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A lot has been happening since our last Newsletter, so hopefully, we will be able to fill you in with this edition.

## **DEDICATION OF THE ANZAC MEMORIAL SHELTER AT WOLLONDILLY ANGLICAN COLLEGE, 18 JUNE, 2018** - From Geoffrey Benn

On Monday, 18 June, 2018, I was a guest at the Wollondilly Anglican College for the official dedication of their ANZAC Memorial Shelter, and garden adjoining.

College students, dignitaries and veterans gathered at a ceremony to watch the unveiling of an Anzac memorial. Dignitaries included Former Prime Minister John Howard and director of the Australian War Memorial Dr Brendan Nelson, who joined headmaster Dr Stuart Quarmby for the official opening the Anzac shelter. The ceremony paid tribute and honoured soldiers who had died in World War I. Several speakers talked about the Battle of Fromelles, the horrors of war and the lives of particular soldiers and their families.

The statue, made by sculptors Gillie and Marc Schattner, has a special meaning to the headmaster, and to myself.

The soldier is a representation of Acting Sergeant William Polding Ryan, who was 20 years old when he was killed in action at the Battle of Fromelles.

He was Dr Quarmby's grandmother's uncle. He was my maternal grandfather's brother. Dr. Quarmby is also related to Alfred Tuck, who also perished at Fromelles, and is also buried in Pheasant Wood cemetery at Fromelles.

The statue was unveiled by me, as great nephew of William Ryan, and as Secretary of the Fromelles Association, and Hanna, who is the granddaughter of Dr. Quarmby, and is a year one student at the College, who is the great, great, great, great niece of Sergeant William Polding Ryan. Hanna was the model for the little girl in the statue.

"The statue of the soldier represents all of the diggers who fought and died in the Battle at Fromelles in a 24-hour period," Dr. Quarmby said.

"[When looking at the statue] imagine every student saying 'thank you for paying such a price'," Dr Quarmby said. "Imagine him saying 'thanks for finding me'."





Dr Quarmby spoke about his relatives Corporal Alfred George Tuck and Mr Ryan who died on their first day of battle on July 19, 1916 at Fromelles.

Their bodies lay in mass unmarked graves until they were identified by DNA from surviving family members.

This event is in many ways, just one of the outcomes of a phone call I received at work in March, 2010, to advise that my great uncle had been identified by use of another family member's DNA. I was, and still am very chuffed at what has come about because of that phone call.

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### VISITS TO THE FROMELLES (PHEASANT WOOD) MILITARY CEMETERY

Our connections now extend to people living in many countries around the world. Some live in the United Kingdom and let us know when they are planning to travel to France, at which they will be visiting Fromelles. One such correspondent is Liz Mitchell, who has posted on our Facebook page. Liz wrote to us in April to advise us that:

'The Fromelles Association have been fantastic. I was contacted a few years ago by Marg and of course Royce. We traced our male – in Germany – and then discovered a whole side of the family and went and met them. It was great.'

So if you are aware of family making a trek to Fromelles, please let us know and perhaps we can arrange for some photos to be obtained of a family burial site.

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## UNEXPECTED FAMILY CONNECTIONS FROM OUR RESEARCH FOR DONORS FOR HARRY MOFFATT.

News from a correspondent in Canada.

When you look for the families of a soldier thought to be buried in the Pheasant Wood mass graves, you come across some wonderful connections. One such event came to our notice recently. We have been searching for relatives to provide samples of DNA for Harry Moffatt. One of our lines led us to a correspondent living in Canada. Other lines of enquiry revealed family members in Australia.

In a recent mailout inviting people to attend the John Laffin Memorial Lecture Day on 15 September, hosted by the Western Front Association, Australian Branch, we received this reply from our Canadian friend:

“Thank you for the invitation, but I will be busy showing my Australian cousins around my country, Canada. These cousins are relatives of Harry Moffatt, one of the soldiers buried in the cemetery in Fromelles. We were brought together by the Fromelles Association, because I was a possible DNA link to Harry. (Names removed) have become internet friends and now we will become real friends as we travel around Ontario and Quebec together.”

