



## Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Discussion Group

### Putting to rest the missing soldiers of Fromelles



**POST CARD: Battery of 18-Pounders in Action during the First World War**—Courtesy of Bob Sutherland, this image was originally published as part of the "OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT" series, to aid the ACF.

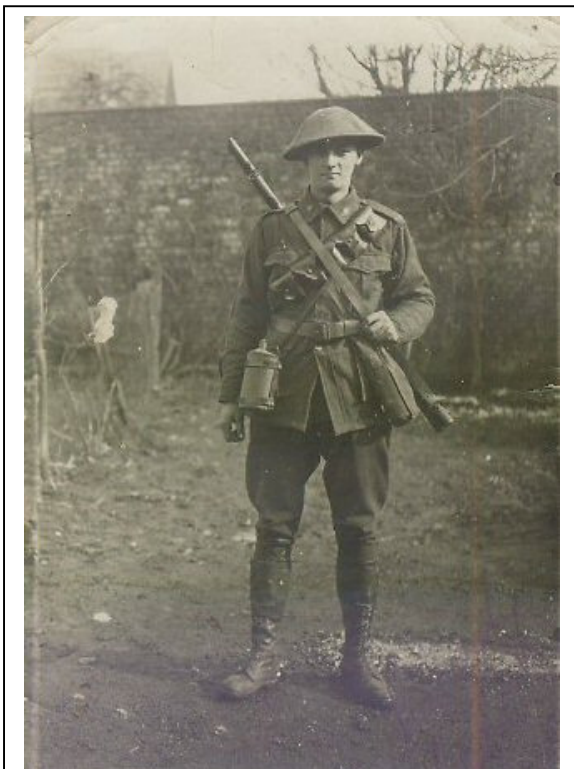
**At the conclusion of World War One Britain and her Dominion forces had suffered a staggering million dead. On the Western Front, France and Belgium had experienced heavy fighting and it was therefore not unexpected in 1918, to find the Allies wanting to honour those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice with the proposal and formation of the Imperial War Graves Commission, whose primary task was to recover, identify and bury the war dead in permanent cemeteries and to perpetuate in stone the names of those who were missing.**

"The Imperial War Graves Commission was established near the end of hostilities", said Mr Bob Sutherland a Member of the Friends of the 15th Brigade who believes the Federal Government should approach the French authorities to implement treaty obligations with respect to the missing of Fromelles. Mr Sutherland believes there is far too much procrastination when it comes to the recovery of the bodies at the Pheasant Wood site near Fromelles, as protocols for exhumation and burial have already been established, tested and historically acted upon. "One only has to look at the Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and France respecting British War dead formulated in Paris, 26th November, 1918, to realize this and understand the diplomatic framework in which this has occurred in the past", he added.

"Other combatant countries followed suit adopting these protocols and guidelines, including Belgium, Italy and other Allied countries, and Germany, Turkey and other former Central Powers signed up as well", explained amateur historian Mr Grant Triffett who supports further direct scientific investigation of the burial pits discovered by Lambis Englezos at Pheasant Wood.

Investigatory techniques have already been applied to Pheasant Wood and the Army History Unit has confirmed the likelihood of a positive result for remains, states Mr Triffett who concurs with Sutherland saying: "In the period 1921 to 1932 as a result of agricultural and building activities, more than 31,000 bodies were found. And around 5000 of these were identified from artifacts during excavation and as far as the Imperial War Graves Commission (now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) is concerned, the cost of recovery was traditionally borne by the respective Government in proportion to the number of their graves and the land handed over in perpetuity by the French Government."

Triffett continued, "Of course the treaty of 1918 has been superseded and updated by a new Agreement in 1951, but the point remains there are statutes and regulations still in force, contrary to the views espoused by some officials. Thus, any dig conducted in the area of the burial pits would benefit from new technology as well as the application of the statutory framework previously enacted."



**POST CARD: Equipped and ready for action—Produced in France this Carte Postale depicts an Australian Digger belonging to either the artillery or service corps—**Courtesy of Alan Bennett, the details on this historic souvenir are too indistinct to give proper credit to the printer named.

"The Army History Unit, which was provided a copy of the results from the non-invasive geophysical survey conducted in 2007 by the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology hosted by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD), must be aware of the criticism that has been directed toward its findings on an international level," Mr Sutherland said. "It is imperative the Army History Unit is seen to be willing to listen to outside leading experts in the field who have expertise in using state-of-the-art identification and recovery techniques and become more transparent when dealing with events such as this, because best practice dictates it."

Referring to the Pheasant Wood site as apparently containing 300 British and 170 Australian bodies, Mr Sutherland stated "the Australian Government should stop dragging its feet and take the lead on this important and emotive matter and settle the debt owed these fallen soldiers. Especially for the sake of their families, who to this day want closure", he said.