



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle



4 March 2005

Hunter "Missing" Found: Battle of Fromelles, 19 July 1916

9 of the 59 Hunter Valley men killed at the Battle of Fromelles in France on the night of 19 July 1916, and posted as 'missing', may have been found, ALP member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson said today.

In this battle lasting little more than 12 hours, Australia suffered its worst disaster of all time, losing 1917 killed, 3146 wounded and 470 taken POW. Many more died of wounds later. More than 1000 Hunter Valley men fought that night with the AIF 30th, 31st, 53rd, 54th, and 56th Battalions.

Of the dead, 1298 were posted as 'missing', their bodies lying unrecovered in no-mans land until the end of the war – or as has now been discovered, buried by the Germans in the days following the battle.

Records recovered from the German Red Cross now reveal that 160 Australians were buried by the Germans, including 9 from the Hunter. It is believed they were buried in a number of mass graves outside the town of Fromelles along with hundreds of others from Great Britain, and perhaps New Zealand.

"There may still be families in the Hunter wondering about the fate of their fathers or grandfathers," Ms Grierson said. "Confirmation of their final resting place is now close at hand, and would be a great relief."

"We hope that the Australian Army will commit to begin discussions with French authorities so that the grave sites can be officially examined, and if confirmed, commemorated as official war graves," Ms Grierson said.

"I hope that anyone in Newcastle or the Hunter who recognises any of the names of the soldiers, and who can help with more information, will contact me at my office," Ms Grierson concluded.

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The Hunter Valley names appearing on the German Red Cross records are as follows:

Pte Vivian A Baker, Blandford;
Pte Harold J Bourke, West Maitland;
Pte Douglas Caswell, Stockton;
Pte Henry A Cressy, Boolaroo;
Pte Charles H Hawcroft, Merewether;
Pte William B Higgins, Gloucester;
Pte George H Lucre, Cooks Hill;
Pte Peter Shannon, Merriwa; and
Sgt William Wass.

As there are many other regions of the nation with Fromelles Missing who may now have been found, Labor Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Mark Bishop, will be speaking on this issue in the Senate next week to bring it to national attention.

For more information contact Sharon Grierson on 4926 1555

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