We may not have found Harry Moffatt, or all the soldiers in Pheasant Wood, but some families have found their own extended families. The outcomes are beyond expectation. Gotta love this project.

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## THE FROMELLES FAMILY GATHERING and PRESENTATION BY Prof. TONY POLLARD.

TONY POLLARD, Professor of Conflict Archaeology and History, and Director of the Centre

for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow, was in Australia to give a presentation at the National Maritime Museum on 22 June. The presentation was part of an archaeological series titled ‘New Ideas on Old Wars – the Archaeology of War’.

Tony had been leader of the team from University of Glasgow, commissioned by the Australian Army to examine ground at Pheasant Wood, to verify the presence or absence of mass graves containing the bodies of Australian soldiers killed in July, 1916.

It is a matter of history now that in 2007 he directed the survey and evaluation that brought to light the First World War mass graves of Australian troops at Fromelles, France. Their remains were subsequently exhumed in 2009.

While in Australia, we in the Fromelles Association of Australia, the Families and Friends of the First AIF, and the Western Front Association arranged for Professor Pollard to attend a specially arranged session on 23 June, which we called the ‘Fromelles Family Gathering’.



Professor Pollard gave those in attendance a personal insight into the excavation at Fromelles. He also advised us of the profound effect it had on him when he was able to verify the presence of soldiers in the mass burial pits. Also present to give talks on Fromelles were Lambis Englezos AM, Ray Martin, Chris Bryett, Patrick Lindsay AM, Professor Richard Wright, and Royce Atkinson.

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### COMMEMORATION OF THE 102ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES AT SYDNEY ON 19 JULY, 2018.

The skies stayed open, and the day was a bright one, for those who attended this service. The following (abbreviated) report of the service comes to us from Jim Munro of Families and Friends of the First AIF. For the full version please go to [www.ffaif.org.au](http://www.ffaif.org.au).

The Families and Friends of the First AIF in conjunction with the Trustees of the Anzac Memorial, hosted the Commemoration of the 102<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles at The Anzac Memorial Hyde Park, Sydney on Thursday 19 July 2018.

The Commemoration was preceded by a Commemorative Procession of about 90 people on a mild winter morning from the Archibald Fountain that commemorates the association of Australia and France in The Great War to the Anzac Memorial.

The Commemorative Procession re-enacts the veterans of the Australian 5<sup>th</sup> Division marching to the ANZAC Memorial on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle to pass to the Trustees the responsibility for remembering their service and sacrifice and that of their fallen comrades in perpetuity.

The procession symbolically represents the “400 yards”, the widest part of “No-man’s land” on the Fromelles battlefield, and paid homage to the 5th Division veterans marching to the Anzac Memorial for the 50th anniversary commemoration in 1966.

Master of Ceremonies, and FFAIF Member Darren Mitchell welcomed guests and read a Vice Regal Message from His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and FFAIF Patron-in-Chief.

Brigadier Neil Sweeney AM, Deputy Commander 2nd Division, The Australian Army delivered the Commemorative Address giving some insights into the Battle of Fromelles and why it was a disaster and acknowledged how it had impacted upon many families. He also reflected on its legacy, particularly for modern military leaders in areas such as assessing intelligence, identification and management of risks, the importance of communications, and welfare of serving military personnel and supporting them and their families both during and after their military service. You can hear Brigadier Sweeney’s Commemorative Address on the Anzac Memorial’s Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/AnzacMemorial](https://www.facebook.com/AnzacMemorial).



*For those lost so far from home.*



John Clingan delivered a unique Family Reflection for the Clingan and Grogan Families. John's great uncle, Private Alexander Stanley Clingan 53<sup>rd</sup> Bn was Killed in Action at Fromelles, buried by the Germans after the battle and has been identified through DNA matching. John told of when, after he and his wife Dorothy had attended Alexander's headstone dedication in 2010, they then went to VC Corner Cemetery and were separately looking through the list of names on the walls and Dorothy saw the name of her great uncle Sgt Vince Grogan, 60<sup>th</sup> Bn, also Killed in Action. Possibly the two great uncles met, Alexander from Waterloo in Sydney and Vince from Bairnsdale, Victoria, possibly not, but their descendants did, fell in love and have raised their children and now have a unique Fromelles connection. Vincent is also on the list of those soldiers buried by the Germans near Pheasant Wood and so the family is now trying to find suitable DNA donors.

