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REMEMBRANCE DAY 11 NOVEMBER, 2021. WHEN WE ALL PAUSED TO REMEMBER

On 11 November, 1918, at 11.00am, after battles fought over nearly 4 years, from 1914 to 1918, an armistice - "a temporary stopping of warfare by mutual agreement; a truce" - was declared on what has ever since become known as Armistice Day, or Remembrance Day. It has become a day of remembrance, shared around the world.

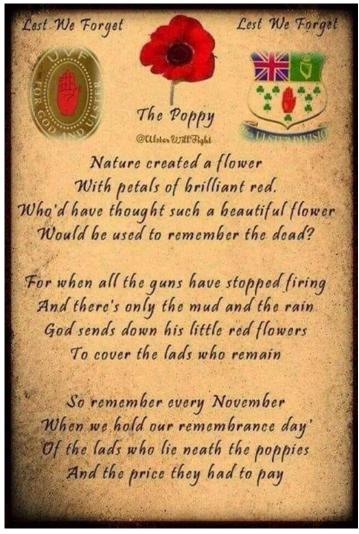
An armistice is not necessarily the end of a war, since it may constitute only a cessation of hostilities while an attempt is made to negotiate a lasting peace. But peace returned to Europe, and the rest of the world. Guns ceased firing. Rifles were put down. Church bells began to peal again, and families tried to find what was left of their property, across the battle-fields and villages of Western Europe, while also trying to locate lost family members.

It has been said that if you stood on a street corner at 9am and watched the spirits of the dead British World War 1 soldiers march by four abreast, the column would stretch 97 miles and would take 20 hours (or until 5am the next morning) to pass you.

The French dead would take an additional 51 hours and the German dead 59 hours.

Considering all the dead on the Western Front, this parade would last from 9am Thursday until 4pm Tuesday and would stretch over 386 miles.

And this is why ever since, on this day, around the world, we stop to remember, to share the loss, to offer our respects to



the fallen, and to quietly pray that we don't ever have to do it all again.

LEST WE FORGET

CATCHING UP ON THE COMMEMORATIONS

FOR 19 JULY, 2021

Our July Newsletter foreshadowed a reduced in numbers service to take place at Sydney, Melbourne and Ipswich this year. We are pleased to advise that the following reports were received subsequent to those services.

From Sydney:-

On the 105th anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles, the Commemorative Procession and Commemoration Services had been cancelled due to the restrictions brought about by Covid-19 and its impact in New South Wales.

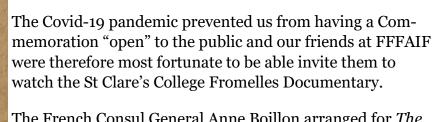
Fortunately, staff at the Anzac Memorial laid a wreath in the Hall of Memory. Separately the Office of Veterans Affairs Communications Team posted the event on social media.

The Fromelles Association joins with the FFFAIF to thank the Anzac Memorial for honouring this annual commitment to remember the "Fromelles" men. Photographs: courtesy Anzac Memorial Sydney

So, despite the lock-down, the Trustees honoured the 1966 request of the final parade of the 5th Division veterans on the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles to always remember the sacrifice of the 8,100

soldiers of the 5th Division Killed in Action during the First World War and those who have

died since.



The French Consul General Anne Boillon arranged for *The Courier Australien*, which is the online media of the French community, to showcase the St Clare's College Fromelles Documentary and to invite its readers to watch it on 19 July.

From Melbourne:

There was also to be a wreath laying at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne in conjunction with the Friends of the 15th Brigade (Co-founded by Lambis Englezos) at 2pm, which was to be live streamed from 1:30pm. Unfortunately, this wreath-laying was impacted by the lock-down in Melbourne and closed to the public.





For those lost so far from home.

From Ipswich, Queensland:

This service was not subject to the covid-19 lockdowns suffered in Sydney or Melbourne. Our friends in the 31st Battalion AIF Memorial Association (Brisbane Branch) in conjunction with Ipswich RSL Subbranch were able to host a service at Ipswich General Cemetery, at 11.00am on 19 July, on the 105th anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles.



