



FROMELLES ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA

For those lost so far from home

Editor: Geoffrey Benn

geoffrey@fromelles.info

Phone: 0408 219636

Newsletter—Dec 2023

FROMELLES VISIT

NOV 2023

When we came to setting out our itinerary for travel in Europe this year, we included a stay-over at Fromelles. Prior to this, there had been a very strong cyclone-force weather event called Cyclone Ciaran,

which came in from the Atlantic Ocean, and caused havoc in northern France, in Brittany and more so in Normandy. It was continuing



eastward prior to our arrival in Fromelles.

Consequently the farms and the entire northern region of France were deluged and full of water. Flooding was happening all across the regions, and by the time we arrived at Fromelles, the farms were inundated.

When we arrived at Fromelles, the Secretary of the Museum, Geoffrey Bouillet greeted me and Anne, showed me an amazing collection of maps which had been sourced from German forces and passed on to him.

The maps clearly showed that the Germans had identified the burial site at Pheasant Wood in 1916. Sadly, the maps had not been passed on to the Imperial War Graves Commission following the war, and the burial site was lost to time, until Lambis Englezos, Ward Selby and John Fielding agitated for a search to be made there.



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Geoffrey also showed me an interactive screen which the Museum had acquired, on which details of soldiers are being progressively added. There are 84 on there at present. All documents able to be searched publicly are included and can be opened by tapping on the interactive screen. Information is presented in English, French, German and Dutch, all of which have to be screened and approved by the various language authorities.

It has been developed in part with material passed on from the Fromelles Association of Australia, so it was gratifying to see some of our work is being seen by people at Fromelles as well as through our own website. Geoffrey then took myself and Anne to various sites. Sadly due to the level of water we could not even walk into VC Corner Cemetery. But we were able to take a short walk into Rue Petillon and Rue Du Bois Cemeteries.





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Water was crossing roads in many places, so we returned to the Museum. While I was with Geoffrey, I was able to autograph his own copy of my book. It holds pride of place on his shelf.

The reason for our visit was to attend the commemoration of the Armistice on 11 November. Inexplicably, the skies cleared and the sun shone for us on that day, and umbrellas were put aside.

After the church service there, I had been invited to speak at the cenotaph at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery. We met with our friends at Fromelles, Martial & Catherine Delebarre, and Carole Laignel. I gave a speech which embraced the first and the last soldiers to have died in World War 1, and illustrating how many soldiers of all nations lost their lives in that horrendous war. I was able to deliver the talk in English, and Jean-Gabriel Masson, the Mayor



of Fromelles, delivered it in French.

Anne was asked by Mayor Masson, to read The Ode following the speech. Afterwards, Martial Delebarre described it as thoughtful and very moving.

Following the commemoration, we all attended the Town Hall, where we were able to share in the usual nibbles, and 'friendship drink', and converse with people we had met, and with many who sought to be introduced. It was a wonderful experience.

Author: Geoffrey Benn





NEW SOLDIER STORIES

www.fromelles.info

We have a swathe of new soldier stories to read at our website.