You can hear John's Family reflection on the Anzac Memorial's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/AnzacMemorial](https://www.facebook.com/AnzacMemorial).

In a small world co-incidence, the Master of Ceremonies for the Dedication of 9 newly named headstones and the Commemoration at Fromelles in France later that day was John's cousin Colonel Scott Clingan, Australian Defence Attache – Commemorations, at the Australian Embassy in Paris.

Wreaths were laid while Piper Jim Braid played the Lament, alternating with the NSW Police Band. Jim Braid is a relative of Sgt James Dodd 53<sup>rd</sup> Bn and Pte Downie Dodd 56<sup>th</sup> Bn KIA at Fromelles.

The Epilogue was delivered by President of FFFAIF, Jim Munro. Mr Munro recognised that: "Today we honour the service and sacrifice of those who fought in the Battle of Fromelles – they did what their country asked of them. They had little or no experience in trench warfare, they had not worn steel hats before. They were keen to gain experiences and reputations that would leave the disappointment of Gallipoli behind. They now had their own commanders, who were somewhat experience; they now had artillery, although it had little experience; and they had their own machine guns. It is these ordinary men, with their aspirations and enthusiasm that we honour today – 102 years after they went into battle– we owe it to them and their families to honour their service and sacrifice".

It is also 86 years ago today that the Foundation Stones were laid for this Anzac Memorial in 1932. – one by a soldier (Sir Phillip Game, the Governor of NSW) and the other by a citizen (Bertram Stevens, the Premier of New South Wales) to highlight the loss to the community inflicted by the Great War. Mr Munro invited all those who attended today to return on this day next year to show that this loss is not forgotten.

He said he was particularly pleased to see that another nine (9) of the soldiers reported as killed with no known grave have been identified and now have their own named headstone over their final resting place. There are still about 1,100 soldiers who were killed in the Battle of Fromelles and lie in un-named graves and Mr Munro called for all Australians who have a relative killed in the Battle of



*For those lost so far from home.*



Fromelles to provide a DNA sample to the Unrecovered War Casualty Unit of the Army to help identify more of these men and help them get their identity back.

Our President, Royce Atkinson, was able to stand with Marjorie Manns, a relative of Alexander McCulloch, whose headstone would be unveiled in Fromelles later that day. Royce and Marjorie laid a wreath together, in remembrance. Of Alexander McCulloch (see prior page).

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## FROMELLES COMMEMORATION SERVICE AT FROMELLES, FRANCE

ON 19 JULY, 2018

- from Geoffrey Benn

This year, with my wife Anne, I was able to attend the service at Fromelles due to a number of fortunate circumstances, and represent the Association on the occasion of the unveiling of 9 new headstones. Those identified this year were: Captain Kenneth Malcolm MORTIMER, Corporal Alfred THOMPSON, Private Henry BELL, Private William Edwin BOYCE, Private Henry GARDNER, Private Alexander McCULLOCH, Private Stanley Richard O'DONNELL, Private James Robert SMITH, and Private Claude YEO.



photographie Dominique Bascour - juil 2018

Anne and I were able to join the official party at the Cross of Sacrifice, and join in the service. The service began with an assembling of representatives and participants at the Ecole Cobbers, but due to school holidays, the school was not in session. But that was not to prevent children from the school being involved in the ceremony.

After assembling at the school, the procession through the streets of Fromelles took place. There was a pause outside the Town Hall, to honour the fallen, before moving on to Pheasant Wood Military Cemetery for the service.

The Master of Ceremonies was Colonel Scott Clingan, cousin of John Clingan, who himself was a relative of previously-identified Alexander Clingan. John had earlier in the day in Sydney, given a speech, which is mentioned in the previous article.

