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Just when we optimistically thought the Covid-19 Virus was coming under control, as this Newsletter is being prepared, there has been a flare up of infections in the Greater Sydney area of NSW, leading to lockdown. Just when we had thought there would be having activities face to face, we have to revert to online meetings. Please keep vigilant against the virus until we can meet again in person. In the meantime, enjoy our Newsletter.

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COMMEMORATION OF THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES ON 19 JULY, 2021

At The Anzac Memorial, Hyde Park, Sydney NSW.

In our previous newsletter we wrote to advise that the commemorative service to be held in Sydney this year would be held on 20 July. At the time that was correct. But since our Newsletter the date was reinstated as 19 July. Sadly it may now not be proceeding at all, due to the increasing numbers of cases of covid-19 infections being recorded in Sydney, leading to the Lockdown ordered by the NSW Government.

It may however, be possible to have a “minimalist Procession” to deliver a single wreath to the Anzac Memorial, but which does not require entry to the Anzac Memorial. There would be no other wreath laying, no Commemorative Service or Star Ceremony or Last Post Ceremony, no speeches, no other wreaths or tributes, no Band with vocalist, no pipers or bugler or flag orderlies or videographers etc. If public gatherings of up to 15-20 people are permitted for 19 July, then FFFAIF proposes a minimalist, COVID-safe Commemorative Procession from the Archibald Fountain to deliver a wreath to a representative of the Trustees for placement on the 5th Division wreath stand on the Northern Forecourt, for later relocation to the France and Belgium Niche in the Hall of Memory.

After the wreath is laid or handed over, the Procession participants would observe one minute of silence and then the MC would thank participants and conclude the commemoration and participants would disperse. All participants would be in the Procession so that there would be no “congregating” on the Northern Forecourt awaiting the arrival of the Procession and those in the “Procession” would not enter the Anzac Memorial.

This would be highly symbolic with media coverage (photographer and Channel 7) raising awareness of the Battle of Fromelles, without posing risks to the few participants. It does however still call for NSW Police security and ADF support.

A small Procession bringing a wreath to the Anzac Memorial should still enable the Trustees to meet their commitment to honour the request of the final parade of the 5th Division veterans in 1966 and enable FFFAIF and kindred organisations to demonstrate their commitment to commemorating the Battle of Fromelles, without posing risks to the participants and without putting a larger number of invitees at risk.

The final advice as to whether or not a service takes place on 19 July is therefore yet to be confirmed.

At The War Memorial, Melbourne

The Friends of the 15th Brigade will be holding a commemorative service next to the Cobbers Statue, in the grounds of the War Memorial, Melbourne, from 1.00pm on 19 July, 2021. At this time, the State of Victoria is easing the previous covid-19 restrictions progressively, and life is returning to normal in a progressive manner.

Further information can be obtained from Lambis Englezos on (03) 9690 1023, from Maria Baker on (03) 9859 8508, or from Graham Williams on 0417 360 097.

At the Ipswich General Cemetery, Ipswich

The members and friends of the 31st Battalion Infantry Association (Brisbane Branch) are conducting a commemorative service at the Ipswich General Cemetery, on 19th July, 2021, at 11.00am. All welcome. More information can be obtained via the Facebook page of the 31st Battalion Infantry Association.

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PART 3 (AND THE LAST PART) OF A LETTER HOME FROM PRIVATE 901 GEORGE MARTINDALE, 59TH BATTALION, AT FROMELLES

Contributed by Paul Cunningham. Sourced for DIGGER Magazine by Lambis Englezos.

Adapted for DIGGER Magazine Issue 73 by Graeme Hosken.

The Story continues part III

About 2 o'clock pm, 20th [July], I left the trenches, going back – and though there was nothing extraordinary doing I felt mighty nervous. If a shell howled a 'Dead March' overhead or landed within 200 yards I'd bob down for a second. I walked or wobbled a mile to the rear and then my knees would hardly hold me up but I made them. You can do what you must do! I got a lift back (altogether 4 miles) in a limber, though it's against orders. The driver stopped and helped me in. I didn't argue. When I reached the billet where the 59th were, men of the regiment ran out and helped me in, taking my rifle and equipment and dishing me out some tea. I told them to wake me at night, as I intended going back to have another go at getting the wounded. Our regimental sergeant major said he would call me – but he didn't. Anyhow, there was no need, as there were plenty of fresh men.

