

**The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH**

LE GROGNARD!

September 2009

Committee 2009/2010

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NOTE!

Next Meeting – Tuesday 29 September 2009

Hellenic Club, Matilda Street, Woden at 7:30pm – Orpheus Room

Title: Recovery of HMAS Sydney – Tim Lyons



Membership Renewal

Only about two thirds of our total membership have renewed so far. Receipts will be available at the next meeting for membership paid prior to the meeting. A reminder will be mailed to un-financial members after the AGM.

Any person, irrespective of occupation and age, who has an interest in the study and research of military: history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment, medals, and kindred matters, is most welcome to attend meetings. Anyone interested in joining the Society may contact the ACT Branch Secretary, PO Box 7139 Watson, ACT, 2602. Feel welcome to visit our website at: <www.mhsa.org.au>.

MHSA Conference 2010 – Melbourne

Start planning! Preparations for the 2010 MHSA Conference are gaining pace and we can now confirm that the venue will be the Box Hill RSL. The programme is filling rapidly and Society members and friends are urged to contact the Victorian Branch sooner rather than later to secure a presentation slot or segment in the Works in Progress session.

A high profile academic has been secured as key note speaker to open the Conference and the options for dinner speaker are encouraging. Arrangements have been made for some aspects of the Sunday excursions including a tour of the Shrine of Remembrance and the War Cabinet Rooms in Victoria Barracks, Melbourne.

Input to the Conference is still welcome at any point and an early commitment by way of Registration of Interest is sought in the short term. To advise this interest and for any further information please contact:

Mr Stephen C Gray, Secretary, MHSA (Victoria Branch), 1 Kelwin Court, Hoppers Crossing, 3029, Tel: 97495829 E Mail: stephencgray@hotmail.com.

Military Quote of the Month:

‘If your enemy is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is temperamental, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. If sovereign and subject are in accord, put division between them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.’

Sun Tzu, the Art of War

POETRY OF WAR

Isaac Rosenberg

Break of Day in the Trenches

The darkness crumbles away –
It is the same old druid Time as ever.
Only a live thing leaps my hand –
A queer sardonic rat –
As I pull the parapet’s poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German –
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.



Trenches of the 11th Cheshire Regiment at Ovillers-la-Boisselle, on the Somme, July 1916, courtesy Wikipedia

What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver – what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man’s veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe,
Just a little white with the dust.

WORDS AND PHRASES OF WARFARE

Submitted by Jean Main

“Turncoat”: A Duke of Saxony whose lands bordered France supposedly once dressed his men in blue coats that had a white interior, one to which they could switch when he wanted them to be thought to be acting in the French interest.

“Under the yoke”: The Romans would force the troops of a defeated army to pass under a yoke (archway) of three spears to demonstrate their submission.

“Vandal”: From the Teutonic tribes that sacked Rome for two weeks in 455.

“Gazetted”: To have news of one’s award for bravery published in the London Gazette.

“V for Victory”: The two-fingered victory salute is said to originate from the gesture used by English archers to taunt the French at Agincourt in 1415 – captured yeomen would have their index and middle fingers amputated so that they could never draw a bowstring again. [A popular, but false, story about the origin of another phrase with which it rhymes, was that undefeated English archers would taunt the French with upraised fingers while shouting they could still “pluck yew”. Ed]

INTREP

No Importance. In 1913, Major General Henri Mathias Berthelot, commander of the French Army’s 53rd Infantry Division, having studied the use of improvised hand grenades during the Russo-Japanese War, asked the Army Ordnance Directorate for training grenades so that he could familiarize his men with their use. The Ordnance Directorate responded that there was no ‘workable model and that, besides, there is no reason to think that this mode of combat would be of importance in a future war.’

Dual Heritage. In 2001, DDG-81 was commissioned, the 31st Arleigh Burke class destroyer in the US Navy. DDG-81 was christened USS *Winston S. Churchill*, in honour of Britain’s wartime Prime Minister, the son of an American mother. To commemorate her namesake’s dual heritage, and to further recognise American-British military ties, USS *Winston S. Churchill*, will always have an officer from the Royal Navy assigned to her crew, while an American officer will serve in HMS *Marlborough*, named for an earlier member of the Churchill family.

