



The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH



LE GROGNARD!

March 2011

Committee 2010/2011

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NOTE: This Month's Branch Meeting
Monday 28th March, 7:30pm
Aegean Room, Hellenic Club, Woden

Branch News: The guest speaker for the March Branch meeting will be Lieutenant Colonel Peter Morrissey (ex CO 1/19 RNSWR 2008-2010), who will speak on the topic of:

The Battle of Amiens [also known as the Third Battle of Picardy], which began on 8 August 1918 and was the opening phase of the allied offensive later known as the Hundred Day's Offensive that ultimately led to the end of the First World War.

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Note, next month's meeting will be on the **THIRD** Monday of the month - on Monday 18 April [the fourth Monday is, of course, Anzac Day].

The guest speaker will be Phil Roberts. His topic: *Australian Army aviation in Vietnam*

The following month the meeting will be on Monday 23 May, when the speaker will be Federal President, and ACT Branch member, Rohan Goyne. His topic: *'The Colo Wars' - Britain's small war in the South Pacific*

I repeat, please advise if you would like to give a presentation during 2011, or can suggest a guest speaker.

Branch Survey:

Following on from the recent Federal Council survey concerning Society membership issues and concerns I'm thinking we should conduct a Branch survey in the near future, along broadly similar lines. If you feel there are particular matters that should be addressed please let me know your ideas. For myself, I'm particularly interested in members' views regarding when and where Branch meetings should be held, and what format our meetings should take.

MHSA Biennial Conference 2012:

I remind you that the ACT Branch will be hosting the Society's next conference, over the weekend Saturday/Sunday 3-4 November 2012. As I said last month, that might seem a long way off, but planning is underway now - suggestions are welcome; offers to assist, more so. A working group has been established, headed by Graham Wilson, together with Ian Ball, Tim Lyon and Nigel Webster.

New *Sabretache* Editor - Expressions of Interest

The editor of *Sabretache* will retire at the end of 2011 and Federal Council is seeking expressions of interest for the position of editor to take effect from early 2012 (with a handover period during the production of the December 2011 issue). The present editor handles both editorial and manuscript production but these could be split and handled by an editorial team. The editor or editorial team is answerable to Federal Council but is responsible for all aspects of the publication of *Sabretache*. Selection of the printer and distribution is the responsibility of the editor with the assistance of Federal Council.

Skills/attributes required include: managing deadlines and budgets; good communication skills including liaison/negotiation with members, printers, book publishers and government organisations (including the Copyright Agency Limited); high level of writing/editorial skills and knowledge of Australian military history. Although *Sabretache* has been published and printed in the ACT for a number of years, there is no expectation that the new editor or printer would be based in the ACT.

Expressions of interest should state the experience and background of the applicant or in the case of a team, the applicants, including samples of work. Applicants should also consider how they would ensure that *Sabretache*:

- continues to be a relevant, quality journal
- best meets the needs and expectations of the membership in light of the recent members' survey (copies of the survey results available from the Federal Secretary)
- adapts to the challenges of changing technologies.

For further information contact fedsec@mhsa.org.au or editor@mhsa.org.au

Written expressions of interest should be sent to:
Federal Secretary
Military Historical Society of Australia
PO Box 5030
Garran ACT 2605
Or fedsec@mhsa.org.au by 15 May 2011

The *Sabretache* Writers' Prize for Military History and MHSA New Writers' Prize

In December 2010, President Rohan Goyne announced the *Sabretache* Writers' Prize, a new biennial writers' prize for military history. Judging criteria and additional details have now been finalized and may be obtained from the editor of *Le Grogard!* at duty_first@hotmail.com

Society's Website Content Manager

Ian Ball of the ACT Branch has agreed to be the Society's website content manager.