For those lost so far from home.

When I woke in the morning I could just stand. I was fully dressed and my clothes were still wet, puttees caked with mud, blood all over me, hands torn by barbed wire and thorns, a patch



the size of half a crown off each side of my forehead caused by a piece of shell striking my 'tin hat', which had quite a respectable bulge, though not pierced. I stepped out and there were a couple of AMC chaps applying priming coats of iodine to various parts of patients' anatomies. They painted my hands and head. I had a look at myself in a mirror just afterwards and got a bit of a shock. I looked a proper wild man from Borneo, with whiskers, blood, iodine, smoke and grime blended on my visage.

At noon there was a roll call. We went into action two score hours previously a virgin regiment (90 percent or more had never seen a shot fired in anger). A regiment at full strength – ninety seven answered their names – not one in ten; 97 out of 1 000 and all practically within half an hour. It's ghastly – horrible, our neighbouring regiment, the 60th, fared even worse, less than 80 (eighty) answering their names – out of a thousand. Of the two regiments not one officer escaped being killed or wounded.

Our brigade bore the brunt of the action and paid heavily, gloriously. Through all this frightful time, when every second we knew not which would be our last as sound men on this side of eternity, I heard no sound of complaint. The wounded were splendid, the unwounded also, though all suffered. Our Brigadier 'Pompey' (Bgr Gen Elliott) is as game as they make 'em. In my company commander I mourn the death of a brave soldier and a gentleman (Captain Liddelow*). He fell at the head of his Company 'C' with his face to the enemy and his revolver in his hand. He served through the Gallipoli campaign where he was wounded. I saw him just before the word to 'go over' was given. He nodded to me and smiled, for we were friends. He knew he was 'going west'. I read it in his face like an open book but he never flinched or faltered. While the Empire produces men of Captain Liddelow's type, it is safe. Some men of my section who sheltered in the creek after I implored them to get out were killed. I found them on my way back. They would not listen to my assurance that the front line or row is the safest place in attack. I'll not say anything about the losses to our division, or how they were flooded and shelled out of some trenches they took on our left. I'll say nothing about the whole attack. I might say too much – or not enough. I'll continue this shortly. Affectionately George.

[***Captain Aubrey Liddelow**, 8th & 59th Bns, married schoolteacher of East Malvern, enlisted 11/11/14, Wounded In Action 25/4/15 & 12/7/15, transferred 59th Bn 24/2/16, WIA 19/7/16 and later Killed In Action by shellfire, no known grave. Ed.]

For those lost so far from home.

Sgt 901 George Gawthorp Martindale was a 27 yo carpenter of Brighton, Vic. He enlisted on 21/8/14 and sailed with 5th Bn. Transferred to 59th Bn and RTA 25/11/17. George passed away in 1922. George's letters have been published in the book, 'Dodging the Devil', ISBN 9781743792155.

DIGGER Magazine is the official publication of Friends and Families of the First AIF. More stories such as this one of George Martindale can be found in the DIGGER Magazine, available in hard copy as well as in electronic format. If you are interested in expanding your knowledge of the many soldiers who served in the First AIF, please contact Graeme Hosken via his email address of ghoskenaif@bigpond.com.

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THE LOST DIGGERS OF FROMELLES – DOCUMENTARY BY THE STUDENTS OF ST. CLARE'S COLLEGE WAVERLEY

It was with the greatest of pleasure that we accepted an invitation from St. Clare's College at Waverley, to attend the launch of their documentary, The Lost Diggers of Fromelles, on 21 April, 2021.

The documentary is a tribute to not only the men who fought so bravely, but also to the courage and determination of the women left behind, who fought so hard to keep their families together in the face of such overwhelming grief.

Two years in the making, St. Clare's students, in collaboration with acclaimed author and documentary maker, Mr. Patrick Lindsay, tell the story of the Battle of Fromelles through the eyes of the women left behind.

Original plans to travel to Fromelles as part of the work in the creation of the documentary did not eventuate due to Covid-19, but the students found other ways of involving local input.

The documentary is available for viewing on Youtube, using the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rzslmwgRIM>

After the launch itself, acclaimed amateur historian Lambis Englezos was also able to recount his decade long quest to search for the Lost Diggers of Fromelles, at Pheasant Wood. Had it not been for the efforts of Lambis these soldiers would still be lying in the fields of Fromelles and many families around the nation would be left wondering what became of their loved one. The interview with Lily, student at St. Clare's College can be seen, again via Youtube, using the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyGOFtmhEVA>

For more information on the documentary, please contact:-

Michael Burden, Leader of Innovation and Partnerships
St Clare's College, 41-51 Carrington Rd, Waverley. 2024
Telephone: (02) 8305 7100

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For those lost so far from home.

