



## *Meet the veteran PI hired by Twiggy*

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### **Body**

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Years before former British SAS soldier turned private investigator Robert Lancaster was paid by Andrew Forrest's **Fortescue** to rummage through mail belonging to the wives, children and employees of his ex-staff, he shared some tips about how to carry out an effective surveillance op.

"Once the residence has been located, confirmation of the residence can be usually obtained by speaking with the local area mail delivery driver under a pretext," Lancaster wrote in an old article.

This is the man at the helm of a company responsible for following Bart Kolodziejczyk and Bjorn Winther-Jensen's wives to Kmart and their children to school, and he appears to have led an extraordinary life before his top secret spy mission for the iron-ore giant.

He served as a British soldier in Ireland during the Troubles, and later set up an investigations and security firm based in Sydney which, among other notable jobs, infiltrated picket lines during the bitter 1998 dispute between Patrick Stevedores and the Maritime Union to identify "ringleaders" and "instances of intimidation".

Lancaster's Instagram is full of #commandos content too, with numerous posts showing him in military fatigues undertaking training and holding large weapons. "In the 80s when you were on the team you were either an assaulter or a sniper. I did both jobs. The weapon of choice was the L96A1," he writes on Instagram.

But what's a spy without another identity? According to Lancaster's prolific social media posts and interviews, he has also purchased properties in France, including a chateau, which he developed into successful business for tourists looking to travel the countryside.

Lancaster has not returned The Weekend Australian's requests for comment, which have been left via social media channels and with a call to his office.

Details about the PI can be revealed after **Fortescue** sensationally alleged Dr Kolodziejczyk and Dr Winther-Jensen stole the would-be green energy giant's intellectual property to launch their own start-up, Element Zero.

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Along with long term lieutenant of Dr Forrest, Michael Masterman, **Fortescue** has claimed that after the three men left the company's green iron project between 2021 and 2022, the only way they could have rapidly developed their own way to process iron ore into metallic iron without burning fossil fuels is by stealing **Fortescue**'s secrets.

The iron ore giant's suspicions prompted the company to launch an urgent court case in May, seeking permission to launch raids on properties of Dr Kolodziejczyk and Dr Winther-Jensen to collect evidence in support of their case. In order to work out when to launch the raids, **Fortescue** was required to determine if children under 18-years-old or female occupants would be in the properties identified in search orders and when they would be there.

He took the job seriously, with a court hearing he or his company conducted "19 days of surveillance that was undertaken of all the respondents and their employees and some family members and wives following people to Kmart, sifting through mail and the like".

Lancaster produced a 600 page report, containing shots taken while undercover of Dr Kolodziejczyk's wife and five-year-old son along with Dr Winther-Jensen's wife and 16-year-old daughter who had been watched as she left for school and returned home on one day.

Who is Robert Lancaster?

Lancaster has left a very public profile of himself across social media and online via interviews, and in old stories he wrote and published on his business website: Lancaster Global Risk.

He served in the British army, including the 22nd SAS and in Ireland during the Troubles, between 1977 and 1989 after he joined the military at 16-years-old.

"When I was in the infantry I spent just under three years in Northern Ireland," he tells the Spycraft 101 podcast, published about a month ago. "A lot of that was intelligence gathering, a lot of surveillance. A lot of patrolling." In a social media post, that shows an old picture with Lancaster in camouflage, he says: "Old school Australian SF. I served in 22 SAS and later in the Australian Commandos. I remain a brother." In another, alongside a picture of two blokes arm-in-arm sitting in front of five dogs, Lancaster says: "Catch up with Bill a mate from the Australian Commandos with his 'wolf pack' at one of his country estates. War stories and wine flowed freely." His time in the SAS set him up for a life in the private sector, Lancaster says. He left the military following a divorce and had just "had enough". In the early 1990s he moved to Australia following a job offer. He carried out a stint in the reserve special forces in Australia from 1990, and then undertook two months-long undercover operations in NSW, he tells the Spycraft podcast.

Lancaster speaks highly of his track record as a PI. After he investigated a multimillion-dollar scam in NSW's Urban Transit Authority in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he claims 18 people were arrested. "If I would have been found out there I'd have probably been disappeared. It was very unionised, it was quite a dynamic situation," he says. He survived, and moved on to another undercover gig three weeks later for the NSW State Rail Authority before launching what he says is a highly sought after PI business in Lancasters Global Risk based in Sydney. After he started off doing jobs for insurance companies investigating the veracity of disablement claims, business soared and he says he had about 100 investigations per week within a few years of setting up the company in 1991.

In another story, published on his company's website, he discusses Lancaster's role in one of Australia's most bruising industrial disputes: that between the Maritime Union of Australia and Patrick Stevedores in 1998.

After Patrick's entire workforce was sacked and replaced with ex-military men, a month long picket disrupted movements across major ports across the country. "While the industrial clash intensified, with surging lines of demonstrators, mass arrests, guards in balaclavas with dogs protecting strike breakers, there was another game being played behind the scenes," the article says. "In the bush around the container port, hidden in the industrial sprawl of Sydney's Port Botany, Lancaster had his operatives, mostly former special forces soldiers, trained in the art of concealment and surveillance.

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"As Lancaster puts it, and talking only because the dispute is now some four years gone: 'We had people in camo gear dug into bushland watching where people gathered. We can take video images from up to a kilometre away as long as the conditions aren't too hot' and identify individuals.

"We clearly identified the ringleaders and documented instances of violence and intimidation. We also had people infiltrate picket lines with miniature covert cameras, and had people at the front and rear gates and a roving patrol, all armed with cameras to record acts of violence and intimidation."

Diversify your business Lancaster says he runs a pension fund and a property portfolio, including in France where he says he ran an eight bedroom chateau with a Michelin star chef for guests. His Instagram profile, called Plantagenet Manor, is private but the name links to a chateau. It does not appear to be available for stays, although an old posting remains online.

"The chateau is located in the centre of historic Chalus on nearly two acres of private grounds, surrounded by high walls and hedges and is within walking distance to restaurants, cafes, bars, shops and a lovely Health Spa," its description reads. "Plantagenet Manor is a beautiful eight bedroom 'petit' chateau with a heated in-ground pool that has gone through a complete renovation with five new bathrooms, gourmet commercial size kitchen (and) modern four poster beds." Photos posted to Facebook in 2022 also show some shots of a completed renovation on a property in the Sunshine Coast, nestled among palm trees and a crystal blue pool. "After living in Sydney for about half of my life it was a big call to move to Queensland," he said. He says had a significant heart attack a few years ago; more recently he has suffered another health setback and has pulled back on work. However, he continued to work "contract by contract", he told Spycraft.

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