAC Memorial (Remembering Fromelles), At Wollondilly Anglican College, Tahmoor, on June 18, 2018.

The official Opening will take place in the College's ANZAC Memorial and Shelter on the College Grounds.



The Official Ceremony and Dedication begins at 10am.

Guests associated with Fromelles are invited to register at the Alfred Deakin Administration Building at 9.15am.

Why are we being invited? Simply put, the Foundation Headmaster, Dr. Stuart J. Quarmby has two ancestors interred in Pheasant Wood Cemetery at Fromelles.

His knowledge of these soldiers, and of others in his extended family has been passed on to the student body, and it is their desire that we remember those who have gone before us, as in his words:

Lest we be complacent; Lest we be apathetic; and Lest our careless indifference muddies the sacrifice of those who thought our future attitude to be worth the price. Lest we forget.

Your Invitation is attached with this Newsletter, along with a copy of Dr. Stuart Quarmby's own Statement prepared following the announcement of the official opening in various media on or after 1 March, 2018.

Please RSVP to Rhonda Hay at the College by Friday 8 June, 2018, telephone 02.46842577.

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INVITATION TO LAUNCH OF INTERNATIONAL SOIL PROJECT.

I was recently invited by our State Premier, The Honourable Gladys Berejiklian MP, to attend the Launch of the ANZAC Memorial International Soil Project at Parliament House on 7 March, 2018.

The ANZAC Memorial, Sydney is undergoing extensions which will incorporate a Hall of Service. 100 sites of significance, at which New South Wales servicemen participated will be honoured. A sample of soil from each of those sites, and from every town where soldiers enlisted in NSW is being gathered. Each will be individually sealed in a glass jar which is to be placed on display alongside the name of the site of significance in the Hall of Service.

About 1600 glass jars filled with red, brown or sandy-coloured dirt from all across the state, and across the world will be displayed as part of the artwork to honour WW1 soldiers from NSW.

Noteworthy is that a soil sample has not been able to be obtained from North Korea, and two other locations.

Fromelles will be one of the 100 such sites honoured, and a soil sample from that location will be on display next to its name. Fromelles will not be included with or as part of, any other site of significance.

Geoffrey Benn

AN ARTIST'S COMMISSION TO CREATE MOSAICS FEATURING FROMELLES AND OTHER EVENTS OF WORLD WAR 1.

Susan Deprost, works as a French teacher in a secondary school in Victoria. She is also a mosaic artist.

Her Grandfather, John Henry Stephens, 2938 (1st A I F, 58th Battalion) fought at Fromelles. He was born in Cornwell, England in 1889, arriving in Australia in 1912. He left Australia in September 1915 with the 58th Battalion, to serve King and Country, as did over 332,000 Australian men and women in the course of World War 1.

After training in Egypt, John Stephens served with the 15th Field Ambulance on the Western Front in France, and stayed there until the end of hostilities.



He fortunately returned to live in Essendon, the area where the 58th Battalion was raised. He passed away at the Repatriation Hospital, Heidelberg in Melbourne, in April, 1980 aged 91. Susan now feels a rather strong connection with the battlefields of the Western Front and the Repatriation Hospital at Heidelberg.

She also has her grandfather's memoirs, in which he makes reference to being under the command of Pompey Elliot, and that Captain Rupert Vance Moon (Mickey Moon) was awarded the 58th Battalion's only Victoria Cross for his actions at Bullecourt on the 12th May, 1917.

Susan also had four of her Great Uncles (New Zealand Army) serve in France during WW1 - four Rudkin Brothers: Ernie, Edgar, Gerard and Alfred.

Susan was commissioned to create a three panel mural depicting the 3 years of the WW1 campaign. These

would be made up of images of the Battle of Fromelles 1916, the stalemate of the Western Front during 1917, and the eventual conclusion of hostilities and Armistice of 1918. When asked to do so by Mr. Robert Winther OAM, Veterans Liaison Officer, at the Repatriation Hospital, Heidelberg, Victoria, the obvious starting point was FROMELLES. It was here that the AIF first saw action on the 19th of July, 1916. The mosaics are to be placed near the site of the Fromelles Garden, at the Repatriation Hospital, Heidelberg, Melbourne.

For those lost so far from home.

One mural will be dedicated each year on Remembrance Day to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of each event - in 2016 for Fromelles; in 2017 for Monash; and in 2018 for The Armistice.

In 2016 Susan visited Edgar Rudkin's grave at the Euston Rd Cemetery, Colincamps, near Albert. Ernie and Gerard have their names at Tyne Cot and Buttes Cemeteries. Alfred Rudkin returned to New Zealand and was awarded the Military Medal.

Susan was privileged to have been at Fromelles on July 19th 2016 (with a group at the official DVA Commemoration of the Centenary of Fromelles in France) and stood at the Memorial to the Australian Fallen.

"The sheer horror and carnage of that action was forever etched in my mind as I stood on the battle fields of Fromelles and listened to the description of the battles. The once bloody battlefields are now such peaceful and tranquil fields, but they too bear the scars of 100 years ago.

"As one walks through these fields, pieces of artillery shrapnel can easily be seen in the soil, a reminder of the enormous artillery barrages that troops on both sides endured. "The local farmers call these pieces "the iron harvest". Each year as they plough these fields, pieces of iron, large and small, appear on the surface.

"I managed to bring some pieces back to Australia and have incorporated them in the Fromelles and future works."

"It is my privilege to be able to complete these works as a tribute to those Australians who fought in WWI as well as a reminder to us and future generations of the sacrifices they made and the gratitude we have for their service.

"I hope that the murals will remind us that although at times we are faced with hardships unimaginable, when hope seems lost and future uncertain, both in military life as well as in civilian life, we as a Nation and a people will persevere and win through as those men and women did.

"I wrote to Mr. Peter Corlett asking him for his verbal permission to allow me to incorporate the "Cobber Statue" image in my Fromelles mural. It's such a powerful image and to actually have seen the statue in France and attend the 99th Fromelles Commemoration at the Shrine here in Melbourne, where I personally met Peter Corlett and Lambis Englezos was truly unforgettable.

"Mr. Robert Winther has informed me that the three mosaic murals will be exhibited at the Shrine, here in Melbourne, before they are permanently installed at the hospital."

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INVITATION TO THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION MEETING

Attached to this Newsletter is your invitation to attend the the next Australian branch meeting of the Western Front Association from 12:30 to 16:30 on Saturday 21st April. At "The Bowlers Club", Level 2, 99 York St, Sydney CBD. These meetings are always very informative.

Please contact Paul Simadas if you are able to attend. RSVP to wfaaustraliabrandh@gmail.com by 15th April.

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ANZAC DAY 25 APRIL, 2018

Many soldiers who were evacuated from Gallipoli became soldiers who served in the 5th Division forces at Fromelles, and elsewhere in France in 1916. During the pause for reflection that will be observed on 25 April, please take a moment to remember those who also served at Fromelles.

LEST WE FORGET!

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**NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR
FROMELLES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

Date: 29 July, 2018.

Venue: Castle Hill RSL Club, 77 Castle Street, Castle Hill NSW

Our Annual General Meeting will return to Sydney this year. Hopefully the venue will enable more people to be present and enjoy the event and the topics being discussed on the day. The facilities at Castle Hill are excellent. We will update details if necessary via emails and our Facebook page in the meantime.

The meeting proper is expected to start at 11.00am after a minute's silence.

Anyone with an article to be put on the agenda, please contact Geoffrey Benn via email on gvb456@gmail.com

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**FROMELLES ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA**

For those lost so far from home