I'd been able to arrange via our friend Carole Laignel, a member of FFFAIF, to have a wreath



for the service. On behalf of the Fromelles Association of Australia, I laid a wreath when able to do so. I was pleased and glad to be standing next to our friend in Fromelles, Pierre Seillier, who has spent, and continues to spend, a considerable amount of his own time, preparing dedication and tribute cards to the soldiers who served at Fromelles. We should all wish to have such a friend.

After the various speeches were delivered, it came time to reveal the headstones of those who had been identified this

year. School children from Ecole Cobbers had been given the task of leading various persons to the headstone of the soldier to be identified. First in the order was that of Captain Mortimer. Other families represented were those of Gardner, McCulloch, Bell, and Thompson. Family descendants were present for Gardner, Bell, and Thompson, but in the case of Alexander McCulloch, I was honoured together with Major Dave Wilson of of UWC-A to be called upon

*For those lost so far from home.*





photographie Dominique Bascour -juil 2018

to unveil Alexander's headstone.

[Picture: Brian Thompson & Family with Alexander Thompson]

Others whose families were unable to attend, were honoured by serving members of the Australian Defence forces, both Army and Navy, and equally respected by those who did so.

I had also been asked to read some family letters to Bell. The new Principal of Ecole Cobbers and a family member were present at his headstone unveiling. So after the formalities were concluded, Major Wilson and I read those letters in front of his headstone.

[Picture: Major Dave Wilson & Geoffrey Benn at the headstone of Alexander McCulloch]



After the formalities had concluded, it was possible for the public and those present to mingle in the cemetery and to exchange stories. We then returned to Ecole Cobbers for what is called 'the refreshment drink' by our French friends, and to share pleasant-ries, business cards, and email and home addresses for future events and correspondence.



photographie Dominique Bascour -juil 2018





All too soon, it was time to return home, after having met with, shared time with, laughed and cried with, those who were there on that warm and very pleasant evening in northern France, 102 years after our ancestors were so mercilessly lost. Fear not: We will be back.

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#### ANOTHER WAY OF LOCATING INFORMATION:

**<https://fromellesremembered.wordpress.com>**

We have now opened a website page, where we will be adding articles, such as these ones from our Newsletter, and individual stories of soldiers, along with pictures of soldiers and events as they come to pass. You may now go to our website at the address above and use the tabs to hopefully find more information about these topics.

It is 'early days', and there is a lot of material to be uploaded for future access, but please check in from time to time. If you have any articles you would like to submit for uploading, please send the information to us via email to: [gvb456@gmail.com](mailto:gvb456@gmail.com), .

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In closing this Newsletter, we are pleased to be able to publish the following:

## FROMELLES

by Maureen Clifford, the Scribbly Bark Poet

The thunder rolled, and dark clouds came, and soon the War Gods called  
young men to fight for King and country, Mothers were appalled.  
These Mothers in each county wept as they sent sons to war.  
Few knew where their boys would be sent once they left England's shore.  
The men were mustered, shipped aboard and left England behind.  
They knew not what was waiting, but were calm within their minds  
convinced they fought to keep loved ones at home safe and protected,  
but when they landed at Fromelles 'twas far worse than expected.  
The air was thick with bullets in a criss-cross grid of death.  
Hundreds were mown down where they stood; ne'er chance to draw a breath.  
The German forces had set up machine gun enfilades.  
The Aussie boys were fighting too...Death paid  
for every yard.  
After the battle guns had stopped, for the battle  
was lost  
Germans reclaimed the land that our troops  
recently had crossed.  
Over two hundred bodies were carried to  
'Pheasant Wood.'  
behind the German lines. Eight mass graves  
craved for Allied blood..  
But now at last the fallen, those who fought and  
died in France  
have finally been found again, given a second  
chance  
to be once more a cherished part of their folks  
memories  
in a cemetery of honour built for them across  
the sea.  
The cemeteries not far away from their last rest-  
ing place but now they'll have the honours  
earned, a headstone and a face.  
A place where families can come and mourn ...  
honour their dead.  
A tranquil place where Aussie flags are flying  
overhead.



[Picture: Family at the newly unveiled headstone of Captain Mortimer, Fromelles.]



FROMELLES ASSOCIATION  
OF AUSTRALIA

*For those lost so far from home*