

THE BRITISH WAR GRAVES AND BATTLEFIELDS HERITAGE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OPERATES WITHIN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. IT PROMOTES BATTLEFIELD HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION AND ASSISTS INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL BODIES LIKE THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION IN ORDER TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES RELATING TO THIS PARTICULAR FIELD. THE ALL-PARTY GROUP IS HELPED BY A NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE UK'S ASSOCIATION FOR BATTLEFIELD ARCHAEOLOGY AND CONSERVATION AND THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM. THE EMAIL SHOWN BELOW WAS TRANSMITTED TO PETER BARTON ON 5TH DECEMBER 2009 TO EXPRESS THE APPRECIATION OF FROMELLES DISCUSSION GROUP FOR HIS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND EFFORTS IN RELATION TO THE FRENCH WAR GRAVES PROJECT WHICH HAS LED TO THE DISCOVERY OF EVIDENCE OF MORE MASS GRAVES FROM THE EUROPEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS DURING THE GREAT WAR.

**PETER BARTON, GREAT WAR HISTORIAN AND CO-SECRETARY, ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY WAR GRAVES AND BATTLEFIELDS HERITAGE GROUP:**

Dear Peter,

**Browsing the website of the British All-Party Parliamentary War Graves & Battlefields Heritage Group this afternoon, I perused your illustrated 48 page report on the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva and listened to the interview conducted with Paola Totaro, Europe correspondent for the Sydney Morning Herald. Might I take this opportunity on behalf of the friends, affiliates and supporters of Fromelles Discussion Group to congratulate you on the data contained in the overview report compiled in collaboration with other specialists like M. Fabrizio Benis, Head of the ICRC's Historical Archives Unit and M. Daniel Palmieri, Historical Research Officer and the other archivists, librarians and translators mentioned. The report is sound and a credit to you and other members of the All-Party Parliamentary War Graves & Battlefields Group, chaired currently by Lord Roper and a number of other statutory officers including Tim Boswell, Nigel Dodds, Doctor Rudi Vis and its treasurer, Jeffrey Donaldson.**

What success can be attributed to the French War Graves Project is largely a result of your dedication and commitment to ensuring the missing at Pheasant Wood are given the recognition they deserve. In your capacity of personal assistant to the All-Party Group you encouraged Lambis Englezos with his early endeavours, undertook research to support preliminary investigations into the mass graves to identify the remains that were expected to be found and now the excavation phase has finished and 250 sets of human remains have been uncovered, you have announced that evidence of a further 35 mass graves have been found in the World War I records of the Bavarian archives in Munich.

Not that the recovery project has been without criticism or controversy. Lately there have been suggestions that archaeologists on site at Pheasant Wood were cutting corners and partisan members of the Australian Fromelles Project Group have come out to lambast the collective I represent. But regardless of the undeserved criticism directed at Fromelles Discussion Group and the castigation of myself, affiliates will continue their community advocacy with respect to Fromelles undeterred. Particularly so now that Lambis Englezos has declared that he is deeply concerned about the paucity of detailed information emanating from LGC Forensics in relation to the identification process, something which at least partially vindicates our apprehensiveness over the management of the project and the standards being applied by the successful tenderers.

For Lambis Englezos to reportedly make such a comment about the company that is supposed to identify the missing Australian Diggers, there must be unresolved problems which need to be addressed even though Oxford Archaeology has previously attempted to rebutt concerns raised about the physical and forensic examination of the burial pits. Indeed it is said that Lambis suggested that if LGC Forensics doesn't get viable DNA from particular soldiers, then the authorities have a moral responsibility to go back and re-sample the remains before their final burial in the new cemetery being constructed for this purpose, which is due to be opened during the commemoration of the 93rd anniversary of the battle on 19 July 2010.

In a news report posted on Patrick Lindsay.com on Sunday 15 November 2009, Lambis refers to restrictive tender processes and in keeping with the views expressed by Fromelles Discussion Group, he signals that in his opinion every effort should be made to identify as many soldiers as possible using both modern and ancient DNA testing methods. The appropriateness of the forensic techniques being adopted at Pheasant Wood was first raised by Leigh Dayton as shown by the article titled *"Keeping Alive The Memory of the Fromelles Fallen"* which has been uploaded to FromellesDiscussionGroup.com, and Paola who has followed developments at Fromelles with much alacrity. Like others before him, Lambis has come to realize that a full range of samples should be taken from load bearing bones like the femur and toe and in an extraordinary gesture of good will and to avoid further complications, he now implies there is a need to independently test such samples when they are extracted.

Though contentious, we would support the resampling of any soldier for whom no beneficial result is obtained. It is self-evident to us that if LGC Forensics fails to obtain viable DNA from any set of remains because sampling has been compromised, then that soldier should be re-tested by an independent laboratory which has the technological resources and expertise to actually enhance genetic typing. Likewise group affiliates will continue to uphold the idea of having all unknowns from this historic assault aggregated.

However before concluding I should reiterate that Fromelles Discussion Group believes your efforts have been praiseworthy and would like to commend your scholarship. Having been at the forefront of the public campaign to have the remains of all missing and unidentified soldiers from this attack aggregated and identified, the group feels greatly encouraged by the fieldwork you conducted with the ICRC and what we presume to be Munich's Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv. Not

only has the Fromelles campaign of this group gained wide recognition, affiliates have obviously been more successful than previously realized, when one considers the latest news about Lambis Englezos whom Patrick Lindsay describes as the "*man behind the discovery of the Pheasant Wood missing.*"

In expressing appreciation for your contribution to the French War Graves Project though I should add that as the convenor/administrator of Fromelles Discussion Group, I would have no difficulty responding to the rhetorical question that heads the material published by Patrick Lindsay and referred to in this communication. When Lindsay asks whether we are doing enough for those that went missing, I say indefatigably that we are not. The authorities continue to refuse to aggregate the remains of unidentified members of the 5th Division AIF, the Rudd Labor Government ignores the need to establish a permanent accounting command even though recent publicity from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and sections of the international media indicates the majority of the 250 recoveries are expected to be valiant Australians.

**Obviously we applaud the decision of the All-Party Parliamentary War Graves and Battlefields Heritage Group to support the ICRC decision to digitize its First World War holdings and in closing, would ask that you keep us informed of your activities so that group affiliates can receive direct feedback, rather than having to rely on narratives and descriptions gleaned from the media and other limited sources like the electronic newsletter produced by the CWGC. Transparency has been an ongoing problem with this project however it should be said, this group has always respected your frankness and straightforward approach when disclosing findings pertaining to your inquiries, whether with the International Committee of the Red Cross or the Bavarian archives, which has just enabled you to locate so many more lost and neglected mass graves from WWI.**

**Kindest regards,  
Grant Triffett, Convenor/Administrator, Fromelles Discussion Group**

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