This was their 3rd Commemoration in Ipswich, and it was bigger than previous years, in part by having invited local schools to participate. Four schools agreed to participate. 16 Ipswich Grammar Old Boys had joined 31st Battalion in WW1, with 5 having fought at Fromelles. Other schools to participate were Bremer High School and St Edmunds & St Marys Colleges.

[Picture: 31 Battalion Assn, Facebook]
A student from Ipswich Grammar also gave a short address on their Old Boy, Cpl E.R.
Kent MM, wounded at Fromelles but returned from the War and lived until 1951.

Addresses were given in relation to the services of Lt Col Toll who was awarded a DSO for his role at Fromelles, Major Eckersley and Lt Still.

Tributes were given for Cpl E.R. Kent MM by Grand Nephew Jon Kent & Great Grand nephew Lukas Kent, Ipswich & Rosewood RSL sub branches, and Ipswich Grammar School. Cpl Kent was an Old Boy of the school.

Tributes were given for Lt E.W. Spreadborough 31st Battalion KIA Fromelles by Grand nephew Ken Spreadborough and Great Grand nephew Tim Spreadborough.

A Tribute was given for Pte George Jones 60th Battalion KIA Fromelles, by Great Grand niece Bettina Newham.

Records of the event were posted onto the 31st Battalion AIF Memorial Association's Facebook page, and can be reviewed in more detail there.

And At Fromelles, France:

At 6pm French time on 19th July, precisely the time when the Australians were attacking the German lines (2am AEST Tuesday 20th in Australia), a Commemorative Ceremony was held in Fromelles, followed by a 'friendship drink' at the Cobbers School afterwards. FFFAIF Honorary Member Carole Laignel in Fromelles sent a copy of the invitation, and confirmed that face masks and social distancing were required. Photos of the Fromelles event have been posted on the www.fffaif.org.au website since.

[Picture : Pierre Seillier, Facebook]



WILLIAM "BILLY" MILES AND THE TRUCE THAT NEVER WAS.

We have included this article because in observing the act of remembrance on 11 November, we sometimes overlook the actions of those who sought to have an act of remembrance following the aftermath of the Battle of Fromelles. [Background information compiled by Bob Griffiths.]

The Soldier's Details

Name: WILLIAM "BILLY" MILES

Regimental number: 1178 **Rank:** Private

Unit(s): "D" Company, 29th Battalion; 58th

Battalion; 5th Battalion

War service: Egypt and Western Front

Prior military service: Boer War – Kitchener's Fighting

Scouts, Brabant's Horse

Enlistment: 26 January 1915 / 13 August 1915
Embarkation: 10 November 1915, "A11" Ascanius
Date & Place of Birth: April 1880, Newport, Monmouth,

wales

Parents: William Miles, Elizabeth Rees

Marital status: Married

Next of Kin: Catherine Miles, wife

Siblings: Henry, Elizabeth, Daisy, Eleanor, Walter

Occupation: Sailor

Physical Description: 5'3", 106 lbs

Religion: Church of England

Fate: Wounded at Polygon Wood, France 1917 **Returned to Australia:** February 1919. Discharged April 1919

Died: South Melbourne, 7 June, 1949

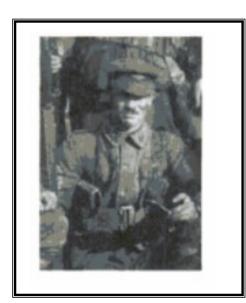
Place of Burial: Fawkner Memorial Park, Melbourne

His Early Life

William "Billy" Miles was born in April 1880 in Newport, Monmouthshire, Wales to William and Elizabeth (Rees). He was the second of six children, three boys and three girls. Billy's father was a lay preacher.

