



FROMELLES ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA
For those lost so far from home

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Newsletter—Nov 2024

UNVEILING OF PHEASANT WOOD HEADSTONES

Pheasant Wood Cemetery, Fromelles 19 July 2024



Unveiling of Headstones at Pheasant Wood Ceremony 19th July 2024 : Brianna Hole for Private William Christopher Brumby, Petula Collier for Private George Robert Barnett, David Wilson for Private Herbert James Graham, Royce Atkinson for Private Ernest Frank Studdon (served under the alias Welling), Stuart Barr for Corporal Percy George Barr, Lance Corporal Harold Thompson Smith and Bronwyn Stanley for Private Alfred William Ansell (served under the alias Fitch)



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FROMELLES MUSEUM 10TH ANNIVERSARY AND DEDICATION

Honouring Matthew Hepple 19 July 2024



Matthew Hepple (31st Battalion) now lies in the Pheasant Wood Military Cemetery at Fromelles, and this year treasured items from his time at war were donated by his family and are now on display for the first time at the [Musée de la Bataille de Fromelles](#) in France.

Royce Atkinson, Team Leader, Genealogy and family member of Matthew gave a speech at the 10 year anniversary of the opening of the Museum which is adjacent to Pheasant Wood Cemetery.

Matthew's legacy and memorial can now be viewed within the Museum for generations to come.



Royce with the new display for Matthew Hepple



Royce gave a presentation at the 10th Anniversary



WESTERN FRONT TOUR JULY 2024

When we learned that Jim Munro of Families and Friends of the First AIF was putting together an itinerary to visit various World War 1 places of interest across France and Belgium, decisions were made to join him. Our Vice President, Bron Stanley would be going. Our Director of Genealogy, Royce Atkinson would be going. Our Secretary, Jim Smith would be going. And our President, Geoffrey Benn also decided to go. It was an opportunity which clichéd as it was, was not likely to happen this way again soon. So this is how it unfolded.

Day 1: Friday, 12 July 2024

The group visited the Ypres Salient, beginning at the Geluveld Leggett Memorial to honor William Thomas Leggett, the first Australian casualty on the Western Front. After exploring Polygon Wood and its memorials, they continued to various cemeteries and significant sites along the Broodseinde Ridge, Hooge Crater Cemetery and the Canadian Passchendaele Memorial. The day concluded with dinner in Ieper and attendance at the Menin Gate ceremony. We overnighted at Talbot House in Poperinge, a lovely WW1 hotel/museum.

Day 2: Saturday, 13 July 2024

The day started with a guided tour of Talbot House, followed by visits to several cemeteries, including Lijssenthoek and Hooge Crater. Due to local cycling events, the itinerary was adjusted.

Day 3: Sunday, 14 July 2024 (Bastille Day)

Bastille Day was a busy day throughout France with lots of road closures! We explored Vimy Ridge, the Bullecourt Battlefield, and learned about the Bullecourt battles from local expert Yves Fohlen, WW1 Historian, including a visit to the new museum at Bullecourt.

<https://www.arraspaysdartois.com/en/remembrance/visit->



Ceremony at Menin Gate



Jim Munro and Yves Fohlen



WESTERN FRONT TOUR JULY 2024 (CONT...)

Day 4: Monday, 15 July 2024

Highlights included the Lochnagar Crater, Pozieres and the Thiepval Memorial as well as Delville Wood and Bazentin Ridge.

Day 5: Tuesday, 16 July 2024

The group visited the Red Baron Crash site at Morlancourt Ridge. Villers Bretonneux CWGC and Memorial, Sir John Monash Centre at Villers-Bretonneux, Villers Bretonneux Museum overlooking the school displaying signs Never Forget Australia, off to Adelaide CWGC, and the Australian Corps Memorial at Le Hamel.

Day 6: Wednesday, 17 July 2024

A visit to Hem Farm Cemetery for Jim Munro, then off to Compiègne for the Armistice Clearing Museum, and the Guards Corner CWGC. Then off to Lille. A long travel day.

Day 7: Thursday, 18 July 2024

The group visited the Fromelles battlefield sites and met with staff at the Museum of the Battle of Fromelles, enjoyed a lovely lunch with Richard Hope-Hawkins and photographing headstones in preparation for a special ceremony. We also met a local farmer who showed us artifacts he had dug up from the battle.



Jill, Jim, Royce, Jim, Garry, Geoffrey and Shirley



Jim at the Red Baron Crash



Geoffrey at Villers Bretonneux



Jim, Richard, Geoffrey and Royce in Fromelles



WESTERN FRONT TOUR JULY 2024 (CONT...)

