

Argentina

Mr Jackson, Falklands Unit

FALKLAND ISLANDS: WAR GRAVES

1. Mr Onslow spoke on the telephone this morning to Mr Pallot, Director-General of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at Maidenhead, and enquired how far the War Graves Commission had become involved with the question of a war cemetery on the Falkland Islands. Mr Pallot said he thought it was generally agreed by all concerned that the Commission were considered to be the experts on this and they were doing everything they could to help in any way. They had been closely in touch with MOD throughout and had produced a note on the Commission's practices and policies which they understood had been of help to the Government. As Mr Onslow would know, there had been a lot of argument as to whether or not the bodies should be brought back; but this had now been resolved and the next-of-kin had been given the option of bringing their dead back to this country. He had suggested to the MOD that, for those whose relatives opted to leave bodies out there, there should be a plot or cemetery built on the usual lines. Mr Onslow enquired as to the numbers involved and Mr Pallot said that he thought that probably about 20 next-of-kin would opt for the bodies to remain in the Falkland Islands. Mr Pallot said that the estimate of 20 burials was that of the MOD, who were at presently seeing the next-of-kin and talking to them. Mr Pallot reminded Mr Onslow that in fact they had a small plot in the civil cemetery on the Falkland Islands containing about 30 or 40 dead from the two World Wars.

2. Mr Onslow said that he was especially interested to know of the Commission's progress, bearing in mind that the 150th Anniversary of the Falkland Islands would be upon us in January 1983 and he very much hoped it would be possible for the war graves to have been completed before then; he wondered at what point the Commission would be in a position to make decisions. Mr Pallot said that the Commission had already told the MOD that they would send one of their men out with the MOD Unit at the end of August or September to make a reconnaissance and to give advice, particularly on construction and maintenance on which, of course, they were the experts. The MOD however, would be responsible for bringing bodies back and for the re-burials in the Falkland Islands. He thought this work would start pretty quickly and be completed in a plain and simple fashion, within a month or so. The Commission should be able to produce headstones within a month or two from their workshops in France and have them shipped out to the Falkland Islands, but they would first need to have the details which needed to be carved on the headstones. Whether or not the work could be completed in time for the 150th Anniversary would depend very much on what progress the Army team made with it all. But the Commission would need to know fairly soon which headstones to carve

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and they would also need to know whether it was planned to erect a memorial to all the buried and missing in the Falklands. They had suggested to the MOD that, in addition to both the graves and the memorial to those with no known grave, there should be a memorial at Brookwood or in London.

3. Mr Onslow said he would very much like to be kept informed of the progress on this subject and it might be helpful if Mr Pallot could supply him with a list of any necessities, and/or problems to be resolved, in order to get everything ready before the beginning of January. Mr Pallot readily agreed to do this.

4. Mr Pallot pointed out that in fact he would be off this week on leave and then back only briefly in September in order to hand over to his successor, Sir Arthur Hockaday, presently Second Permanent Secretary in the MOD, who would be taking over from him. In the meantime, he would speak to Alistair Lane, his deputy, and would inform him of the details of the conversation with Mr Onslow. Mr Lane would be in touch with the MOD, had already had discussions with them, and was fully in the picture. Mr Pallot would tell Mr Lane to keep in touch with Mr Onslow.

5. Mr Onslow would be grateful if you would liaise with the MOD and take any necessary action to facilitate progress on this matter. Or, if you think it more appropriate, this could be done at the appropriate level by Defence Department.

S Bailey

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Sylvia Bailey
APS/Mr Onslow

cc

Mr Weston, Defence Department