Ian is currently semi-retired and occupies himself as a freelance researcher/writer mainly in government and social/welfare. He is also a supporter of the Australian War Memorial and a member of several military and historical societies. His main area of interest in military history is the Australian militia and 18th and 19th century volunteer movements. During 2011 he hopes to finalise a project to research and consolidate records for selected infantry battalions from both world wars. The result will be an accessible resource for people researching relatives who served in the battalions. A series of articles and a book are planned as a follow up. Ian served in the Army Reserve in Canberra from 1978 to 1984 and undertook various infantry training and duties. His last period was spent in a mortar platoon and as well as a company headquarters.

If you would like to contact Ian with ideas for content or for him to post a member's notice, please contact him on eyeball7@tpg.com.au, 02 6297 9485 (business hours).

Ian Stagoll

Resignation of Branch Member

Long time MHSA and ACT Branch member John Bullen submitted his immediate resignation from the MHSA on 21 March 2011. Bill's resignation was in response to a letter to the editor in *The Canberra Times* of 21 March 2011, written by MHSA Federal President Rohan Goyne and published over Rohan's signature block as MHSA Federal President. John has requested that his letter of resignation be published in the ACT Branch newsletter as he believes that MHSA ACT Branch members should know why a fellow member has abruptly resigned from the Society. John's letter is reproduced below

IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION FROM MHSA

I regret that I must resign immediately from the Military Historical Society of Australia.

I can no longer remain a member of an organisation whose Federal President has officially written to *The Canberra Times* (see letter published on 21 Mar 2011 from Rohan Goyne in his official capacity as MHSA President) expressing views which include such absurd statements as "*Canberra has a memorial to those who served in the Spanish Civil War, but not to those who served this nation in the two defining events of the first half of the 20th century. It is time this oversight is corrected.*"

How a local resident can be so ignorant of the significance of the Australian War Memorial is beyond my understanding, but if that is his personal opinion, no matter how misguided, then so be it and he is welcome to publish it.

However I am outraged that such a view has been presented officially on behalf of the Military Historical Society of Australia for publication in a national daily newspaper.

Despite being a MHSA member, I am not aware of any discussion within the Society on this matter nor have I been given any opportunity to express my own views before the Federal President wrote his letter on behalf of us all.

Either his action was unauthorised, or it was approved by the Federal Council. In neither case can I remain a member of the Society now that the public has read what is apparently the Society opinion.

Not wishing to embarrass the Society publicly more than has already done by the Federal President, I am refraining from writing to *The Canberra Times*, but would you please publish my email in *Le Grogard*.

Yours sincerely,

John Bullen

(MHSA member for over 25 years and regular visitor to the Australian War Memorial for over 55 years)

Military Quote of the Month

“In Italy, for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, they had five hundred years of democracy and peace, what did they produce? The cuckoo clock.”

Orson Wells

The British German Legion 1855-59. At the outbreak of the Crimean War, faced with a critical shortage of military manpower, the British Government took the unusual step of passing the *Enlistment of Foreigners Act 1854*, which paved the way for the recruitment of trained and experienced European soldiers and saw the creation, in 1855, of the British German Legion. The BGL at its height consisted of six regiments of light infantry, three of *Jägers*, and two of light dragoons. The force was not a success – although many of the men recruited were excellent military material, well trained and in some cases with recent combat experience, the problems created by the language barrier and some poor officer selections quickly eroded the efficiency of the formation. Although a brigade of Germans consisting of a light infantry regiment and a *Jäger* regiment departed for the Crimea in October 1855, they only got as far as Scutari and never saw action. They were later joined by a second German brigade and Swiss brigade, neither of whom also saw an action. Some members of the BGL deserted, some transferred to the British Army, some settled in Britain and some emigrated to America and Australia. In the end, following the end of the Crimean War, about 25% of the original strength of the BGL remained in uniform and these men accepted an offer to serve in South Africa as ‘military settlers’. The remnant of the BGL, then serving in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, was disbanded in 1861.