- Norman Percival Jones <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/274-sergeant-norman-percival-jones/>
- Herbert James Graham <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/3543-private-herbert-james-graham/>
- Albert Arthur Rawnsley <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/2392-private-albert-arthur-rawnsley/>
- James, Russell and Joseph Balsdon <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/2274-private-james-balsdon/>
- Arnold Needham <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/4946-private-arnold-needham/>
- Sydney Joseph Hyams <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/2028-private-sydney-joseph-walter-hyams/>
- George Edward Bonney <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/44-private-george-edward-bonney/>
- Harold and Sidney Bromley <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/4903-private-sidney-reginald-bromley/>
- Walter John Bacon <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/3236-private-walter-john-bacon/>
- Christian Clyde Fisher <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/1259-private-christian-clyde-fisher/>
- Frederick and Rueben Parry <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/1211-private-reuben-frederick-parry/>
- Victor Robert Ingram <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/3158-private-victor-robert-ingram/>
- William Joseph Cullen <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/623-private-william-joseph-cullen/>
- Phillip Joseph Foulser <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/3530a-private-phillip-joseph-foulser/>
- William Bentley <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/3007-lance-corporal-william-bentley/>
- Francis Stringer Woodcock <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/1262-private-francis-stringer-woodcock/>
- John Henry Boswell <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/891-private-john-henry-boswell/>
- Rictor Jones <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/3544-private-rictor-jones/>
- Samuel Farlow <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/80-private-samuel-farlow/>
- Jens Jenson Feldt <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/929-private-jens-jensen-feldt/>
- William Miles <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/1178-private-william-miles/>
- Robert Gill <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/2033-private-robert-gill/>
- George Croft <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/2006-private-george-croft/>
- Sydney Byfield King <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/76-private-stanley-byfield-king/>
- Harold and Vivien Clements <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/4076-corporal-harold-george-clements/>
- Herbert John Westmoreland <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/361-private-herbert-john-westmoreland/>
- Charles Jury <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/273-lance-corporal-charles-jury/>
- Norman Gibbins <https://fromelles.info/soldiers/86-captain-norman-gibbins/>



BURIED IN A SAP—NINE MEN OF THE 29TH

<https://fromelles.info/the-search-for-the-missing/buried-in-a-sap-nine-men-of-the-29th-battalion/>



Pte Herbert John WESTMORELAND
1885-1916

source: Photo courtesy of David Lee and the extended Westmoreland family



Private 166 Lemuel BATEY 1895-1916

source: Courtesy of Trevor Batey



Samuel Farlow

source: BBC News article dated Friday, 17 December 2010



Private Norman Leslie BRUMM 1897-1916

source: AWM collection, P05301.003



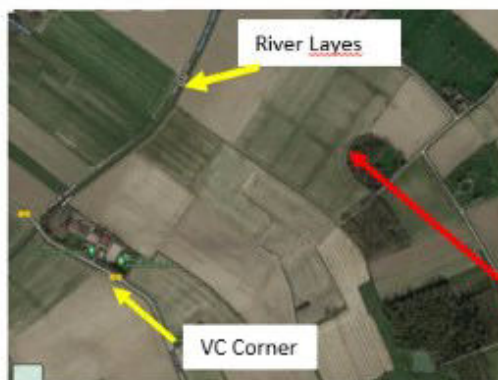
Private Ernest Frank WILKIN 1893-1916

source: VWMA 131269, courtesy of Joan Horsburg collection from <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/131269>



Frederick Parry (1895-1916)

source: Australian War Memorial Collection C1277184



"All the above were killed either by Shellfire (sic) or Machine Gun, and were **buried at the left hand of the sap which runs in to the back of Water Farm**"

Current day map



Trench Maps



Pte James Ingersoll HIGGINS 1889-1916

source: AWM P03802.001 (cropped)

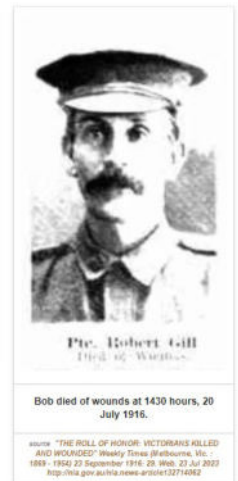


BURIED IN A SAP—NINE MEN OF THE 29TH

<https://fromelles.info/the-search-for-the-missing/buried-in-a-sap-nine-men-of-the-29th-battalion/>

Evidence was given to the Red Cross that nine soldiers killed on the evening of 19-20 July and buried on 22 July as part of a larger group of twenty or thirty in a grave in a sap near Water Farm, 'Pozieres' (sic). This reference to Pozieres was a common mistake of the times relating to French place-names. The sap (a short covered trench / tunnel dug towards an enemy position to provide cover for advancing troops) is probably on the Mine Ave end of the trench (marked in blue in the map above) near where the water hole is marked. The evidence was likely given by Harold Antrobus, taken Prisoner at Fromelles or his brother Aubrey, who was wounded in action at Fromelles.

