

Chapter Five: Part Three – The Artefacts

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SUMMARY

Approximately 5900 artefacts were recovered from the Pheasant Wood graves in direct association with bodies. These included metals, textiles, paper/cardboard, rubber, leather and wood, primarily from military issue uniforms, equipment and ammunition, but also including personal effects. Details of all artefacts, including descriptions, their identification scores ('ID scores') and interpretations, were compiled into confidential case reports

for each of the 250 individuals. These also include survey plans showing the locations of every artefact in relation to their associated bodies (not included in this report but examples can be seen in Figs 5.1 and 5.2). In this chapter the results are presented at the assemblage level with particular focus on exploring the artefacts that are informative for determining identification. Every artefact was recorded in a catalogue, with reference to the body with which it was found. In respect of the sensitivities involved, it is not possible to include it with this report (see Chapter Two). It is important to point out that, as with the anthropology, this chapter was

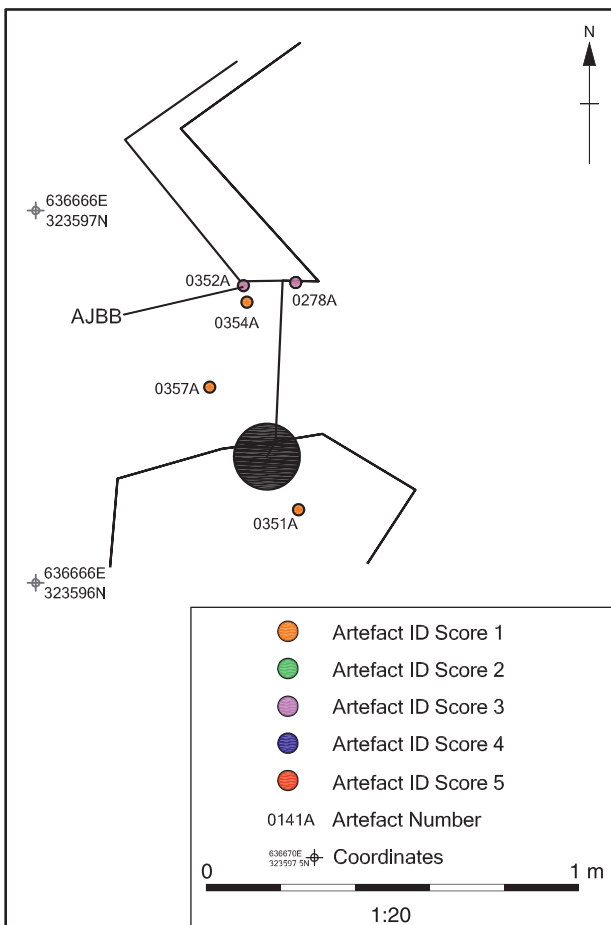


Fig. 5.1 0266B with Australian jacket belt buckle in area of navel

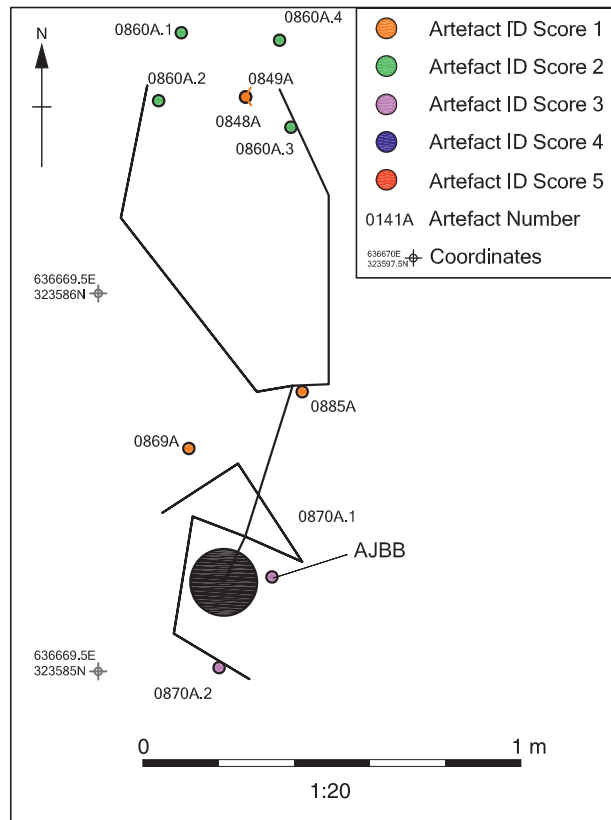


Fig. 5.2 0495B with Australian jacket belt buckle in area of shoulder

written prior to the Identification Commission taking place and therefore before the archaeology, DNA and historical data sets were collated by the DAT. Thus, the observations presented here are irrespective of the results of the Identification Board, though are considered in Chapter Seven.

INTRODUCTION

A total of 2678 artefact numbers were assigned during the course of the excavation. These refer both to composite artefacts, for example a row of buttons on a jacket, and to individual items. If the individual components of composite artefacts are counted separately, then this brings the total number of objects to *c* 5900.

Of the 2678 artefacts numbers assigned, 2406 items were associated with bodies, while the remaining 272 were not, but were found in the fills of the graves. None of these bore any initials, names or other significant identifying features. These items were logged and form part of the site archive but are not included in this report.

The results of the analyses of the associated artefacts are presented below, beginning with their overall preservation and their locations in relation to the bodies. Both are of fundamental importance because they have a direct bearing on the level of information carried by each artefact and therefore their reliability as evidence for identification. This is followed by a description of the different types of items, according to their function and with reference to their assigned ID scores. The latter part of the chapter considers the biasing factors that will have influenced the information provided by the artefacts and concludes with a discussion on their interpretation.

It is important to point out that, at the time of writing, there is very little published on First World War artefact assemblages recovered from communal graves and their use in identification, the work of Brown and Osgood (2009), Desfossés *et al.* (2009), and Robertshaw and Kenyon (2008) being the closest examples. Thus, the uniqueness of the Pheasant Wood project means that it has not been possible to draw on comparisons between this and other assemblages, except in a very limited way.

PRESERVATION

Overall, and largely due to the wet, anaerobic, conditions in the graves, the majority of artefacts were well preserved. In particular, this meant that a significant amount of organic material, including paper, card, textiles and leather, which does not normally survive in most burial environments, was present to varying degrees. Variation in the condition of the artefacts was primarily related to the location of the graves from which they were recovered, with those from graves furthest from Pheasant Wood (the wetter graves) being better preserved than artefacts from those closest to it. For example,

this was reflected in the leather and textiles which were more completely preserved in graves one, four and five, furthest from the wood. In addition, it was noted that in graves one and five, some brass items had turned a bright sparkling gold colour (Fig. 5.3). Brass was the most frequent type of metal found and many buckles, buttons and other fittings had been made from brass. In most cases it was blackened with a green patina and sometimes had significant corrosive deposits on the surface which masked the original shape of the object. This was frequently observed on Australian jacket belt buckles (AJBBs) and on badges (Figs 5.4 and 5.5).

Besides variation in the condition of artefacts between graves, variation was also seen within them, reflecting the variable micro-environments of these features. For example, of the large numbers of zinc and aluminium eyelets and buttons that were recovered, some were significantly degraded, while others were in perfect condition despite being from the same grave (Fig. 5.6).



Fig. 5.3 Gold patina on a button



Fig. 5.4 Varying corrosion on belt buckles



Fig. 5.5 'INF' badge



Fig. 5.6 Plain aluminium buttons

Substantial quantities of textile were present and it was usually in sufficient condition for the different fabrics to be observable, but not for the precise details of uniforms to be identified (these were inferred from buttons, badges and buckles instead). Animal fibres would appear to have survived better than plant fibres, the latter being rarely encountered. For example, no cotton woven straps from the 1908 pattern webbing equipment were found (the webbing surviving as metal fittings only) and cotton undergarments survived

as remnants only. In addition, other occasional fragments of cotton and linen were found, but could not be identified to an item of clothing or other item; these may have survived because they appeared to have been coated with some form of waterproofing chemical, suggesting that they may have been field dressings. By comparison, woollen socks (Fig. 5.7) and woollen pullovers, encountered in all graves, survived very well, often as complete, identifiable items of clothing.



Fig. 5.7 Woollen sock

LOCATIONS

The heavy clay soil into which the graves were dug, and with which they were subsequently backfilled, meant that there had been little movement of artefacts within the graves. Virtually no artefacts were found in the overburden (the soil immediately above the burials), despite extensive fingertip searching and metal-detecting, and most had remained in association with individual bodies since their burial in 1916. In fact, rather than the movement of artefacts, it was the way in which the bodies had been buried that posed difficulties for associating items with individuals. This concerned a small number of cases only and was where bodies overlapped one another. In addition, some artefacts were not sufficiently close to a body to be conclusively associated with a particular individual and were therefore recorded as 'unassociated'.

Interpreting the location of most artefacts on the bodies was usually very straight-forward. For example, most military badges were worn on collars, shoulder straps or sleeves, most excavated examples of these being found in the neck and shoulder areas, as might be expected. Similarly, most buttons were located down the length of the torso matching their position on the front of the jacket or under-shirt. An exception was the location of AJBBs, which were found in a variety of positions on and around the torso, including by or above the right or left shoulder (for example, Fig. 5.2). Buckles found around the torso could indicate that the soldiers had been buried with their jackets open, rather than fastened. If a jacket had remained fastened then the buckle would have been located in the navel area (for example, Fig. 5.1). These different locations can be explained by the fact that the German burial party was under orders to search the bodies to remove military insignia, personal effects and ID discs and would undoubtedly have unbuttoned and opened tunics. Buckles by the left or right shoulder, would suggest that jackets had ridden up, or been pulled up when the bodies were moved for transportation or lowered into the grave.

Less straight-forward was interpreting artefacts found in locations that suggest they had not been worn by the soldier, but perhaps carried in a pocket, or worn incorrectly. One example is an identity disc found in the region of a trouser pocket (Fig. 5.38) of one individual which raises questions regarding the ownership of the item. This is discussed further below, in addition to other examples.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ARTEFACTS

This section provides descriptions of all of the artefacts, organised according to their function and the ID scores that they were assigned. Those with ID scores of two or above (called 'identifying artefacts') are discussed separately from those scoring one

(called 'non-identifying artefacts'), because these were considered to be key forms of evidence for identification.

Identifying artefacts

Identifying artefacts either provided information about an individual, but not his identity (score two), the army in which he served (score three), his rank (score four), or supplied the name or initials of an individual (score five). A total of 204 bodies were recovered with at least one identifying artefact, that is 540 artefact numbers (the unique reference number assigned to each item or composite item, such as a row of buttons) which accounts for 22% (540/2406) of all artefact numbers that were assigned.

Significance score two

Religious items, trouser eyelets, leather trouser patches, a Royal Scots button and a Machine Gun Squadron badge are the different categories of artefacts that provided this level of information.

Religious items

Fourteen religious items (12 artefact numbers) were found with twelve skeletons and comprised small medallions, crucifixes, rosary beads, bibles and prayer books. The medallions included one with a depiction of the Virgin Mary and the words 'Mary Conceived Without Sin Pray For Us' (found with 0602B), one bearing the image and name of St Stanislaus (found with 0666B); and one bearing the



Fig. 5.8 Crucifix



Fig. 5.9 Rosary

image and name of St Benedict (found with 0606B) (Fig. 5.10). All three are Catholic medallions.

Five crucifixes, including one very large heavy example made of iron with a wooden inlay (Fig. 5.8), were recovered with 0495B, 0666B, 1223B, 1266B and 1803B. These could have been carried by Christians

of any denomination, but one of the crucifixes was found as part of a set of rosary beads (1266B; counted together here as one religious item) which are typically Catholic items. Rosary beads were found with three further skeletons (2116B, 2147B, 2810B; one set each), although some of the beads are now loose (Fig. 5.9). In addition, one prayer book was associated with body 1582B and one bible with 1528B. A further prayer book and another bible were found, but neither was associated with a skeleton (Fig. 5.12).