Historians Seek Stauffenberg’s Grave. A German historical society, acting on information found in a cemetery inspector’s will, has petitioned to unearth a mass grave at Berlin’s Güterfelde cemetery, which is thought to contain the remains of Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, one of the central conspirators in the 1944 July Plot to assassinate Hitler, as well as the remains of nine of his co-conspirators. Previously, the resting place of Stauffenberg and his fellow victims had been unknown and the German historians hope that their efforts will finally locate them.

That’ll Teach Them! In 1827, three instructors at the US Military Academy at West Point protested to Washington about compulsory attendance at chapel. Secretary of War James Barbour addressed the problem by advising the three officers that he was far “from any desire to interfere in the least with their conscientious scruples,” and transferred them to remote frontier posts.

Statue to Honour Private Voytek. Scottish sculptor Alan Herriot is crafting a statue of Private Voytek, a 500 pound brown bear that worked alongside Polish soldiers during World War Two and who lived out his post-war days in Edinburgh Zoo. Adopted by some Polish soldiers as a cub and officially enrolled into the Polish Army in 1942, Voytek (Polish for ‘happy warrior’) served as the mascot of an artillery company and was present at the Battle of Casino, where he helped to carry ammunition to the forward gun positions. The statue will be unveiled in Edinburgh later this year.

Honourable Artillery Company Light Cavalry. Here’s one you probably haven’t heard of, the Light Cavalry of the Honourable Artillery Company. The Light Cavalry HAC originally was formed in 1861 as an extension to the part time and venerable Honourable Artillery Company’s ‘variety of arms’. Amongst their then duties was that of guarding the Lord Mayor of London (a role taken over more recently by the HAC’s Company of Pikemen and Musketeers). In 1891 the HAC Light Cavalry was disbanded and absorbed into the rapidly expanding Royal Horse Artillery element of the Regiment, eventually becoming part of ‘A’ Battery (HAC) RHA. The Light Cavalry was reformed in 1979 as a civilian organisation, chiefly due to the enthusiasm of Major Gerald Flint-Shipman, an officer in the Royal Green Jackets (V) and member of the HAC, who became its first commander. The Light Cavalry is open to both Regimental and Non-Regimental Members of the HAC, with the

latter category subject to proposal for membership on the basis of previous military service elsewhere. In April 2004, to mark the celebration of twenty five years since reforming, the Captain General of the Honourable Artillery Company, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, was pleased to inspect the Light Cavalry HAC in Review at Windsor, and afterwards presented a Royal Warrant enacting their rights and responsibilities. This includes the right to wear badges of qualification and achievement, but not rank, earned in Her Majesty's service. The Light Cavalry HAC (who provide their own uniforms, mounts and equipment) escort the Lady Mayoress, and particularly provide her 'Travelling Escort' at the Lord Mayor's Show. The Light Cavalry also provide a dismounted 'Carpet Guard', which lines the entrance to the Royal Courts of Justice to 'protect' the Lord Mayor's coach whilst the Pikemen are otherwise engaged inside on the same occasion. The Light Cavalry also supply mounted and dismounted guards at polo matches held at Smith's Lawn, Windsor during the summer months. Members of the Light Cavalry HAC take part in a variety of equestrian competitive activities, either as individuals, or as team members.

Over at Last! In the northern autumn of 2010, Germany made its final reparations payment, officially ending the Great War, 92 years after the armistice of 11 November 1918. The last installment, approximately \$95 million, satisfies Germany's debt from the Treaty of Versailles.

