



The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH



LE GROGNARD!

July 2011

Committee 2010/2011

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NOTE: This Month's Branch Meeting

**Monday 25th July, 7:30pm Aegean
Room, Hellenic Club, Woden**

Branch News:

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The guest speaker for the June Branch meeting will be ACT Branch Member Colin Campbell. His topic:

Colin will talk about his book 'More Bang For No Bucks', published earlier this year – a unique story of Australian soldiers in six US Army self-propelled M108 Howitzers in Vietnam.

[As an aside, this year, July has five Fridays, five Saturdays and five Sundays. This only happens, apparently, once every 823 years. In Chinese culture this is referred to as 'money bags', and if you spread this knowledge to others rewards will follow. Feng Shui followers hold that the one who does not pass this on will be without money. Perhaps safer not to take any chances - good luck!]

August Branch meeting – Annual General Meeting:

Monday 22 August 2011 – 7.30pm Orpheus Room , Hellenic Club, Woden

Following the AGM,s for both the Federal Council and the ACT Branch, which will include the election of office-holders for the forthcoming year, it is proposed to have a general discussion about the way forward for the ACT Branch, as well as an update on the Society's 2012 Biennial Conference which the Branch will be hosting. It will also be an opportunity for members to tell others about any research projects underway, and perhaps to seek help with answers to any questions one may have. Also, an opportunity to bring along any items of ephemera or artifacts that might be of interest.

Again, please let me know if you would like to give a presentation at a Branch meeting down the track, or perhaps can suggest a guest speaker who might be of interest.

Lastly, Society membership renewal forms were posted out with the June issue of *Sabretache*. **Can I please request that you send them in promptly.**

Notice to Members from Federal Secretary:

Notice to ACT Branch members

Federal Council and the ACT Branch will conduct their Annual General Meetings on Monday 22 August 2011 at the Hellenic Club (usual meeting details to be advised in the August Le Grognard).

Both Federal Council and the ACT Branch will conduct elections for committee members.

Federal Council has four vacancies, including Federal Secretary/Membership Officer and Vice President.

Please contact Kristen Alexander 6258 7348 alexfax@alexanderfaxbooks.com.au to put forward your nomination or for information about the exciting and fulfilling duties of Federal Secretary.

The ACT Branch has vacancies for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and at least one committee member.

Please contact Ian Stagoll 6254 0199 ian.stagoll@gmail.com to put forward your nomination for or information about the ACT Branch vacancies.

If you are not able to attend the meetings, please contact Kristen and Ian for applicable Federal Council and Branch proxy voting forms.

Australian War Memorial – Technology Centre Open Day

The marketing folks at the AWM have asked for the following announcement to be made:

For just five hours each year the Australian War Memorial opens the doors of its Technology Centre.

The Centre is where the Memorial stores and restores planes and vehicles associated with Australians in over a century of conflict.

Big Things In Store is massive. It is your chance to explore, discover and wander among row after row of vehicles, tanks, trucks, guns and other very big things.

This year's highlights include a Sabre Jet Fighter from the Cold War era and a Japanese Ha-Go tank currently being restored.

Big Things In Store would be a great day out for club members and families and this year there is a special kids program.

If you have not been to the Australian War Memorial in a while, take the 15 minute drive from the Technology Centre and visit the Memorial's newest galleries and exhibitions.

Big Things In Store
Treloar Conservation and Storage Annex Callan Street Mitchell ACT

Sunday 18 September 2011
10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Entry by gold coin donation
Barbeque lunch and refreshments available for purchase.

No large bags, tripods or monopods.
Closed flat footwear is recommend.

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Ian Stagoll

INTREP

Military Quote of the Month

“Thank-God, my left flank is safe . . . now for my right.”

Brigadier-General Bernard Freyberg, VC
88th Brigade, 29th Division, 1918

On learning that the left flank of his brigade was held by the 1st Royal Newfoundland Regiment

The Royal Army Pay Corps' Spitfire. Early in World War II Lord Beaverbrook originated the idea of the 'Presentation' aircraft. An individual, organisation or town could present the cost of an airframe (for a Spitfire this was set at £ 5,000 although the real cost was nearer £ 12,000) and an aircraft would be allocated to bear the name of the donor (or any caption they chose instead) in (officially) four inch high yellow characters on the fuselage. The official style was not always adhered to, however. Spitfire EN 966, a Mark VB version, was purchased for the Royal Air Force by the members of the Royal Army Pay Corps (RAPC). The aircraft was ordered from the Castle Bromwich Aircraft Factory on 23 August 1941 and delivered to the RAF on 22 May 1942. On the same day the aircraft 'went into Squadron Service' with 118 Squadron, sporting an image of the RAPC badge above Latin inscription FIDUCIA (the Corps motto). Sadly, on 19 July 1942, FIDUCIA was hit by flak during an attack on enemy shipping and shot down; the pilot, Flying Officer Brown, was seen to bale out and land safely in the water, however, he then became tangled up with his parachute and drowned.