Billy began his soldiering career when he was about 20, heading to South Africa to fight in the Boer War. While he has listed his occupation as a Sailor, he served a year as a trooper/horseman in both Kitchener's Fighting Scouts and Brabant's Horse units in South Africa. He was with Kitchener's Fighting Scouts in Durban from January 1901 and was assigned to B Troop, F Squadron in the 1st Battalion.

His unit was constantly on the move. One of his mates, Corporal Albert Robinson, documented one of their days while in the Natal/NE area. "Saturday, June 22nd Reveille 3:30 AM, moved off at 4:30 AM. Very dark cloudy morning, 5 horses lost from lines at night. Horse Guard had to stay behind to find horses.



We found all ours & several more at daylight then followed on F squadron left flanking. Offsaddled at 10 AM, got out very hot. On Grazing Guard fine deep clear River lovely scenery among mountains. Had no time to take wash or swim, moved off at 1 PM. I found a fine big chestnut horse and called him Mack and kept him for myself. Gave Jim [old horse] to Miles, as his was done up. Left flanking over very rough high hills, drifts, Rivers through very high grass and Prickly mimosa bush. Saw some Boer scouts at 2 PM. Laagered up, relieved from horse guard by Corpl Johnstone at 5 PM. Fine night, all quiet."

To Australia

After serving in South Africa, Billy emigrated to Australia, arriving in Victoria in January 1903. In November he married Catherine Moore, from Collingwood and they settled in Bendigo. Although he listed his occupation as a sailor, he worked in a number of roles, from a clerk to a labourer to a carpet layer. Prior to WWI, the couple had three children.

Back to War

When the War broke out, Billy was keen to serve again, and enlisted on Australia Day 1915. However, during his early service he caught pneumonia and was discharged in July 1915 as medically unfit. But just a month later he was well enough and reenlisted and was assigned to D Company in the newly formed 29th Battalion.

After a short period of training in Victoria, the 29th left Australia on 10 November, 1915 on the "A11" Ascanius. They arrived in Suez, Egypt on 7 December. Training continued until mid-June with postings at Ismailia, Tel el Kebir, Ferry Post and Moascar. While in Tel el Kebir in March, the troops were reviewed by the Prince of Wales.

The Western Front

The call to the Western front came in mid-June. On the 16^{th} they boarded the troop ship "Tunisian" in Alexandria, heading to Marseilles, arriving there on the 23^{rd} . They took the train to Hazebrouck and on to Steenbeque and by the 26^{th} were encamped in Morbeque, about 30 km from Fleurbaix.

On 1 July they moved to Hazebrouck. Training here included the use of gas masks for the possible use of "lachrymatory shells" – tear gas. Training was tough. One day included a march of 16 miles carrying 75 lb of kit, which only the youngest and fittest could complete.

On July 9th they moved to Erquingham, just outside of Fleurbaix and on the 10th they got their first experience in the front line trenches. They were back in Fleurbaix on the 14th. There was a gas alarm on the 15th, but this was not felt by them in Fleurbaix.

On 19 July, Billy was in the trenches, ready for the attack. The 8th Brigade's position was on the left side of the 5th Division, in the Cellar Farm area.

By 8pm, the soldiers were ready, with D & A Companies in the front trenches. Many of the men broke through the forward lines of German trenches looking for what they had been told was a second line. Instead, all they found were a series of shallow drainage ditches.

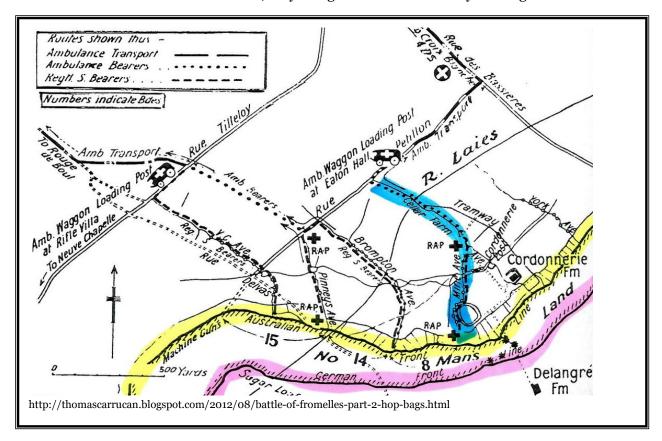
At 10 PM, the 30th Battalion was asking for support and D&C began carrying supplies over No Man's Land. In these supplies, however, they found that a number of the grenades had no fuses.

