

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

LE GROGNARD!

November 2010

Committee 2010/2011

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NOTE: This Month's Branch Meeting
22 November 2010, 7:30pm
Aegean Room, Hellenic Club, Woden

The speaker at this month's meeting will be Branch member Ric Pelvin.

Ric's subject: *The Australian Corvette in WW2.*

This is the last Branch meeting for 2010. The first Branch meeting in 2011 will be on Monday 24 January. Please let the Branch President know if you would like to give a presentation during 2011, or have a suggested guest speaker in mind.

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Society's Website:

A reminder that Federal Council is seeking a volunteer for the position of Website Manager to work with Peter Shaw, our Webmaster, to ensure the website is kept up-to-date, and to act as a portal for members wishing to contribute material to the website. For further details contact Federal Secretary Kristen Alexander: fedsec@mhsa.org.au or Ph. 02 6258 7348 [bh].

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Society Mailing List:

If you haven't already done so, consider adding your details to the mailing list [see Member Services on the website: www.mhsa.org.au]; 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.

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University of the Third Age [U3A]:

The **ASPECTS OF MILITARY HISTORY** course that I convene for the U3A will end, for this year, in early December and begin again on 3 February 2011.

As I may have mentioned previously in *LE GROGNARD!* this ongoing course features a talk or presentation on a different topic each week. Speakers include well-known historians and writers, and others who talk from personal experience or perspective. It covers a wide range of subjects relating to military history matters, with a special emphasis on Australian military history.

The course is held each Thursday 2.30-4.30pm at the Canberra Southern Cross Club Jamison. The usual format is for the speaker to talk for around an hour, followed by a 15-20 minute break for afternoon tea, and then the speaker takes questions and joins in general discussion. Attendance is generally around 35-40, including many former service personnel.

The guest speaker at next week's session, Thursday 25 November, will be Major Arthur Dugdale who will talk about the sinking of AHS *Centaur* in May 1943 and the discovery of the wreck in December 2009.

Since the course began in 2008, presentations have been given by the following MHSA members: Kristen ALEXANDER, Peter BURNES, Clem DAVIS, Keith HOOPER [deceased], Tim LYON, Robert MORRISON, Keith RICHMOND, Col SIMPSON, Anthony STAUNTON, and Graham WILSON, as well as the Society's Patron Barry GRATION. Other speakers have included the following *Sabretache* contributors: Jean BOU, Karl JAMES, Bill REFSHAUGE and Peter STANLEY. I am very grateful for their contribution to the success of this course.

I remind Branch members that they are most welcome to attend sessions of this course. Please contact me if you want to know more - Ian Stagoll.

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The following letter is from documentary film-maker Michael Caulfield:

Dear Military Historical Society of Australia,

We're making an historical documentary series and we need your help.

From the makers of the critically acclaimed documentary series *Australians at War* and the *Australians at War Film Archive*, comes an exciting new television project aimed at uncovering the remarkable personal stories of everyday Australians during wartime. These stories will be revealed to family members who will quite literally walk in the footsteps of their ancestor.

Each week we'll visit the iconic sites of the action, both local and international, to explore and share in the triumphs and tragedies of a different Aussie hero, bringing their unique story to life, and taking their descendant on a true journey of discovery.

This is where you come in! In order to bring this project to life we need your help because no one knows the people of Australia and their family histories like you do.

Essentially we're searching for two things:

1 A Local Hero:

Someone from your community who had an incredible wartime experience be it abroad or on the home front. They don't need to have been awarded medals; we're interested in the ordinary foot soldiers, sailors and airmen, the women of the land army, nurses, and war brides. We want to tell the stories that have for too long remained untold. We're looking for experiences ranging from WWI right through to more recent peace-keeping operations.

2 A Passionate Family Member:

Alternatively you may have a family in your community that are keen to find out more about the wartime experiences of their ancestor, or perhaps you've started them on a journey of discovery but know there is much more for them still to find out. They'll need to be confident and articulate as they may end up in front of the camera!

If you know anyone that fits either of these requirements please direct them to our website **www.intheirfootsteps.com.au** where they can register their details.

