

The Military Historical Society of Australia

ACT BRANCH

LE GROGNARD!

April 2010

Committee 2009/2010

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NOTE!

Next Meeting – Monday 19 April 2010

Venue: Hellenic Club, Matilda St, Woden, 7:30pm

MHSA Biennial Conference 2010

MHSA Biennial Conference, Box Hill, Melbourne – 2-5 April 2010

Federal President Robert Morrison's comment:

I attended the Society's Biennial Conference conducted by the Victorian Branch which from a presentation point of view was very well done. The disappointing aspect was the number of MHSA members attending. I would like to thank those members from all branches who did attend. The Federal Council Meeting on Sunday 4 April although long was productive, and changes to the Society's rules will occur in due course.

ACT Branch President's comment:

This was in fact the first interstate Biennial Conference that I have attended, and I was very impressed by both the variety and quality of presentations. I think it's fair to say, on this score at least, that the Victorian Branch has set the bar high for future Conferences. It was quite obvious that the branch had done a great deal to plan for and organise the Conference – compliments on their achievement in putting it on successfully. Displays of military memorabilia assembled by some of the Branch's collectors was also noteworthy.

Less impressive, however, was the overall attendance: no more than about 40 on my count – and that included around 12 MHSA members who gave presentations. The ACT Branch was well represented [in numbers, second only to the host branch, Victoria]: Federal President Robert Morrison, Sabretache Editor Anthony Staunton, Graham Wilson [who presented a paper: 'Timor Triumph – The Dutch Expedition Cross with Clasp TIMOR 1942 and its links with Australian military history'], Nigel Webster, and myself.

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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 Biennial Conference, 2-5 April 2010 (continued)

I wonder if the comparatively high cost of the Conference [\$150, plus \$60 to attend the Conference Dinner], coupled with travel and accommodation expenses for those who were not locals, might have been off-putting for many MHSA members. Certainly, apart from Branch office bearers and those who gave presentations, the Victorian Branch itself was, in my view, underrepresented. This was the highest cost for a Biennial Conference to date. By way of comparison: Western Australia 2008 - combined fee [Conference & Dinner] \$140; South Australia 2006 - Conference \$60.00, Dinner \$40.00, combined fee \$90.00; Albury-Wodonga 2004 - Conference \$45.00, Dinner \$45.00, combined fee \$80.00. The ACT Branch will need to work hard to contain costs for the 2012 Biennial Conference in order to attract the widest possible attendance.

Other Matters:

On 1 April Federal Secretary Kristen Alexander gave a presentation on Australian WW2 fighter pilot Jack Kennedy at the U3A (University of the Third Age) Aspects of Military History Course which I convene. I missed her session as I was in Melbourne at the Biennial Conference, but from feedback I've received since from course attendees it was well received and much appreciated. Thanks Kristen.

Vale KEITH HOOPER

Keith Hooper, who'd been a Branch member for the last several years, died last month. I represented the Branch at his funeral on 29 March. Keith, a 2/6 Bn original who saw service at Bardia, Tobruk and in Greece before his capture on Crete, was quite a character. All up he made six attempts to escape during his time as a guest of the Third Reich, none lasting more than a couple of days before recapture.

He was involved in the establishment of The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Researching his family history some time back he found he was related to the well-respected New Zealand Maori, Boer War and Gallipoli veteran Captain Edward 'Tip' Broughton, commander of the 8th Employment Company in which many of the 'Dunera Boys' served. He then discovered that Broughton's remains lay in an unmarked neglected grave in Fawkner Cemetery, Melbourne. Keith was quite proud that in 2006, following his extensive lobbying to have Broughton's service recognised, RSL Victoria arranged for consecration of the grave and installation of a memorial gravestone.

Keith was a career journalist throughout his long working life, having spent time scribing from London, South Africa, New Zealand, and Hong Kong as well as in Australia. He retired as a journalism lecturer at the University of Canberra a few years ago at the age of eighty-six. I, for one, will miss Keith.

Ian Stagoll

What's happening on Monday?

The meeting on Monday 19 April 2010 at the Hellenic Club in Matilda St, Woden, at 7:30pm has seen a late change in topic and guest speaker, which is why this information doesn't feature on the front page of Le Grogard!

WW2 in Russia: visit up close and personally

This is not intended as a free ad for a tour company. Rather, for those members with the time and inclination, why not see how the other half fought WW2. The crisis with the volcanic plume from Iceland should be sorted by then! Ed.

Ausglobal Travel Group are currently putting a tour to Russia together which would include an Australian guide, Tim Byrnes who has lived and worked in Russia. A Russian historian/guide will also accompany the tour, planned for September this year.

We are endeavouring to make this a unique tour that will appeal to anyone who is interested in the WW2 Russian history. At the end of the tour extra travel through Russia or Europe can be arranged.

