



The Granville Guardian

Patron Laurie Ferguson M.P. B.Ec.(Syd) M.A.(Syd)

Volume 23 Issue 4

June 2016

The next general meeting of
the Granville Historical
Society will be held at 2.00
pm on Saturday
25 June 2016

At our Research Centre
62 Railway Parade
Granville

Guest Speaker:

Dr Terrence Smith Ph.D.
"The Parramatta Asylum"

TO CONTACT US

Write to

P.O. Box 320

Granville NSW 2142

Phone:

9682 1290 (Wed. only)

9631 0216

(Barry & June Bullivant)

Email:

granvillehistorical@bigpond.com

Website

www.granvillehistorical.org.au

Heritage Watch NSW
Website

www.heritagewatchnsw.org.au

Friends of Mays Hill
Cemetery

www.mayshillcemetery.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GranvilleHistoricalSocietyIncNswAustralia?ref=hl>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"A Place where heritage & culture are valued & celebrated."

The last months have been frantic. The local schools have had a term of studying local history. This has involved our speaking to and providing resources for them. Many of the Granville based schools are also doing Anzac Day and WW1; we assisted by providing them with information from the excellent work done by Arthur Naylor with his lists and scans of documents relating to soldiers from the Parramatta district. Schools of the area run their own ANZAC Day service and also Remembrance Day.

The interest of schools in local history has also led to a grant application to Parramatta Council to allow our Society to organise a tour of the Parramatta Female Factory to see history first hand. Students will be picked up at school (each school 20 students and two teachers), taken for a tour, and then on to Lake Parramatta for lunch and toilet break before being returned to school. The Society will provide show bags for them that will include the story of the Female Factory, an Australian flag, the meaning of Anzac and a publication called The Anzacs put out by Parramatta City Council. We will also add anything that will give them a sense of place as most children are from a family that has English as a second language. Does anyone have historical brochures about their area they would like included - we will need about 80 brochures.

Council mergers: At the moment, we don't see a problem with the mergers if, as is being mooted by the NSW Government, nothing will change. However that could change. The Society has discussed problems that might affect us, such as support for venue, and that

things are supposed to remain the same. If the mergers proceed, this society has a reasonably good chance of survival. We are the only established archives in the new council area; we already collect Auburn and Lidcombe history; Dorothy Warwick and her teams are already well established in the Holroyd Council area and the Granville Society has shared information and is working with those groups. And if all of us don't observe council boundaries as in the past, it will not affect us. Parramatta Historical Society is well established also. So the advice is to carry on as usual. No one government heritage centre or government body holds the information that the local historical or family history centre holds, no matter how big they are.

Barry G Bullivant OAM, President

THE FROMELLES DISASTER

In the 14 hours of a summer night in July 1916, the 5th Division – the least experienced of the Australian divisions in France in World War 1 – lost 5,533 men killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. This was the Battle of Fromelles, the worst 24 hours in Australian military history. The shocking toll was equivalent to the total number of casualties in the Boer War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.



Australian Cemetery at Fromelles

The attack at Fromelles was a joint operation by the 5th Division and Britain's 61st Division. It was devised by the commander of the British force, Lieutenant General Richard Haking, as a diversion, aimed at preventing the Germans reinforcing their troops in the Somme, 80 kilometres to the south, where the Allies had begun a major operation on 1 July. Haking had launched a similar operation three weeks earlier, with disastrous results. This was an attempt to

capture the Boars Head salient, four kilometres southwest of Fromelles. Two of Haking's battalions lost 60 per cent of their strength, including 21 officers and 364 men killed.

The Australian 5th division was a mix of experienced Gallipoli veterans and fresh reinforcements entirely new to fighting. It began arriving in France from Egypt at the end of June 1915, and took over the front line as the three Australian Divisions of the 1st Anzac Corps transferred to the Somme.

Haking's battle plan was for the infantry to attack the heavily entrenched German front line centred on the Sugar-loaf salient to the northwest of the small village of Fromelles, after a preliminary bombardment. Two battalions from each of three brigades from

each division would advance, with the other two in reserve, but go no further than the enemy's support lines. The units to attack first were the 32nd Battalion from Western Australia and the 31st from Queensland and Victoria (8th Brigade), the 53rd Battalion, drawn mainly from Sydney suburbs, and the 54th, also predominantly from New South Wales (14th Brigade), and the 59th and 60th Battalions from Victoria, (15th Brigade).

The objective proved to be a series of water-filled trenches and ditches. No-Man's Land separating the Australian and German lines was between 80 and 400 metres wide, with a shallow river down the middle. The whole area was marshes, in which high grass and neglected crops hid the treacherous nature of the terrain. German machine guns were well sited on vantage points with a good view of the whole area.

As the assault began just before 6 pm on 19 July, there were already serious casualties, including officers, from German shelling of the Allied trench lines. This was the cause of a high proportion of the 31st and 32nd Battalions' casualties. Despite this setback, the 8th and 14th Brigades were able to penetrate the German lines before dark, helped by the comparatively narrow No-Man's Land on their front, and advanced well behind the enemy front line. But wave after wave of men from the 15th Brigade were cut down by machine gun fire. A hail of bullets stalled the 59th Battalion's progress half-way across No-Man's Land, and it appears that at this point almost every officer and N.C.O. in the 60th Battalion had been killed.

As night fell, the Germans counter-

attacked and drove a wedge between the foremost Australian battalions and the Australian front line. Completely isolated they were forced to fight their way back through the enemy's position to their own lines. However, 470 men from the 8th and 14th Brigades were taken prisoner. Dawn light showed a battlefield littered with bodies, and wounded men calling for



German concrete pillboxes at Fromelles

help. It's estimated there were 2,000 corpses on No-Man's Land, and thousands of wounded sheltering in shell holes, ditches and long grass. Stretcher bearers and survivors worked for the next three days and nights carrying the wounded from the battleground. An unofficial truce was agreed to in the field to allow the wounded to be safely evacuated, but it was rejected by the Australian and British Divisional headquarters.

Fromelles was a devastating defeat - 5,533 Australian casualties, 1,547 in the British ranks, and fewer than 1,500 Germans.

The 60th Battalion from Victoria suffered 757 casualties, the 32nd Battalion 718, 59th Battalion 695, 53rd Battalion 625, 31st Battalion 544, and the 54th Battalion 540.



The Cobber Monument at Fromelles

At the Australian Memorial Park in Fromelles is the Cobber Monument – a full bronze figure of an Australian carrying a wounded comrade to safety. The sculpture by Peter Corlett is of a Victorian farmer, Sergeant Simon Fraser, rescuing a wounded man from No Man’s Land after the battle. The title comes from a letter that Fraser wrote a few days after the battle:

We found a fine haul of wounded . . . and we came across a splendid specimen of humanity trying to wriggle into a trench with a big wound in his thigh. He was about 14 stone weight and I could not lift him on my back; but I managed to get him into an old trench, and told him to lie quiet while I got a stretcher. Then another man about 30 yards away sang out “Don’t forget me, cobber”. I went in and got four volunteers with stretchers and we got both men to safety.

Sergeant Fraser was later promoted to 2nd Lieutenant but was killed in the 2nd Battle for Bullecourt.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual general meeting of the Granville Historical Society will be held on Saturday 23 July 2016. Nominations for the election of office-bearers should be lodged with the Honorary Secretary, June Bullivant, 7 days beforehand.

Membership fees are now due.