Trouser eyelets

A total of 22 artefacts defined as trouser eyelets were found with 16 bodies (Fig. 5.13). These were usually in the form of fragments of fabric with parallel lines of small brass eyelets, but occasionally lengths of leather thong were also attached to them. The fragments of fabric are typical of the lower leg part of the Australian breeches, which were laced to keep them tight to the leg. However, because the breeches worn by officers in the British army had similar lacing, they were assigned an ID score of two.



Fig. 5.10 Religious medallion



Fig. 5.11 Gold cross and pouch

Leather trouser patches

Twenty leather trouser patches (Fig. 5.14) were found with ten bodies (0379B, 0484B, 0495B, 1084B, 1357B, 1522B, 1525B, 2512B, 2821B, 3211B). These leather patches were part of the breeches worn by both British and Australian mounted soldiers. In

some cases these patches were still attached to fragments of the thick cord of the Australian breeches, while in others only the leather survived.

Royal Scots button

One copper alloy Royal Scots button was found with 0486B (Fig. 5.15). It was embossed on the front with the regimental badge of the Royal Scots featuring St Andrew and was similar in form to the British general service buttons. The Royal Scots



Fig. 5.12 Prayer book



Fig. 5.14 Leather patches from mounted style breeches



Fig. 5.13 Lacing eyelets from the ankle of breeches



Fig. 5.15 British general service button (left); Royal Scots button (middle); back of an Australian service button (right), found with one body



Fig. 5.16 MGS (Machine Gun Squadron) shoulder title



Fig. 5.17 Australian jacket belt buckles

were not present at Fromelles and therefore the button may have been a souvenir, or may relate to a previous posting of the soldier.

Machine Gun Squadron badge

A single Machine Gun Squadron (MGS) badge was recovered from fabric which was not seen during excavation, but on a radiograph within a soil sample (Fig. 5.16). The soil sample was from the arm, neck or shoulder region suggesting that the badge had been worn rather than carried in a pocket. Badges such as this were worn by members of a MGS, which was attached to the Australian Light Horse. They were the equivalent of the infantry machine gun companies which supplied fire support to the infantry battalions and brigades. However, no Machine Gun Squadrons were present at Fromelles and therefore this was either from a previous posting or a souvenir (hence its ID score two); it is not possible to suggest which given that its location on the individual is inferred, but was not observed.

Significance score three

Most artefacts were assigned this score and consisted of Australian jacket belt buckles (AJBBs), insignia, buttons, miscellaneous Australian items and some stamped boots.

Australian jacket belt buckle

A total of 185 AJBBs were found with 162 bodies (Fig. 5.17-18). AJBBs were made of copper alloy (brass), were oval in shape and had a single central bar. They had no prong and functioned in a slide fashion. They were integral to the Australian uniform jacket, being sewn onto the fabric belt.

The AJBB is a highly distinctive feature of the Australian uniform. It was not used on the British uniform, nor was it easily transferable between soldiers. Most AJBBs found in the graves were of similar size and shape, but there was some variation in their proportions and the thickness of the metal. Some of these differences were due to differing levels of corrosion, but most were the result of differences in design or manufacture reflecting that the buckles were made by many different manufacturers in Australia.

'Australia' shoulder title

Twenty-one 'Australia' shoulder titles were found with 19 bodies. This item of insignia is a curved brass badge which reads 'Australia' in flat, block lettering (Fig. 5.19). One badge of this type was worn on each shoulder of the Australian uniform attached to the epaulettes. In most cases there would have been an additional badge above the curved 'Australia' to denote the arm of service or specialist sub-sections within the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). One example of the latter found at Pheasant Wood comprised the letters 'MGS' denoting the machine gun section (but in this case, was probably a souvenir). Another example is the brass 'INF' badge which indicates service in the infantry.

The 'Australia' shoulder title is very unlikely to have been worn by British soldiers and therefore found on a British body, unless it had been kept as a souvenir, in which case it is unlikely to be found in the correct shoulder position.



Fig. 5.19 'Australia' shoulder title

Australian 'rising sun' badge

A total of 18 rising sun badges were found with 17 bodies (Fig. 5.20). The rising sun badge is the iconic symbol of the AIF and the Australian Army today.

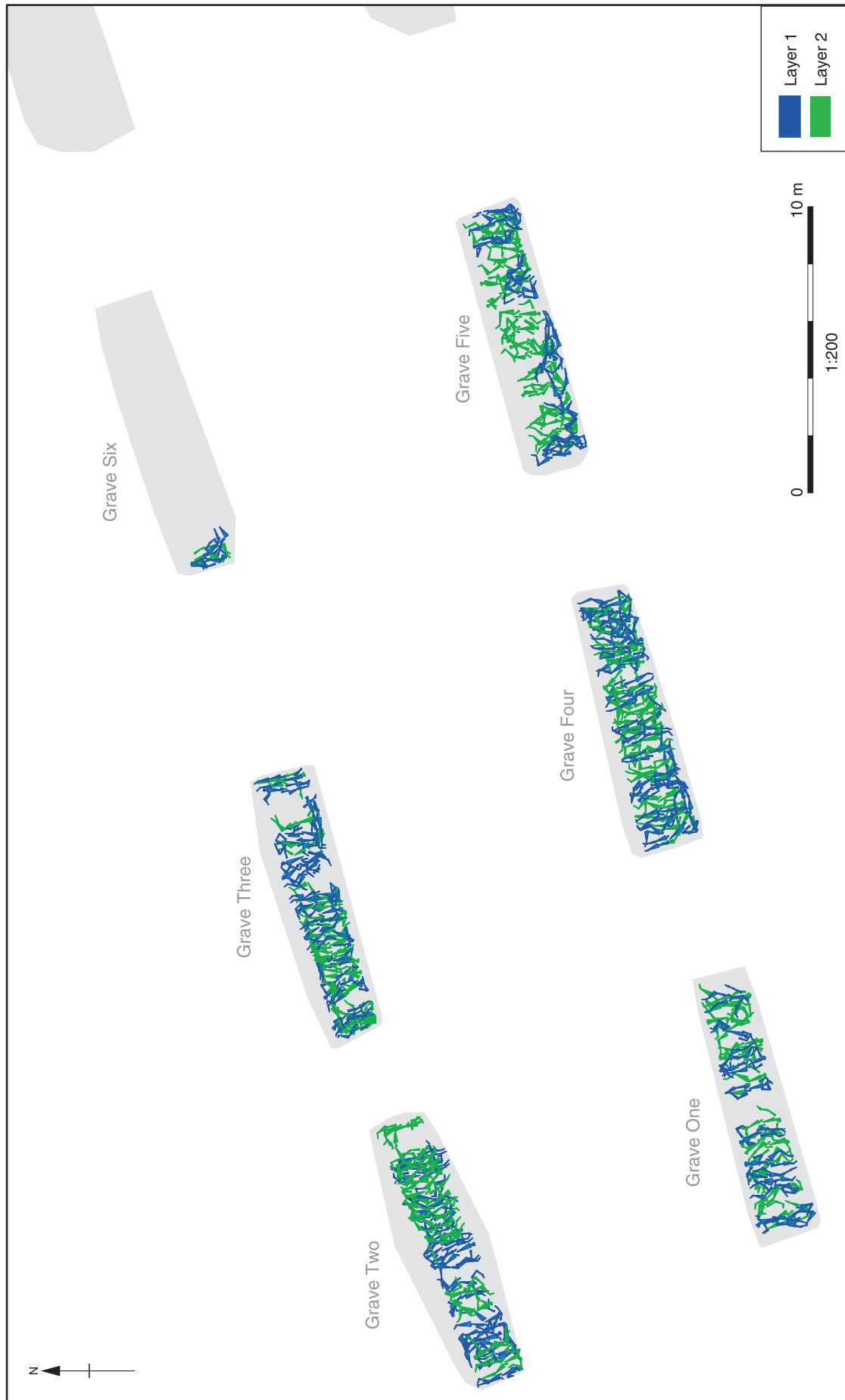


Fig. 5.18 Bodies associated with AIBBs



Fig. 5.20 Rising sun badge

Made of brass, the badge worn during the First World War features a rising sun with a crown and a scroll which reads 'Australian Commonwealth Military Forces' (Fig. 1.10). One large rising sun badge was worn on the side of the slouch hat and two smaller ones on each collar of the tunic. No large rising sun badges were found at Pheasant Wood, possibly because the Australian soldiers were wearing steel helmets in the battle. However, according to McLachlan (2007) many of the soldiers were wearing their slouch hats, so this could mean that the Germans had removed these larger badges before burial.

Australian 'INF' badge

This small badge was made of brass and comprised the letters 'INF' to denote infantry (Fig. 5.4). One badge was worn on the epaulette on each shoulder of every infantry soldier of the AIF. At Pheasant Wood a total of nine 'INF' badges were found with seven bodies (0269B, 0314B, 1671B, 1828B, 1871B, 2516B, 2930B).



Fig. 5.23 'Commonwealth' trouser buttons



Fig. 5.21 Australian service button



Fig. 5.22 Australian 'no borders' service buttons

Australian general service buttons

Thirteen Australian copper alloy general service buttons were found with eight individuals. These are a domed type of button with a solid back and floating shank, in the style of the British general service button. They were occasionally used on Australian uniforms in the First World War, although the vegetable ivory/cellulose buttons were much more common. Although these Australian buttons were sometimes British-made, several examples were found at Pheasant Wood that had 'Stokes and Sons Melbourne' stamped on the back, clearly indicating an Australian manufacturer.

Two types of Australian Service Button were found. One of these comprised an Edward VII emblem and the words: 'Australian Commonwealth' (Fig. 5.21); the other depicted an outline map of Australia without state borders (Fig. 5.22), sometimes referred to as the 'no borders' button.

'Commonwealth' buttons

A total of 132 'Commonwealth' buttons were found with 54 bodies (Fig. 5.23). This small four-holed brass button, stamped with the word 'Commonwealth', was a trouser button worn by soldiers of the AIF. The buttons were worn around the waistband of the trousers for the attachment of braces and may have also fastened the waistband at the front (for example, see Fig 2.35).

Cellulose/plant fibre buttons

Seventeen cellulose buttons (Fig. 5.24), often called 'vegetable ivory buttons' were found with eight bodies (0036B, 0184B, 0438B, 0602B, 0740B, 1975B, 2028B, 2662B). They were a distinctive feature of



Fig. 5.24 Cellulose/vegetable ivory button



Fig. 5.25 Trouser button from 'Hordern & Sons, Sydney'

the Australian uniform and were worn on the front of the jacket and on the breast pockets. In addition, smaller examples fastened the epaulettes.

Other trouser buttons

Sixteen stamped trouser buttons were found with 12 bodies (Fig. 5.25). These four-holed buttons were made of copper alloy and had a recessed centre and a variety of inscriptions stamped around the edge.

Some identified retailers, including 'Bollard, Maitland' and 'Hordern and Sons Sydney', both Australian firms, while others were mottoes or brand names, such as 'Excelsior', 'Imperial', 'Our Own Make' and 'The Federal'. It is likely that those with mottoes and brand names were Australian buttons, but it has not been possible to confirm this. Because of the differences in the level of information on these buttons, their assigned ID scores varied from three for the 'Bollard, Maitland' and 'Hordern and Sons Sydney' buttons, to one for the brand name buttons, even though they are the same type of button (hence their inclusion together here).

British general service button

A total of 42 brass British general service buttons (Fig. 5.15) were found with 20 bodies. These were given an ID score of three. These are brass domed buttons with a solid back and floating shank and were worn by all British soldiers on their tunics, with the possible exception of officers, as officially officers continued to wear regimental buttons. The full set of tunic buttons would have included five large buttons down the front and smaller versions on the pockets and epaulettes. A full set of buttons would have totalled 11.

The British general service buttons found at Pheasant Wood included some stamped on the back with the manufacturer's name, 'Birmingham Button Co'. The backs of other general service buttons were plain. No other manufacturer's name was found on the British general service buttons at Pheasant Wood.