Day 8: Friday, 19 July 2024

The day featured the 10th anniversary commemoration of the Museum of the Battle of Fromelles and the Pheasant Wood Annual Ceremony, including the unveiling of new headstones for the seven soldiers in which Royce and Bronwyn unveiled a headstone. Geoffrey and Jim laid a wreath at the ceremony.

Afterwards we visited the local school for a much needed cool drink and excellent pastries.

Additional Days (20-23 July 2024)

Royce and Geoffrey remained in Fromelles for further engagements, including meetings with local historians and researchers, before returning on the EuroStar train to Charles de Gaulle Airport.

This poignant journey honored and remembered those who served, leaving participants with lasting memories and a deeper appreciation of their history.

A huge thanks to Jim and Jill for organising this amazing opportunity.



Pheasant Wood Cemetery on July 19th 2024.



Geoffrey Benn (FAA) , Garry Semmens, Alan Cooper (UWC-A) and Jim Munro (FFAIF)



Bron, Geoffrey, Jim and Royce at Pheasant Wood



Geoffrey with Pascal and Marinette Leclaire



FROMELLES FAMILY DAY AT THE ANZAC MEMORIAL

Saturday, August 17, 2024, Anzac Memorial, Sydney

On August 17, 2024, the Anzac Memorial in Sydney served as a poignant gathering place for the families and descendants of soldiers who fought in the Battle of Fromelles, as well as military history enthusiasts and key figures involved in the ongoing commemoration of this significant event. Organised with Families and Friends of the First AIF, the day was dedicated to acknowledging the contributions of the "Fromelles family" and to sharing the latest developments in the Fromelles story.

The event featured a series of insightful presentations that addressed critical aspects of the Battle of Fromelles, which occurred on July 19-20, 1916. Topics covered included:

- The strategic reasons behind the Battle at Fromelles (Jim Munro)
- A detailed account of the events, during the battle itself, and finding the mas graves at Pheasant Wood (Lambis Englezos)
- The aftermath and the recovery (Jim Munro)
- The Identification efforts surrounding these missing soldiers. (Geoffrey Benn)
- The ongoing search for those still considered missing (Major Dave Wilson UWC-A)
- The significance of **Battle Honours** and Memorials (Geoffrey Benn)



Featured: John Thomas (Forgotten Diggers), Lambis Englezos, Jim Munro, (FFFAIF) and Chris Bryett.
Background: Various presentations from the day from Jim Munro and Geoffrey Benn.



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FROMELLES FAMILY DAY AT THE ANZAC MEMORIAL

Saturday, August 17, 2024, Anzac Memorial, Sydney

Continued... Key speakers included Jim Munro, President of the FFFAIF, and Geoffrey Benn, President of the Fromelles Association of Australia. Major Dave Wilson from Unrecovered War Casualties - Army also contributed, alongside Fromelles advocate Lambis Englezos AM. Together, they provided valuable insights, including updates on the identification of the 'missing' and the reasons for the absence of an official battle honour for Fromelles.

With 61 attendees present, the atmosphere was both reflective and engaging. Presentations were effectively displayed on large screens, ensuring everyone could fully participate. A highlight was the screening of a segment from '60 Minutes,' from 2006, showcasing interviews with notable figures such as Lambis Englezos, Yves Fohlen, Martial Delebarre, and Ross McMullin, all hosted by the esteemed Ray Martin.

Lambis Englezos shared unique insights into the Fromelles narrative, while Major Dave Wilson explained the identification process and the transfer of the Identification Board from the UK to Australia. Geoffrey Benn's presentation revealed that 11 of the 12 battalions of the 5th Division had requested Fromelles as a battle honour. When he named those responsible for the omission from the honours list, the room fell silent.

In a notable follow-up, the Australian War Memorial has since amended its website to reflect the accurate information regarding battle honours in World War I, as outlined by Geoffrey in his book. This correction allows readers to engage with a fact-based narrative and counter any inaccuracies that may have persisted.

Participants also learned about the historical context of the Geneva Conventions and the Red Cross, enhancing their understanding of how German documentation came to be archived in Canberra. The event was held in the ideal setting of the Anzac Memorial, combining excellent organization, catering, and technology. There were spaces for book displays and socializing, fostering connections among attendees.

Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting a shared sense of pride among the FFFAIF members and all involved in making the Fromelles Family Day a meaningful experience. The event not only honored the legacy of those who served but also strengthened the community of those who remember and commemorate their sacrifice.

Author: Jim Munro and Geoffrey Benn



THE SEARCH FOR 32ND BATTALION FAMILIES IN SA



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P09029.006

With the help of Zoe Wagner from Talkforce Media, we recently reached out to help research fallen soldiers who hailed from South Australia. Margaret O'Leary OAM spoke to a number of radio stations in South Australia and an online article appeared on ABC news as well. **(extract below)**

[Private Andrew Perry](#) died in the Battle of Fromelles, far from the small South Australian town of Naracoorte, where he worked on the railways. He and thousands of other Australian and British troops went "over the top" on July 19, 1916, following orders to charge across no man's land into enemy fire. Most of the soldiers in that grave have now been identified through painstaking research and DNA matching.

