

REPORTER ATHANAE LUCEV OF THE WEST AUSTRALIAN CONTACTED FROMELLES DISCUSSION GROUP ON 25 NOVEMBER 2009 REQUESTING TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS AT PHEASANT WOOD. KNOWING THE WEST AUSTRALIAN WAS INTERESTED IN FROMELLES, THE FOLLOWING REPLY WAS PREPARED AND FORWARDED. ON THE 23 DECEMBER 2009, THE DAY THE BRIEF WAS TRANSMITTED BY EMAIL; THE DOCUMENT WAS ALSO SENT TO MR WILLIAM GAYNOR OAM RFD, THE PRESIDENT OF RSL STATE BRANCH—WA, AS A COURTESY TO THAT PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION.

ATHANAE LUCEV, REPORTER, THE WEST AUSTRALIAN:

Dear Athanae,

STRIVING TO GIVE VOICE TO AUSTRALIA'S MISSING WAR DEAD FROM THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES

Fromelles Discussion Group welcomes your inquiry. As a reporter with The West Australian I understand you want to keep up with developments in relation to the French War Graves Project. However I am not certain how we can keep you in the loop.

This group is independent of government and is not privy to information unavailable to others. Unlike members of the Australian Fromelles Project Group, our affiliates are not political insiders. Indeed FromellesDiscussionGroup.com is privately funded and works to fulfill advocacy and educational roles relating to this historic action.

Regardless of this, your contact has been noted. Since the group is constantly updating its website we would suggest you avail yourself of the opportunity of using this research tool. The website known as War Graves & Battlefields Heritage created by the British All-Party Parliamentary Group might also be helpful as will Lest We Forget, the newly-developed Virtual Fromelles Museum.

From our viewpoint we would be grateful if The West Australian would support our campaign to have all unknowns from the Battle of Fromelles recovered and identified. In addition the paper might like to encourage the Rudd Labor Government to establish a permanent accounting command to deal with future discoveries of Australian service personnel in war graves from this era. As you probably already know, questions have been raised about tendering, toxic seepage and the recovery rate of individuals from the site at Pheasant Wood, so there is no need to go into much detail about such problems. Particularly since there has been a fair amount of publicity about the dig, which has questioned the limited parameters formulated for the project, inadequate screening techniques and the restrictive nature of timelines imposed by government. Lately one of the major stakeholders has even criticized the appropriateness of the DNA methodologies being employed.

I understand PerthNow published an article on the 31st May 2008 titled "WA soldiers who died at Fromelles" so if The Western Australian wants any further background, might I direct you to the following. Some preliminary research by myself suggests the following Great War Diggers listed in the BATTLE OF FROMELLES ROLL OF MISSING uploaded to FromellesDiscussionGroup.com appear to have come from Western Australia and been declared missing:

1205 Private Percy Michael Anderson 32nd Battalion—[POB Perth WA; POE Perth WA].

1241 Private Walter Vernon Cope 32nd Battalion—[POB Geraldton WA; POE Blackboy Hill WA].

937 Private Albert Ernest Gillett 32nd Battalion—[POB Perth WA; POE Perth WA].

962 Private James Wesley Hutchinson 32nd Battalion—POB Fremantle WA; POE Blackboy Hill WA].

3158 Private Victor Robert Ingram 32nd Battalion—[POB Perth WA; POE Perth WA].

974 Private William Keating 32nd Battalion—[POB Northampton WA; POE Blackboy Hill WA].

982 Private James Thomas Lee 32nd Battalion—[Kalanning WA; POE Blackboy Hill WA].

985 Private Frederick William Lydiate 32nd Battalion—[POB Guildford WA; POE Blackboy Hill WA].

1040 Private Mervyn Ross 32nd Battalion—[POB Lion Mill WA; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

These names have been extracted from a computerized database relating to VC Corner Cemetery Memorial and would of course need to be verified. But at least they are a starting point for you. Please remember these members of the 5th Division AIF actually attested to having been born in WA.

Among the missing who enlisted in Western Australia though were individuals like 1602 Lance Corporal Allan Bennett, who were born in other states of the Commonwealth. The son of Henry Goulding Bennett and Fanny Collier Bennett, 1602 Lance Corporal Allan Bennett, 32nd Battalion was killed in action on 20-JUL-1916 at Fleurbaix. Before joining the First AIF for service abroad, Bennett was a grocer who was born at Clunes, Victoria, although he enlisted at Blackboy Hill, WA.

First AIF soldiers born in other states who enlisted in Western Australia and went missing at Fromelles included:

881 Private Jack Bartlett 32nd Battalion—[POB Armidale NSW; POE Perth WA]

1602 Lance Corporal Allan Bennett 32nd Battalion—[POB Clunes VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

891 Private John Henry Boswell 32nd Battalion—[POB Stanley VIC; POE Perth WA]

885 Private John Patrick Bourke 32nd Battalion—[POB Bairnsdale VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1218 Private William Edwin Boyce 32nd Battalion—[POB Gulgong NSW; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1226 Private Edward Nason Burney 32nd Battalion—[POB East Melbourne VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1229 Private James Byrne 32nd Battalion—[POB Bendigo VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

917 Private Ian Alister Cameron 32nd Battalion—[POB Banchory SCOTLAND; POE Perth WA]

1235 Private Thomas Clift Cartwright 32nd Battalion—[POB Richmond NSW; POE Perth WA]

1239 Private Maurice James Claxton 32nd Battalion—[POB St. Arnaud VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

925 Lance Corporal Jack Dean 32nd Battalion—[POB Bolton ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]

1252 Lance Corporal Sydney William Dennis 32nd Battalion—[POB London ENGLAND; POE Perth

WA]