Miscellaneous Australian items

A total of ten miscellaneous items of Australian origin were found with ten bodies. Subject to the



Fig. 5.26 Train ticket



Fig. 5.27 Boomerang 'sweetheart' badge



Fig. 5.28 Shoulder number

degree of association of the artefact with the body, the Australian origin of these items, which do not fall into any of the above categories, strongly suggests that the owners were members of the AIF. Items include a leather case for wire cutters stamped 'Luhl and Sons' (found with 2203B), who were hide fitters in Brisbane and were commissioned to make leather equipment for the Australian forces. In addition, leather straps were stamped 'Brisbane' (found with 1750B). The most



Fig. 5.29 Colour patch



Fig. 5.30 Royal Engineers' badge

remarkably preserved item in this category was a card train ticket (found with 0676B), which was a return ticket from Fremantle to Perth in Western Australia, found folded in half in a gas mask bag (Fig. 5.26). A very personal item, a boomerang 'sweetheart' badge (found with 1524B), was inscribed with the words 'return to me' (Fig. 5.27).

Boots

Fifteen soldiers (0573B, 0674B, 1083B, 1525B, 1975B, 2115B, 2203B, 2340B, 2523B, 2799B, 2896B, 2919B, 3089B, 3271B, 3272B) were found wearing one or two boots, which were issued a total of fifteen artefact numbers (pairs of boots were assigned a single artefact number). The boots (Figs. 5.31–33) were made of brown or black leather, with rounded or slightly squared toes and between six and eight pairs of eyelets for laces. Many of them (see Table 5.1) bore clear manufacturers' marks, including 'R. WHITE/MELB' (Melbourne; 0674B; and possibly also 1083B with an incomplete but similar stamp), 'Rayn' (2523B), '___McCrows Maker' (3089B), 'Harry Harris Warranted' (2115B), and 'The R/P___' (3271B). One pair of boots (3272B) had different marks; one was stamped with 'The _ Sho_' with a War Office broad arrow, and the other with 'P _' in italic script. Five of the boots were stamped with numbers, in some cases one number above another, such as 6/7 or 7/4. Although consecutive number pairings such as 6/7 may suggest a shoe size, 7/4 is more ambiguous.

Boots without clear manufacturers' marks or with no manufacturers' marks were assigned an ID score of one, while those with identifiable manufacturers' marks (0674B and 1083B) were assigned an ID score of three (hence their inclusion here).

Significance score four

Artefacts scoring four comprised shoulder numbers, colour patches, a Royal Engineer badge, an officer's pocket compass and gaiter buttons.

Shoulder numbers

Five individual brass battalion shoulder numbers were found with five bodies (0438B, 0737B, 2446B, 2775B, 3216B). These numbers were worn as shoulder badges by AIF infantry soldiers to indicate to which battalion they belonged (Fig. 5.28). They were worn on each epaulette of the jacket, above the 'Australia' and the INF badges. Two individual numbers would be worn side by side to form a double digit number. For example, a '3' and a '0' worn side by side would denote a member of the 30th battalion. The numbers found at Pheasant Wood were '6' (n=1), perhaps worn by a member of the 56th or 60th battalion, '0' (n=2) which could have been worn by a member of the 30th or 60th battalion, and '3' (n=3), possibly worn by a soldier of the 30th, 31st, 32nd or 53rd battalions.



Fig. 5.31 British Pattern boot (1005A)



Fig. 5.32 Boot (3374A) with the inscription: 'R. WHITE/MELB'

Colour patches

A total of six rectangular colour patches were found with six bodies (0105B, 0314B, 0610B, 1116B, 2340B, 3211B), each one wrapped up in uniform fabric (Fig. 5.29). Four of the patches were purple and two were black. Colour patches were worn in

pairs on the upper sleeve of the Australian uniform, one to indicate the soldier's brigade and one to indicate the battalion. They were first used by the Australian Army in 1915 as a means of rapid identification and became a symbol of unit pride, much like the regimental badges of the British Army.

Royal Engineer badge

A Royal Engineer shoulder title comprising the letters 'RE' in brass (Fig 5.30) was found in the trouser fabric with 2446B, indicating that it had not

been worn but had been carried in the soldier's pocket, perhaps as a souvenir (though the fabric was too decomposed to identify a pocket as such). Alternatively it could attest to the presence of a Royal Engineer in the attacking force. Engineers frequently went forward with the attacking troops to provide technical advice on the construction of temporary defences and trenches.

Officer's equipment

The only equipment issued to officers that was found was a brass pocket compass (Fig. 5.34), stamped on the front 'Sherwood & Co., London, V, No. 61900, 1916'. This was with body 3147B.

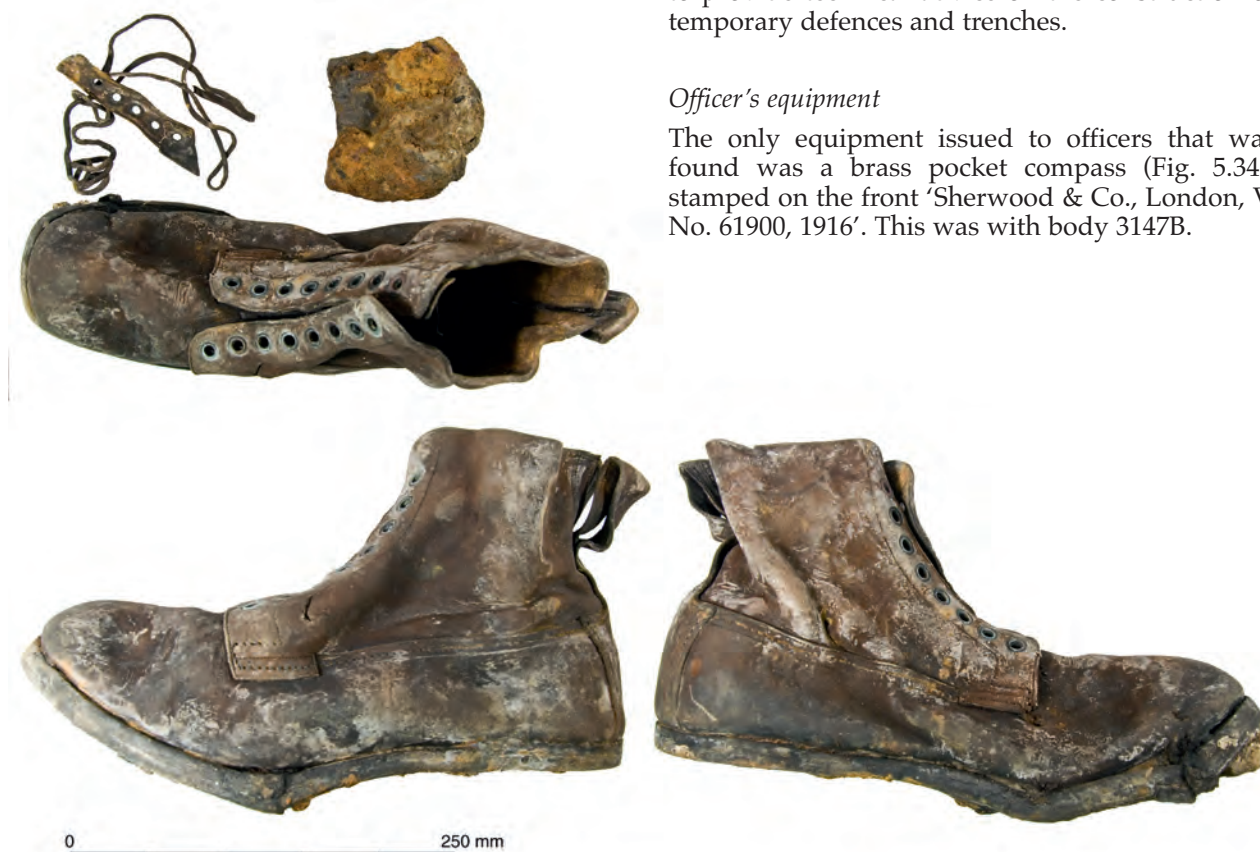


Fig. 5.33 British Pattern boot (3081A)



Fig. 5.34 Officer's compass

Table 5.1: Summary of boots found with individuals

Body number	Artefact number	Grave number	ID score	Summary description
0573B	1005A	1	1	British Pattern Boot with 7 eyelets, stamp on outside sole number 6 above 5. Hobnailed sole.
0674B	3374A		3	Boot with 7 pairs of eyelets, one strip of which are detached. Part of leather lace partly threaded through eyelets. Sole is studded in rows lengthways and the heel is studded with an arc around the edge. Neck of boot is stamped with R. WHITE MELB, suggesting manufacture in Melbourne.
1083B	3494A	1	3	Complete boot with 6 pairs of lace eyelets. Hobnails on sole, double row some way from edge of sole following its outline, cross of hobnails in centre of sole. Worn heel. Left boot, with two stamped letters on left side near opening: '...W [or M] ...', with '...M...' below. Possibly: 'R. WHITE/MELB' as with boot (3374A, Case 0674B).
1525B	1719A	4	1	Boot with fabric and leather lace. Very fragmentary. No markings or numbers stamped anywhere. 7 eyelets.
1975B	3682A	3	1	Pair of boot soles, lacking most of uppers and yet with laces. Heels present but detached. Each stamped '10' and '5' on soles under the heels. Found on feet.
2115B	2278A	4	1	Two complete boots, found on feet in the grave. One has 7 eyelets and a leather bootlace. One has 8 eyelets and is stamped at the top/ankle on the outside with 'Harry Harris warranted' and a number '8' on the inside top/ankle. Brown leather.
2203B	3590A	3	1	Pair of boot soles with part of upper and laces surviving. One boot has been badly cut and is in two pieces. Part of the sole is missing.
2340B	3676A	3	1	Left boot. Very fragmented. No markings, most of upper not present.
2523B	3833A	3	1	Remains of two boots, very fragmentary. Only soles remain and small part of uppers. Number of eyelets is not known. Stamp on heel: 'Rayn' 6-7.
2799B	2911A	5	1	Boot with 8 eyelets and still with lace in. War office mark on outside ankle at top, as well as the remains of the manufacturer's stamp (scrolled script) but this cannot be read any more.
2896B	3081A	5	1	British Pattern boot. 8 eyelets. No markings.
2919B	3108A	5	1	Pair of boots with 8 eyelets. Badly damaged and deteriorated uppers. No markings.
3089B	3118A	5	1	Pair of leather boots, very fragmentary. 7 eyelets. '____mcrow's maker' stamped instep side ankle. Sole stamped 7/4 1914 (left boot). Right boot stamped outside ankle with war office arrow and 'VW'.
3271B	3465A	5	1	Boot with 8 eyelets and top ankle stamped with 'The R/P____an Reg' in script. Also ET and war office arrow mark stamped next to this.
3272B	3326A	5	1	Pair of boots. 8 eyelets. Stamped 'Th____ Sho____' as well as with the war office arrow and another stamp in scrolled text 'P_____', cannot be read. On the sole is stamped '7 6'.

Gaiter buttons

A line of white buttons was found just below the knees and next to each leg of body 0370B. These buttons suggest that the individual was wearing gaiters, made from linen or cotton (no fabric survived) and worn around the leg at the top of a riding style boot. Gaiters were worn by British officers and were a private purchase item.

Significance score five

Only two categories of artefacts were found that were assigned an ID score five: identity discs and marked personal items.

Identity discs

Three identity (ID) discs bearing names were found with three bodies (2119B, 3214B, 3272B). In

Fig. 5.35 ID disc (3332A, found with 3272B)





addition, two further fragments without names were found (2561B, 2930B). Although they were assigned an ID score of two, they are discussed in this section (Figs 5.35-36).

At the time of the battle, army ID discs were made of compressed plant fibre, similar to thick card. At Fromelles, these were collected by the German burial parties to be sent to the Red Cross to allow the identification of the dead. The discs that were found are aluminium discs, which are examples of privately purchased discs.

