



Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Discussion Group

## Cobbers Statue Unveiled

*In memory of those who fought and fell in the Battle of Fromelles 19-20 July 1916*

Officiating at the unveiling of the 'Cobbers' Statue at the Shrine of Remembrance on 19 July 2008, chairman of trustees John Taylor introduced the Premier of Victoria, The Honourable John Brumby MLA who demonstrated not only a grasp of the history behind the infamous Battle of Fromelles, but enthusiastic support for commemorating our Great War dead. Cast from the original mould by Peter Corlett (who was present at the ceremony), the sculpture had a powerful effect on those who attended and was generally felt to be moving and inspirational.

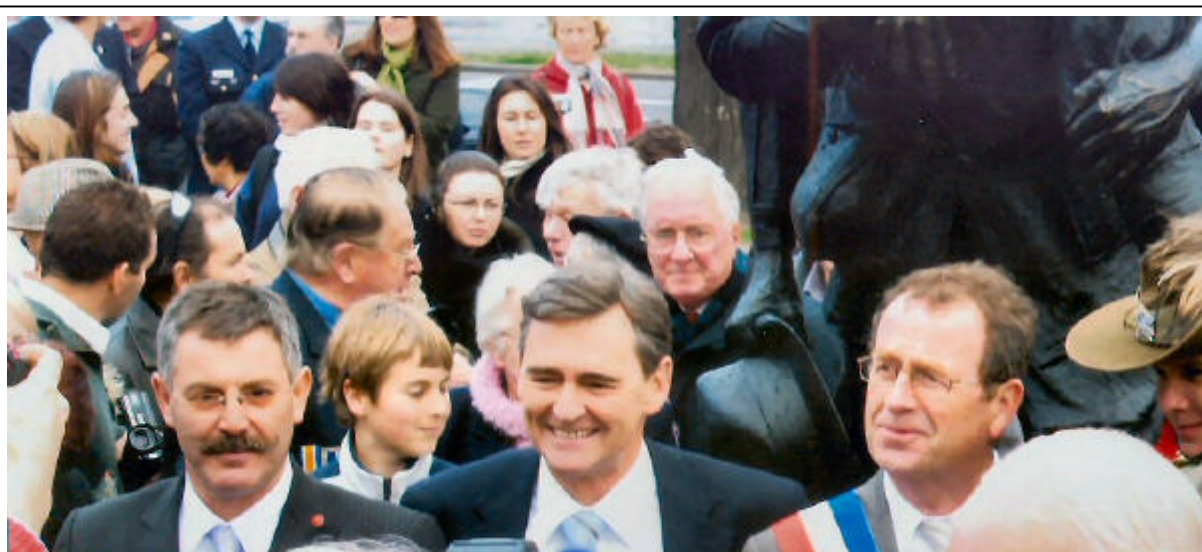


**PHOTOGRAPH: Lest We Forget-** Cobbers Statue Unveiled: 92nd anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles. [The human face of tragedy depicted in a magnificent sculpture which encapsulates an extraordinary act of bravery].

Besides the Premier, speakers included State President RSL Victoria Major General David McLachlan AO, Chairman of Tattersall's George Adams Foundation, Brian Jamieson and Garrie Hutchinson, representing the Friends of the 15th Brigade.

It involved a catafalque party led by Senior PSO Lee Andrews, the Mayor of Fromelles Monsieur Hubert Huchette and Martial Delebarre, one of the founders of L'Association pour le Souvenir de la Bataille de Fromelles (ASBF) and a great supporter of investigations into Pheasant Wood.

Advisor to the State Minister for Veterans' Affairs and prominent member of the Friends of the 15th Brigade Garrie Hutchinson, well known military historian Robin Corfield, amateur military researcher Lambis Englezos and compatriot Tim Whitford, were credited with the discovery of the burial pits at Fromelles and being the catalyst for the second casting of the statue and its placement at the Shrine. The original sculpture stands at Australian Memorial Park, Fromelles and was commissioned in 1998.



**PHOTOGRAPH: Official Party and other VIP's mixed freely during the Event held on 19 July 2008** - [Depicted during the unveiling of the replica 'Cobbers' statue are Foreground—L to R: Martial Delebarre, a founder of L'Association pour le Souvenir de la Bataille de Fromelles and veteran French military historian; The Honourable John Brumby, MLA Premier of Victoria; Monsieur Hubert Huchette, Mayor of Fromelles].

Sculpted by Peter Corlett, it depicts Sergeant Simon Fraser of the 57th Battalion carrying a wounded member of the 60th Battalion to safety. Having enlisted at Byaduk, Victoria where he was born, Fraser was subsequently promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, transferred to the 58th Battalion AIF (Victorian) and died on 12 May 1917. Son of James and Mary Fraser, Simon was awarded a Mention in Despatches and killed when a platoon commander at Bullecourt, aged 40.

