



The 100th Anniversary of the Battles of Fromelles and Pozières

July 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of two of the biggest and costliest battles in which many of the men listed on the WW1 Honor Roll of the Sydney Flying Squadron and the Sydney Sailing Club participated in during the war.

On 1 July 1916, the British and French armies launched the Battle of the Somme with aim of breaking through German lines 20 km east of Amiens. The battle was an absolute bloodbath from the outset with the British 4th Army losing 57,470 men on the first day alone.

As a means of drawing German troops away from the Somme, the 5th Australian Division and the British 61st Division on 19 July 1916 launched a diversionary attack on the strongly fortified German position at Fromelles in Northern France. The feint was a disastrous failure with the troops advancing across open ground in broad daylight under the direct observation and heavy fire from the German lines. Over 5,500 Australians became casualties. Almost 2,000 of them were killed in action or died of wounds and some 400 were captured; it was greatest loss by a single Australian Division in the space of 24 hours during the entire war.

SFS and SSC Honor Roll Members Involved in the Battle of Fromelles

Henry William BARNFIELD	Wounded
William Fletcher DAVIES	
Francis Arnold GUMLEY	
George Huddy LANGTON	
Owen Patrick MARTIN	
William Ernest MAY	
Oswald Augustus MONTGOMERY	Wounded
Charles Bruce NICOLL	
Cecil Roy STUBBS (MSM)	
James WATT	Died of wounds

To support the Allied offensive on the Somme, the Australian 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions were moved south from the front line in the Armentières area of Northern France in mid-July 1916.

On 23 July 1916, the Australians launched a major attack against the strategically important village of Pozières in the Somme Valley. The village was captured initially by the 1st Division and it clung to its gains despite almost continuous artillery fire and repeated German counter-attacks. However, the 1st Division suffered heavily and by the time it was relieved by the 2nd Division on 27 July, it had incurred 5,285 casualties.

The 2nd Division mounted two further attacks - the first, on 29 July, was a costly failure and the second, on 2 August, resulted in the seizure of further German positions beyond the village. Again, the 2nd Division suffered heavily from the German artillery and it sustained 6,848 casualties before being replaced by the 4th Division after 10 days of fighting.

The 4th Division also endured a massive artillery bombardment and on 21 August was replaced after losing 4,649 men.

The 1st Division returned to the front line one-third under strength from the losses it had sustained in the first few days of the battle. The Division made some ground but lost another 2,650 officers and men.

The 2nd Division was then returned to the battle to replace the remnants of the 1st, however it fared little better. In four days it lost 1,268 men and had to be replaced by the 4th Division which continued the attacks on Mouquet Farm but failed to take the position from the German defenders. The last Australian attack was on 3 September 1916.

Over the six weeks period, the three Australian Divisions had lost a staggering 23,000 men, of whom 6,800 had been killed in action or died of wounds. It was a loss comparable with the casualties sustained by the Australians over eight months at Gallipoli in 1915.

SFS and SSC Honor Roll Members Involved in the Battle of Pozières

Joseph William ALLEN	Wounded
Erwin Hoskisson BLACKMAN	
Edward John BREW	Wounded
Robert Henry BREW	Wounded
Cyril Leslie CASHMAN	Wounded
Francis COURTNEY	
Henry CULLINGHAM	
Alexander DAN	
Arthur Sydney Eric EARNSHAW (MM)	
William Henry ELLIS	
Leonard FISHER	Killed
Cecil Roy Herman HARDER	
Edwin George Albert HEADON	
Frederick Oliver HOLLAND	
Edward James HUTCHISON	Wounded
John Stanley KAYSER	
David KEENS	Killed
Malcolm Wallace KENNEDY	
William Patrick LEONARD	
John Richard McCARTHY	
Leslie Kenneth MORRIS (DCM)	
Richard Henry REYNOLDS	
Edward Lawrence H. SPALDING	
Charles Ernest THOMPSON	
Richard Henry Mann TURNER	
Charles TWYMAN	Wounded
Leslie Arthur WOODWARD	

Back in Australia, the huge battlefield losses had political consequences. In the latter part of 1916, enlistment numbers could not keep up with the desperate need for reinforcements. As a result, the Government conducted two bitterly fought and unsuccessful conscription campaigns to compel men to serve overseas during the war.