We would very much appreciate it if you could discuss this opportunity at your next meeting or distribute this letter amongst your membership. If you require more information please contact one of our researchers –

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Thank you for your time, kind regards,

Michael Caulfield
Executive Producer
In Their Footsteps
November 1, 2010



INTREP

'That's Not Whiskey... !'

Having been invited to make a speech at Westminster College, a small liberal arts school in Fulton, Missouri, in the late winter of 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill travelled to the US, where he was the guest of US President Harry S Truman at the White House for several days. It was an amiable visit, and the two men got along well, though Truman reportedly cleaned Churchill out at poker. As the time for Churchill's speech approached, the two boarded a special train to take them to Fulton. Shortly after boarding the train, the President asked if Churchill would like some whiskey. Never averse to a little booze – or a lot, for that matter – Churchill readily accepted the offer. But then Truman hauled out a bottle of his favourite potable, Wild Turkey.

Churchill is said to have recoiled in horror and stated: 'That's not whiskey, that's bourbon!'

Within minutes, a presidential aide was on the telephone, and soon afterwards a wholly unscheduled stop was made at a railroad station in western Maryland, where several cases of Johnny Walker Red were brought aboard. Thus properly lubricated, on 5 March 1946 Churchill delivered what would come to be known as the 'Iron Curtain' speech, coining a phrase as he noted the onset of what would become the Cold War.

Warlords' Preferred Potables

The principal national leaders running World War Two, not just Churchill, all had distinctive tastes in alcohol.

- Churchill himself was a major toper, and he held his liquor very well. Churchill's daily intake regularly included scotch (preferably Johnny Walker Black or Red), brandy (Hine), port, and claret, not to mention champagne (Pol Rogers or Cordon Rouge), of which he claimed to average about a bottle a day.
- Chiang Kai-shek - unlike most Chinese, the Generalissimo was a teetotaler, and also did not smoke.
- Hirohito - much preferred whiskey over the more traditional sake.
- Adolph Hitler - generally a teetotaler, the *Führer* did occasionally take a little brandy in warm milk to help him sleep. From time to time he is reported to have sampled beer, though never found one that suited his taste. On celebratory occasions Hitler was sometimes seen with a glass of Moët & Chandon champagne, such as on hearing the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor or upon marrying Eva Braun
- Benito Mussolini - *Il Duce* rarely drank more than an occasional glass of wine, and like Hitler he did not smoke.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt - Roosevelt often had wine or beer with meals, but his preferred potable was a martini.
- Josef Stalin - the Soviet *Vozhd* often drank Georgian red wine or vodka with red pepper, sometimes to excess.
- Harry S Truman – as we have seen, in keeping with his Missouri roots, Truman liked bourbon, and greatly preferred Wild Turkey (not exactly top shelf).

The Salt War, 1540-1541

For centuries after the collapse of Byzantine power in Italy in the eighth century, the Umbrian city of Perugia was legally a dependency of the papacy. But papal authority waxed and waned, and at times the city was virtually independent. Like many Italian city states of the era, Perugia had a domestic political scene that could best be described as homicidal, with the great families indulging in frequent assassination, murder, and massacre. By the onset of the sixteenth century this struggle culminated in the primacy of the Baglioni, a family so blood-thirsty that when not slaughtering their enemies they did away with each other, culminating in the infamous 'Wedding of Blood' in July 1500, when one faction of the family took advantage of the marriage of the head of a rival faction to massacre him and virtually all his close kin. By 1532 the place was under the control of Rodolfo Baglioni (1512-1554). A typical representative of his family, Rodolfo had been a *condottiero* with his own command since he was about 17, and gained power in the city through a *coup* in 1533 that had the blessings of Pope Clement VII. Clement died in 1534 and the new pope, Paul III (*r.* 1534-1549), found Rodolfo a recalcitrant vassal. After Rodolfo had a papal legate murdered, Paul ousted him from Perugia and restored to the city its ancient liberties, within the framework of papal overlordship.