The discs bearing names also gave the owners' battalion and service number information. They were found in graves four (2119B) and five (3214B and 3272B). The discs found with bodies 2119B and 3272B were found at or close to the neck (for example, Fig. 5.37), while that found with 3214B was located in the pelvic cavity (Fig. 5.38). The disc found with 2119B appeared to be heavily corroded when it was recovered, but drying it at room temperature and carefully cleaning

Fig. 5.36 (above left) ID disc (2393A, found with 2119B)

Fig. 5.37 (below left) 3272B with ID disc in area of neck

Fig. 5.38 (below) 3214B with ID disc in area of pelvis

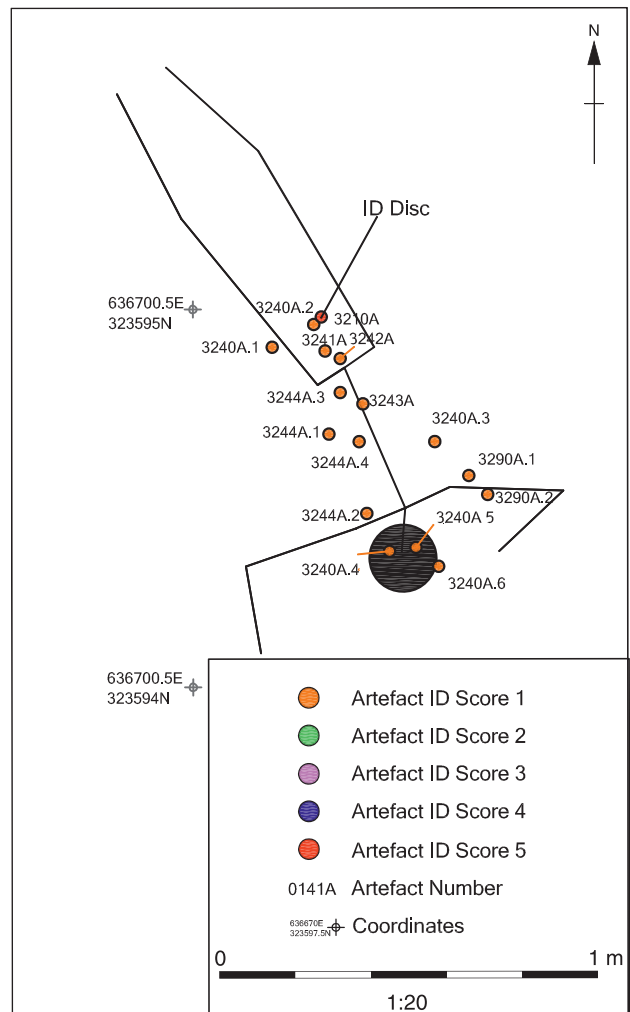
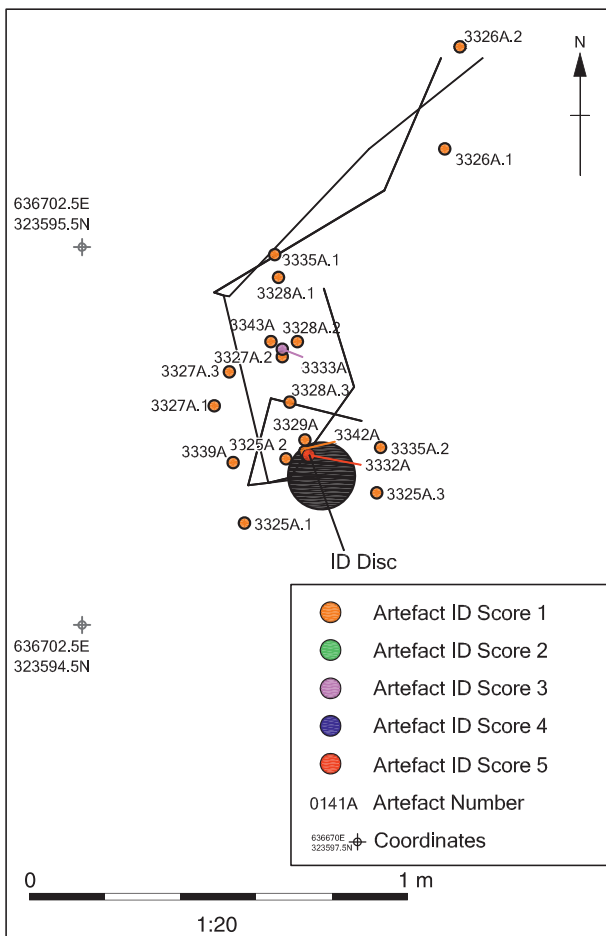




Fig. 5.39 Briar pipe engraved with initials

it revealed surviving stamped lettering. The other two discs were recovered in almost perfect condition, with no corrosion and with all lettering intact.

The two fragments of aluminium ID discs without names were both very fragmentary and corroded, and despite careful cleaning only revealed minimal information. One example was found with 2930B, located between the head and torso. It bore a small letter 'c' in the centre of the disc, but this was adjacent to a break and should perhaps be read as part of 'c.e.' (Church of England). The second fragment was found at the neck of body 2561B and bore the stamped letters 'A.I.F.' and 'Med'. Despite research and consultation the meaning of 'Med' (possibly 'med[ic(al)]' or even 'Med[iterranean]) remains uncertain, since no parallel has been found.

Marked personal items

Four personal items, found with four individuals, were marked with information that was extremely significant for identification (Figs. 5.39–5.41 and 7.2). These were an engraved gold finger ring inscribed on the inside with the words 'from Aunt Julie 1910', found on the ring finger of the left hand of body 2795B; an engraved matchbox cover, with the words 'Pt Cyril Johnston 1915', found with body 1835B; a briar pipe marked with the hand cut initials H E P or H E D, found by the neck of body 1859B and discussed further in Chapter Seven, and an upper denture (found with 0448B) inscribed with the name Weir, discussed in Chapters Four and Seven.

Frequency and distribution of identifying artefacts

The most frequent identifying artefacts were AJBBs, followed by Australian 'Commonwealth' buttons, which accounted for 8% (185/2406) and 5% (22/2406) of all artefacts respectively (Table 5.2). The least frequent items were named ID discs



Fig. 5.40 Matchbox case engraved with name



Fig. 5.41 Inscribed gold ring

Table 5.2: Number of identifying artefacts (ID score two or more; main categories only) by grave and by artefact (G1 and G2 are grave numbers; note that where the number of individuals is stated there will be some duplication, where an individual has items in more than one category. For example, an individual found with a rising sun badge, an Australian jacket belt buckle and an INF badge are counted on all 3 lists.)

	<i>ID score</i>	<i>No. found (% of 2406 artefacts)</i>	<i>G1</i>	<i>No. individuals with artefact</i>					<i>G6</i>	<i>Total individuals (% of 250 individuals)</i>
				<i>G2</i>	<i>G3</i>	<i>G4</i>	<i>G5</i>			
Australian jacket belt buckle (AJBB)	3	185 (7.69%)	28	35	27	39	30	3	162 (65%)	
Australia shoulder title	3	21 (0.87%)	3	2	5	3	5	1	19 (8%)	
Australian rising sun badge	3	18 (0.70%)	4	2	4	5	2	0	17 (7%)	
Australian INF badge	3	9 (0.40%)	1	1	2	2	1	0	7 (3%)	
Australian 'Commonwealth' button	3	132 (5.00%)	8	12	12	12	10	0	54 (22%)	
Australian cellulose/ vegetable ivory button	3	17 (0.70%)	1	4	3	0	0	0	8 (3%)	
Other Australian trouser button	3	16 (0.60%)	2	1	0	5	3	1	12 (5%)	
Australian shoulder number	4	15 (0.60%)	0	2	1	0	2	0	5 (2%)	
Australian colour patch	4	6 (0.20%)	4	0	1	0	1	0	6 (2%)	
Australian service button	3	15 (0.50%)	3	0	2	1	2	0	8 (3%)	
British general service button	3	42 (1.70%)	6	3	5	2	5	0	21 (8%)	
Leather trouser patches	2	20 (0.80%)	5	0	1	2	2	0	10 (4%)	
Trouser eyelets	2	15 (0.60%)	4	4	3	1	3	0	15 (6%)	
Officer's equipment	4	2 (0.08%)	1	0	0	0	1	0	2 (0.8%)	
Religious item	2	10 (0.40%)	5	2	0	2	1	0	10 (4%)	
ID Discs with name	5	3 (0.10%)	0	0	0	1	2	0	3 (1%)	
Miscellaneous Australian item	3	10 (0.40%)	2	0	2	4	2	0	10 (4%)	
Marked personal items	5	3 (0.10%)	0	0	2	1	0	0	3 (1%)	
Total			108	100	93	117	98	7		

(0.1%; 3/2406) and marked personal items (0.1%; 3/2406). These items had the highest scores (score five) in terms of their significance for identification (see below).

Most identifying artefacts had ID scores of three, reflecting the fact that they are items that suggest the army with which a soldier served. In over 90% of cases (405 out of 447 artefacts assigned an ID score of three), these items suggested service with the Australian army.

Australian jacket belt buckles were most frequent in graves four (39 individuals) and two (35 individuals). However, a similar number of AJBBs and Australian 'Commonwealth' buttons were distributed between graves one to five. This is also reflected in the visual distribution of bodies with AJBBs (Fig. 5.18). British general service buttons were found in similar quantities in all graves, with the exception of Grave Six, which had none.

The only artefact type that showed a bias in terms of its spatial distribution was leather trouser patches. These were found with five bodies in Grave One, none in Grave Two, and with only one or two bodies in Graves Three to Five.

Non-identifying artefacts

Non-identifying artefacts, all assigned an ID score of one, accounted for the majority of items that were found with each body. They comprised 1597

allocated artefact numbers (66%; 1,597/2406) and they largely consisted of the remains of standard issue items that were used by soldiers in both armies; they do not distinguish one individual from another, nor do they help in determining for which force an individual served.

Standard issue items included ammunition, webbing equipment and associated items, gas masks, first aid kits, plain buttons, and so forth. Also included are the remains of groundsheets, discussed in Chapter Three (see 'Associated Evidence and Method of Burial'). A total of 354 artefact numbers were assigned to army issued equipment, which was found with 209 bodies. Other non-identifying artefacts were cable and wire (discussed along with groundsheets in Chapter Three), and trench art items, writing paraphernalia, charms/talismans, smoking paraphernalia, a phrase book and personal items.

Ammunition

Any live ammunition that was found during excavation was disposed of at the graveside on the advice of the UXO officer employed on the project. This material was not safe to take into the finds laboratory, and as it is not useful for identification, it was not recorded.

Items of this nature were limited to live rounds found alongside webbing equipment that was



Fig. 5.42 Textile from an Australian jacket

associated with a small number of bodies and a small number of corroded and unidentified items that, at the time of discovery, were not considered safe to examine.

Clothing/uniform fabric (Fig. 5.42)

A total of 88 artefact numbers were issued for uniform fabric, found with 64 bodies (Fig. 5.42). The amount of fabric with bodies varied greatly, from large folded pieces to small scraps, and this is almost certainly due to varying preservation in the graves (see above).

Despite the recovery of fabric from numerous uniforms (many individuals were found with a small amount of fabric), in most cases it was in a state of decomposition and was very fragmentary. However, some pieces survived and were well preserved, allowing the examination of the weave. Research undertaken during the project led to the conclusion that the identification of fabric was only useful for identifying soldiers of the Australian army because they sometimes wore Australian uniforms that had been made from a British textile, but British soldiers did not wear uniforms made from Australian textiles. Occasionally Australian textiles were identified, for example as fragments of distinctive Australian cord from breeches, or a fragment of the fabric belt from an Australian jacket, but only in a few cases was preservation sufficient to allow this level of information. Because other evidence associated with individuals

provided better or sufficient evidence to identify Australian or British soldiers, fabric was only photographed when this evidence was missing, or if it was a clear identifier of a particular uniform.

