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

LE GROGNARD!

November 2011

Committee 2010/2011
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NOTE: This Month's Branch Meeting

Monday 28th November, 7:30pm
Aegean Room, Hellenic Club, Woden

Branch News:

The guest speaker for the October Branch meeting 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.

I repeat, please advise if you would like to give a presentation during 2011, or have a suggested guest speaker in mind.

Ian Stagoll

Military Quote of the Month

"Why can't we stop all the political nonsense and get on with the war?"

Eric Arthur Blair (George Orwell)
Homage to Catalonia

Honorary Third Officer Ruby Boye, BEM, WRANS.   At the outbreak of the Second World War, Sydney Skov Boye and his wife Ruby were living on Vanikoro Island in the Santa Cruz group in the Solomon Islands, where Skove managed a Kauri plantation. When the war had broken out, the station radio operator had left for Australia to enlist in the RAAF, however, prior to his departure he taught Skov and Ruby how to operate and maintain the plantation radio and they took over the responsibility of transmitting regular weather reports to Australia. Later, after she had taught herself Morse code, Ruby took over sole responsibility for the radio. When the Japanese occupied Tulagi and Guadalcanal in the Solomons in May 1942 most European residents departed for Australia. Skov and Ruby, however, elected to remain behind and Ruby was enrolled by Commander Eric Feldt into his Coastwatcher organisation, sending her daily weather reports and acting as a relay station between coastwatchers further north and the naval intelligence office at Vila, New Hebrides. To extend a measure of protection under the Hague Conventions to the civilian coastwatchers, the RAN began to grant them naval rank from March 1942. Ruby must have been something of problem for them, as it was not until 27 July 1943 that she was appointed an Honorary Acting Third Officer Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS). Ruby's appointment carried with it no pay, even though male coastwatchers appointed to honorary acting commissions in the RANR did receive pay. Ruby had been identified by the Japanese soon after their landings in the Solomons and she had received a personal, threatening broadcast in 1942, however, she remained unshaken and Eric Feldt greatly admired her courage. Ruby also had a fan in American Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, who made a special flight to Vanikoro to meet her and later, when Ruby fell ill late in 1943, sent a US Navy aircraft to evacuate her for medical treatment. After her recovery Ruby returned to Vanikoro and in 1944 she was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for her contributions to the war effort. Her WRANS appointment was terminated on 30 September 1946. Ruby Boye, BEM, died on 14 September 1990 at Narwee and was cremated. An accommodation block at the Australian Defence Force Academy is named after her.

Prime Minister for Day.   Most readers will have heard of the Indian invasion of the Portuguese colony of Goa in 1961, but how many have heard of Nagar-Haveli? The tiny enclave of Nagar-Haveli was given to Portugal by the Maratha Empire in 1783 as compensation for the sinking of a Portuguese ship by the Maratha navy. In 1785, the Portuguese purchased the neighbouring area of Dadra and the two were administered by the Portuguese Governor of Daman until 1954. In that year a small "nationalist" movement, aided by "volunteers" from India, ousted the tiny Portuguese administration and declared "independence". Although it enjoyed de facto independence, Dadra and Nagar Haveli were still recognized internationally (e.g., by the International Court of Justice) as a Portuguese possession. The residents of the "liberated" colony requested the Government of India for administrative help and Mr. K.G. Badlani, an officer of the Indian Administrative Service (i.e. the Indian public service), was sent to act as "administrator". From 1954 to 1961, the territory was administered by a body called the *Varishta Panchayat* of Free Dadra and Nagar Haveli. In 1961 when Indian forces took over the Portuguese colonies of Goa, Daman, and Diu, "Administrator" Badlani, in a breathtaking act of international political ledgerdemain, was, for one day, designated the Prime

Minister of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, so that, as Head of State, he could sign an agreement with the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and formally merge Dadra and Nagar Haveli with the Republic of India.

SMS *Emden* (II).   When the Imperial German Navy's High Seas Fleet steamed in to surrender to the Royal Navy at Scapa Flow on 21 November 1918, each German ship was assigned to the custody of a British ship, which sent aboard a party to inspect the German ship for hidden explosives and to give instructions to the captain. HMAS *Melbourne* was assigned to the German light cruiser SMS Nürnberg, while, fittingly enough, HMAS *Sydney* was assigned to the light cruiser SMS *Emden*, the ship that had been launched in 1916 and named as a replacement for the earlier ship of the same name destroyed by HMAS *Sydney* off the Cocos Keeling Islands on 9 November 1914. Talk about rubbing it in!