AN UPDATE ON STORIES OF OUR SOLDIERS

From Marg O'Leary:

We are compiling stories of the soldiers who served at Fromelles, whether they were killed in action, wounded, taken prisoner, or neither of these but who served and later returned home. These stories will be uploaded to our website when it 'goes live'. So far:-

- approximately 50 have been forwarded to our web manager, to upload onto the website;
- about another 50 more have been completed, and are awaiting forwarding;
- we have about another 100 completed and waiting to go, making about 200 complete.

After that, there are another 400 stories either written or on a promise or waiting for us to nudge them along. Total stories either finished or in the pipeline so far are approximately 600. A shortened version of just one of those stories follows.

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THE McLEANS OF THE 60TH BATTALION

ALEXANDER 43 AND HIS TWO SONS, LESIE AND VICTOR HENRY,

ABBREVIATED FROM WEB STORY BY BOB GRIFFITHS.

Early Life



ALEX. McLEAN, Snr.

Alex McLean, Snr

The McLean family were living in Geelong, Victoria in the late 1800s. Alexander McLean was a house painter who had married Margaret McMullen in 1889. They had two sons, Alexander Leslie, born in March 1894, and, Victor Henry, born in February 1897. The boys attended state schools in Geelong and upon completion of their schooling. Victor became a plasterer and Leslie worked as a shop assistant. Older sister Elsie Victoria May (1891) died at 10 months. Younger siblings Ruby Violet b 1889, Clive Redvers McLean (1900) died aged 72. Mervyn Balfour b 1903. So, the younger children were on the home front with Margaret. (Clive: Navy WW2).

In 1915, the call to war was answered as a family affair, with all three of the eligible male McLeans enlisting in July 1915. While Victor was underage at just 18, his parents obviously approved.



Young ALEX McLEAN, Grandson

Alexander Leslie McLean, son of Alex McLean

For those lost so far from home.



[Picture: A tram used for recruiting during World War I. There are posters along the side of the tram and the sign 'Come on Geelong'. Pictures: Collections Museum Victoria]



VICTOR McLEAN, Grandson.

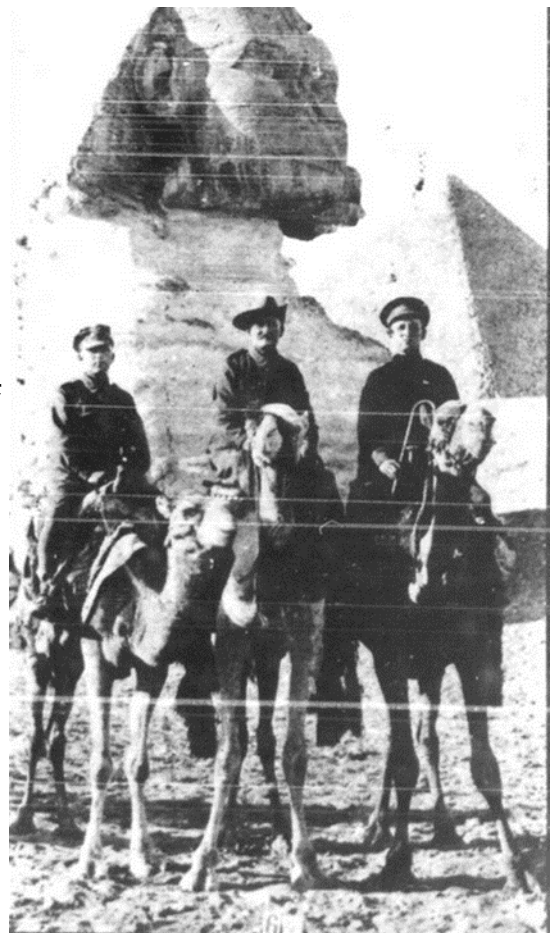
Victor Henry McLean

Off to Egypt

All three were assigned to the 7th Reinforcements / 21st Battalion. Initial military training in Broadmeadows, Victoria before heading for Egypt on the HMAT Wiltshire on 18 November 1915.