Hooks, and hooks and eyes

A small number of tiny collar hooks (11 artefact numbers associated with 11 bodies) and brass waistband hooks from tunics (37 artefact numbers associated with 33 bodies) were found. These items are often cited as being an identifying feature of the British jacket (Martial Delebarre pers. comm.), but the work at Pheasant Wood, backed up by research at both the Imperial War Museum stores at Duxford, and photographs taken by a member of the team at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, has found that Australian tunics also had either one or the other, or both of these types of hook. Thus, these items cannot be used to identify a soldier to the Australian or British forces.

Miscellaneous buttons and badges

A 'flaming grenade' badge and a French artillery button (Figs 5.43-44) were found with the same body (1974B). The flaming grenade is a widely used motif, used by a number of British regiments as well as the US Army and the French army. The badge from Fromelles seems to closely match a collar badge on a New Zealand uniform stored at the Imperial War



Fig. 5.43 Flaming grenade collar badge



Fig. 5.45 Braces ends



Fig. 5.44 Flaming grenade collar badges on a New Zealand army uniform at the Imperial War Museum stores

Museum. The French artillery button is decorated with crossed cannons and a flaming grenade above. The presence of two such items with a single body strongly suggests that these are souvenirs.

Braces

A total of 165 artefact numbers were issued for trouser braces, found with 116 bodies (Figs 5.45-46). These items consisted of the leather parts of the braces, either the ends, which attached to buttons



Fig. 5.46 Stamped braces fragment



Fig. 5.47 Braces end with a re-used British general service button

around the waist of the trousers, or to the leather part worn at the back, where the straps would have crossed. In some cases the ends were still attached to trouser buttons. Some of the leather parts were stamped with manufacturers' names, including, 'Times Braces', 'Times and Sons' and 'The Samson Brace'. A common stamp was 'regd. no. 305436', and this may have been associated with army issue braces. However, it has not been possible to trace the place of manufacture for any of these stamps, which is why they have all been assigned an ID

score of one. In one case a small British general service button was found attached to a leather brace end (0674B) (Fig. 5.47) suggesting it had been re-used as a replacement button.

Undergarments

Fragments of undergarment fabric were occasionally preserved, but in most cases only the buttons had survived. These were usually small white shell or ivory buttons that would have fastened the front of the cotton under-shirt. They accounted for 168 artefact numbers and were found with 123 bodies. In addition, aluminium buttons from the thicker woollen under-shirts, also issued by the British and Australian armies, were found with 97 bodies comprising 117 artefact numbers. They were similar to other plain metal buttons recovered, but were found where the tops of trousers would have been, so may have been used to fasten braces.

Webbing equipment and associated items

A total of 174 artefact numbers were issued for elements of pattern 1908 webbing equipment, which were found with 52 bodies (Figs 5.48-49). Being made of cotton, the fabric straps of the webbing set did not survive, and only the metal elements were recovered. The webbing equipment found with most bodies comprised only a few press-studs, buckles or strap ends. Material from only nine bodies (0104B, 0486B, 1371B, 2028B, 2203B, 2341B, 2506B, 2940B, 3215B) had enough individual elements to suggest the original presence of a full set of webbing. The difference in the quantities of webbing equipment found with individuals is probably due in part to loss during the battle and post-mortem but pre-burial, rather than to differential preservation.

Gas masks

Eighty-five artefact numbers were issued for fragments of gas masks, which were found with 72



Fig. 5.48 Fittings from pattern 1908 webbing equipment

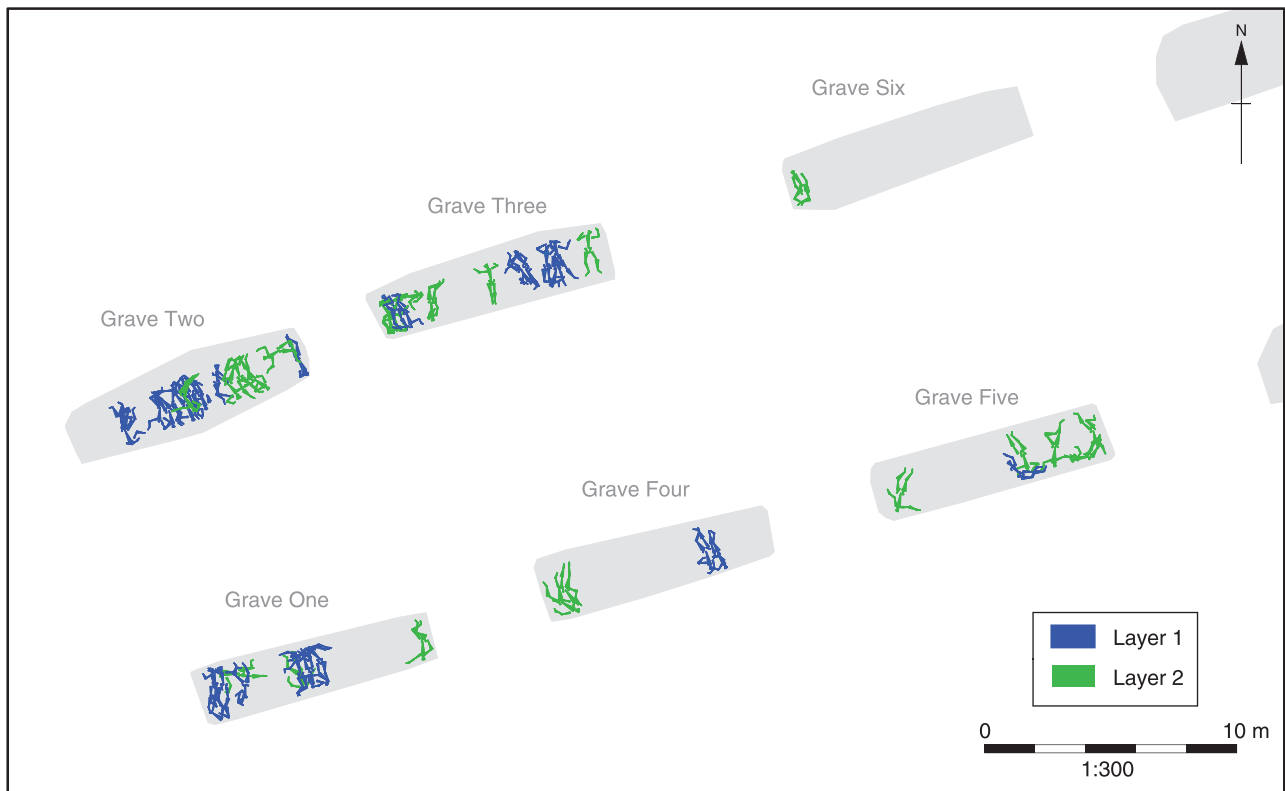


Fig. 5.49 Bodies associated with webbing equipment



Fig. 5.50 Gas mask fragments



Fig. 5.51 Bayonet scabbard

bodies. The elements recovered were from the PH hood gas mask, which comprised a cloth hood with iron rimmed glass eye pieces and a rubber breathing valve (Fig. 5.50). Most of the recovered fragments were eye-pieces and tubular breathing valves; only a small amount of cloth from the hoods survived. The mask would have been kept in a pouch or worn around the neck ready to be used.

Bayonets/bayonet scabbards

These items were worn on the webbing set, attached at the side by a loop and press-stud (Fig. 5.51). A total of seven bayonet scabbards were found with five bodies (0104B, 0486B, 1266B, 1791B, 2203B). The scabbards were all made of leather and contained extremely corroded fragments of bayonet, none of which were removed. All the metal tips and metal mounts were either badly corroded or missing, but the leather sheaths were remarkably well preserved. Two of these bore stamps including one which had a small six-pointed star near the mouth and one which bore a maker's stamp, which read 'H.G.R 15', the mark of Hepburn, Gale and Ross Ltd of Bermondsey, London, with the date mark for 1915.

Oil bottle for service rifle

A small cylindrical oil container for a British Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE) service rifle was found with body 3217B (Fig. 5.52). The cylindrical container was part of the rifle cleaning kit and in the normal course of events was stored in the butt of the rifle. The SMLE mark 1 was issued to both British and Australian infantry.

Field dressing kit

A total of 79 artefact numbers were issued for elements of the standard issue first aid kit, which was found with 67 bodies. The field dressing kit was carried in the inside pocket of the jacket, and consisted of a bandage, safety pins and iodine ampoules for the treatment of wounds. The overwhelming majority of items found from this category were iodine ampoules, most of which were intact and still contained iodine (Fig. 5.53). Others found were a variety of brass safety pins of various designs (Fig. 5.54), and a very small number of fragments of field dressing bandage.



Fig. 5.52 Rifle oil canister



Fig. 5.53 Iodine ampoule from a field dressing kit



Fig. 5.54 Safety pins from a field dressing kit



Fig. 5.55 Toothbrush from a personal kit

Personal kit

Fourteen items of personal kit were found with 13 bodies (Figs 5.55-56). These comprise items of personal hygiene and for the repair and maintenance of clothing. They included a fragment of a shaving brush (0486B), four pocket-knives, or



Fig. 5.56 Pocket knife from a personal kit

fragments of pocket-knives (0379B, 2581B, 2795B, 3165B), four toothbrushes (0267B, 0610B, 1674B, 2580B), one stamped 'SARBON' and 'Made in Japan' (2580B), a thimble (0610B), two fragments of a needle (2722B), three lengths of folded bootlaces (0568B, 0647B, 1388B) and a small fragment of a comb (2559B).

Phrase book

An unusually well preserved item was a 'Black Cat Phrase book', found with 2722B. These were supplied to troops with cigarettes to help with common phrases that might be needed while in France. Of the pages that remained and could be read, phrases included 'Bring me cigars and cigarettes', and 'Do you like omelets (sic)'. Many

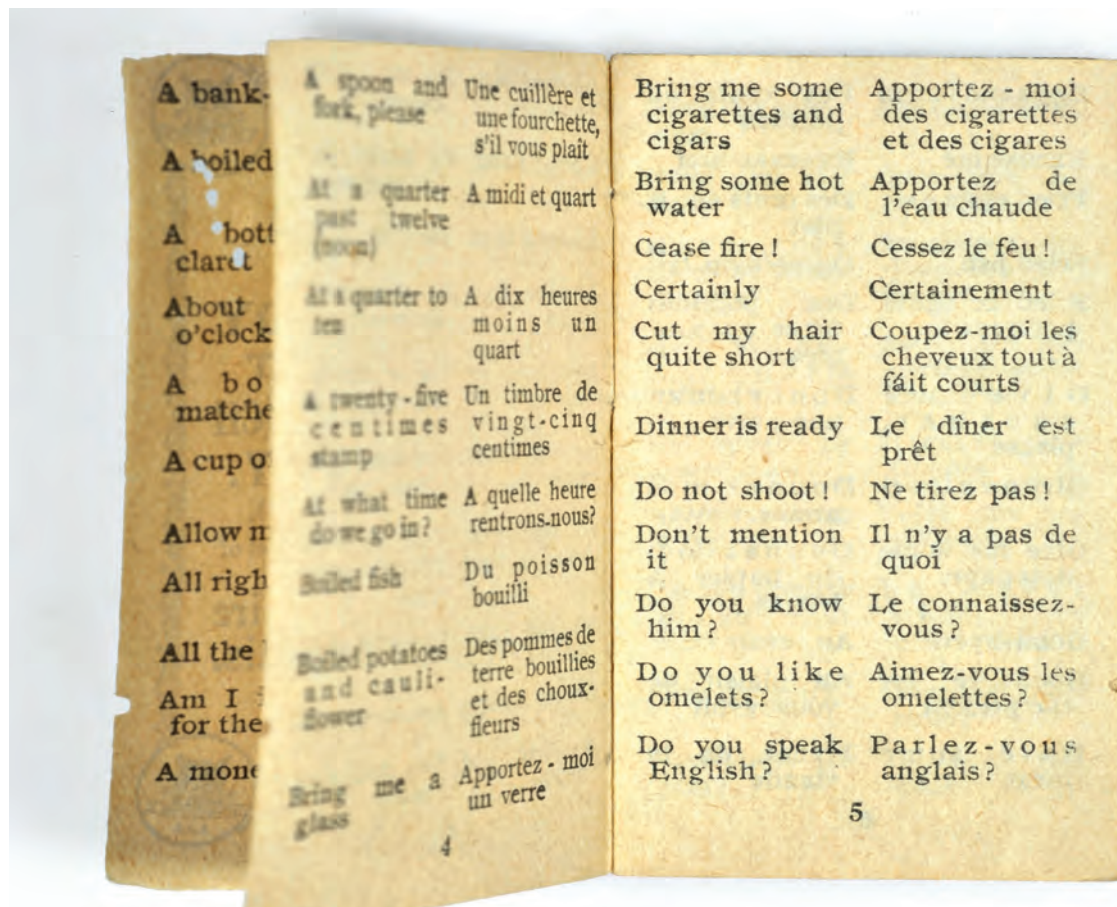


Fig. 5.57 'Black Cat' phrase book from Fromelles museum



Fig. 5.58 Trench art ring

fragmentary phrases in French and English were read with the aid of a replica of the phrase book from the Fromelles Museum collection (Fig. 5.57).

