



The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH



LE GROGNARD!

October 2011

Committee 2010/2011

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NOTE: This Month's Branch Meeting

Monday 24th October, 7:30pm

Aegean Room, Hellenic Club, Woden

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Branch News: The guest speaker for the October Branch meeting will be ACT Branch Member Graham Wilson. His topic:

Shabash Jawan! The Indian Army at Gallipoli".

The final Branch meeting for the year will be on Monday 28 November 2011; the speaker will be ACT Branch Member Colin Campbell, who will provide an insight into ANZUK - a tripartite force formed by Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to defend the Asian Pacific region after the United Kingdom withdrew forces from the east of Suez in the early seventies.

Please let me know if you would like to give a presentation during 2012, or can suggest a guest speaker.

Ian Stagoll

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INTREP

Military Quote of the Month

“Myself, I don’t take any chances. I talk to Mohammed, to Buddha, to Mr. Jesus H. Christ, or any other religious honchos I can come up with.”

**Gunnery Sergeant Hafner, USMC
(R. Lee Ermey)**

“The Siege of Firebase Gloria”

Uniform Maintenance Allowance. In 1930, as a cost cutting measure, all ranks of the Permanent Military Forces of the Australian Army were required to take compulsory leave without pay, ranging from one week to eight weeks per annum, depending on level of annual salary (the more you earned, the longer you were required to go on leave); this situation was to continue into the early part of 1935. At the same time, the government was making its best efforts, within existing financial restraints, to expand the volunteer, part-time CMF and one of the incentives for recruitment was smart new uniforms, including full dress blue uniforms for senior NCO and warrant officers, all provided out of the public purse. At the same time, the PMF warrant officers and NCO who were responsible training and administering the CMF units not only did not receive new uniforms but were also required to pay for their existing uniforms out of their own pockets, at a time when their pay had been drastically cut. As a result, by 1933 the uniforms of PMF members had become so shabby in contrast to the brand new uniforms of the CMF, that the Army was required to introduce, for the very first time, a uniform maintenance allowance (UMA) of 8d. per day (not for officers).

Room and Board, 1931. Two years before the Army introduced UMA, it was faced with the problem of providing, out of a stringent financial vote, security for its drill halls, which had begun to suffer damage and theft. In a truly innovative move, approval was given for single members of the CMF to live in drill halls, with full board and lodging provided at government expense in exchange for providing out of hours security for the buildings.

Civil war mass grave unearthed in Spain. Researchers from the Forum for Memory, one of several associations working in Spain to shed light on the fate of the unknown dead of the conflict, have identified a mass grave believed to contain the bodies of up to 600 people killed by Nationalist forces in the Spanish civil war. If confirmed, this find would be the second-biggest Civil War mass grave found in Spain, after one containing 2,840 bodies which was uncovered in the southern province of Malaga in 2008.

New Zealand Vietnam Nominal Roll. On 18 August the New Zealand Ministry for Culture & Heritage (*Manatū Taonga* for those of you who prefer it in Maori) launched the online nominal roll of New Zealanders in the Vietnam War. The online roll is searchable by name, service number and unit and includes information on NZ visitors and civilians in country between 1964 and 1972. It also contains information on honours and awards, and NZ units in Vietnam. The roll can be accessed at <http://www.vietnamwar.govt.nz/>.

World War Two Allied Air Crashes in The Netherlands. Advice has been received of a new Dutch based website that will be of interest to our air force historians, especially those interested in the Second World War. Nieuwenhuis in The Netherlands has developed a software based database of Allied aircraft that crashed in The Netherlands in the Second World War. INTREP took the time to run the program and found it exceptionally interesting, even though not an air force historian per se. Various searches of the database can be made, including by individual aircraft or individual crew member where details are known, but also by force (e.g. RAF, RAF(VR), RAAF, RNZAF, RCAF, etc); aircraft type, squadron/group, air base. INTREP did a search for “Lancaster” and came up with some very interesting entries, followed by a search by “RAAF”, which came with some very sobering details.

The database is by Jan's own admission nowhere near complete, however, he continues to populate it as more information comes to hand. He currently lists detailed information on 838 aircraft and 4446 crew members (of whom 211 are RAAF). Worth a look, free to download and, according to INTREP's security software, gremlin free, and can be accessed at <http://airwar.texlaweb.nl>.