The McLeans arrived in Egypt on 15 December for further training and defence of the Suez Canal. With the Western Front expanding and the results of the heavy recruiting programs back home, there was a great deal of reorganization of the battalions. The McLeans were assigned to the newly formed 60th Battalion in late February, 1916.

[Picture: Father and sons in Egypt]



Western Front

After postings in a number of camps in Egypt, the call to join the British Expeditionary Force in France came in mid-June. The 60 officers and 975 enlisted men of the 60th embarked in Alexandria on the transport ship Kinfauns Castle on 18 June 1916. After a stop in Malta, they arrived in Marseilles on 29 June and were on trains to the

For those lost so far from home.

front, arriving in Steenbecque, France on 2 July.

Just a few kilometres from the front, their training continued, although with a higher intensity. The 60th were into the trenches for the first time on 13 July and just three days later were in position for an attack. However, it was postponed due to unfavourable weather. While they were in the trenches there was a gas alarm, but luckily it was just that. On the 19th, they were again getting ready for an attack and were in position by 4:20 PM.

There was heavy artillery from both sides. The first wave of Aussies went over the parapet at 6:45 PM with the last wave going over at 7:00. They were in a very difficult position, with the ongoing bombardment, facing short range fire from the German trenches and cross fire from the machine gun emplacement on the Sugar Loaf salient, just a short distance away.

One soldier said that their unit only got to within 90 yards of enemy trenches, but another said he "believed some few of the battalion entered enemy trenches and that during the night a few stragglers, wounded and unwounded, returned to our trenches."

Fighting continued through the night. With the known heavy casualties in the 60th, they were relieved by the 57th Battalion at 7 AM.

Roll call was held at 9:30 AM. In the *Official History of the War*, Bean said "of the 60th Battalion, which had gone into the fight with 887 officers and men, only one officer and 106 answered the call". Victor and Leslie were not present.

The Aftermath

With the heavy death toll and confusion surrounding such a battle, finding out just who, if any, of the family survived would have been a challenge. On the 21st through the 23rd, search parties were sent to no-man's-land, but Victor and Leslie were not found.

Sergeant H. Lau, 3158, spoke of Victor's death. "I knew MacLean (sic) personally and saw him dead on the evening of 20th July in No-Man's-Land, Fleurbaix. He was lying in a Sap. It looked as though he had been crawling back, and had got mortally wounded before getting back. He was in the Charge."

Private A Wyatt, 1593, stated that "A. McLean and V. McLean are brothers. They were both killed the same day. They have a father who is in the Bn also: he knows they are both dead."

While it is difficult to imagine what Alexander was going through with the loss of both of his sons, as well as his own experiences, it had been reported to his wife back in Australia that he had been killed as well. This was later proven to be attributed to some confusion between Alexander McLean and Alexander *Leslie* McLean, which Margaret had written to the Army about.

For those lost so far from home.

Alexander's Saga

Alexander, despite the loss of his two sons, had to "soldier on". The 60th remained in the area near Fromelles until 18 October before being moved to outside Paris. They were then moved to Amiens, Dernancourt, Flesselles to join in the activity in the northern area of the Somme.

His further experiences continued to be unenviable. The November War Diaries summary cites there being heavy rain and marching through slush.