8852 Private Frederick Dixon 53rd Battalion—[POB Woolwich ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

929 Private Jens Jensen Feldt 32nd Battalion—[POB Horseus DENMARK; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1259 Private Christian Clyde Fisher 32nd Battalion—[POB Warwick ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

931 Private Alfred Hugh Fraser 32nd Battalion—[POB North Melbourne VIC; POE Perth WA]

1265 Private Reginald Arthur Furze 32nd Battalion—[POB Adelaide SA; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1083 Private Guy Sommerville Dion Gibney 32nd Battalion—[POB London ENGLAND; POE Bunbury WA]

1274 Corporal Robert Courtney Green 32nd Battalion—[POB London ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]

1275 Private Bertie Greenfield 32nd Battalion—[POB Worthing ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]

3115A Private Percy John Greenwood 32nd Battalion—[POB Tunbridge Wells ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1276 Private Gilbert Allen Griffiths 32nd Battalion—[POB Unknown NSW; POE Perth WA]

941 Private Thomas Gully 32nd Battalion—[POB Bristol ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

865 Corporal Leslie William Hart 32nd Battalion—[POB Ballarat VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1402 Private William Craven Hollings 32nd Battalion—[POB Accrington ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

955 Private Arnold Holmes 32nd Battalion—[POB Nottingham ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]

1291 Private George Honey 32nd Battalion—[POB Port Isaac ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]

972 Private Roy Wilfred Jamieson 32nd Battalion—[POB Bendigo VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

866 Corporal Ernest Hewitt Jarman 32nd Battalion—[POB Brisbane QUEENSLAND; POE Perth WA]

1299 Lance Corporal Francis David Johnstone 32nd Battalion—[POB Waratah NSW; POE Perth WA]

1624 Private Jack Joyce 32nd Battalion—[POB Wolverhampton ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

971 Private Clarence Frank Judge 32nd Battalion—[POB Goudhurst ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]

2697 Private Wilfred Kilburn 53rd Battalion—[POB Dewsbury ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

1603 Private Adolf Thompson Knable 32nd Battalion—[POB Melbourne VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

977 Private Sydney Lacey 32nd Battalion—[POB Chesham ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
1009 Private Herbert Mackness 32nd Battalion—[POB Stepney ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
1011 Private Alexander McCulloch 59th Battalion—[POB Nairn SCOTLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
998 Private Albert James Mitchell 32nd Battalion—[POB Gravesend ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]
1025 Lance Corporal Clifford Nichols Oates 32nd Battalion—[POB Clare SA; POE Perth WA]
1082 Private Alexander Russell Robert Page 32nd Battalion—[POB London ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]
1036 Private Samuel Thomas James Ridler 32nd Battalion—[POB Surrey ENGLAND; POE Norseman WA]
1356 Corporal Alfred William Roberts 32nd Battalion—[POB Adelaide SA; POE Perth WA]
1639 Private Henry Searle 32nd Battalion—[POB Sommertown SA; POE Perth WA]
1047 Private Harold Shaw 32nd Battalion—[POB Temora NSW; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
1363 Private Charles Francis Shepherd 32nd Battalion—[POB London ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]
1054 Private William James Smith 32nd Battalion—[POB Melbourne VIC; POE Perth WA]
1367 Private Morton Solomon 32nd Battalion—[POB Pittsburgh USA; POE Perth WA]
1640 Private Arthur George Smith 32nd Battalion—[POB Chesterfield ENGLAND; POE Perth WA]
1057 Private John Henry Stuart 32nd Battalion—[POB London ENGLAND; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
1186 Sergeant John Walker 32nd Battalion—[POB Mooroopna VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
2837 Private Vincent Wallis 32nd Battalion—[POB Daylesford VIC; POE Kalgoorlie WA]
1384 Private Clarence Hampton Warren 32nd Battalion—[POB Quorn SA; POE Blackboy Hill WA]
1385 Private William Watterson 32nd Battalion—[POB Ballarat VIC; POE Blackboy Hill WA]

The background provided here should be checked through an examination of the records held by the National Archives of Australia. The state of origin of several officers in the database are not known to us at the moment.

I note in passing that PerthNow suggested 3487A Private Clifton Sydney Brindal was among the WA soldiers who died at Fromelles. This was probably based on information from relatives, as his father was recorded as living in WA on his Attestation Paper dated 28th October 1915. Brindal's service record actually shows he was [POB Sydney NSW; POE Holsworthy NSW].

1316 Private Duncan Peter Cameron, also mentioned by PerthNow, is variously recorded as [POB Hamilton VIC; POE Keswick SA] and [POB Coburg VIC; POE Helena Vale WA], depending upon which Attestation Paper in the service record is looked at to ascertain such data. 4904 Private Richard David Davies is recorded as [POB Strata-Florada Abbey WALES; POE Holsworthy NSW].

On his enlistment papers the mother of this soldier is recorded as residing in South Fremantle, WA. 2779 Private Sydney Harold Atwell a.k.a. Norman Thomas Lee mentioned in the list published last May by PerthNow, according to records held by the NAA, was [POB Inverell NSW; POE Liverpool NSW], and had a guardian residing in Perth, WA.

Z405 Lieutenant Frederick Hulks served with "D" Company 32nd Battalion. Hulks was POB London ENGLAND; and gained his commission in the 5th Military District after being recommended as suitable by the District Commandment on 29th September, 1915. Hulks was married with two children.

Hope this background is useful and The Western Australian continues to take an interest in this subject.

Kindest regards,
Grant Triffett, Convenor/Administrator, Fromelles Discussion Group

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