Of the nine mentioned, there are also similar notes in these soldiers' AIF files that they are buried at 'Fleurbaix', and a general map reference, sheet 36, with the exception being Private [Robert Gill](#) who died at the casualty clearing station and is buried at the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension.



It would have been chaos in the trenches during the battle and in the immediate aftermath, and it is no wonder records of deaths and burials are often non-existent or contradictory. There are no records of these soldiers being found in this vicinity.

However, in 2008 a burial ground was located at Pheasant Wood behind the old German front line at Fromelles that contained the bodies of 250 British and Australian soldiers. Many of their identities were confirmed through a combination of anthropological, archaeological, historical and DNA techniques.

To date (2023), DNA testing has been able to identify 173 of these 250 soldiers. Despite being identified as being buried in the sap, four of these nine men - [Ernest Wilkin](#), [Frederick Parry](#), [Samuel Farlow](#) and [Norman Brumm](#) – were identified in 2010 as being buried in the Pheasant Wood Cemetery, some 2 km away! Was the original grave disturbed by shelling or otherwise re-opened necessitating re-burial by the Germans?





BURIED IN A SAP—NINE MEN OF THE 29TH

<https://fromelles.info/the-search-for-the-missing/buried-in-a-sap-nine-men-of-the-29th-battalion/>

29th Btn.

Brunn M.L.	1470
Farlow S.	80.
Gill R.	2033.
Higgins S.A.	2050.
Parry F.	320
Westmoreland H.J.	361
Wilkin E.F.	1314
Woodcock F.S.	1262.
Batey L.R.	166

Killed in action 19-20 July 1916.

Informant states that all the above men were in No.3 Platoon along with himself and his brother. He knew them by Regimental No. and name well, but could not describe each one individually. The nine above named men were killed on the afternoon of July 19th. or in the morning of July 20th, 1916. All the above named were killed either by Shellfire or Machine Gun, and were buried at the left hand of the sap which runs in to the back of Water Farm. (POZIERES). This was a very large grave and contained about twenty or thirty bodies, and is marked by one big cross. They were all buried by a fatigue party from D. Company and some of the bandmen. Informant was at the burial on the 22nd, July and saw the remains of the nine men named above, properly buried. Informant and his brother were the only two men left alive out of the Platoon, his brother was in charge at the time.

Informant:- Col. F. Webster.
C.M. Northcott, Private address:- 118 Clawsden Street,
U.B. - Gill - died at C.O.S. North Fitzroy.

Evidence given by Corporal Webster to the Red Cross regarding the death and burial of nine soldiers of the 29th Battalion. Source AWM: Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Files – 1470 BRUMM, Norman Leslie, page 2

With four already identified, are the remaining four ([Herbert Westmoreland](#), [Francis Woodcock](#), [Lemuel Batey](#) and [James Higgins](#)) still amongst those soldiers now buried at the Pheasant Wood cemetery but unidentified?

Researchers investigated the young men identified as buried in the sap and hope to identify more of the nine by persisting in the search for suitable DNA donors. The four men identified in 2010 were amongst those who had their identification discs returned by the Germans.

We remain determined to persist in our search for DNA to help identify those buried at Fromelles and hope that the remaining missing four are amongst them. If you can help us unravel any of the family connections, we would love to hear from you.

Interestingly, both Ernest Wilkin and Frederick Parry had twin brothers who were taken Prisoner of War during the battle and Herbert Westmoreland had a twin sister back home in Australia.

Author: Bronwyn Stanley

Please contact royce@fromelles.info if you have any further information



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STILL MISSING—MEN OF THE 29TH

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James Ingersoll Higgins - 29th Battalion

<https://fromelles.info/soldiers/2050-private-james-ingersol-higgins>

- James and family came from the Geelong area of Victoria with Brunswick connections.
- James worked as a chauffeur, but listed his occupation as a labourer.
- James' DNA story is interesting in itself and his death and burial are very complicated. James was known by his stepfather's name (Higgins) but was born before his mother married and his birth was registered as James Ingersoll KIDDLE.
- Can you help identify James?