At 2 AM the German counter attack began, but as noted in the War Diaries, "After a struggle, Germans content to stop at their own trench."

The attack on their right was altered and they became exposed in a salient jutting into the German lines and were quickly enfolded by German machine guns. In the end, they basically had to fight their way back to their own lines, 'run for it', or be killed wounded or captured. (Virtual War Memorial Australia)

The nature of this battle was summed up by one soldier from the 29th: "the novelty of being a soldier wore off in about five seconds, it was like a bloody butcher's shop". (Australian War Museum)

When bombardment ceased on the 20th, they reorganized and were busy holding their front line.



The Truce that Never Happened

Billy was a key figure in supporting his mates after the battle, as is well documented in several books. Garrie Hutchinson's book, 'Pilgrimage: A Traveller's Guide to Australia's Battlefields' has a detailed account:

"After the guns had stopped, according to Charles Bean, 'there was a stillness never again experienced by the 5th Division in the front trenches. The sight of the wounded lying tortured and helpless in no man's land, within a stone's throw of safety, but apparently without hope of it, made so strong and appeal that more than one Australian, taking his life into his hands, went out to tend them.

What followed, the truce that never happened, is an extraordinary story, best told in the words of Sergeant William 'Billy' Miles of the 8th Brigade (29th Battalion) and in a letter to Bean."

"On the afternoon of 20 July, Billy had volunteered to go out into no man's land to tend to the wounded and look for Captain Ken Mortimer:

'I offered and was given a Red Cross badge for my arm and over I went, landing in a shell hole and ricking my knee. I asked two or three wounded if they had seen Capt. Mortimer, but could not find him.'

After tending to some wounded men, dodging from shell hole to shell hole, Billy heard a voice.

'I jumped as well as I could into another shell hole, which, however, was not deep enough to hide in, and heard someone call out from the German lines; looking over, I saw a man beckoning to me. I got up and

The Fromelles Association of Australia Inc. November, 2021

walked slowly towards him, stopping once to pick up a pair of field glasses. I stopped at the edge of the wire.'

The following conversation took place with the officer Billy named Fritz (who spoke perfect English):

Fritz: What are you supposed to be doing?

Billy: Tending wounded men, giving them a drink, and cutting their equipment off so they will lie more comfortable till we can get them in.

Fritz: You may be laying wires, this is not the usages of war.

Billy: Oh yes it is, the Red Cross is always allowed to work unmolested.

Fritz: What did you pick up just now?

Billy: Pair of field glasses.

Fritz: It might have been a bomb.

Billy: I'll show you.

Fritz: Don't put your hands in your pocket, put your hands above your head.

Billy waited by the German wire as 'Fritz' spoke on the telephone to his superiors."

"The German officer put down the telephone and Billy promptly asked whether he could lower his hands.

Fritz answered, 'I forgot, your arms much be aching'. And then added, 'I want you to go back to your lines and ask an officer to come over here and we will have a "parliamentaire" and see if we can arrange about collecting the wounded. Will you come back and let me know what they say?'

Billy promised and returned with Major Alex Murdoch, distributing water bottles as they walked across.

'Fritz' explained, according to Billy, that if an Australian officer would allow himself to be blindfolded and held as a hostage in the German trench, each side could collect the wounded in the half of no man's land nearest them. (Bean, in the official version has this as a suggestion from Murdoch.)

Murdoch and Miles returned to the Australian lines and asked General McCay for permission for this informal truce, while Australian stretcher-bearers were busy bringing in as many wounded men as they could, and the Germans were repairing their parapet and looking after their own wounded.