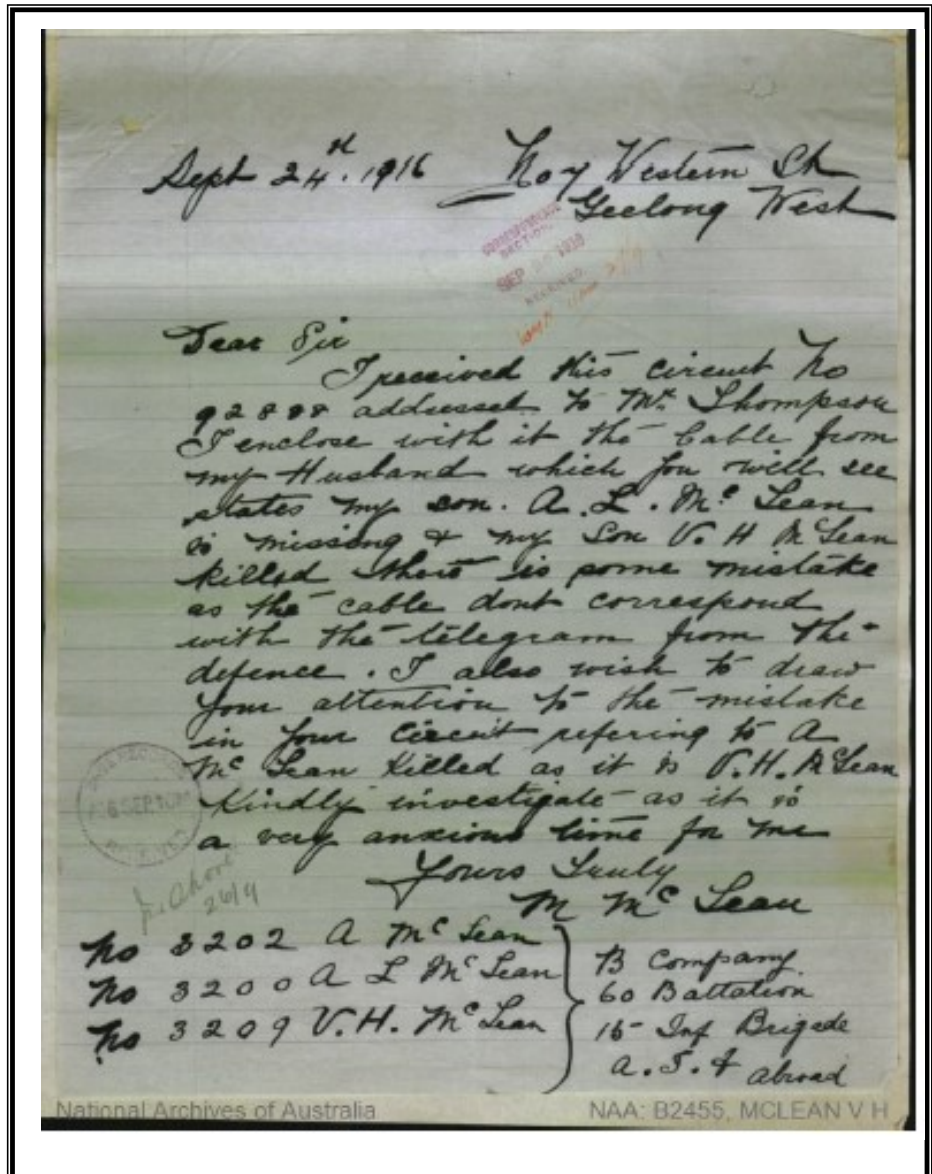
The Major in charge of the 60th War Diary was not one to mince words about the conditions.

"Arrived at 'D Camp', what a travesty. A few dozen sodden stinking dugouts, many without cover of any sorts. No chance of getting the men dry and altho' a good hot meal was served, the men were looking very wretched in the cold light of early morning."

That afternoon they marched 5 miles to relieve the Welsh Guards at Needle Trench. After 1 ½ miles, "... we had fallen into and climbed out of all the shell holes we could conveniently find, dragged through a thousand yards of the best churned land, you have to actually do this to appreciate its meaning, wriggled through an enemy barrage and lost ourselves several times we fell into an alleged trench. There are no communications and it is remarkable that we escaped with 1 killed and 5 wounded."

"The Bn. was now in a very bad condition, the irregular meals and sleep due to continued movement added to the heavy marching played havoc with the tempers and physical condition of the men and the three subsequent days in the front line have produced an alarming amount of sickness and Trench Feet."

For those lost so far from home.



"I am writing this on my last sheet of paper and beg to apologise for its dirty condition."

On 1 December, the 60th was relieved. They still had a long march out, but at least were given a hot meal, able to get their boots off and had dry blankets.

On 3 Dec Alexander was sent to hospital with pleurisy and on the 20th with bronchitis.

On 25 Jan he was finally moved out of the battlefield and on to the 3rd Division HQ Salvage Company in the UK.

Margaret's Plea

On August 30 1917, Thomas Trumble, the Acting Secretary of the Department of Defence, forwarded this letter to AIF HQ in London.

"The following copy of a communication which has been received in this Department is referred to you for consideration and favour of report please."

"Excuse the liberty I am taking in writing to you. I will state my case and leave it for you to judge.

It is now close on two years since my husband and two sons enlisted. They sailed together and were in the same Battalion up till the 19 July of last year, in which I lost my sons, one missing and the other killed.