Trench art

Three items were recovered that can be tentatively described as 'trench art', that is decorative items made from materials that were available to soldiers in the trenches (Figs 5.58-60). These items were found with three bodies. Two of these are light metal finger rings, probably made from aluminium. One is silver coloured and in the style of a signet ring with a rectangular insert on the front (found with 2114B). The other is more elaborate, and gold coloured, with an empty stone setting and twisted and coiled wire decoration (found with 1828B). No identifying markings could be seen on either. The third item in this group was a length of leather (perhaps a boot lace) that had been fashioned into a bracelet with knots of alternating style along the length (found with 2115B).



Fig. 5.59 Trench art ring

Charms/talismans

Three charms or talismans were found with three bodies. They include a small intricately carved monkey (Fig. 5.61) made of wood or resin with a suspension hole in the top of the head (found with 0184B); a silver swastika with a suspension hole in one of the arms (found with 0104B), threaded with a short fragment of leather (Fig. 5.62), and a silver fob or medal in a cross and wreath design, which once had a suspension



Fig. 5.61 Monkey charm



Fig. 5.60 Knotted leather trench art bracelet

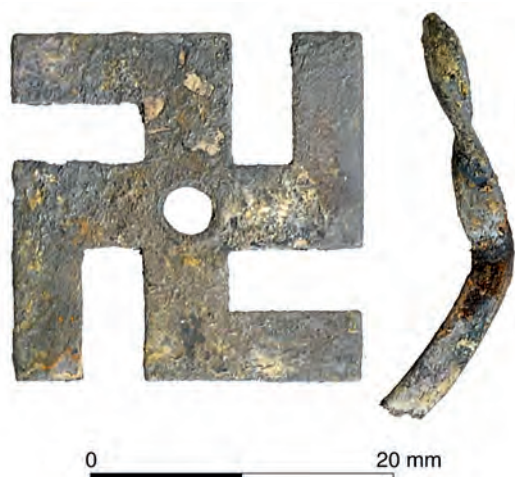


Fig. 5.62 Swastika charm



Fig. 5.63 Cross and wreath charm



Fig. 5.65 Graphite pencil



Fig. 5.64 Indelible pencils



Fig. 5.66 'Empire' fountain pen



Fig. 5.67 'Onoto' fountain pen fragments

loop, similar in style to a school or club badge, but with no pin attachments or inscription (found with 1803B) (Fig. 5.63). It is stamped on the back with the words: 'Mexican Silver' and '...? and Co' underneath. This badge is similar to a mapping medallion displayed at the Australian War Memorial (REL32958).

Writing paraphernalia

Forty-four artefact numbers were issued for items of writing paraphernalia, found with 40 bodies (Figs 5.64-67). The vast majority of these were pencils, including both graphite pencils and indelible pencils, the latter being particularly useful in wet conditions. Some of the pencils were stamped with manufacturers' names or other wording. These included 'American Pencil Co', 'Crayon a courier', 'George Rowney', and 'Copygraph'. One pencil had a wooden pencil extender attached, which allowed the pencil to continue to be used after it had been worn down beyond a comfortable holding length. The Australian war diaries from the battle, displayed in the Australian War Memorial Collections, are largely written in indelible pencil.

One complete fountain pen and fragments of another were also found. They were made of an early plastic such as Bakelite, with gold nibs, and were clearly rare items, being immaculately preserved. The complete pen (found with 3212B) had a lid and was in a perfect condition, apart from a having a slightly warped shape. Its Bakelite body was decorated with incised lines and the lower part was stamped with the words "Empire" self filling pen'. Its gold nib was marked 'warranted 1401'. The other fountain pen (found with 2341B) survived as



Fig. 5.68 Purse and Ottoman Turkish coins



Fig. 5.69 'Estaires' souvenir badge

seven fragments, which did not represent a complete pen. The gold nib was complete, however, and was stamped with the words 'Onoto' and 'patent self-filling'. Onoto pens were the first 'self-filling' pens to be manufactured. They were 'guaranteed not to leak' and would have been an expensive purchase at the time.

Personal items

Some bodies were found with artefacts defined as personal items that do not fall into the other descriptive groups. These are items that were not standard issue, and were either brought to France from home or were acquired locally by the soldier (Figs 5.11 and 5.68-72).

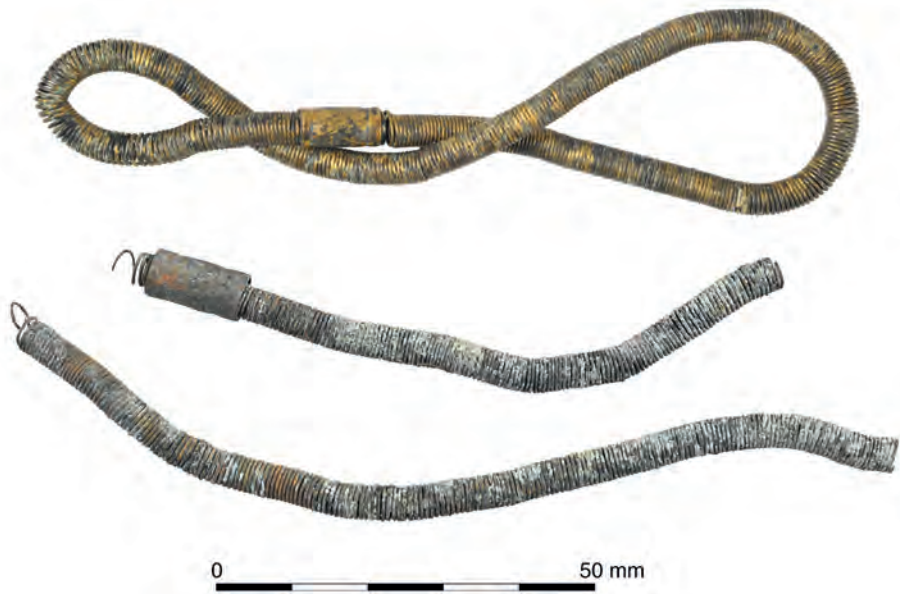


Fig. 5.70 Sleeve holder

Items in this category totalled 36 and were found with 30 bodies. They include pendants, pouches, purses, coins, a souvenir badge from nearby Estaires, sleeve holders and good quality ornate fancy brace fittings. Two of the four purses contained coins. The coins were usually concreted together, but careful cleaning meant that some could be identified. They included British pennies and halfpennies, French francs, Dutch guilders, Ceylon cents and Ottoman Turkish coins.

A particularly poignant and very personal artefact was a hand stitched heart shaped leather pouch (found with 1223B) (Fig. 5.11) which, when opened was found to contain a solid gold cross, a brass crucifix (also described above under 'religious items') and another small leather heart, hand-stitched around the edge (Fig. 5.72). When the stitching was carefully unpicked, fibrous material, possibly decomposed paper, was found inside and within this were some tiny fragments of hair, probably from a loved one or child. The inside of the large heart was concreted with tiny fragments of



Fig. 5.71 Braces fitting



Fig. 5.72 Hand stitched leather heart

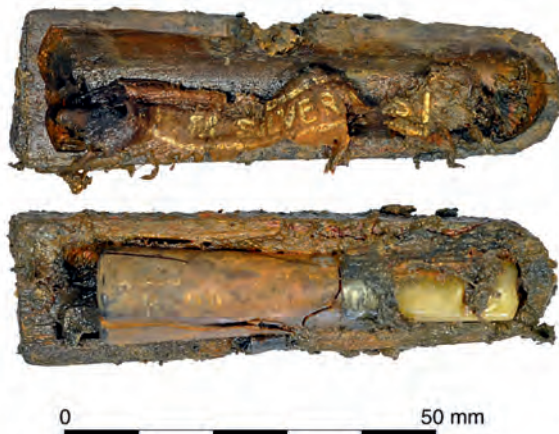


Fig. 5.73 Cigarette holder and case



Fig. 5.74 Matches



Fig. 5.75 Pipe

paper and what appeared to be decomposed glass, suggesting the pouch had once held a photograph or a letter, or perhaps a religious keepsake.

Most of these items were allocated an ID score of one because, in spite of their very personal nature, they were anonymous and could not contribute information on individual identity. That said, because none were army issue and therefore were more personal to the individuals they were buried with, some at least had potential to contribute to the identification process (because they might have been recorded at enlistment), pending suitable ante-mortem data. These items were assigned ID scores higher than one to reflect this potential.

Smoking paraphernalia

A total of 58 artefact numbers were issued for items of smoking paraphernalia, found with 48 bodies (Figs 5.73-75). These items included pipes, or fragments of pipes, cigarette holders, matches, a matchbox holder and a lighter. The last mentioned was recovered as a small oblong brass object and was identified on x-ray.

Matches, or what were once boxes of matches, comprised the majority of items in this category. The wooden matches survived more frequently than the paper/card boxes they were presumably held in. Some boxes survived, occasionally with the print intact. In one case the brand name 'Pilot' was visible, and in another, S J Moreland and Sons, Gloucester, England, makers of John Bull Matches.

Eleven individuals were found with pipes, pipe fragments or cigarette holders. This includes a briar pipe (found with 1859B), which was inscribed with letters and is described above. A particularly ornate cigarette holder was found (with 0379B) (Fig. 5.73) with a silver inlay and a surviving paper label inside a wooden case, indicating that the item was made in Birmingham, England.

The presence of smoking paraphernalia with individuals provides very limited evidence for identification since smoking was ubiquitous among soldiers in the trenches. However, it may assist in assigning a presumptive identification to individuals, should ante-mortem information, such as a photograph depicting someone smoking, be available. Some pipes and cigarette holders are of greater value in this respect because of their individuating features. Thus, ID scores assigned to smoking paraphernalia varied.

DISCUSSION

The artefacts recovered from the mass graves at Pheasant Wood largely comprise items that the soldiers happened to be carrying with them at their time of death. Unlike most non-catastrophic burial contexts, the artefacts had not been selected by mourners to accompany them in death and therefore do not reflect an imposed identity. According to the orders issued by Major-General von Braun, the

soldiers were stripped of insignia, dog tags, or any personal items, for sending to the Red Cross to pass on to families and for passing to army intelligence (Barton 2007; see Chapter One). Thus, it could be argued that this served to remove identity and, perhaps unintentionally, impose anonymity on the buried soldiers. Therefore, any finds that can provide information on identity are of particular significance.

Some caveats

The vast number and variety of artefacts that were found, coupled with the aims of the project, required a simple and transparent system to be developed that would sort and rank them in terms of their significance for identification (see Chapter Two). This resulted in the development of the five significance scores that reflect the full range of the evidence, from items that had no identification information, to those that stated an individual's name. This system minimised bias in interpretation and ensured that each artefact was assessed equally and that the full potential of each item for identification was realised. However, it is important to stress that the scores were just one stage of the artefactual analysis and have not been intended to be employed on their own, but as a precursor to interpreting individual items and assemblages of items found with the soldiers. Before discussing this further, it is important to consider a number of factors that will have biased what was found with the soldiers and how this can help to identify them.

