

The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH
LE GROGNARD!

February 2010

Committee 2009/2010

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NOTE!

Next Meeting - Monday 22 February 2010
Venue: Hellenic Club, Matilda Street, Woden at 7:30pm -
Orpheus Room

'Captain Bullen's War'
presented by John Bullen

Your average Vietnam diary tends to focus on daily routine, incidents and firefights. John Bullen's diary isn't your average diary. Originally compiled in some nine volumes of Foolscap notepads, it was more than 10cm thick when John ended thirteen and a half months of service in Vietnam and returned home.

As the commander of the 1 Topographical Survey Unit in Nui Dat, John's war kept him mobile at a time when other officers faced a war limited to operations and patrolling the Task Force perimeter. His liaison work, both with US and South Vietnamese forces, took him from Nui Dat to Da Nang, making contacts ranging from senior officers to ordinary Vietnamese.

At the end of his tour, John's diary gathered dust until it was recently published as Captain Bullen's War, bringing its unique perspective on one man's experience in Vietnam.



www.rasurvey.org

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>.

Military Quote of the Month:

"The enemy bombards our front not only with a drumfire of artillery, but also with a drumfire of printed paper. Besides bombs, which kill the body, his airmen also throw down leaflets which are intended to kill the soul." -Field Marshal Paul Von Hindenburg, 1847-1934

INTREP

Richmond by Christmas?

At the start of the Campaign of 1864, General Ulysses S. Grant was asked how long it would take him to get to Richmond. He replied: 'I will agree to be there in about four days, that is, if General Lee becomes a party to the agreement, but if he objects, the trip will undoubtedly be prolonged.'

Royal Gibraltar Regiment Stamps

The Gibraltar Philatelic Bureau and the UK Post Office has issued a set of 10 stamps featuring the history of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment. The Royal Gibraltar Regiment is the home defence regiment of the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar. Originally a part time unit, with the withdrawal of the British garrison from The Rock in 1991, the RGR was converted to a Regular Army unit (with an integrated part-time Territorial component), organised as a light infantry battalion with HQ Company and three Rifle Companies (G and I are Regular and B is Territorial) and has provided troops for deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan (where members of the Regiment have been awarded a Military Cross and two US Bronze Stars).

Originally raised as an artillery unit, the RGR contains a ceremonial saluting unit of 25-pounder guns and has the privilege of firing Gun Salutes from Tower Hill in London (the only other unit of the British Army having this privilege is the Honourable Artillery Company), and has fired 62 gun Royal Gun Salutes in London on the occasion of The Queen's Birthday in 1998 and 2004. The unveiling of the new set of stamps was carried out in the Garrison Library in the presence of HE The Governor of Gibraltar, Lieutenant General Sir Robert Fulton, Gibraltar Deputy Chief Minister Joe Holliday, Gibraltar Mayor Momy Levy and the Honorary Colonel of The Regiment Denis Duarte.

An army is a body of men
assembled to rectify the
mistakes of the diplomats.
—Josephus Daniels—

First Woman Pilot

Princess Eugenie M. Shakhovskaya was Russia's first woman military pilot. An aristocratic adventuress who had learned to fly in France, the princess served with the Imperial Army's 1st Field Air Squadron, although it is unknown if she actually flew any combat missions. She was ultimately charged with treason and attempting to flee to enemy lines. Sentenced to death by firing squad, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by the Tsar. Freed during the Revolution, the erstwhile aristocrat became a fervent Bolshevik and Communist and became chief executioner for the regime in Kiev. A drug addict, she died when she shot one of her assistants in a narcotic delerium and was herself shot to death.

T it for Tat?

In 1917, learning that King George V, bowing to public pressure to distance the dynasty from its German roots, had changed the name of the Royal Family to 'Windsor', Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany is said to have quipped that he wished to go to the theatre to see The Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

Jenny BEM – Death of a Legend

On 18 February 2009, Mrs. Ng Muk Kah, BEM, passed away peacefully in Hong Kong at the age of 92. Mrs. Ng was better known to generations of Royal and Royal Australian (and other Commonwealth) Navies as 'Jenny', operator of Jenny's Side Party. Jenny and her small team of Chinese ladies operated a ship's husbandry business at the Naval Base in Hong Kong from the 1920s until the end of British rule in 1997, cleaning, chipping and painting, making their money by selling soft drinks to the crew and collecting food scraps from the galleys and other discarded items and re-selling them in Hong Kong. Jenny, who is believed to have been born in a sampan in 1917, inherited the business from her mother, Jenny One, in 1928 and became a fixture in the naval base over the decades. As a locally enrolled local volunteer she was entitled to the Royal Navy Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, which she received in 1938, receiving a clasp in 1975 and she was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1980. One of Jenny's most treasured mementoes was a letter of commendation from the Duke of Edinburgh for her work in the Royal Yacht during Britannia's visit to Hong Kong in 1959.

And About Time Too!

In 1901 the Swedish Army revised its conscription regulations. Nothing particularly out of the ordinary in that, except for the fact that the last time the regulations had been reviewed was in 1682!

War of the Dog, 1925

On 22 October 1925, a dog belonging to a Greek border guard strayed across the frontier into Bulgaria. Her master crossed the border in order to retrieve her, and was promptly shot by a Bulgarian frontier guard, Greece claiming that a Greek Army officer was also shot and killed. In retaliation, the Greek government despatched troops across the border with orders to occupy the Bulgarian town of Petrich, however, while the Bulgarian Army, acting on government orders, offered only token resistance (the Bulgarian government was relying on the League of Nations to resolve the dispute), the townspeople of Petrich, local militiamen and war veterans from the surrounding countryside quickly erected defences and held off the Greek incursion at the cost of about 50 fatal casualties on both sides.

The League of Nations uncharacteristically quickly stepped in and Greek forces withdrew across the border into Macedonia. Although Greece saw itself as the injured party and demanded the punishment of the 'murderers', an official Bulgarian apology and six million Drachmas as reparations and compensation, it was the party censured by the League and was ordered to pay a £45,000 indemnity. Thus was narrowly avoided the outbreak of what would have been the fifth full-scale war in the Balkans since 1907.

Commemorating the Christmas Truce of 1914

On Christmas Day 1914, near the French village of Frélinghien, a truce was observed between the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers and men of the 133rd Saxon Infantry Regiment and 6th Prussian Jäger Battalion, the men indulging in, among other things, a friendly game of football. On 11 November 2008, in honour of this event, a memorial bearing the badges of the RWF and the 133rd Saxon Infantry was unveiled at Frélinghien. To mark the occasion, a football match was held between teams fielded by the 1st Royal Welch (Royal Welsh Fusiliers) of the British Army and the German Army's Panzer Grenadier Battalion 371, lineal descendants of the Saxon infantry (the Germans won 2-1).

Watch this space:

Earlier date for March Meeting?

As the Hellenic Club are unable to host the regular MHSA meeting date in March, the meeting has been rescheduled for **15 MARCH**. To be confirmed.