There and Back. During WW1 the normal combat patrol for a German submarine was only 17 days, of which only five were actually spent on station, the balance being consumed in transit.

Taking the Long War Round. Rutherford B. Hayes, US Congressman, was elected 19th President of the United States in 1876. Hayes had served as an officer in the Union Army during the Civil War, being appointed to the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry in 1861 and although originally appointed as a legal officer, proved so competent at command that he was soon commanding the regiment in action and finished the war as Brevet Major General, having been wounded five times (the only US president to have been wounded in action). With an eye to securing the White House, and keenly aware of the ‘drawing power’ of a military hero, Hayes’ party nominated him in 1864 for Congress, however, on learning of the nomination Hayes declined to accept, stating: ‘I have other business just now. Any man who would leave the army at this time to electioneer for Congress ought to be scalped.’ Elected anyway, Hayes refused to take his seat, declaring ‘I shall never come to Washington until I can come by way of

Richmond.’ True to his word, Hayes remained in the Army until the South was beaten, resigning his commission on 8 June 1865 and finally taking his seat in Congress, the first step on his road to the White House.

Ride to the Sound of the Guns. On 20 July 1944, Prince Joachim Louis Napoléon Murat, the great-great grandson of Napoleon’s master cavalryman Joachim Murat, was killed in action at La Gabriere-Linge, during the liberation of France. It was the elder Murat, of course, who is credited with the famous military saying ‘ride to the sound of the guns.’

A Penny Saved? The American generals and admirals promoted to five star rank – General of the Army or Fleet Admiral – during and after WW2 were always considered to be officially on active duty, and thus technically never retired. In fact, after leaving the presidency in 1961, even Dwight D. Eisenhower went back on ‘active duty’ in his rank as a General of the Army. Even when not holding an active assignment, such as Omar Bradley’s tour as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (1949-1953), officers with five star rank were provided with an aide, office space and staff space at the Pentagon, and money for office operations. But their pay, \$1,076 a month in 1945, was never raised. As a result of Congressional parsimony, all of the five star officers never received more than that \$1,076 a month. While this was a reasonable income in the mid-1940s, by the mid-1950s, it was actually less than what some active duty flag officers of lower rank were earning, and declining rapidly in purchasing power. By the mid-1960s, it was only a bit more than what an experienced teacher in a wealthy school districts was making. This situation continued until all but one of the five star officers was dead. General Omar Bradley, the last of the five star generals, eventually benefited from a very belated pay increase in the late 1960s.

Battle Losses. German Army figures for men killed in action per day during the Polish Campaign of 1939, 13.7, were higher than for any other period or front in the war, save for the first six months of fighting in Russia, when it reached 17.0. This is probably a reflection of a combination of the lack of combat experience of the German Army at the outbreak of the war and the often ferocious defence put up by the doomed Poles.

The Great UAV Pilot Shortage The US Air Force is currently suffering a severe shortfall in pilots for its fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and is considering, amongst other solutions, the revolutionary idea of opening the career field up to enlisted personnel. One of the probable reasons for the shortage is that while the USAF currently requires UAV operators to be qualified pilots, service as a UAV operator is not classed as flying service, which affects both pay and promotion/posting prospects for operators.

Oops! One of the most successful air attacks against shipping of WW2 was undoubtedly that made on 22 February 1940 by a Ju-88A of the *Luftwaffe*’s KG30 off the coast of Borkum, in the North Sea, when it accounted for two destroyers in a single bomb run, *Lebrecht Maas* and *Max Schultz*. Unfortunately, both destroyers happened to be German, a case of poor ship recognition skills on the part of the *Luftwaffe*. Only 60 of the 330 crew members of the *Lebrecht Maas* and none of the 308 crew members of the *Max Schultz* survived.

*Coming
this way
soon*

ACT Branch Speakers Program for 2009 - 2010

Hellenic Club, Matilda Street, Woden

Tuesday 29th September “Orpheus Room”

Title: Recovery of HMAS Sydney – Tim Lyons

Tuesday 27th October “Orpheus Room”

“RMC – A Centenary Pageant for critical review – Robert Morrison

Monday 23rd November “Orpheus Room”

Title TBA – Kristen Alexander

Easter 2010 – MHSA Conference – Box Hill Melbourne