This, of course, was the era of the Franco-Spanish 'Italian Wars', of which there were eight in all covering about 35 of the years between 1494 and 1559. While Spain generally prevailed, the French proved slow learners. Naturally these wars put quite a strain on Italian states and rulers. When Paul came to the papacy, the church's finances were in dire straits, so in 1538 he imposed a tax on salt in the papal dominions. Most of the papal dependencies protested, citing legal precedents reaching back into the dimmest ages; Perugia, for example, claimed exemption under agreements made in 1379 and 1424. In March of 1539 Paul put Perugia and several other uncooperative cities under the Interdict, that is, he barred the clergy from celebrating Mass or administering the Sacraments. This brought most of the states to heel, but not Perugia. The Perugians restored Rodolfo to power and continued to defy the pope. In March 1540 Pope Paul, in retaliation, excommunicated both Rodolfo and the city of Perugia itself. At the same time the pope mobilized an army under the command of his son Pier Luigi Farnese (1503-1547), the 'Captain General of the Church', who had been soldiering since first taking up arms at the age of 17.

Early in April Farnese invaded Perugian territory with some 8,000-10,000 Italian troops, some 3,000 Spaniards, and about 400 German mercenaries. The army advanced quickly against slight resistance. Rodolfo had hardly 2,000 troops, mostly infantry, both poorly equipped and short of ammunition. After some limited skirmishing, Rodolfo fell back on the defences of Perugia. Farnese invested the city in May; a desultory siege followed, while various notables attempted to effect a peace agreement. Finally the Perugians folded, and on 26 March 1541 surrendered to the pope, while Rodolfo once more went into exile. This ended any pretence the Perugians had to independence. Just to emphasize his victory, Pope Paul razed the Baglioni palace and built the fortress of Rocca Paolina on the site. In vengeance, the Perugians essentially began to boycott salt. Even today, bread there is traditionally made without salt, with dire consequences to its taste.

The Greek 'Sacred Wars'

From time immemorial Delphi, in mountainous Phocis, was the holiest oracle in Greece. Because Delphi was so holy a site, many offerings accumulated, donations from cities, kings, and ordinary people, both rich and poor, and the place was also the focus of a lucrative tourist trade. To protect the holy site, not to mention the enormous treasures stored there, from the dimmest ages a dozen *poleis* (city-states), from the Peloponnesus northwards into Thessaly, had formed an *amphictyony* or confederation, the Delphic League, to protect this and some other holy sites. Naturally, from time to time, someone decided to try to lay hands on Delphi to secure all that loot. The result was a series of wars which revolved around the sanctity of Apollo's sanctuary, considered by all Greeks to be especially holy ground, wars which came to be known as the 'Sacred Wars':

- First Sacred War (595-586 B.C.) - in 595 B.C. the people of Kirrha, a nearby polis, began robbing and abusing pilgrims to the shrine and even ploughed up sacred lands. The League intervened, defeated the Kirrhans, razed their city, and established a special council to oversee the government of Delphi, which became a sort of international territory within Phocis.
- Second Sacred War (449-448 BC) - during the First Peloponnesian War (460- 445 BC), the first major confrontation between Sparta and Athens, a Spartan army gave Phocis full control over Delphi, asserting their ownership based on some lines in the *Iliad*, virtually holy writ among the ancient Greeks. No sooner had the Spartans left, however, when an Athenian army under the great Perikles, intervened to restore Delphi's autonomy.
- Third Sacred War (355-346 B.C.) - the Phocians again occupied Delphi, looting the treasures there, leading to a complex war that ultimately even involved Macedonia, hitherto not generally considered 'really' Greek. Although heavily outnumbered, the Phocians were able to use the temple treasures to finance the war, and managed to stave off defeat for ten years. Upon their defeat the Phocians were expelled from the Delphic League and replaced by Macedonia, ruled by Philip II, father of Alexander the Great.
- Fourth Sacred War (339-338 BC) - following the Third Sacred War, the Amfissians, although members of the Delphic League, began to cultivate part of the Crissaeian plain, which belonged to Delphi and was dedicated to Apollo, and established a pottery factory on the old site of Kirrha, matters that did not stir much international attention. But in 339 BC the Athenians offered some golden shields to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi with inscriptions insulting to the Thebans. Amfissia was allied to Thebes and their representative to the Delphic League objected to the donation. At that, the Athenian representative indicted the Amfissians for their illegal seizure of sacred lands before the entire Delphic League. The League asked Philip II of Macedon to intervene, and the following year he captured Amfissia, expelled its people, and donated its lands to Delphi.

