

The Military Historical Society of Australia

ACT BRANCH

LE GROGNARD!

August 2010

Committee 2009/2010

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NOTE!

Next Meeting – Monday 23 August 2010

Venue: Orpheus Rm, Hellenic Club, Woden, 7:30pm

Annual General Meeting

This month's Branch meeting is also the AGM for the Branch, at which the election of office bearers for the coming year will be held. It will be on Monday 23 August in the Orpheus Room, Hellenic Club, Woden from 7.30pm. Please make every effort to attend.

The AGM will be followed by a showing of the very entertaining documentary Dig for Victory [circa 55 minutes] which looks back on the campaign that was instigated in Britain as soon as World War 2 started. The UK government realised that the population would go hungry if the war was to last longer than a few months. The result was that formal gardens, lawns and even sports pitches were transformed into allotments, large and small, and everybody on the home front was urged to become a vegetable gardener.

The Year Ahead:

I believe that the Branch needs to address some important issues concerning future directions. The Branch is scheduled to host the Society's Biennial Conference in 2012, which means that planning and appropriate preparations for its successful conduct need to be made in the short term and firm arrangements arrived at and put in place well in advance of the actual conference.

It is of concern that attendances at Branch meetings over the last year, since we stopped meeting in Civic, have been low compared to earlier days even though membership of the Branch has remained fairly stable. As a Branch, collectively, we need to consider ways of revitalising our activities to suit a greater proportion of members and to increase our overall membership. Basic questions to be resolved, I would suggest, are where and when we meet and what different format if any should meetings take. Please pass on any comments or suggestions.

Ian Stagoll, President

Also on Mon 23 August, the Federal Council AGM will follow the AGM of the ACT Branch, which commences 7.30.

Other Matters:

On 5 August ACT Branch member Graham Wilson gave an absorbing presentation to the University of the Third Age/U3A Aspects of Military History Course [which I convene] on the life, and death, of Father Michael Bergin SJ MC of the 1st AIF. Thanks Graham.

While on the subject of the U3A Aspects of Military History Course, on Thursday 26 August MHSA Federal Secretary Kristen Alexander will be giving a presentation on Australian WW2 fighter pilot Dick Glyde. And, on Thursday 16 September MHSA Federal Treasurer Tim Lyon will give a presentation on the Korean War landing at Inchon.

Society members are most welcome to attend sessions of this course which are held Thursdays 2.30-4.30 pm, Canberra Southern Cross Club Jamison, Cnr Catchpole & Bowman Streets, Macquarie. Please contact me if you want to know more.

Society Mailing List:

Recently I conducted a review of the Society's website [www.mhsa.org.au] for Federal Council. If you haven't visited the site before, or haven't for a while, take a look. It's grown since it was first set up, but some areas do need updating. Please pass on any comments or suggestions. And, if you haven't added your details to the mailing list consider doing so [see Member Services on the website]; it's a good resource for lodging enquiries and helping others with their research, as well as sharing information and hearing about matters of possible interest. When I last asked, only about 25 of the Society's total membership of around 300 were on the list!

Research Enquiry:

Jack Braithwaite 2nd Bn Otago Regiment was one of the five members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force executed for military offences during World War 1.

Variously said to have been born as Cecil James or John on 3 or 4 January 1882, 1883 or 1885 in Dunedin, New Zealand, he is also said to have worked on or for the Sydney 'Bulletin' and/or another Australian newspaper as a journalist prior to enlistment in 1915. Any leads to help establish whether Braithwaite spent any time/lived in Australia between 1911-1915 would be appreciated.

Branch Meeting: September 2010

Please note that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 28 September 2010 [that is, not Monday!] in the Orpheus Room, Hellenic Club, Woden from 7.30pm.



Double Dipper ?

Spanish Lieutenant General Gen. Miguel de Alava appears to have the unique distinction of having been the only man present at both of Britain's great decisive victories over Napoleon – the naval Battle of Trafalgar (21 October 1805), when he was a frigate captain with the Franco-Spanish fleet, and the Battle of Waterloo (18 June 1815), when he was serving as an aide to Wellington.

At Trafalgar, de Alava, originally a naval officer, served as a captain of marines aboard the Santa Ana, the 112-gun flagship of his uncle, Vice-Admiral Ignacio-Maria de Alava y Saenz de Navarrete. Captured with his uncle when Santa Ana was forced to strike to Collingwood's HMS Royal Sovereign, de Alava went on to fight another day when his ship, being convoyed to Britain as a prize, was recaptured by the French two days later. When Spain defected from the French camp in 1808 de Alava, by then a lieutenant colonel, was posted to the staff of the Duke of Wellington as an aid-de-camp.