He was commended for his continuous good work during the 10th July to the 20th September 1916 by H. E. "Pompey" Elliott, and congratulated on his courage during this crucial period. Elliott, Brigadier General Commanding, 15th Infantry Brigade, commended Fraser for this award describing him as setting a very fine example and being fearless in rescuing wounded. According to Elliott, Fraser was "responsible for some very gallant work during the period 19th/23rd July", and he is commemorated at Villers Bretonnuex, a cemetery situated in northern France.

The replica statue now located in the lower Shrine reserve adjacent to the Domain Interchange is a tribute to the men who served on the Western Front and particularly the Somme and its erection in Melbourne was made more poignant, by the family and relatives of Sergeant Simon Fraser participating in the unveiling.

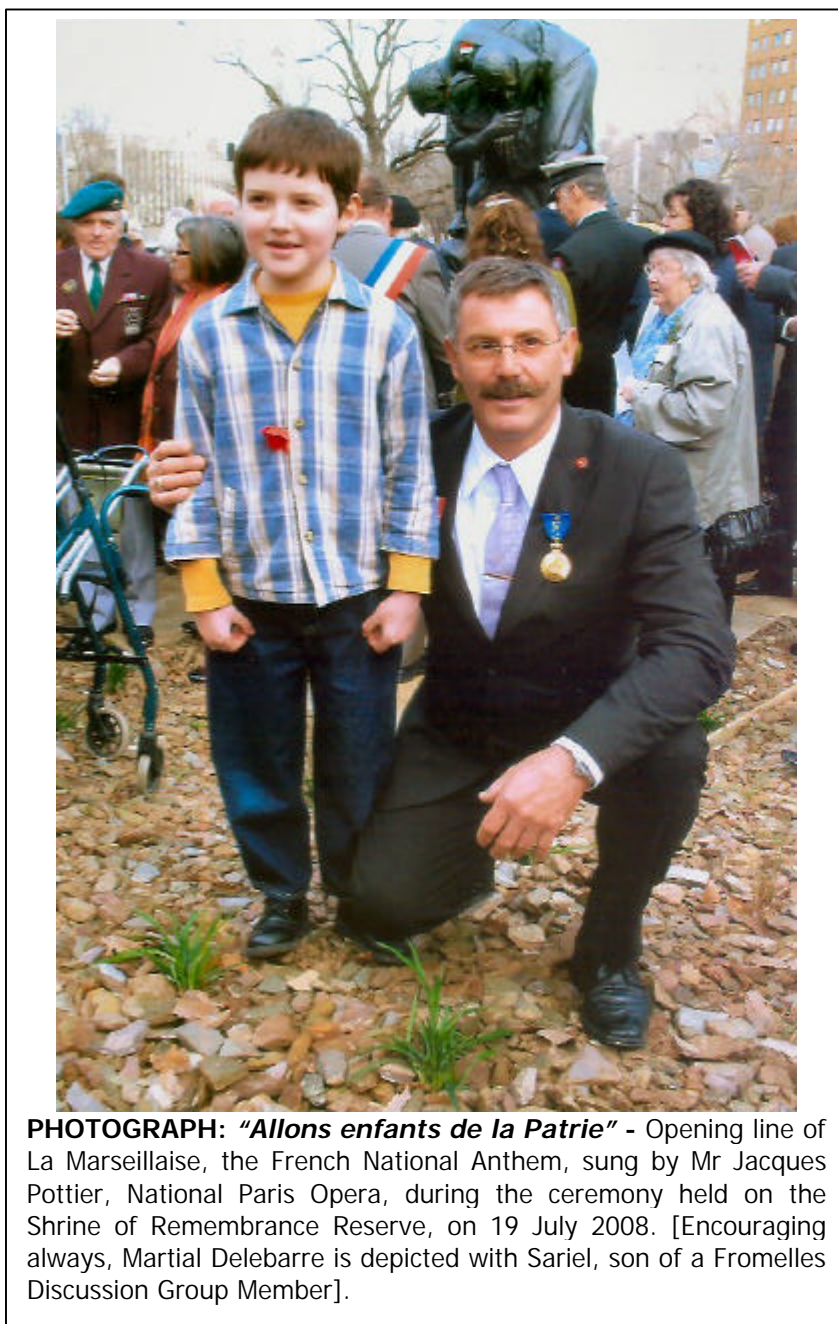
'Cobbers' Statue will become iconic according to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin when speaking at the reception held on the 92nd anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles and members of the Fromelles Discussion Group tend to agree with the assertion.

