



Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Group

Forwarded in October 2015 to the American POW/MIA Accounting Agency — FORMERLY THE JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND and Defence POW/Missing Personnel Office, this document shows the First AIF had a multinational component, as many soldiers originated from elsewhere in the world. 3400 Corporal Henry Lockett and 1367 Private Morton Solomon fought at Fleurbaix. Servicemen like this should be acknowledged as details about country of origin are available through the personnel dossiers held in the National Archives of Australia.

Open letter to:

Director Michael S. Linnington, Director, Defence POW/MIA Accounting Agency

US links to the battle of Fleurbaix 19/20 July 1916

Fromelles Discussion Group is in the process of updating its website for the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Fleurbaix. While engaged in this activity on behalf of the group I have come across some notes from 2010 which relate to the allied attack on the village of Fromelles and the nationalities of servicemen who fought in the 5th Division AIF. We had intended to forward this information to what was then JPAC during our early inquiries into the fallen from this assault. At the time we were concentrating on encouraging our Federal Government to investigate claims of a mass grave of missing Australian First World War Diggers in northern France and supporting the need for a geophysical survey of the proposed burial site. Toward this end I submit the following, but in doing so point out the data may need verification through archival material held by the National Archives of Australia.

While undertaking a cursory look at the digitised records held in our national repository and uploading a Battle of Fromelles Roll of Missing to our Fromelles Discussion Group website it was found there were two lost Great War Diggers that might be of particular interest to the Defence POW/MIA accounting command, even though the agency no longer appears to investigate missing American soldiery from WWI. Two individuals who served in the Australian army though should be brought to your attention, if this has not already been done, because they originated in the USA, and were lost during the Battle of Fromelles.

The First World War soldiers being referred to were 3400 Corporal Henry Lockett, 60th Battalion and 1367 and Private Morton Solomon, 32nd Battalion. These men are forever linked to the abortive attack in French Flanders, and although they have not actually been identified in the forensic investigation just completed by the Commonwealth War Commission and Australian and British Governments, which have disinterred more than two hundred and fifty men from their places of burial, they are a part of this country's war history.

Cpl Henry Lockett was killed in action on 19th July 1916. He was among 7th Battalion Reinforcements before joining the 59th and 60th battalions. He had previously been a commercial traveller and was apparently 25 at the time of his death. His enlistment papers indicate he was born in Chicago, USA. [Documents promulgated by the NAA suggests he was two years of age when he migrated to Australia, his parents who came from Manchester, England were recorded as British-born]. Cpl. Lockett was the son of Albert Edward and Esther Lockett and the husband of Berwyn, who resided subsequent to Morton's enlistment, at Belford Avenue, East Kew, Victoria.

Also KIA on 19 July 1916 was Private Morton Solomon who designated Pittsburgh, USA, as his place of birth. Hebrew, Morton enlisted in Perth, Western Australia on 12-July-1915, listing Esther Solomon (his stepmother) as his next of kin. Morton was 21 on enlistment, an optician and upon his death, his medals appear to have been forwarded to his sister, Miss Cora L. Solomon, who resided in Prahran, Victoria. The family business, Messrs Solomon & Son was based in Perth, W.A. Private Solomon enlisted at Blackboy Hill Training Camp, W.A.

3400 Cpl. Lockett was not included in the 2009 list of "*Fromelles: Who is buried at Pheasant Wood?*" However it is quite likely the two soldiers referred to would probably be unknown burials in the neighbourhood of the assault. Either that or one of the many unidentified bodies from the feint which are presently lying in other cemeteries dotted around the region. Cemeteries like VC Corner Cemetery where there are said to be 410 Australian military personnel awaiting exhumation and identification. There are over 200 at Rue David Military Cemetery from the action, 140 at Ration Farm Military Cemetery, and approximately 100 at Auber's Ridge Military Cemetery. Others from the skirmish were interred at: Farm Military Cemetery, Le Trou Aid Post Cemetery, Rue du Bois Military Cemetery, Rue Petillon Military Cemetery, Anzac Cemetery, and Sailly-sur-la-Lys Canadian Cemetery - all of which await forensic testing and commemoration.

It is beyond the ken of this group though to inquire into migration policy during this particular era or to check the citizenship status of the deceased, other than to highlight the fact they went missing during what author Patrick Lindsay described as Australia's worst-ever military disaster. Australia suffered more Diggers lost in one night, than in the Boer, Korean and Vietnam wars combined. When the din of battle subsided we had more than 5,500 casualties. That is Diggers either dead, wounded and missing.

Regards

Grant Triffett, Convenor/Administrator, Fromelles Discussion Group

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