The Highest Caste of All. In 1907, Major-General His Highness Sir Pertab Singh (1845-1922), a younger son of the Maharaja of Jodhpur and Maharaja of Idar in his own right, an experienced and able officer of both the Jodhpur and Indian Armies, took part in the funeral of a senior British Army officer, a long-time friend and colleague, as a pall bearer. Brahmin priests of the Jodhpur court, horrified at Sir Pertab's involvement in a Christian ceremony told him that he had polluted his caste and demanded that he undergo ritual purification. The old soldier responded: “I will do nothing of the sort, the deceased and I belong to the highest caste of all, that of a soldier.”

Sir Pertab Singh and the Prince of Wales. During the course of his long and faithful service to the British Empire, Sir Pertab Singh became a personal friend to Queen Victoria, her son Edward VII, and the latter's son George V. So when, in 1921, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII), toured India, he quite naturally looked up the old family friend. Sir Pertab took the young prince pig sticking, a favorite sport among the Indian horse set, and one at which he was quite adept. The prince, although an accomplished polo player, was much less experienced at the pig sticking business, and made a careless mistake; he dismounted during the hunt, before the pig had been killed, which could have cost him dearly. Snapping at the head-strong and self-centred prince to immediately remount, Sir Pertab told him: “I know you are the Prince of Wales, and you know that you are the Prince of Wales, but the *pig* doesn't know you are the Prince of Wales.”

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Guidon. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), although a civilian police force, was awarded the status of a dragoon regiment by His Majesty King George V following the service of many of members of the force during the First World War. In recognition of this unique status, the force was presented with a cavalry guidon in 1935. The guidon is a standard swallow tailed flag as used by cavalry/armoured regiments in the British, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand Armies; on the scarlet field are the Royal Cypher (top left), the initials “RCMP” (bottom right), “NWMP” (for North West Mounted Police, the original title of the force - top right) and “RNWMP” (Royal North West Mounted Police – bottom left), all surrounded by a wreath of maple leaves; the badge of the RCMP is in the centre of the guidon. Displayed on the guidon are the force's battle honours: Northwest Canada 1885; South Africa 1900–02; France and Flanders 1918; Siberia 1918–19; Europe, 1939–45. The original guidon was retired in 1973 when a new Guidon was presented at Regina, Saskatchewan on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the RCMP by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Honourary Commissioner of the RCMP. The original Guidon is laid up in the RCMP Chapel.

Another Canadian Battle Honour “Oddity”. McGill University is the only educational institution in Canada to carry a battle honour. During the First World War the McGill University Canadian Officers’ Training Corps (COTC) contributed a company to the 148th Overseas Battalion the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF); in addition to the COTC company, the majority of the rest of the 148th Battalion was recruited from the staff and students of McGill. When the 148th Battalion arrived in France it was absorbed for training by the 20th Reserve Battalion and then the men drafted to the 13th and 42nd Battalions for front line service, with the McGill COTC contingent being drafted intact to the 13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada). The 13th earned the battle honour “ARRAS” for service in the battle of the same name between 9 April and 4 May 1917. Although the McGill OTC contingent was part of the 13th Battalion, the battle honour was awarded to it separately as McGill University Contingent, Canadian Officers’ Training Corps, a unique honour to a COTC contingent. The battle honour was carried after the war by the McGill University COTC until that unit was disbanded in 1968 and is held today “in trust” by the Principal and Board of Governors of the university.

Hedy Helps the War Effort. On 11 August 1942, the US Patent Office issued Patent No. 2,292,387 to a German expatriate, Hedy Lamarr, the noted actress, and George Antheil, an *avant garde* composer, for their “Secret Communications System”. The patent was for a frequency-hopping spread-spectrum electro-mechanical device that used a kind-of piano roll to change between 88 frequencies, making radio-guided torpedoes harder to detect or jam. This concept underlies the technology used today in Wi-Fi and some wireless telephone systems.

Fate of France’s Generals, 1792-1837. In 1837 the French Ministry of War published figures on the number of generals who had died from causes other than old age or disease since 1792. The outbreak of the “War of the French Revolution” in that year had touched off nearly a quarter century of major conflicts which did not end until the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815. And while the three decades that followed saw no major wars, they did see French troops involved in interventions or colonial wars in Spain, Belgium, Senegal, Greece, and particularly North Africa. During these conflicts, nearly 300 French generals died violently while on active service. Most deaths, of course, were due to combat, an occupational hazard, especially in those days; but some of the others were quite unusual:

- 170 were killed in action
- 55 died of wounds
- 20 were executed, most by the Revolutionary Regime during the “Terror” for real or imagined acts of treason, like losing a battle, but some were shot by the Restoration regimes, notably Marshals Michel Ney and Joachim Murat, in 1815
- 13 were murdered, most famously Jean Baptiste Kléber, killed by an Egyptian in 1800, and Marshal Guillaume Brune, slain by a Royalist mob in 1815
- 14 committed suicide, notably Louis Alexandre Berthier, Napoleon’s great chief-of-staff, during the “Hundred Days” in 1815
- 9 died due to accidents, such as Marshal Józef Antoni Poniatowski, who drowned in 1813 during the Battle of Leipzig

Meaford Weather Control. The Canadian Army’s Land Force Central Area Training Centre is located near the town of Meaford, in Ontario, on the shores of Lake Huron. LFCATC operates year round; Meaford is generally reserved for training by Canadian Army reserve forces in the summer during the main civilian holiday season, with members of the regular forces being required to train in the other months of the year. This has led to the regular forces nicknaming Meaford Range Control (MRC) as Meaford Weather Control, based on the firm belief that MRC has a weather machine installed which provides the base with abysmal weather while all surrounding communities enjoy beautiful sunshine. It is stated that range control set to the weather machine to “suck” whenever regular troops are in the field training.

Indian Army Rations at Gallipoli. Besides British, Australian, New Zealand, French and Newfoundland troops, a large contingent of the Indian Army served at Gallipoli. All soldiers have to eat, and the King Emperor provided the following daily sustenance for his soldier sons:

- ¼lb Meat (mutton, lamb or goat – preferably issued live to be slaughtered by the troops themselves)
- ⅛lb Potatoes
- ⅓oz Tea
- ½oz Salt
- 1½lb Atta (flour)
- 4oz Dhall (dried pulses)
- 2oz Ghee (clarified butter)
- ⅓oz Chillies
- ⅓oz Turmeric
- ⅓oz Ginger
- ⅓oz Garlic
- 1oz Gur (unrefined whole cane sugar)

Vegetarians received an additional 2oz of gur or 3oz of milk in place of the meat ration. The iron ration issued to Indian troops consisted of:

- 1½lb Biscuit
- 8oz Gur
- 1oz Tea
- 6oz Condensed Milk or 2½oz Dried Milk in lieu, when available

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Food by any other name. Food is incredibly important to soldier, its importance reflected in the rich variety of slang words applied by soldiers around the world to food and eating. Here is a very small selection:

Alter Mann (German), “old man”, slang term for tinned, preserved meat, mythically said to have been made from dead pensioners.

Armoured cow (Australian, WW2), canned milk.

Army strawberries (US, WW2), prunes.

asino morto (Italian) “dead donkey”, canned meat.

Assaku Koryo (Japanese, WW2), “compressed ration”, consisting of cooked rice (dried), pickled plums, dried fish, salt and sugar.

Back-ups (Australian, current), seconds (when having a meal).

Bait layer (Australian, current), an Army cook.

Brew (Australian, current), coffee or tea (usually made in “Standard NATO” i.e., milk and 2 sugars).

Eiserne Kuh (German), “iron cow”, canned milk (interestingly, see “armoured cow”).

Fang (Australian, current), food, also “to eat” or in reference to food, e.g., “Go and get a fang”.

Fat pills (Australian, current), chocolate and lollies

Gâteau et vin (French), “cake and wine”, slang for bread and water punishment diet.

Growlies (Canadian), slang for food.

Gulaschkanone (German), “goulash cannon”, slang for field kitchen.

Horst Wessel Suppe (German, WW2) “Horst Wessel Soup”, meat and other good things that should be in the soup and aren’t, but are there in spirit. A huge pun on the famous *Horst Wessel Lied*.

Jack rations (Australian, current), civilian food taken to the field to liven up the issue rations (aka “jackies”).

Küchenbulle (German), “kitchen cop”, a cook.

Lung in a bag (Canadian), a field ration meal of omelet in mushroom sauce, referring to its appearance.

“**Madagascar**” (French, WWI), alternative name for preserved meat; based on the premise that all of the monkeys on Madagascar had been cleaned out to provide rations for *les poilus*.

MRE (US/Canadian), abbreviation for Meal Ready to Eat (combat ration pack) aka Meals Rejected by Ethiopians.

Pinard (French), wine ration.

Singe (French) “Monkey”, term for any sort of preserved meat

Sprot/шпротина (Russian) “sprat”, any kind of tinned fish.

Stalintorte (German, WW2), “Stalin cake”, stale bread.

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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.