McCay refused Murdoch's request for the truce, claiming instructions from higher headquarters were explicit and unambiguous."

In Bean's words — "The horror of knowing that a mate — his living body the prey of flies and ants — is slowly being done to death within two minutes of the succour to which, without military disadvantage, he could be brought, is less present to distant staffs than to officers and men in the line, and was estimated (though doubtless only after severe internal conflict) as a trifle when balanced against the mighty issues at stake..."

"There was no truce, but for the next three days and nights Australians went out into no man's land under enemy fire to bring in the wounded."

On the night of 20 July alone, more than 300 wounded from the 15th Brigade were brought in.

Simon Fraser, 15th Brigade, was also bringing the wounded in. As he was helping one soldier, he heard a cry from another: 'Don't forget me cobber!' Fraser was able to return and bring him back in safely. (Our Darkest Day)

One Battle Over, But the War Goes On

While there were no further attacks at Fleurbaix, Billy's Battalion remained, holding the line until 31 July, when they were relieved by 31st Battalion. They moved to Bac St Maur, not far from Fleurbaix and they finally evacuated trenches after 38 days. It took until 26 September to be able to get a hot bath. It was noted in the War Diaries that "the men were in good heart". They went to Amentieres by "motor wagons" which were "very satisfying".

Although the 29th Battalion still spent periods in the front lines, they did not play a major offensive role for the rest of the year.

Billy was promoted to Lance Corporal in March 1917, Corporal in May 1917 and to Sergeant in Sept 1917.

The one large battle in 1917 in which the 29th Battalion played a major role was Polygon Wood, fought in the Ypres sector in Belgium from 26 September to 3 October 1917.

The battle began at 5.50 AM, under heavy bombardment of gas shells. By noon, they had achieved their objective, but the German counter attacks began at 2.00 PM. The six counter attacks that took place that night and into the next day were successfully repelled. The 29th Battalion was relieved late on September 27th.

Billy was wounded in this offensive; "shell shock". He was sent to several hospitals in the area for treatment. He was not released to re-join his unit until December 1917.

He was later transferred from the 29th. He spent the rest of his time in Europe assigned to training brigades and administrative headquarters assignments, briefly in the 58th Battalion and finally to the 5th Battalion.

He finally completed his service and was sent home to Australia in January, 1919, arriving 27 February, 1919. He received his discharge on 13 April 1919.

For his efforts in two major battles, he received the Victory Medal, the Star Medal and the British War Medal.

Medal.



Billy's Home: 39 Emerald St, South Melbourne (Google Maps)

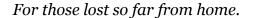


Billy and Catherine Miles had another child after the war. They named the boy Aussie. They lived in a number of places, Bendigo, Mooroopna (near Shepparton) where Billy was an orchardist, and finally in South Melbourne.

Billy died on 7 June, 1949, 69 years old. He was buried on 9 June 1949, in Fawkner Memorial Park, Melbourne. Catherine died in 1963.

HIS DUTY FEARLESSLY AND NOBLY DONE EVER REMBERED

The full details of Billy Miles' story will be uploaded to our website (more about this later on), so you can have more details of the reference material for the Truce that Never Was.





ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FROMELLES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA 24 JULY 2021

Royce Atkinson provided a report on the work Genealogical research which is ongoing. Dave Wilson of UWC-A confirmed that the investigation for Fromelles is on open and ongoing investigation, and funding is available if there are any missing DNA links.

Marg O'Leary provided a report on the preparation of our Soldiers' Stories. Many diggers' stories already completed, and we are trying to write a story for every soldier at Fromelles. These will be uploaded to our website when the website is ready. We had all this information from our genealogists of stories from the families, wonderful information. Getting diverse stories, some who died, some who came home, also nurses, Padres etc., who were there.

Overall, there are about 650 stories, in various stages, articles etc. There is a huge repository of knowledge, so preparing the stories took so much longer.