Perhaps the most influential factor is the German burial order, which required the bodies to be searched prior to burial so that identity papers and ID tags could be removed along with military insignia and used by the Red Cross to inform families. Thus, it was clear from the outset of the project that identification using artefacts would depend upon any significant items that had been overlooked. The extent to which the Germans obeyed their orders is clear from the excavated assemblage. It is however worth noting that they only took items that would identify individuals; many personal and valuable items were left behind, including gold jewellery and money, in addition to privately purchased aluminium ID tags. Evidently army-issued equipment was also taken, including webbing, boots and helmets, because only a few complete sets of webbing fittings were found, and there were no helmets and few boots. Presumably these were removed to be utilised by the Germans; where they were not removed they seem to have been associated with very severe peri-mortem trauma.

Besides the German orders, post-depositional processes, in particular the varying micro-environments within the graves and the difference in soil conditions between graves will have inevitably influenced the excavated artefact assemblage. This is in addition to the process of excavation and recovery, which are themselves destructive processes.

Maximum recovery of artefacts was ensured by the careful use of fingertip searching, metal detecting and sampling. The application of these strategies, and the fact that the vast majority of artefacts were found in association with individuals, means that bias caused by excavation is believed to be limited. Perhaps of most relevance here is the fact that a small number of items (for example, some small insignia) were found during radiography and processing following their recovery from the grave (for example, because they were wrapped inside fabric). For this reason their precise *in situ* locations are unknown, although sufficient information could be deduced from their association with a soil sample from a particular region of the skeleton and/or by their association with clothing (for example, trouser fabric) to determine whether they had been worn or carried. The lack of locational information here is therefore not that detrimental to the value of the assemblage for identification, although it is a biasing factor nonetheless.

The role of a soldier is another biasing factor that should be considered. As part of an organised military force subject to group discipline, individuality is minimised by the use of uniforms and the wearing of insignia and standardised equipment. This means that the artefact assemblages associated with each body were, in many ways, very similar. As such they favour the establishment of group identity – the buried individuals are soldiers of a particular unit or army – rather than individual identity. For this reason, it was the subtle differences between assemblages and combinations of artefacts, as well as what was not present that has been important for indicating the identification of individuals from their artefacts.

Lastly, and perhaps most fundamental to the interpretation of the artefacts is their portability, or more specifically, the fact that elements of British uniforms were regularly worn by Australians, and some of the items had possibly been collected as souvenirs. As discussed in Chapter One, distinctions between the Australian and British uniforms were often blurred by the fact that Australians frequently wore elements of British uniforms at times of shortage. It is considered to be less likely that British soldiers wore elements of the Australian uniform. The enormous numbers of British soldiers, backed by the massive industrial infrastructure of Great Britain, contrasted dramatically with the relatively small population of the Commonwealth of Australia and its forces, and its correspondingly small industrial base. It was inevitable that equipment would be more likely to reach Australian troops from British manufacturers and suppliers than the other way round. This phenomenon was observed at Ploegsteert, where the remains of a soldier was found wearing an Australian uniform and insignia but British boots (Brown and Osgood 2009).

Collecting souvenirs is common practice among soldiers today, and was reported as common among

the soldiers who fought at Fromelles. The First World War was called 'a war of souvenirs' by the soldiers who fought in it and 'souveniring' was a common name for looting (Brown and Osgood 2009). Buttons and badges, in particular, were swapped and collected from the battlefields, and souvenirs were also acquired from locals in the places the soldiers visited. The following extract from Knyvett (1918, 162-63), on events that took place during the days just before the Battle of Fromelles is instructive:

"Everybody was very willing to make friends with us Australians, but the difficulties of language prevented a very rapid growth in knowledge of each other. All were on the hunt for souvenirs, and on the second day hardly a man had a button left on his coat. Orders were issued that the buttons be replaced before the next parade, and it was amusing to hear the boys trying to explain to the village shop-mistress what they wanted. It ended in their ransacking the stock themselves, but I do not think any one found many buttons of the same kind, and our uniforms did not look as smart as usual, as somehow blouse-buttons do not seem to go well with a uniform."

Buttons were portable, distinctive and eminently collectable items and it was not considered unusual among soldiers to wear different types of buttons on their jackets. For this reason, it was to be expected that buttons, badges and insignia from the uniforms of other armies might be found with individuals at Pheasant Wood. A good example from Pheasant Wood is one individual (1974B) who was found with a Flaming Grenade collar badge (Fig. 5.43), similar to that which was worn by New Zealand Fusiliers (Fig. 5.44), and a brass French artillery button, also bearing a flaming grenade over crossed cannon barrels.

Even the most personal items could find their way into the possession of another, as Knyvett (1918, 182) records:

"There was another man who was anxious about his money-belt; perhaps it contained something more valuable than money. I went back for it, stuffing it in my pocket, and then forgot all about it."

A possible example of this at Pheasant Wood is an identity disc that was found in the pelvic cavity on an individual (3214B). The name, service number and other information were perfectly clear. The position of the find raised the possibility that it belonged to another soldier and either had been picked up from the battlefield, or taken from a fallen comrade, or perhaps held for a friend to be returned to family in the event of his death. Perhaps it was taken from a comrade's dead body and put in the trouser pocket, in order to report his death after the battle. Equally, the disc could have belonged to the individual it was found with and been put in his pocket for safe keeping after the cord had broken.

Interpretation of the artefacts

With the above caveats in mind the following discussion focuses on interpreting the artefacts, considered by function and with reference to ID scores.

Trouser buttons

A large number of well-preserved trouser buttons was recovered and key identification information was provided by many. The most numerous by far were the small brass trouser buttons used to hold braces, which although sometimes plain, were in many cases stamped with 'Commonwealth' or with a maker's name. 'Commonwealth' buttons were numerous and found with 22% of bodies. Although it cannot be confirmed that 'Commonwealth' buttons were Australian, the name is strongly indicative and there is a strong presumption that they were widely used on the trousers issued by the Australian army. The Commonwealth of Australia had been established as a dominion of the British Empire as recently as 1907.

Some of the suppliers of the trouser buttons can be traced to Australia, including 'Bollard, Maitland', which refers to a town in New South Wales and 'Hordern and Sons Sydney', a large department store in Sydney at the time. The name Bollard probably refers to a supplier rather than a manufacturer.

The origin of other marked buttons, including those with 'Excelsior', 'Imperial', 'Our Own Make' and 'The Federal', is more elusive because there is very little information available about these buttons or their suppliers or manufacturers. 'Excelsior', 'Our Own Make' and 'Imperial' buttons are commonly found by metal detectorists exploring the gold mining camps of Queensland, which indicates that they were available in Australia, but does not confirm that they were made there or that they could not have been available to British troops. The buttons stamped 'The Federal' are much more likely to be an Australian type; Australia became a 'federation of colonies' on 1st January 1901. The name would be appropriate for an Australian button, but the evidence for an Australian origin is inconclusive.

Jacket buckles and buttons

A very large number of very distinctive AJBBs were found in all graves and accounted for the largest single group of identifying artefacts. They were found with 162 individual bodies, which is 65% of the 250 bodies recovered. These Australian tunic buckles are the most reliable evidence for nationality, because they were an integral part of the Australian tunic (the belts were sewn into the seams) and were not likely to have been worn by British soldiers. The number of buckles, but particularly the percentage of bodies accompanied by an Australian buckle is significant for identification of

the buried soldiers. As has been borne out by the ID process, a large proportion of the buried soldiers were Australian. Also instructive is the contrast between the large number of Australian belt buckles recovered and small numbers of other distinctive metal fittings and in particular badges that were found. This confirms that the German burial parties carried out their orders to remove unit badges and other insignia thoroughly. This has significance for the British Missing, as the British uniform did not have a distinctive feature such as the Australian buckle. Remove the British badges and distinguishing the British Missing from the Australian Missing becomes extremely difficult where no AJBB is associated.

Among the jacket buttons were vegetable ivory/cellulose buttons. These were found on far fewer bodies than the AJBBs. As stated above, plant fibre textiles did not survive well in the graves, and although fairly hard and possibly coated, it is possible that a large number of these buttons had decomposed. That said, it should be noted that those buttons of this type that did survive were very well preserved.

Metal Australian general service buttons were also uncommon, and those found are likely to reflect occasional anomalies in the standard issue Australian jackets. Where British general service buttons survived caution was applied in their interpretation because these may have been worn on Australian uniform jackets as replacements for lost Australian buttons, or Australian soldiers may have been issued with British jackets when supplies were low. It is salutary to note that of the 20 individuals found with British general service buttons, 13 also had items from an Australian uniform, and therefore these buttons were not considered significant for identification. Of the remaining seven, only one had more than one British general service button (two) with the remainder only having one. Considering that the British jacket would have had 11 general service buttons as a total set, these occurrences are not considered conclusive indicators of soldiers of the British army.

One other type of service button was recovered, a button of the Royal Scots, found with 0486B. However, this was found with a British general service button and the back of an Australian made service button (Fig. 5.15). This combination of artefacts could perhaps suggest that the buttons belonged to a soldier with previous service with the Royal Scots. However, it is equally possible that the individual had been souvenir collecting.

Insignia

Shoulder numbers were infrequent in the graves and this would seem to support the documentary evidence that such identifying items were removed by the German burial party. In many of the cases where shoulder and collar badges were found, only one of a pair remained, suggesting that one was

taken for identification. Where two remained the extent of injuries may have made removal of these items difficult. However, it should be remembered that soldiers often removed shoulder badges themselves, particularly on the rifle carrying side, and this may explain some absences. The badges that were removed would have been safely stowed away and left behind with other items that were not carried into the attack.

Of the six Australian colour patches that were found, four were purple (found with 0105B, 0314B, 0610B, 2340B) and two were black (found with 1116B, 3211B), colours that were worn by soldiers who fought at Fromelles. Purple patches were worn by the 14th Brigade (54th Battalion) and the 15th Brigade (58th Battalion) and black patches were worn by the 8th Brigade (29th Battalion), 14th Brigade (53rd Battalion) and 15th Brigade (57th Battalion). However, the extent to which these patches have discoloured in the ground is uncertain. The purple patches were consistently strong, suggesting that this was their original colour. However, the black patches may have been discoloured by the black residue that was observed in some of the graves, probably as a result of decomposition.

Only one British badge was found, and this bore the letters 'RE' for 'Royal Engineers' (Fig. 5.30) This badge was found inside a sock that was associated with an individual (2446B), who was also found with three Australian uniform items, a tunic buckle, a small brass shoulder number and a 'Commonwealth' button. The badge was probably a souvenir and as such cannot be used to infer British identity.

The Australian shoulder title, with the letters MGS, which was found associated with one individual (2510B), may also have been a souvenir. The same badge is held in the Australian War Memorial Collections (REL25274) with the following description:

"Associated with 554 Private Henry McIntosh Hopping Mills, who served with 9 Machine Gun Company and 3 Machine Gun battalion, AIF. He enlisted on 10 October 1916 and was killed in action on 8 August 1918 at Tout Suite Gully, Hamel. He did not serve with the Light Horse, and may have acquired the Machine Gun Squadron title as a souvenir when his troopship passed through Egypt."

Although a relatively small number of Australian badges were found in comparison to the less easily removed belt buckles, the fact that virtually no British badges were found may be significant. More specifically, this suggests that few British soldiers were buried at Pheasant Wood.

Uniform fabric and leather trouser patches

The identification of fabric was only useful for aiding with the identification of soldiers of the AIF,

and only when the fabric was clearly from an Australian uniform (see above). Occasionally items of fabric were helpful, such as when fragments of distinctive Australian cord from breeches or a fragment of the fabric belt from an Australian jacket, were found. However, the preservation of fabric was not good enough for it to be used regularly in this way as an aid in identification. In most cases the other evidence associated with individuals provided more convincing evidence for identifying the force to they belonged.