Philip's success, and ruthlessness, set off alarms about growing Macedonian power. Led by Demosthenes, the Athenians forged an alliance with the Thebans, Locrians, and others, including the exiled Amfissians, and declared war on Macedonia. On August 2, 338 BC, Philip utterly crushed the alliance in the Battle of Chaironea, in which his young son played a major role, effectively ending the independence of the Greeks.

Second Choice: Noted Commanders Who Wanted to be Something Else

People often end up in careers quite different from those which they had intended to pursue. Some find their chosen profession too crowded, or perhaps paying less than they anticipated, or even just much less interesting once they actually came to practice it, or may be unable to secure the necessary training and education - and then, of course, war may interfere. A surprising number of fairly notable commanders actually started out wanting to be something other than warriors, such as the generals and admirals noted here:

Name	Country	Preference
Italo Balbo (1896-1940)	Italy	Journalist
Henry Bohlen (1810-1862)	US	Liquor salesman
Lewis H. Brereton.(1890-1967)	US	Naval Officer
Guillaume Brune (1763-1815)	France	Attorney
Semyon Budyonny (1883-1973)	USSR	Farmer
Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)	England	Gentleman Farmer
José Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915)	Mexico	Priest
Joseph Francois Dupleix (1697-1763)	France	Civil Servant
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969)	US	Naval Officer
Baldomero Espartero (1793-1879)	Spain	Priest
Jose Estigarribia (1888-1940)	Paraguay	Farmer
Francisco Franco (1892-1975)	Spain	Naval Officer
John D.P. French (1852-1925)	Britain	Naval Officer
Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882)	Italy	Sea Captain
Vo Nguyen Giap (1910-1981)	Vietnam	History Teacher
Nathanael Greene (1742-1786)	US	Blacksmith
Benjamin Grierson (1826-1911)	US	Music Teacher
Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (1928-1967)	Cuba	Physician
Antoine Henri Jomini (1779-1869)	France	Banker
Henry Knox (1750-1806)	US	Bookseller
Jean Lannes (1769-1809)	France	Dyer
M.E.P.M. MacMahon (1808-1893)	France	Priest
Mao Tse-tung (1893-76)	China	Librarian
Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891)	Prussia	History Professor
Joachim Murat (1767-1815)	France	Priest

John J. Pershing (1860-1948)	US	Teacher
Israel Putnam (1718-1790)	US	Tavern Keeper
Gonzalo Queipo de Llano (1875-1951)	Spain	Priest
William R. Robertson (1860-1933)	Britain	Domestic Servant
Konstantin Rokossovskiy (1896-1968)	USSR	Stonemason
Nicolas Jean-de-Dieu Soult (1769-1851)	France	Attorney
Semyon K. Timoshenko (1895-1970)	USSR	Farmer
Heihachiro Togo (1849-1934)	Japan	Samurai
Henri de Turenne (1611-1675)	France	Priest
George Washington (1732-1799)	US	Surveyor
Henry Evelyn Wood (1838-1919)	Br	Naval Officer
Georgi K. Zhukov (1895-1970)	USSR	Furrier

The 'Preference' or 'profession of choice' is that which the person expressed an interest in or was already engaged in when called to arms, a career which they subsequently found more congenial. Many of these men would probably have pursued their original career choices but for the outbreak of major wars that led to relative mass mobilization, such as Greene, Knox, Putnam, Murat, Dupleix, Timoshenko, and Zhukov. Francisco Franco, John French, Dwight Eisenhower, and Lewis Brererton have been included because, although their preferred trade was within the profession of arms it was in a different branch service than that in which they subsequently served, due usually to an inability to enter a naval academy. In the case of Baron Togo, originally a samurai, circumstances led to him becoming a sailor.

Interestingly, the priesthood stands in the lead of professions of choice, with six, followed closely by naval officer, at five.

Who's Counting?

Between 1560 and 1721 Sweden averaged 1.2 wars per year, while Denmark averaged only 0.25 (slackers!).

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Anyone who has an interest in the study and research of general military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment, medals, and related matters, with particular reference to Australian military history, is most welcome to attend meetings of the ACT Branch of the Society.

For membership or other enquiries contact the ACT Branch Secretary, PO Box 7139, Watson ACT 2602, or visit the Society's website: www.mhsa.org.au.