Congratulations to the writers of the stories. This is a national resource. The 'Digger' magazine of FFFAIF is now on- line with Trove. 4000 pages of diggers stories. This has become an authoritative body of work. The stories of our soldiers will be the same.

Office Bearers elected for the next 12 months were: Geoff Benn, President; Marg O'Leary & Ann Watson, Vice Presidents; Bill Irvine, Treasurer; Jim Smith, Secretary.

Royce Atkinson will continue in the position of Director, Genealogy.

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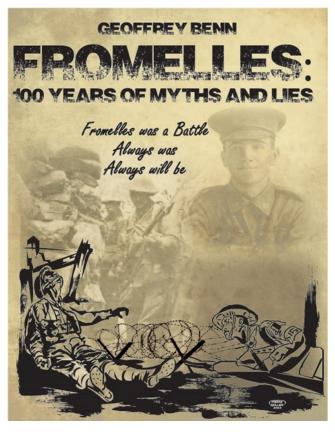
FROMELLES: 100 YEARS OF MYTHS AND LIES

The long-awaited book from our President, Geoffrey Benn was released to publication in August this year. It is able to be purchased online only at this time, through sites such as Amazon, Booktopia, Nile, and Utopia, and is printed 'on demand', i.e. once an order is received online.

Comments have been received describing it as the 'definitive' book on the topics covered. One commented that she 'couldn't agree more with the conclusions', while another wrote to say he was 'thoroughly enjoying your book and I am understanding so much more of the Fromelles Battle.'

Perhaps now the soldiers who fought at Fromelles will begin to officially receive proper recognition for their service.

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"ADOPT A COBBER" HAS BEEN REVIVED BY L'ECOLE COBBERS, AT FROMELLES.

The following message has been received from our friend in Fromelles, Pierre Seillier:

After almost two years of interruption due to the global pandemic, we are gradually starting to return to normal life. Our project "Adopt a Cobber of Fromelles" can take shape again. For this we are looking for new families, new descendants to adopt new soldiers, to keep their memory alive, so that the flame is always lit ...



This is the list of the soldiers already adopted by the pupils:

HENRY VICTOR WILLIS
SAM WILSON
ERIC WILSON
FREDERIK ROWLINGS
HERBERT NUTSY BOLT
HERBERT GEORGES POLLARD
ROSSITER ALFRED BARRETT
ATHOL HALLIDAY MC DOWELL
ARCHIE MCDONALD
JOHN MORLEY alias WILLIAM HOWARD
WILLIAM BRUCE HIGGINS

COLIN ARNOTT ALFRED GEORGE TUCK WILLIAM POLDING RYAN WILLIAM CUCKSON LESLIE LEISTER JOHN ROBERTSON FORREST LESLIE GORDON WALSH JOHN TURNER ALBERT ERNEST PRATT MATTHEW HEPPLE JUSTIN HERCULES BREGUET GREGORY FRANCIS STALGIS **ERIC CHINNER CLAUDE WARD** GEORGE VERNER BENSON KENNETH MORTIMER ALFRED THOMPSON RAYMOND HOLSTEN PFLAUM GEORGE CROFT RAYMOND CHARLES BISHOP BERROL MENDELSOHN HENRY BELL ERNEST AUGUSTUS JENTSCH EDWARD JAMES HOPE

If you are a descendant of another soldier buried in Pheasant Wood Cemetery, if you want that your soldier to be adopted by pupils, please contact:

Pierre Seillier: pierreseillier@hotmail.fr;

or

Anne-Florence Willefert (Principal of Ecole Cobbers): ce0591243f@ac-lille.fr LEST WE FORGET.

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HURRAH AND HOORAY!!!

www.fromelles.info

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS NOW OPEN AND ONLINE

On the 8th November, we were able to spread the word among our close working colleagues, and subsequently, we have posted the news via direct emails to all who are on our mailing list.

All those months of being locked down has enabled those involved with the Soldiers' Story Project and those doing the website building to keep going. And going they have. It has truly been a mammoth task. And to think that it all started when Covid originally hit us in 2020.