Jane Hodges, Ausglobal

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The potential itinerary:

Ausglobal has exclusive fully escorted tours for groups to the famous historical sites of the 'Battle of Stalingrad', in 2010.



We will visit the Mamayev Kurgan (Hill 102), "Panorama Stalingrad battle" museum, the "Red Square", or the "Square of fallen heroes", the Central River Crossing, the Tsaritsa River as well as the places that have traditionally been closed to tourists during the Soviet Era and many, many other places.

Some of them are in the industrial area between the Volga and areas such as the factories "Red October," "The Barricades," "Tractor plant" or the ruined Command Posts of the Red Army on the bank of the river (north industrial part of city). Still visible today are the remains of the walls and basements of the apartment buildings. These places have not been previously shown to any tourists.

Some sites are located on the outskirts of towns which were HQs of the German 6th Army. Such as near the railroad station at Gumrak. "Stalingrad" was known by the Germans as "Hartmanstatt". We visit the last German airbase inside the "Kessel" (encirclement) and to the German airstrip near "Hartmanstatt" – where the last German Heinkel HE-111 or JU-52 took off – as well as to the central German air base at Pitomnik. We are also planning to see the Stalingrad-frontline. Places like Kalach, Peskovatka, Vertyachiy, Karpovka, Marinovka, new and old Rogachik, new Alekseevsky (destroyed), Baburkin (destroyed), Bunkers (foxholes) at the Rossoshka river, Borodkin (destroyed), Gonchar farm (destroyed), Konnyi and Kotluban, Samofalovka and "Tatar Wall" Gorodishe and Orlovka.

By helicopter we fly to the firing lines at the Myshkova River, to the battlefield area of the 57 Pz. Korps (Mannstein) that started the relief operation at 12.12.1942 of the encircled German 6th Army and that was stopped at Verhnekumsky at Christmas 1942. Also to the area of Nnijnekumsky, Gromoslavka and Ivanovka, Vasilievka and Kapkina, railroad station Abganerovo. We offer you a flight on our helicopter over the main advance route of the German Luftwaffe planes "Pitomnik - Tazinskaya" and over the maybe bloodiest battle area on the right bank of River Don, from Nije Chirskaya to Kletskaaya- Serafimovich as well as over some historically interesting places with the ability to stopover at any requested place. The flight with our helicopter will take about 1 to 4 hours with a maximum of 5 people on board.

In Oriente Primus

A History of the Volunteer Forces in Malaya & Singapore

By Jonathan Moffatt & Paul Riches

Introducing a new and important book on the Volunteer movement in Malaya and Singapore from inception to disbandment. "In Oriente Primus", Latin for "First in the East," was the motto adopted by some Volunteer units in Singapore. The greater part of the book contains biographies on all known volunteers during the Second World War. Price £25.00 + £6.00 Post & Packing. Airmail at cost.

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Out of print but in facsimile

A snippet likely of interest to members. In the UK, MLRS Publishing offers a range of military gems long out of print, in facsimile. There are many official treasures, Army, RAF and Axis, among the military pamphlets, manuals and books, mainly, but not exclusively, from the period 1919-1945. See <www.mlrsbooks.co.uk>.

Don Clark

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What is a GROGNARD?

The French term *grognard* is a "grumbler", an affectionate term for the Napoleonic French Imperial Guard. It comes from Fr. grogner 1. snarl 2. grunt 3. growl 4. grumble 5. gripe and also from Fr. grognon 1. grouch 2. curmudgeon.

Militarily, a grognard is a veteran soldier; specifically of the grenadiers of the Imperial Guard (*Grenadiers à Pied de la Garde Impériale*); an old complaining soldier. Familiarity breeds contempt, as the saying goes. Old soldiers know the way of things on campaign, and are known to groan at the realisation (from experience) of what events or actions must come next.

Far from evoking the picture of bearskin-capped grenadiers, the modern usage of the term has been subverted to refer to "seasoned wargamers". Inside the computer game development industry, it is a slang term for a game fan who will buy every game released in a certain genre of computer game.

However, it's not the first time the Grognards have appeared in games. There is a popular myth that the Old Boot playing piece in Monopoly is in fact a reference to the Grognards.

An author of one of the The Roots of Strategy series published by Stackpole Books suggests the Grognards were reluctant to invade Russia and rather enamoured with the idea of preserving their lives. Or, perhaps, of parading in large cities which appreciated their fine uniforms and offered other titillations. As the other saying goes, an old soldier is a careful soldier, that's why he is an old soldier.

More usefully for those around to savour it, is that Grognards has become the name of a boutique Belgian beer. Ironically, it was made in a traditional brewery called Sainte-Hélène, in Belgium. Their latest beer is "La Grognarde" (don't ask me why they named it feminine, I suspect the Belgian translation into English for the website was a little rough). Visits are led by the brewer allowing visitors to witness every stage of the brewing process. Ed.