Some Statistics From 'The Wall'. There are 58,267 names listed on US Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC, the memorial being universally referred to as 'The Wall'. The names are arranged in the date order in which those commemorated were killed, and within each date the names are alphabetized. The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, listed by the US Department of Defense as having been killed on 8 June 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son USMC Lance Corporal Richard B. Fitzgibbon, who was killed on 7 Sept 1965 (there are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall).

- 39,996 on the Wall were aged 22 or younger
- 8,283 were 19 years old (the largest age group)
- 3,103 were 18 years old
- 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old
- 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old
- one soldier, PFC Dan Bullock, was 15 years old

- 997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam
- 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam
- 31 sets of brothers are on the Wall
- 54 soldiers on the Wall attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia
- 8 women (US Army nurses) are on the Wall
- 244 American servicemen were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War, 153 of them are on the Wall
- Beallsville Ohio, with a population of 475, has 6 names listed
- West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita by state in the nation; there are 711 West Virginians on the Wall
- 9 graduates of Morenci High School in Morenci, Arizona (population 5,058) enlisted as a group in the US Marines; all served in Vietnam, 6 of them are listed on the Wall
- the most casualty deaths for a single day was on 31 January 1968 – 245 deaths
- the most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968 – 2,415 deaths

Grim Statistics. French casualties in the First World War – killed, wounded, and missing – averaged 37,000 for each of the 51 months of the war; for August and September of 1914, however, casualties actually averaged 164,000 a month.

The Guard of the Rock. The tiny independent Republic of San Marino, an enclave surrounded by Italy, nestled on the eastern slopes of the Appenine Mountains, approximately 61km² in size and with a population of just over 30,000 boasts its own tiny army, the *Guardia de Rocca* or Guard of the Rock. The precise origins of the unit are unknown, however, it is known as a military unit of the Republic as early as 1754. However, the unit also uses the name ‘Fortress Guards’ which can be traced back to much earlier units of Sammarinese military. The *Guardia de Rocca* is the state border patrol, with responsibility for patrolling and defending the Republic’s borders. In their role as Fortress Guards they are also responsible for the guarding of the *Palazzo Pubblico* in San Marino City, which is the seat of national government, as well as the offices of several other government ministries. In this role, in their distinctive red and green uniforms, they are the uniformed element of the Republic most visible to tourists, and are known for their colourful ceremony of Changing the Guard. Under the 1987 statute the members of the *Guardia de Rocca* are all enrolled as 'Criminal Police Officers' (in addition to their military role) and act to assist the police in investigating major crime. The name of the unit stems from one of its original roles as custodians of San Marino’s jail, *la Prima roccia* or the First Tower, generally referred to simply as *la Rocca* or the Rock. The strength of the *Guardia de Rocca* is currently 40 men, commanded by a captain. In addition to the *Guardia de Rocca*, there is also an 80 strong part time volunteer military unit, the *Compagnia Uniformata delle Milizie* or Company of Uniformed Militia, which dates back to 1600 and carries out purely ceremonial duties; the 75 man strong *Guardia del Consiglio Grande e Generale* or Guard of the Great and General Council, another part time unit, which dates back to 1740, this unit is responsible for the personal security of the Captains Regent of San Marino and the Great and General Council during its sessions; the *Corpo della balestra* or Corps of Crossbowmen, a part-time, volunteer body of about 80 men, who take part in state ceremonies and keep alive the art of the crossbow; and the *Banda Militare*, or military band, a full time military band of 50 members, originally established in 1843, today part of the *Compagnia Uniformata delle Milizie* but used as the band of all of the elements of the San Marino armed forces, including the para-military Gendarmerie.