This is the home screen for our website. Ready for you to explore and read through.



Thanks to the executive, the sub committees, the writers and editors, and the website building team. It has been two years of endeavour (and coping with the virus environment at the same time).

We are all sure you will enjoy the new website, as to date we have uploaded 100 stories and many more will come over the next months.

The amount of information that has been put together in the last two years has been simply staggering. The arrangement of the material into readable stories that grab the reader is a great achievement. This is all to assist with finding the missing, and honouring those who served whether lost or returned. As well as the stories, there are many menus to explore about Fromelles, and we welcome your ideas and suggestions.

You can now access a wealth of material via our website, and in doing so, you may be able to pass on information and soldier story material for this and future generations, so our soldiers are not forgotten. A pro bono media firm helped us to prepare for the release of the news of our website, and our Race to Identify the 84 soldiers still unknown, through various media. So the news may pop up in your area. We would love feedback, if you saw it in your locale.

We can't wait to get the feedback all of you, all of the researchers, and all of the families truly deserve. We hope you will continue to be involved with this truly unique project.

Please look through all the information at:

www.fromelles.info

WE STILL NEED MORE VOLUNTEER STORY WRITERS

We are always ready to work with new story writers. The stories we have ready to be worked on will increase as more and more of us read of the information that has been assembled.

There are now over 100 stories of our soldiers on our website, with another 500 waiting to be worked on. We are always looking for volunteers to help with writing the stories of our soldiers. Please contact Marg O'Leary at: **marg@fromelles.info**, if you can help in any way at all.

AND WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEER FAMLY RESEARCHERS, GENEALOGISTS

If you are able to help in any way to identify the remaining 84 soldiers whose remains were reburied at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery, please do so. You can use the 'Contact Us' box, or send an email to either royce@fromelles.info (genealogical research) or to geoffrey@fromelles.info.

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THE CHANGING ROLE OF OUR NEWSLETTERS

Our Newsletter will now have a less direct role to play in being a major outlet for information about our ongoing activities. We will from now on, be uploading material to our website under the various categories of information that you can see on the landing page of the website. But we will still from time to time, need to bring to your attention information which is best sent to you directly.

Our Newsletter is likely to become a 'Bulletin' letting you know of items which are to be uploaded to our website instead.

As matters develop which require a more 'directed' approach, we will send you details directly via email. Otherwise, you can check in periodically via Facebook, where we will upload progressive information updates, or you can go directly to the website and check under the various drop-down tabs., such as the 'News' tab. You can also look through all our past Newsletters by browsing through our website. Who knows, it may even one day be uploaded to the National Library of Australia (the 'Trove' search facility). We are sure you will find it all informative and interesting.

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BUT, AS ALWAYS, WE STILL NEED FUNDS TO KEEP IT ALL AVAILABLE FOR ONGOING ACCESS

While the work of our volunteers is rewarded by the results of their activities, their research, their investigations are often paid for by themselves. But the hosting of a website requires funds to be met each month. We will continue to need financial assistance so that the information about our soldiers continues to be available to you, to those who wish to learn more of our soldiers, and to keep the information able to be accessed.

Donations are always appreciated, in fact needed, and we hope you can assist with financial support. Funds can be deposited to our bank account as follows:-

- Westpac Bank, Goulburn
- Fromelles Association of Australia
- BSB: 032 721 A/c No. 310953

Please drop us an email to make sure we know who it was that deposited into our account.

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Just to recap, contact details for our committee now are as follows:President: Geoffrey Benn—email: geoffrey@fromelles.info;
Address: 13 Bromfield Avenue, Toongabbie 2146
Vice-President: Marg O'Leary (Research) - email: marg@fromelles.info
Vice-President: Ann Watson (Research & Asst. Treasurer) - email: ann@fromelles.info
Treasurer: Bill Irvine—email: bill@fromelles.info
Secretary: Jim Smith—jim@fromelles.info
Membership to Bill Irvine, at 41 Chantilly Court, Goulburn 2580