My husband has never been the same in health since that awful day and after being in the trenches last year. He has been before 4 or 5 boards and marked unfit, still they keep him there, although he has been put at H.Q. carrying letters etc.

I think he has done his bit, and after losing two good sons as Captain Kerr says whom any mother can be proud of, I wish to ask you if you can do anything for me in returning him before another winter sets in, he now being unfit.

His age was 47 last month. Late of the 60th Battalion, now No.3202 Private A. McLean with HDQ, 3rd Division AIF, abroad."

Private Alexander McLean was returned to Australia in December 1917, his file stamped "family reasons".

Post-War

Alexander was formally discharged on 27 February 1918. He returned to his job as a painter until he retired in 1937. He died in 1939, age 67. He was living in Richmond, Victoria at the time.

The burial sites of Victor and Leslie are still unknown.

For those lost so far from home.

They are commemorated at VC Corner Memorial near Fromelles, France, Panel 21 and the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, Roll of Honour, Panel Number 170. They each received the Star Medal, British War Medal, Victory Medal, Memorial Scroll and Memorial Plaque.

In 2008, a mass grave that had been dug by the Germans outside of Fromelles was discovered. It contained the remains of some 250 soldiers. With this discovery, there was an Australian Defence Force project to try to match up DNA of the soldiers in the grave with living relatives to be able to honour the soldiers properly. A great many of the soldiers have been confirmed, but as yet, neither Victor nor Leslie have been identified.

The Fromelles Association has continued with the soldier identification project.

No family could have given more



[Picture: The Geelong memorial where the McLeans are recorded.]

Thank you to Geelong historian Susie Zada, for material on the wider McLean family who went to war, this will be in the long version of this story on our new webpage.

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For those lost so far from home.

THANK YOU FROM THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL TO AUSTRALIA'S VOLUNTEERS

We at the Fromelles Association know of the valuable and usually unpublicized, but extremely rewarding work undertaken by our volunteers. So it was with much gratitude that we received this message from the office of the Governor-General, our Patron, on 17 May, 2021:

Good morning,

At the beginning of National Volunteers Week, the Governor-General has sent a message of thanks to Australia's six million volunteers. In the message, available on Facebook and YouTube or to download, the Governor-General says: "Volunteering takes many forms and volunteers come from all sorts of backgrounds. "Together, you help strengthen our community in just about every way imaginable. "We are grateful. We appreciate you... "To all those who volunteer, thank you. Chances are you don't volunteer for recognition or thanks – but you deserve both and National Volunteer Week is our opportunity to offer it to you."

The message continues to advise that:

Nominating someone for recognition through Order of Australia is one way to celebrate the most committed of volunteers. Many outstanding Australians are already recognised each year for their work in the community but there are many who are not - women, in particular, have been historically underrepresented in nominations (and therefore, awards). The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley are seeking to address this and ensure that the Order reflects Australian society - they need your help.

To find out how to nominate someone go to <https://www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awardsorder-australia/nominate-someone-order-australia>.

Happy National Volunteer Week. The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley look forward to catching up with you over the course of coming months.

Warm regards,

Rob Ayling | Director, Communications and Creativity Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General Government House, Canberra ACT 2600 T: +61 2 6283 3524 E: patronages@gg.gov.au

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INSCRIBING 'FROMELLES' ON MEMORIALS

[from Geoffrey Benn as author of *Fromelles: 100 Years of Myths and Lies*]

I have written in the opening pages of my upcoming book, that despite the deaths of 1917 Australians and 519 British soldiers on 19th and 20th July, 1916, 'Fromelles' is not inscribed on any war memorial dedicated to those who died in the service of their country, *within Australia*. Many others died in the days, weeks, even months after, due to wounds sustained in the Battle of Fromelles.

To this day, you can only see such inscriptions if you travel overseas.

For those lost so far from home.

In London you can attend the Australian War Memorial at Hyde Park Corner.

At Fromelles, France, you can visit the VC Corner Military Cemetery, and the Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery, near Fromelles

Near Zonnebeke in Belgium, you can visit the A.I.F. Fifth Division's own monument at Polygon Wood. And elsewhere in Belgium, you can visit the Berks Cemetery Extension Memorial at Ploegsteert.

Ironically, "Fromelles" is inscribed on a column located in the grounds of the French Embassy in Canberra, erected *to honour the memory of Australians who fell on French soil in the 1914-1918 War*. It was unveiled on 28 July, 1961, in a function attended by then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies.