Irish Victims of the Holocaust. Esther Steinberg and her Paris-born, Belgian-fathered son were the only Irish victims of the Holocaust. Esther Steinberg, born in Dublin to Irish-born, Jewish parents, became caught up in the horrors of Hitler's purge against the Jewish people after marrying a Belgian

man, Chaskel Gluck, in 1937 and moving to his home country. Two years later, the young couple fled to Paris where Esther gave birth to her son Leon and in 1942 the family was transported to Auschwitz where they met their deaths.

WWII Commando ‘Veteran’ Found Under Suburban House. A surprise discovery was made recently when a lady in Ringwood, Victoria asked a local boat repairer to remove an ‘old canoe’ from under her house. On dragging it out and inspecting the contents of two bags the boatman, Carl Shadbolt, realised that they contained a 1943 folboat, still in remarkable condition. The lady explained that her husband had used the boat for fishing trips in the late 1940s. Kayak enthusiast Jack Scott later bought the folboat and had it shipped to his home in Sydney. On further inspection, Jack rightly thought that the craft had something to do with Australian commandos during the war. He contacted wartime folboat authority John Hoehn who explained that given the very early serial number, date and manufacturer on the identity plate it was indeed a war veteran. John was able to ascertain that this folboat had seen service with Z Special Unit at either Cairns, Fraser Island, or Mount Martha training camps by SRD operatives training prior to embarking on SRD operations. (Thanks to Branch member Nigel Webster for this contribution)

Russia Plans Arctic Army Brigades. Russia's defence minister has said he plans to create two specialist army brigades to be based in the Arctic. The announcement came a short while after Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Russia would strongly defend its interests in the region. The brigades could be based in Murmansk, Arkhangelsk or other areas, Russian news agencies reported. Anatoly Serdyukov said Russia had studied the specialist Arctic troops in Finland, Norway and Sweden. According to Minister Serdyukov the Russian Army's general staff is currently working on plans to create two Arctic brigades. Immediately prior to the Defence Ministry announcement, Russian President Vladimir Putin had declared that Russia would ‘expand its presence in the Arctic’ and ‘strongly and persistently’ defend its interests.

‘Lash up and stow!’ Although used for decades previously by the Spanish and Portuguese navies, which had copied the design from Caribbean natives, the hammock was not formally instituted into the Royal Navy until 1597, in which year a Royal Warrant authorized the purchase of canvas for the manufacture of the famous nautical sleeping gear.

Last Vietnam Era American Draftee Retires. Command Sergeant Major Jeffrey Mellinger, US Army, who retires in 2011, is the last Vietnam era draftee on active duty with the US armed forces. CSM Mellinger was a 19 year old construction worker when he was called up in 1972. Although he had no idea what service in the Army entailed, he obviously found something about it that he liked as he stayed in the Army for 39 years. (Thanks to Branch President Ian Stagoll for this snippet)

‘Bill the Bastard’ Harden-Murrumburrah. Most members will probably be aware of the 1st Australian Horse memorial garden in Harden-Murrumburrah. Visitors to the memorial can view a bronze sculpture of a 16 hand chestnut known as ‘Bill the Bastard’, which stands on the lower western side of the memorial garden. ‘Bill the Bastard’ gained his name as a result of his habit of bucking whenever he was saddled but was also noted for courage, strength and staying power. At the battle of Romani on 4th August 1916, Major M Shanahan DSO, 2nd Australian Light Horse, heard that four men having lost their horses, were left out in the field at the mercy of the Turks. Riding ‘Bill the Bastard’, Major Shanahan returned to the scene under heavy enemy fire, collected the stranded men and ‘Bill’ galloped back across the 1,000 yards of sand carrying the additional four light horsemen (two on his back and one hanging onto each stirrup). For his services in carrying these men to safety, ‘Bill the Bastard’ was retired with honour the following day and served the remainder of the war as an officer's packhorse.’ (Thanks to Branch member Colin Campbell for this little snippet)

How the Sayings Came About:

Have you ever wondered why aircraft and ships in distress send out a ‘mayday’ call? The call comes from the French phrase ‘venez **m'aider**’ meaning ‘come to my assistance (or help)’. There is strong evidence that the mayday callsign was originated in 1923 by Frederick Stanley Mockford, then senior radio officer at Croydon Airport in London. Mockford was supposedly asked to think of a word that would indicate distress and would easily be understood by all pilots and ground staff in an emergency. Since much of the traffic at the time was between Croydon and Le Bourget Airport in Paris, he proposed the word ‘Mayday’ from the French ‘m'aider’. Now you know.

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.