However, 70 still have graves without names, at the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery.

"We're really down to the ones that are very difficult," Margaret O'Leary said.

Although female descendants of the Perry family have been identified in Naracoorte, the association is searching for descendants of the male Perry line to provide a DNA sample. The association is also trying to locate relatives of Clarence Rhody Schwan Hoffman, Reuben Harold Magor, Albert Arthur Rawnsley and Alfred George Sinigear.

Like Private Perry, they were part of the 32nd Battalion, which was formed at Mitcham in the Adelaide foothills in 1915. They too were killed at Fromelles and their remains are yet to be identified.

Margaret O'Leary said descendants of the families of the missing men could be across wide areas of South Australia and Broken Hill and the sometimes disjointed family structures, particularly of those from mining areas, made the search for relatives more difficult.

"These are five brick walls we'd really like to overcome," she said.

You can read the full article here: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-07-19/dna-identification-hope-for-wwi-australian-soldiers/104102778>



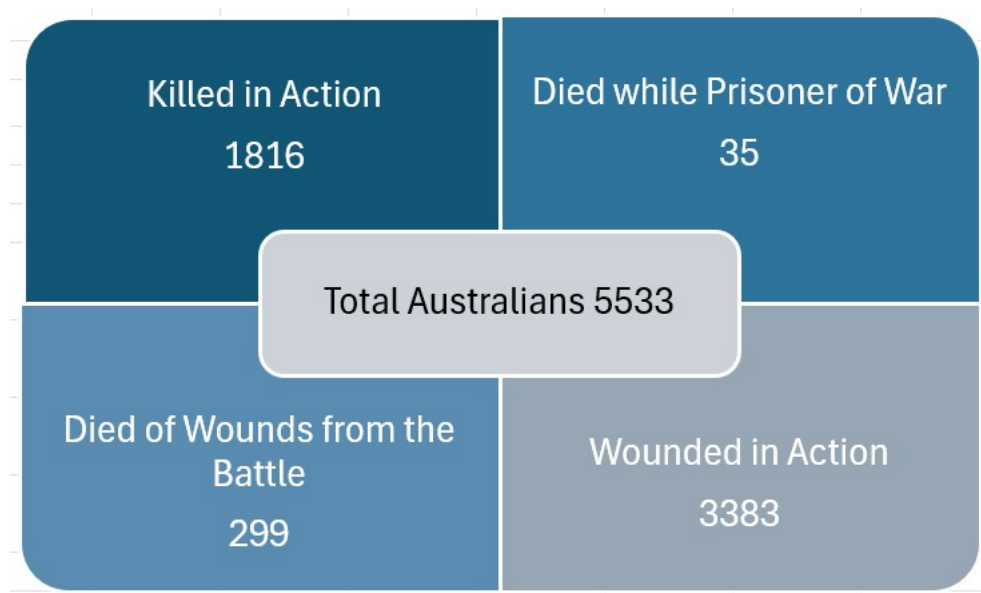
FROMELLES IN NUMBERS

The Battle of Fromelles in July 1916 is often remembered for its high casualty figure of 5,533, but this number can be misleading. "Casualties" includes not just deaths but also injuries, missing soldiers, and prisoners of war. Official historian Charles Bean, who reported the 5,533 figure, acknowledged that it might not be entirely accurate, prompting caution among scholars.

Geoffrey Benn's book, *Fromelles: 100 Years of Myths and Lies*, has significantly clarified casualty numbers, identifying 2,591 soldiers by name, including those killed, died from wounds or taken prisoner. His research, supplemented by Robin Corfield's work using Red Cross records, uncovered about 478 previously unaccounted soldiers. Investigations from the National Archives and The AIF Project have also aimed to pinpoint individual soldier files, up until 3 days after the end of the Battle, though records for those killed in action were not maintained beyond July 23, 1916.

Ultimately, 1,816 soldiers were confirmed killed in action, with 299 dying from wounds and 476 taken prisoner, of whom 35 died from their wounds. Geoffrey now estimates that 2,150 Australian soldiers died in total, highlighting the importance of ongoing research. For British soldiers, the tally of casualties stands at 1,547, with 810 deaths.



















In total, this means that of the 7,080 combined Australian and British casualties, approximately 2,960 were fatalities, or about 42%. Notably, around 54% of Australian casualties and 48% of British casualties went on to fight again. As research continues, especially for deaths from wounds after 1916, these numbers may be revised further.







