

## **Story of the finding the grave of Capt Arthur Harold APPLEBY, KIA Bullecourt, France, 6 May 1917, aged 25 years**

A SEARCH of more than 100 years for the remains of a fallen Tasmanian WWI soldier has ended with a remarkable discovery on the battlefields of France, fulfilling Andrea Gerrard's mother's dying wish.

Arthur Harold Appleby, who his great niece Mrs Gerrard referred to as "uncle Harold", died by shellfire while in the frontline trenches alongside some 10,000 Australians who were killed, wounded or taken prisoner of war during two battles against enemy defences. He was 25.

A soldier during the 2nd Battle of Bullecourt, he was buried near where he fell in France, in May 1917.

But the burial site was destroyed during the ensuing battle, meaning Captain Appleby's remains had become lost to his family back home in Tasmania.

Andrea Gerrard OAM at the memorial of her great uncle Captain Arthur Harold Appleby at Hobart's Soldiers' Memorial Avenue. Picture Chris Kidd

Andrea Gerrard OAM at the memorial of her great uncle Captain Arthur Harold Appleby at Hobart's Soldiers' Memorial Avenue. Picture Chris Kidd

Following years of research, his final resting place has been identified in an unmarked grave at Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, in Souchez, France, by private researchers Len Kelly and Noel Forde, with help from Mrs Gerrard.

The discovery has ended a 103-year family search.

"My mother always believed he would be found, and a big thanks needs to go to Mr Kelly and Mr Forde," Mrs Gerrard said.

"They did the lion's share of work which has seen my mother's dying wish fulfilled.

"She and I talked about it a lot over the years, and I knew it would be something she wanted to see happen."

Federal Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Minister Darren Chester said finding Captain Appleby's final resting place would not have been possible without the efforts of his family, private researchers, the Army's Unrecovered War Casualties team and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

"It is fitting that, ahead of Anzac Day this year, Captain Appleby's family can reflect on his service and sacrifice with knowledge his final resting place will now be marked with his name, Australian Imperial Force details and the iconic Rising Sun badge," he said.

Captain Arthur Harold Appleby died by shellfire while in the frontline trenches. In consultation with Captain Appleby's descendants, the Australian Army and Commonwealth War Graves Commission are set to make arrangements to replace the previously unmarked headstone.

Mrs Gerrard said the family wanted to make mention of Captain Appleby's home state of Tasmania on his headstone.

The new headstone will read: "Separated by death. Remembered always by his family in Tasmania. Much loved brother and uncle."

Mrs Gerrard received an Order of Australia medal in 2018 in recognition of her service to veterans and their families through the Tasmanian Headstones Project, which installs headstones on previously unmarked WWI graves.

Her great uncle was the eldest of two sons to Arthur and Elizabeth Appleby, born in Launceston in 1892.

The couple died while their sons were young and Captain Appleby was raised by his maternal grandfather at Railton while his brother ended up in state care.

Arthur worked as an accountant for Blundstone and Sons and was a talented lacrosse player before enlisting in November 1914. He was appointed as a second lieutenant due to his previous military experience.

He was then promoted to lieutenant and eventually became captain following his service at Gallipoli and a training stint in Egypt.

Tree 255 on Hobart's Soldiers' Memorial Avenue was planted in 2018 in his honour.

Written by JAMES KITTO, published 24/4/2020