The statue is impressive, thought-provoking, representative and symbolic and Fromelles Discussion Group members believe 'Cobbers' will reinvigorate pride in this nation and help illustrate the spirit of mateship. It will symbolize selflessness in the face of adversity and with each generation that succeeds us, the sculpture will epitomize valour and loyalty.

Located in the Shrine Reserve it will always retain a certain magnificence sculpturally, but it will also be a place to pay homage to the fallen and a focal point from which to contemplate and honour the memory of all who failed to return to their homeland at war's end. For anybody interested in the history of the 5th Infantry Division, 'Cobbers' will provide visitors to the Shrine of Remembrance with a personal encounter as Alan Griffin suggests . . . it will become a permanent reminder of the tragic losses at Fromelles and a memorial to the missing, and one which better than most, provides a special insight into this part of our wartime history.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PREMIER BRUMBY AND MAYOR HUCHETTE WHO UNVEILED 'COBBERS'. WE NOW LOOK FORWARD TO THE RUDD LABOR GOVERNMENT MAKING IT A PRIORITY TO IDENTIFY AND INDIVIDUALLY REBURY THE MISSING SOLDIERS OF FROMELLES.

THE UNVEILING OF THE STATUE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE FRENCH NATIONAL ANTHEM *LA MARSEILLAISE* AND THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM *ADVANCE AUSTRALIA FAIR* AND WHAT A HOLLOW GESTURE ITS DISPLAY WOULD BE, IF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



**PHOTOGRAPH: "Allons enfants de la Patrie"** - Opening line of La Marseillaise, the French National Anthem, sung by Mr Jacques Pottier, National Paris Opera, during the ceremony held on the Shrine of Remembrance Reserve, on 19 July 2008. [Encouraging always, Martial Delebarre is depicted with Sarel, son of a Fromelles Discussion Group Member].

FAILED TO COMMIT TO RESOLVING THE MYSTERY OF FROMELLES, INCLUDING THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE REMAINS OF THESE HEROES.



**PHOTOGRAPH:** Friends of the 15th Brigade admire the statue by Australian sculptor Peter Corlett before attending a service for the association in the Sanctuary.- Pictured are amateur military researcher Lambis Englezos [Left], with colleague and supporter, Tim Whitford after their return from Fromelles at the conclusion of the trial dig undertaken in June 2008. Tim laid a wreath for his great uncle Private Harry Willis, during the unveiling and was accompanied by his family and other relatives, including Denise McFarlane who is a great niece of the soldier concerned.



**PHOTOGRAPH:** Melbourne-based sculptor Peter Corlett who created 'Cobbers', attended the tribute and is depicted in front of Ted Baillieu, MLA Shadow Minister for the Arts and Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party in Victoria.

**THE REPLICA HAS A STRENGTH, A PATHOS AND A HUMANITY WHICH BOTH COMMANDS ATTENTION AND DEMANDS ACTION AND RESOLUTION. FOR MOST OF US UNABLE TO VISIT PHEASANT WOOD, THE SCULPTURE PERSONIFIES OUR MORTALITY ... OUR FRAILTY ... OUR VULNERABILITY, AND THAT IS THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENT OF MELBOURNE-BASED ARTIST, PETER CORLETT. CORLETT CREATED FLESH AND BLOOD AND THAT FLESH AND BLOOD REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST REMEMBRANCE. THE FIGURES SPEAK FOR THE MISSING AS WELL AS THOSE WHO SURVIVED THE BATTLEFIELD HOWEVER FLEETINGLY, AND THEY IMPLORINGLY SEEK RECOGNITION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND THIS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH RECOVERY AND IDENTIFICATION, AS IT WAS IMPORTANT**

**TO WORLD WAR ONE DIGGERS NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN. A FACT WHICH PRODUCED MANY OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING ACTS OF BRAVERY DURING THE CONFLICT. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, 'COBBERS' IS A LIVING MEMORIAL.**

**19 July 2008 was the 92nd Anniversary of the Battle of Fromelles**

Since its inception Fromelles Discussion Group has advocated the retrieval, reburial and identification of the missing Australian soldiers recently discovered at Pheasant Wood. Our campaign has supported the rights of fallen First World War soldiers under international law and the group has vigorously lobbied the Federal Government to move toward full recovery. Fromelles Discussion Group members congratulate the Families and Friends of the First AIF in now moving to support this position. In an announcement on July 20, 2008 the FFFAIF issued a Policy Statement saying, "The Families and Friends of the First AIF believes that the Australian Government, through the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, should commit to the reburial of the 'missing of Fromelles', with individual graves and headstones in a new Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery at Pheasant Wood after DNA testing."