NEW SOLDIER STORIES UPLOADED TO OUR WEBSITE

www.fromelles.info

	SCOTT, Joseph , 4873, 54 th		BROADHURST, Leonard , 3013, 55 th
	TURNER, Arthur Leslie , 39, 30 th		GIBNEY, Guy Somerville Dion , 1083, 32 nd
	COPE, Walter Vernon , 1241, 32 nd		COZENS, James Alfred , 210, 29 th
	SAMPSON, Victor Horatio Buller , Major, 55 th		IRVING, Allan William , 1528, 32 nd
	WHITEHILL, John Alger , 3281, 58 th		MACKNESS, Herbert , 1009, 32 nd
	MCCAUL, Donald Curteis , 1980, 60 th		HARLAND, Cecil George , 2041, 32 nd
	THOMAS, Henry Lamert , 2466, 30 th		IRVIN, David George , 4807, 54 th
	BARBER, William Brommell Drake , 346, 32 nd		
	BLOOMFIELD, Bertram Benjamin , 589, 31 st		
	CAUGHEY, Rodger , 3784, 31 st		
	SMITH, Percival Kerrison , 339, 29 th		

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ANNUAL AGM

Our Annual General Meeting has been held and the following members have been appointed.

The Executive Committee for 2024 – 2025 presently consists of:

- President — Geoffrey Benn
- Secretary— Jim Smith
- Treasurer — Bill Irvine
- Vice President - Bronwyn Stanley
- Committee Member - Carla Miller

And in addition we have:

- Team Leader, Genealogy – Royce Atkinson
- Director of Solider Stories - Marg O’Leary
- Chief Editor of Soldier Stories - Bob Griffith
- Publicity and Social Media Officer - Bronwyn Stanley

SPECIAL THANKS

The Fromelles Association is made up of many volunteers who help us fulfil our mission. A shout out goes to Zoe Wagner from Talkforce Media and Ameet Virdee from Blistering Developers for their help behind the scenes with press releases and website development and maintenance.





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ARE YOU A GENEALOGY GURU?

Seeking Volunteer Genealogists and Experienced Family Tree Researchers

The Fromelles Association of Australia (FAA) is a not-for-profit group of dedicated volunteers – scattered all over the world – who undertake two primary tasks.

1. To undertake genealogical research and locate relatives of the boys Killed in Action at the Battle of Fromelles 1916. These boys are, and have been, identified via the use of DNA “matching”.
2. To maintain a web site – literally preserving the memories of all who fought at Fromelles. The website can be viewed at: www.fromelles.info

In regards to genealogical research, we hope there may be interested parties who might have time to dedicate some research to locating relatives of those boys who have been uncovered.

The research is difficult, but the rewards are immeasurable.

To give an indication of the FAA’s work, in 2023 they were responsible for research on all 7 of the boys identified. We also were instrumental in assisting to identify the 7 found in 2024.

Over the past decade the FAA have identified donors for most of the boys who now have been named.

Those seeking more information can contact the Team Leder, Genealogy, Royce Atkinson, by emailing royce@fromelles.info

Don’t forget you can order you Lapel pin and badges by emailing bill@fromelles.info

(See Membership / Orders form at end of Newsletter)

The form can be used to both apply for Membership, as well as order some of our labels or embroidered badges:

<https://fromelles.info/association/membership/>



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/fromelles-association-of-australia-72408028a/>

<https://www.instagram.com/fromellesassociation/>


<https://www.facebook.com/FromellesAssociationofAustralia>



MEMBERSHIP AND ORDER FORM

Fromelles Association of Australia Inc

THE FROMELLES ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED Application for Membership/Orders from:

Surname:		1 st name	
Surname		1 st name	
Surname		1 st name	
Address:			
City/Town		State	Postcode
Email:			
Phone (H)	Phone (M)		
For Single member fee: \$10.00	Family Membership – incl. additional Members under 18 years of age: \$20.00		
My/our Soldier: (No.)	Surname:		
Unit:	1 st Name(s):		
I hereby apply for Sole / Family Membership of the Fromelles Association Inc. and agree to abide by the Constitution of the Association	Signed + Date		
Membership Fee (calculate from above):	\$		
Lapel/Hat Badge(s) @ \$8.00 each x	\$		
Embroidered Badge(s) @ \$6.00 each x	\$		
Add Postage:	\$2.50		
Cheques to:	The Fromelles Association Inc., Attn: Bill Irvine, 41 Chantilly Court, Goulburn NSW 2580		
Direct Deposit: Westpac Bank	The Fromelles Association Inc. Westpac Bank, BSB: 032 721, Account No.: 310953		
Email to:	bill@fromelles.info or to geoffrey@fromelles.info		
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