Six of the bodies (0379B, 0484B, 0495B, 1084B, and 1357B) in Grave One were found with leather trouser patches, compared to just one or two bodies in graves three (2512B), four (1522B, 1525B) and five (2812B, 3211B). Although numbers are low this is the only example where the distribution of identifying artefacts was found to cluster in one grave. It may tentatively be suggested that more soldiers of mounted rank were buried in Grave One than the other graves (although officially no mounted soldiers are known to have taken part in the battle). This perhaps reflects where they were fighting on the battlefield, having been subsequently collected where they fell and buried together by the Germans.

Boots

Well-preserved boots were found on 15 individuals only and this is probably because most were removed by the German burial party. British and Australian style boots were greatly desired by German troops due to their superior practicality in the Flanders mud, being short lace-ups rather than long pull-on boots. The boots worn by the Australian troops at Fromelles would have been especially desirable because they had only been on the Western Front a few weeks, and therefore the boots would have been relatively new.

It is probable that boots found *in situ* were on bodies injured in a way that made it too difficult or too unpleasant to remove them. Among the boots recovered were several different styles, one being a typical British pattern boot (found with 0573B; Fig. 5.31), and some with makers' stamps and numbers on the sole indicating shoe size. The maker's stamp, 'Harry Harris Warranted' (associated with 2115B) may refer to Harris Brothers boot makers of Northampton, England.

Although all identifying features have been taken into account, boots are not considered significant as a means of identification. As previously stated, Australian soldiers often wore British pattern boots (see Brown and Osgood 2009) and lost or damaged boots would have been replaced wherever possible. This is demonstrated by one of the very few cases at Pheasant Wood where an individual (2115B) was found wearing two boots. On examination in the finds laboratory it was noticed that both boots were made for a right foot.

Helmets

No individuals were found with their standard issued steel 'Brodie' helmets. Many of the Australian soldiers at Fromelles had not been issued with steel helmets (Cobb 2007, 110 and see Chapter Four) although photographs taken in the trenches just before the battle show that they were worn by at least some of the soldiers. These would not have been removed prior to going 'over the top', being the only protection the soldier had from bullets and shrapnel and therefore, like the majority of boots, the helmets were almost certainly salvaged by the German burial party. (The discussion under 'Australian 'rising sun' badge' is also relevant here.)

Webbing and associated equipment

Nine of the individuals found in the graves at Pheasant Wood appear to have been buried with a full set of webbing equipment. However, in the majority of cases, it appears that the webbing had been removed. It is likely that this equipment was considered valuable, particularly the ammunition held within it, and it is likely to have been removed by the German burial party. Possibly the bodies buried with webbing equipment were those individuals who had been badly wounded.

Only a very small number of items of larger equipment were found, such as bayonets with scabbards (Fig. 5.51) and trenching tools (Fig. 5.76). No wire cutters were found, but one empty leather case for a set (bearing an Australian maker's mark) was found. Most bayonets, trenching tools and similar will have been salvaged by the German burial parties. Other items of equipment found included water bottle fragments and an oil canister that still held rifle oil (Fig. 5.52).



Fig. 5.76 Head of trenching tool

First aid kits

Unfortunately the elements of first aid kit that were found, including the glass iodine ampoules and safety pins, are not useful for identification, as kits of identical type would have been carried by both British and Australian soldiers.

Army issue personal kits

Personal kit was issued in a cloth wrap and was kept in the soldier's backpack. However, this was usually not carried into battle. This would explain the relatively small number of items from personal kit found at Pheasant Wood. The full kit would have contained a shaving brush, a pocket knife, a comb, a toothbrush, toothpaste, spare boot-laces, a small sewing kit, a button holder (for polishing buttons) and a fork and spoon, and may have been supplemented with other items added by the soldiers. Those few items that were found had probably been carried into the battle in pockets.

Particularly disappointing was the fact that no army issued cutlery was recovered because this was often marked with a service number. None of the equipment found was marked with initials or service numbers.

Items possibly associated with officers

Officers were usually advised to dress the same as the infantry during battles to be inconspicuous and as such avoid being targeted by enemy snipers. Nonetheless they would have still carried some

items that distinguished them as officers. These may have included a compass, binoculars/periscope, a revolver, a whistle, and a map case and message pad. An officer may also have worn his 'Sam Browne' belt (Fig. 5.77) with a single cross strap to hold his equipment even if he was wearing a soldier's uniform during battle.

Only two bodies had associated artefacts which suggested that they might have been officers. Body 0370B had a line of small white shell buttons by each lower leg, suggesting that he had been wearing gaiters of the type worn by British officers. Another individual (3147B) was found with a brass pocket compass (Fig. 5.34). (A very similar, but undamaged, example is on display in the Fromelles Museum.) The same body was associated with some unusual, ornate and probably expensive braces fittings (Fig. 5.71).

Two individuals were found with gold-nibbed fountain pens (Figs. 5.66 and 5.67), one being an 'Onoto' (with body 2341B), a make still available today and very expensive. The other was an 'Empire' self filling pen found with body 3212B. These are most likely to have been the property of officers, although it is not impossible that they belonged to those of other ranks.

If these individuals are considered to have been officers, then their burial locations suggest that officers were not necessarily buried together. The individual with the shell buttons was found in Grave One, the individual with the compass was buried in Grave Five and those with the pens were buried in graves three (2341B) and five (3212B).

Besides these items, no insignia, buttons or other items directly identifying rank were found. However, if they had been worn into the battle they would probably have been removed by the German burial party.

Personal items and religious items

Personal items have the potential to contribute to the ID process, should ante-mortem data be found, such as a photograph or an enlistment record, that refers to them, or where a living relative recognises them. As stated, the German burial instructions describe how personal possessions were to be removed from the bodies prior to burial for identification purposes and for return to families via the Red Cross. They also record that looting was explicitly forbidden (Barton 2007, 21):

"The misappropriation of even the most insignificant item of property from a body (German or 'English') constitutes robbery of the dead and will be severely punished. The collection of effects, as ordered above, may only be carried out by the sergeant-majors at Beaucamps or in the presence of a senior NCO of the h-Company at Pheasant Wood."

The personal items that were found at Pheasant Wood represent those that were perhaps contained



Fig. 5.77 Officer's Sam Browne belt at Fromelles museum (three views), Fromelles town hall (Fromelles Weppes Terre de Mémoire)

in pockets that were not searched, were not regarded as personal items and/or did not decompose in the burial environment.

Personal items would have formed an important element of a soldier's possessions. Gifts from home, keepsakes, letters, photographs and items of jewellery would have provided comfort to many during their time on the Western Front. Several examples of personal items were found, some of which were considered useful for identification because they refer to the country of origin, such as the boomerang badge (1524B), while others, such as the carved monkey (found with 0184B) and silver swastika (found with 0104B), provide limited identification information. Boomerang badges were given to Australian soldiers by their loved ones on leaving home with a symbolically represented wish for them to return home safely (Burness pers. comm.) The monkey may have been a souvenir that was collected during a stop-over in Egypt on the way to France. Alternatively, along with the swastika, it may have been acquired during previous service in Gallipoli or elsewhere. At this time, swastikas, which are an ancient symbol, were sometimes worn as talismans and were not imbued with the negative connotations acquired through association with Nazism later in the century. The swastika was a popular symbol in the Middle East (including Turkey) and parts of Asia.

Some of the coins that were found also probably suggest the locations of previous service, or were swapped or collected. In particular, the more exotic coins may refer to service in Gallipoli or the former Ceylon.

Another personal item that is likely to have been acquired as a souvenir is the Estaires badge (found with 0747B) with the representation of the arms of the commune. It comprises a shield bearing the arms of Estaires, which were a cross moline counter-charged on a red and white field on a shield, surmounted by a crown and supported by lions rampant (Fig. 5.69). This badge, which is not (and probably was not) coloured, is testament to souvenir collecting by the soldiers in the local area and it may have been manufactured in the nearby town for this purpose.

Letters and photographs have the potential to be an invaluable source for identification, with the possibility of names, addresses or other information, and the wet and largely anaerobic conditions in the graves were favourable for the preservation of paper. The fact that the Germans were instructed to remove personal papers, including pay books, is probably why very little paper was found. Despite the immediate removal of all paper and card from the graves to the finds laboratory, and careful cleaning and examination, no letters or photographs were identified. Only the tiniest scraps of paper that may have been hand written were found. However, these were so small that they only showed what is believed to have been parts of writing, in fact only parts of letters. The only personal paper items (indeed the only paper items)

that were found comprise bibles, prayer books, a phrase book and, the best preserved of all, the card return train ticket (Fig. 5.26).

The discovery of religious items with the soldiers is not surprising, being associated with a time when practising a religion was the norm. In fact, given the circumstances and the time, more items of this nature might have been expected. All British troops were issued with a copy of 'A Simple Prayer Book for Soldiers' issued by HM Stationery Office by arrangement with the Catholic Truth Society. Therefore, the recovery of a Catholic prayer book with an individual should not be used as an indicator of faith. One such prayer book was found with an individual at Pheasant Wood.

Other religious items that have been found may have been given to the soldiers by local inhabitants upon their arrival in France as revealed in the following passage from Knyvett's memoirs (1918, 163):

"These people were simple and religious, as I found most of the French people to be, at least the country-folk. I received no less than six crucifixes that I was assured by the charming donors would protect me from all danger, as they had been blessed by certain archbishops, the favourite (sic) being the archbishop of Amiens."

Identity discs

The recovery of ID discs was not expected, as their removal was recorded in the German instructions for the burials, as the following passage recorded by Barton (2007, 20) shows:

"The removal of the effects and identity disks, in the same way as for the German bodies, is to be carried out by the h-company...."

The aluminium discs recovered from the graves are of the type that could be privately purchased and that were bought by many soldiers as an extra precaution against anonymity in death. Some soldiers, after seeing comrades lose limbs in battle would purchase these to wear around their wrists and ankles, so important was posthumous identification of their entire body to a First World War soldier (possibly a relict belief from pre-Reformation days whereby for a body to pass from purgatory to heaven it had to be buried intact). The army (both British and Australian forces) issued ID discs at the time made of a thick compressed cardboard material, which were unlikely to survive well.

Three of the discs bore names and service numbers. One of these (found with 3214B) was likely to have been in the soldier's pocket and therefore may have been the identity of a different soldier. However, the others (found with 2119B, 3272B) were recovered from near the neck region of the bodies. In these cases, both the nature of the artefact and their location meant that even before

this artefactual evidence took its place among the complementary evidence of DNA and anthropological results, it could strongly indicate that the names on the discs were the names of the soldiers with which they were found.

Summary and conclusions

The artefact assemblage was generally well preserved and comprised a wide variety of items, primarily from uniforms, but also those associated with everyday life, such as writing and smoking paraphernalia, and personal keepsakes, such as a leather heart. Of the 2678 artefact numbers assigned, a total of 2406 were found in association with bodies or with the largely decomposed clothes that they had been wearing. This gives an average of 9.6 items per individual. The majority of these (82%) were not useful for identification, being generic in nature. However, 441 artefact numbers were assigned to items that are considered useful for identification and were given an ID score of between two and five to reflect the type of identification information (army/rank/name) they provided. The vast majority of scores assigned to these items was three, a score that refers to items

that identify individuals to a specific army. A smaller number of individuals (16) were associated with items that indicated their rank, battalion or regiment (score four), and six were associated with items that bore names or initials and therefore suggested a personal identification. The majority of bodies (204) were found with at least one artefact of score two or higher. However, when considered in their broader context some of these items were not considered useful for identification, either because they probably represent souvenirs or because they represent the blurring of distinctions between the Australian and British uniforms. Thus, scores cannot be taken at face value, but should be considered with reference to these factors.

The vast majority of items that were considered useful for identification referred to the Australian Imperial Force. Although British items were found in the graves, all were probably British items from uniforms that could equally have been worn by Australians. This is with the exception of the remains of gaiters, which were worn only by British officers (and unlikely to have been transferred to another soldier) and, with no associated finds evidence suggesting the contrary, may refer to a British individual.