Francis Woodcock

In our home you are ever remembered

Sweet memories cling round your name;

The hearts that held you to deepest affection.

Still love you in death just the same.

1895-1916

www.fromelles.info

Francis Stinger Woodcock - 29th Battalion

<https://fromelles.info/soldiers/1262-private-francis-stringer-woodcock/>

- Francis Stringer "Frank" Woodcock was born in 1895 in Normanton, Yorkshire, England to Sam and Mary Woodcock.
- As Frank was growing up, the family stayed local to the area and lived in Rotherham and Barnsley. But, in 1913, at the age of 17, his family migrated to Australia, settling in West Coburg (Melbourne).
- Frank's father Sam was a watchmaker and began working for Dunklings the Jewellers.
- Frank listed his occupation as a watchmaker on his attestation papers and likely worked with his father.
- Can you help identify Frank?



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Herbert John Westmoreland - 29th Battalion

<https://fromelles.info/soldiers/361-private-herbert-john-westmoreland/>

- Herbert was born in Norwood, Adelaide in 1885 and had a twin sister Lizzie.
- He worked as a labourer and his father was a successfully Bootmaker.
- We understand that UWCA hold 1 Family Reference Sample (FRS) of mt DNA and 1 of Y DNA. Second mt DNA and Y DNA FRS samples are still needed for family connections
- Can you help us identify Herbert?



Lemuel Batey
1895-1916

One short year a
soldier boy was he -
Perchance fame
gleamed in store.
When duty called
he answered fearlessly,
And on a far-off shore,
Afar across the dreary,
heaving sea,
He sleeps - a brave one,
gone for ever more.



www.fromelles.info

Lemuel Reginald Batey - 29th Battalion

<https://fromelles.info/soldiers/166-private-lemuel-reginald-batey/>

- Lemuel Reginald Valentine Fitzhawthorn Batey "Lem" was born at Katandra, near Shepparton, Victoria in 1895. He was one of ten children.
- Lem was a farmer, working with his family on their farm.
- The last seen of him was in the Fromelles attack of July 19th when he was left in No Man's Land with his shoulder shattered. Offered help, he replied: "Never mind me, I'll be all right, go on." He was not seen again.'
- Can you help identify Lem?



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AGM HELD 29TH JULY 2023

Fromelles Association of Australia

The Fromelles Association of Australia had our Annual General Meeting held via Zoom

The Executive Committee for 2023 – 2024 presently consists of:

- President — Geoffrey Benn
- Secretary— Jim Smith
- Treasurer — Bill Irvine
- Vice President - Bronwyn Stanley

And in addition we have our

- Director of Genealogy – Royce Atkinson
- Director of Solider Stories - Marg O'Leary
- Researcher and Assistant to the Treasurer - Ann Watson
- Publicity and Social Media Officer - Bronwyn Stanley

YOU CAN NOW FIND US ON INSTAGRAM!

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



Don't forget you can order you Lapel pin and badges by email to bill@fromelles.info

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/>



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WINTER AT PHEASANT WOOD

Commonwealth War Graves



Photo: Thomas Capiaux

[UNESCO](#) [Unesco en français](#) [Musée de la Bataille de Fromelles](#) [Métropole Européenne de Lille](#) [Commune de Fromelles](#) [Fromelles Military Cemetery](#) [@followers](#) [@à la une](#)

MEMBERSHIP AND ORDER FORM

Fromelles Association of Australia Inc

Our Membership Fees Have Changed


Reflecting the times we live in and expenses we incur generally, at our AGM on 29 July, we decided to review our Membership Fees.

Single Membership is now \$10.00 per person p.a.

Family Membership (including children up to 18 y.o.) is now \$20.00 p.a.

Any memberships taken out prior to the change remain as is. No up-funding required if you are paid ahead.

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		
<div><div>FROMELLES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA <i>For those lost so far from home</i></div></div>			