Andrew Gee was appointed as Minister for Veterans Affairs and Defence Personnel, Andrew, following Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce being reinstated as Leader of the National Party. Following his appointment, a letter appeared in the Western Advocate, Bathurst, on 29 June, 2021, in which Robyn Lewis wrote:-

"For many years I have been active in striving to have Fromelles inscribed on the Australian National Memorial in Villers-Bretonneux in France.

On July 19, it will be 105 years since the Battle of Fromelles and there is still no recognition of these Australian soldiers by inscription. There were nearly 2000 [casualties] in less than 24 hours.

I am aware that Andrew is sympathetic for the cause, so now is the appropriate time for him to make a move in having these brave soldiers recognised. I know that I am not the only member of this electorate with family involved in this battle. However, there are many families in Australia waiting for their families to be honoured in France. "

The call for inscriptions will continue.

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SOME EVIDENCE OF LOCAL INSCRIPTIONS

[With thanks to Dave Farrar] On the war memorial in Camden Memorial Park, Camden NSW, the names of local soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War are inscribed. The memorial honours those individuals primarily, and lists the places of their deaths as well. Following the name of William Bernard Gibson the locality of 'Fromelles' is inscribed as the place of his death. So, in an indirect manner, 'Fromelles' is inscribed on a war memorial honouring those who died in the service of their country.

William Bernard Gibson is recorded as having been a 21 y.o. farmer, born in London England, who enlisted in Liverpool NSW. He was a soldier in the 54th Battalion and was killed in action on 20 July, 1916 by an exploding shell. (See picture of memorial plaque on next page.)

For those lost so far from home.

[Picture courtesy of Dave Farrar]

**NOTICE OF UPCOMING ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING OF THE
FROMELLES ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA**

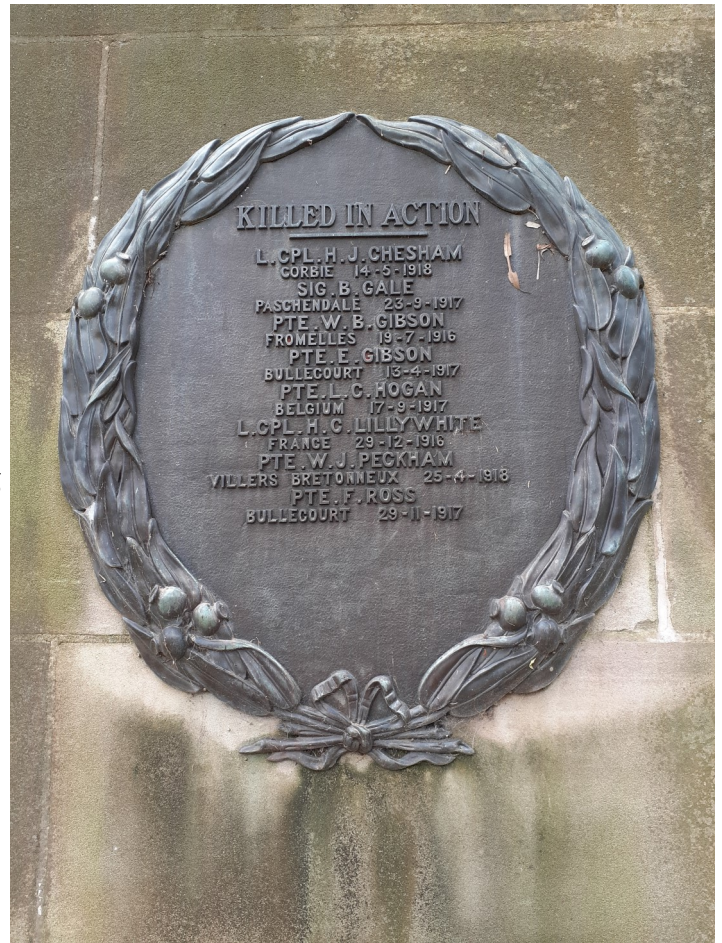
This year, due to the ongoing interference of Covid-19, our AGM will be held online using Zoom software.

The meeting will take place on 24 July, from 10.00am.

More details for being able to log in to the meeting will be published separately via email and via our Facebook page.

We have not received any Notice of an item to be placed before the meeting for consideration, so there will be Presentation of Reports and Election of Office Bearers for the next financial year.

Stay safe in the meantime.



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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

For those lost so far from home.