City of London Police Special Constabulary (HAC). Just when you thought the above was possibly the most eccentric thing you may have read for a while, the HAC, i.e. is the charitable body incorporated by Royal Charter in 1537 by King Henry VIII with the stated purpose of attending to the "better defence of the realm", also supplies a police unit. In 1919, following a decision to increase the strength of the Metropolitan Police Reserve Force, the Home Secretary approached the HAC to form a Division of Special Constabulary; 150 members of the HAC, mostly Great War veterans, rallied to the call and joined the Division, forming the HAC Detachment. At the outbreak of the Second World War the Detachment was integrated into G Division of the Metropolitan Police and then later with Islington Division. Following a reorganization of police responsibilities, the Detachment was transferred to the City of London Police (a small, totally independent police force responsible for policing the square mile of the City of London, at the centre of the metropolis) and became part of the City of London Police Special Constabulary, with its administrative base at Armoury House, the headquarters of the HAC. The detachment retains its unique identity by wearing the HAC Regimental Titles in addition to their Divisional identification. They are considered an 'Active' unit of the HAC, as is the Regiment, and continue the HAC's tradition of keeping order within the City of London.

Dolomites Glacier Yields Preserved Remains of World War One Soldier. A man walking near his home in the central Dolomites region of northern Italy recently discovered the frozen remains of World War One soldier. During the Italian Campaign, Italian and Austro-Hungarian troops fought for control of the Dolomites region of the Alps, a particularly harsh conflict due to the high altitude, thin air, extreme cold and frequent avalanches, and at least 9,000 soldiers died in the region. The Italian discoverer of the remains, himself a World War One collector, was at 9,000 feet near a cable car station near the Austrian border when he spotted what he thought was a 'bundle of rags'. Closer inspection revealed a soldier's uniformed skeleton, missing its head and with many broken bones, especially in the legs and torso, suggesting that the man might have stepped on a mine. Police and mountain rescue teams recovered the remains from the mountainside and transported them to a local mortuary for examination to determine cause of death, the man's nationality and, perhaps, his identity. Once officials release this information, the soldier will be given a proper burial in a military cemetery.

My Kingdom for a Horse? German plans for Operation *Sea Lion*, the invasion of Britain, included the landing of about 4,500 horses in the first wave, and 23,000 within the first three days.

Rank Creep. On 1 January 1946, the senior-most ranks of the US Army, including the Army Air Forces, totaled four Generals of the Army and 12 full Generals, for a force of 8,200,000 men and women. As of mid-2010, the combined strength of the Army and the Air Force was only about 825,000, commanded by 24 full Generals (11 Army and 13 Air Force), with five more pending promotion.

And a Sickly Season.... In 1780, British troops stationed in the Leeward Islands in the West Indies were authorised a double daily spirit ration to compensate them for the heightened danger of death from tropical diseases that they faced.

Bundeswehr Wachbataillon Oops! In 1995, as a result of complaints aired on the floor of the German parliament by the SDP party, the venerable *Karabiner 98K* rifles of the German Armed Forces ceremonial unit, the Ministry of Defence Guard Battalion (*Wachbataillon beim Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*) were closely inspected for Swastikas and other Nazi era emblems and any offending markings removed from the weapons. The *Wachbataillon* uses the *Kar 98K* for ceremonial purposes as it is better suited to the old Prussian Army drill movements used by the unit than modern weapons (which the unit also holds and trains in for its secondary role of providing armed security for the primary and alternative seats of national government in the event of an attack on Germany).

Last of Royal Navy Rum up for Sale. E.D.&F. Man & Co., official rum merchant to the Royal Navy from 1784 to 1970, is selling its last remaining stocks of 'Black Tot' rum. The RN stopped issuing a rum ration to its sailors on 31 July 1970. The 6,000 bottles of rum, each presented in a dark wooden case with a copper cup in the official half-gill tot measure, are available from the shop of the museum ship HMS *Belfast* (www.hms-belfast.iwm.org.uk) for just short of \$1,000 per bottle.

JAPC Searches for US Remains on Tarawa. The Honolulu, Hawaii based US Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) recently sent a team to the Pacific atoll of Tarawa to search for the remains of World War Two US servicemen. An estimated 450 US Marine Corps casualties of the November 1943 battle were buried in unmarked graves.

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Anyone who has an interest in the study and research of military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment, medals, and related matters, particularly where such are relevant to Australia, 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.