



Missing Soldiers of Fromelles Discussion Group

Red Cross archives significance finally realized

A communication was received from Army Headquarters on the 13th March 2009 noting the continuing interest of Fromelles Discussion Group in the recovery and re-interment of the First World War Diggers at Pheasant Wood. Forwarded by Belinda Cole, Communications Manager, Australian Fromelles Project Group, the unclassified Email offered to keep us informed of future developments and incorporated a link to what the UK media has described as the unearthing of significant archives at Red Cross headquarters in Geneva by British historian, Peter Barton.

Co-Secretary to the All-Party Parliamentary War Graves and Battlefields Heritage Group, Peter Barton is said to have uncovered the information while carrying out research on behalf of the Australian Army. According to Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia Peter has been involved in locating and investigating the graves at Fromelles, has participated in a number of archaeological projects on the Western Front and researched a book on The Battlefields of the First World War which was recently revised.

Besides collaborating on a book about The Battle of Arras fought between 9 April and 16 May 1917, Peter has authored several other texts including one titled Beneath Flanders Fields: The Tunnellers' War 1914-1918. The biography on him mentioned above can be examined at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Search/Peter_Barton_\(historian\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Search/Peter_Barton_(historian)) as can background on the Battle of Fromelles.



Cole referred also to the fact the Australian Fromelles Project Group was in receipt of Peter Barton's latest Fromelles research. Electronically the article that was forwarded can be accessed through http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7940540.stm. Compiled by Robert Hall, the BBC News item headed 'Piecing together the past' is a fascinating write-up and features a video with Barton discussing the value of the records as well as a link to the Red Cross Museum.

Further material on the subject of the release of the World War I casualty records by the Red Cross Museum and the unprecedented challenge faced by the organization in proposing to digitize its archives can be found below. Titled 'Unknown no longer: thousands of WWI dead could at least be identified', this piece was written by Alexandra Williams on the 14th March, 2009 and uploaded on the UK's MailOnline—World News where it can be located by means of <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1161810/Unknown-longer-thousands-WW1-dead-identified.html>. The article by Robert Hall disseminated by BBC News was dated 13th March 2009. The records have apparently lain untouched since 1918.

Since responding electronically to the initial communication from Belinda Cole, she has notified us in part that the Australian Army will take our suggestions on board as the AFPG and other Federal authorities move to consider the wider implications of the records uncovered by Barton who estimates there could be 20 million sets of details involved.



The Fromelles Discussion Group aims to promote public debate on this important issue and by doing this, hopes to encourage a general exchange of ideas and information within the broader community.

Find the Fromelles Discussion Group at: www.FromellesDiscussionGroup.com and register your interest and support. Information or comment can be directed to the following E-mail address: info@FromellesDiscussionGroup.com.