Later arrested and imprisoned by the restored Spanish King Fernando IV, de Alava gained his freedom through the intercession of powerful friends (including Wellington).

To avoid the embarrassment of having de Avala around his court, Fernando sent him to Holland as his ambassador and it was there that de Avala found himself once again serving under the Iron Duke, as Spanish Commissioner to the Allied Army with the rank of lieutenant general and as such he served by Wellington's side throughout the Waterloo campaign and battle.

The old soldier died at Bareges in France in 1843.

Vale JOHN WHITELAW

Major General John Stewart Whitelaw AO CBE, who had been a member of the Society for more than 40 years, and an occasional contributor to *Sabretache*, died in June. Named after his father, Major General John Whitelaw CB, CBE [1894–1964] – a graduate of the first Royal Military College intake – his funeral with full military honours was held at the Anzac Memorial Chapel, Duntroon.



Following in his father's footsteps he joined 10th Field Brigade, Royal Australian Garrison Artillery as a senior cadet in 1939, on his eighteenth birthday. Transferring from the militia to the CMF, he was commissioned the following year, and subsequently enlisted in the AIF. From early 1944 he saw active service in New Guinea and Bougainville. He was wounded in action on Bougainville but remained on duty overseas until the war ended, later returning to the CMF.

He rejoined the army in 1948 and began a 29 year full-time army career during which he rose to Deputy Chief of the General Staff, all the more remarkable because he was not a product of the RMC Duntroon. Appointed to that position in 1977, he was placed on the retired list the following year.

Following retirement, John Whitelaw continued to serve ex-servicemen and women as national president of the Regular Defence Force Welfare Association and vice-president of the Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council, and the wider community through his involvement with the National Heart Foundation, the National Farmers' Federation and Greening Australia.

For over 50 years he maintained a strong interest in the Australian Army's heritage. He helped establish the army history unit, and was the first patron of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society, which laid the foundations for the collection and display of artillery equipment and memorabilia at the Australian Army Artillery Museum in Manly, NSW. In 2007 a building there was named Whitelaw Hall.

Like father, like son. John Whitelaw was a 'gunner' through and through, as were his two brothers who both also served in artillery units during WW2.

Ian Stagoll

INTREP

65th Anniversary of the 'Great Patriotic War'

The Moscow Victory Day Parade of 2010 was held on 9 May 2010 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the capitulation of Nazi Germany in 1945 and mark the Soviet Union's victory in the 'Great Patriotic War'. It was the largest parade held in Moscow since the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, and saw 11,135 troops, 127 aircraft and helicopters, and the new Topol-M mobile intercontinental ballistic missile taking part.

For the first time, the 2010 parade also included military units from foreign countries who were allied with the Soviet Union during World War II, with representation from France, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Foreign contingents included battalions from the CIS, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

Upon request from the government of Turkmenistan, the contingent from Turkmenistan was led by an officer riding on horseback, with the horse being flown into Moscow from Ashgabat. Poland was represented by the Representative Battalion of the Polish Armed Forces. The United Kingdom was represented by a detachment from 1st Battalion, the Welsh Guards, the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment. The United States was represented by the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment and the Naval Forces Europe Band. France was represented by pilots and aircraft from the Normandie-Niemen Air Regiment. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev was nice enough to note that the inclusion of foreign troops in the parade recognised their 'common victory' in World War II.

The inclusion of foreign troops in the parade was not without controversy. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation held a May Day rally in Moscow, at which several thousand protesters used the rally to decry the inclusion of troops from NATO countries in the parade. A poll run by the Levada Center saw 20 percent of respondents disapproving of foreign troops, with 8 percent strongly opposed.

Who Was That Masked Man?

Those of my generation or older will almost certainly remember the 'Lone Ranger' television series, with the role of the 'Masked Man' played by Clayton Moore. Moore was not, however, the first actor to play the Lone Ranger on the screen.

That credit goes to American actor Lee Powell, who is generally accepted as the first man appear behind the famous mask, in the Republic cinema series that commenced screening in 1938. Unfortunately, it was never possible to question Lee Powell to confirm whether or not he was the first screen Lone Ranger. Powell enlisted in the US Marine Corps in the summer of 1942, and saw action at Tarawa and Saipan.

On 30 July 1944 Sergeant Lee Powell (serial number 442926), 18th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, was killed in action on Tinian (Marianas Islands). He was buried in Tinian Cemetery, but in March 1949 his remains were transferred to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii (AKA 'The Punchbowl'). On 14 March 1949 he was laid to rest in Section F, Gravesite Number 1246. 'Hi-yo Silver – awaaaaaay' (said with the deepest respect).

Graham Wilson

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>.