

Two Third (2/3) of the Diggers from Pheasant Wood now have named headstones

Background

During the past decade, the Battle of Fromelles in French Flanders has been in the news. Firstly, research undertaken by Lambis Englezos AM in 2006 revealed that there were a significant number of Australian soldiers killed in the battle but not accounted for in burials by Australian or British troops.

After advocacy by Lambis and a team of supporters, in 2007 an archaeological team from Glasgow University led by Professor Tony Pollard confirmed the location of a mass grave where German soldiers had buried the bodies of Australian soldiers after the battle. A further archaeological excavation by Oxford Archaeology in 2009 recovered the remains of 250 soldiers who were then buried with full military honours in the new *Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery* in 2010.

The names of 233 of the 250 soldiers buried by the German Reserve Bavarian Infantry Regiment soldiers following the Battle of Fromelles are known (93%).

The analysis of artefacts and DNA analysis and matching of results with DNA from soldier's relatives has enabled 166 of these soldiers (or 66% of the 250 soldiers) to be positively identified and they now have their own named headstone in the *Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery*.

The names of a further 67 soldiers believed to be buried at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery are known, but their individual remains have not yet been identified and therefore their graves are unnamed, together with another 17 soldiers that were not on the German short list and whose identity is not known.

The identities of the remaining 17 soldiers are amongst the list of the 1,100 Australian soldiers killed in the Battle of Fromelles on the night of 19th July, 1916 with no known grave. (1,333 Australian soldiers were listed as having no known grave less 233 now known to have been buried near Pheasant Wood).

Identifying these 84 (67+17) soldiers remains the challenge that can only be solved now by matching the soldier's DNA with that of a descendant.

Some of the attendees at the Fromelles Day Commemorations are relatives of soldiers killed in the battle, others are descendants of veterans of the battle who returned to Australia and some will be researchers or archaeologists involved in the search for the "missing" soldiers of Fromelles. Following is an update on the progress of the identification process.

Update on identifications

The 2019 Fromelles Identification Board revealed the names of 7 more Australian soldiers who will have their names inscribed on individual headstones. They were:

- 352 Private Arthur George BATT 32nd Bn. A.I.F. age 32 of Hilton, South Australia.
- 77 Lance Corporal John Alexander CRAWFORD 32nd Bn. A.I.F. age 30 of Hindmarsh, South Australia
- 641 Private Leslie Clark DUNN 31st Bn. A.I.F. age 28 of West Melbourne, Victoria
- 1291 Private George HONEY 32nd Bn. A.I.F. age 31 of West Guilford, Western Australia
- 4188 Private Edward James HOPE 54th Bn. A.I.F. age 28 of Penrith, New South Wales.
- 715 Lance Corporal Ralph JOHNSON 32nd Bn. A.I.F. age 19 of Middle Brighton, Victoria

- 3433 Private Peter Paul SHANNON 53rd Bn. A.I.F. age 35 of Merriwa, New South Wales.

Source: <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/dchester/media-releases/seven-australian-soldiers-identified-battle-fromelles>

The identification of these soldiers followed at least 100 submissions made to the Joint Identifications Board for consideration in March 2019, mostly by the Fromelles Association supported by DNA samples from descendants. (See [Seeking Fromelles DNA matches.](#))

Privates Batt, Dunn, Honey, Hope and Shannon’s names were on the original Working List developed for the Fromelles Project in 2008 based on the research and advocacy of Lambis Englezos AM and his team. The Service Records of these soldier contained German documentation advising that their bodies had been buried by the German Army following the Battle. The name of Lance Corporal Ralph Johnson was added to the list following research by the Fromelles Descendants Database team who compiled detailed family histories for most of the soldiers on the Working List. The Australian Army Fromelles Project Group subsequently called for descendants to register for DNA contributions and this more recently has been continued by the *Unrecovered Casualties – Army* unit and broadened to relatives of any soldier killed in the Battle of Fromelles with no known grave. This has enabled Lance Corporal Crawford also to be identified from DNA samples contributed by relatives.

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, the Identification Board did not meet in 2020 but may meet in late 2021.

A list of the names of the 233 Australian soldiers known to be buried in the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery including the names of the 166 soldiers identified so far is available from enquiries@ffaif.org.au.

	Thought to be buried by the Germans	Identified with named head-stones	Identified from Original Working List	Identified from Munich & Fromelles Database research	Identified but not on Working List
Soldiers identified	233	166	125	5	36
Soldiers recovered	250	250			
Source of soldiers’ names	93%	66%	75%	3%	22%

Jim Munro
 President
 Families and Friends of the First AIF
president@ffaif.org.au
 0419 636 028
 1 July 2021

PS: Anyone who believes that they are related to one of the Australian soldiers who are still missing from the Battle of Fromelles are invited to register their details with *Unrecovered War Casualties – Army* at <https://army.govcms.gov.au/forms/uwc-a-online-registration-form> and to contribute DNA samples.