345001 Rifleman Léon Pageot.   Léon Auguste Pageot was a French citizen, born in Dijon in 1891, however, at the outbreak of World War One, he was living in London, where he worked as a jeweller. Qualifying as a jeweller in his native France in 1908, in that year he won a competition to work in London, where he both carried out freelance commissions and also worked as a designer for Cartier. His designs for the royal cypher for King George V can still be seen on some older British post boxes, for example, at Bembridge Post Office, Isle of Wight and this design influenced the designs for the cyphers of both King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. In addition, he designed the badge for the Royal Flying Corps, which later became the Royal Air Force. Married and the father of two children, he was enlisted into the British Army in 1916 and served on the Western Front with the 6th (City of London) Battalion, the London Regiment (City of London Rifles). He was killed on 21 May 1917 during the Battle of Bullecourt and has no known grave.

How an Aircraft Carrier Got Its Name.   When Australia's first aircraft carrier was acquired from the UK in the late 1940s, the ship's name, *Sydney*, was chosen in order to access the AU£426,000 raised by the HMAS Sydney Replacement Fund after the loss of the light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* in 1941. These funds had been raised by public subscription to enable the RAN to purchase a new HMAS *Sydney*. For the record, the aircraft carrier *Sydney* was the last vessel to be commissioned into the RAN as "His Majesty's Australian Ship" as after the death of King George VI on 6 February 1952 and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, all RAN ships became "Her Majesty's Australian Ship".

The Red Baron's Other Aussie Connection.   Second Lieutenant John (Jack) Hay, Royal Flying Corps, has the melancholy distinction of being the only Australian shot down by the infamous "Red Baron", Manfred von Richtofen. Hay travelled to the UK from Australia to enlist in the RFC and was eventually qualified as a pilot and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. He fatally met the "Red Baron" on the afternoon of 23 January, 1917, becoming von Richtofen's 17th aerial victory and the 19th man he killed. At the time of the action, Hay was serving with 40 Squadron, RFC and flying an FE8, while von Richtofen was flying an Albatross DIII. The after action account by von Richtofen records that: "The plane I had singled out caught fire after 150 shots, fired from a distance of 50 metres. Occupant fell out of plane at 500 metres height". Hay is buried in Aire Cemetery, France.

You're Late.   On 4 September 1945, the Japanese commander of Singapore, General Itagaki, accompanied by Vice Admiral Shigeru Fukudome and his aides, boarded the Royal Navy's heavy cruiser HMS *Sussex* in Keppel Harbour to discuss the surrender. They were received by Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Christison and Major-General Robert Mansergh. A tense encounter began when an English speaking Japanese officer curtly remarked: "You are two hours late". If this had been an attempt to establish dominance in the meeting, it failed when one of the senior British officers responded: "We don't keep Tokyo time here."

Think Small? During the Second World War, in an effort to maximize cargo space on European and Pacific bound ships, America instituted V, or Victory mail. The process, which originated in England, was the microfilming of specially designed letter sheets. Instead of using valuable cargo space to ship whole letters overseas, microfilmed copies were sent in their stead and then "blown up" at an overseas destination before being delivered to military personnel. V-mail ensured that thousands of tons of shipping space could be reserved for war materials. The 37 mail bags required to carry 150,000 one-page letters could be replaced by a single mail sack. The weight of that same amount of mail was reduced dramatically from 2,575 pounds to a mere 45. The system of microfilming letters was based on the use of special V-mail letter-sheets, which were a combination of letter and envelope. The letter-sheets were constructed and gummed so as to fold into a uniform and distinctively marked envelope. The user wrote the message in the limited space provided, added the name and address of the recipient, folded the form, affixed postage, if necessary, and mailed the letter. V-mail correspondence was then reduced to thumb-nail size on microfilm. The rolls of film were sent to prescribed destinations for developing at a receiving station near the addressee. Finally, individual facsimiles of the letter-sheets were reproduced about one-quarter the original size and the miniature mail was then delivered to the addressee. The first large US Army operated V-mail station overseas was opened on 15 April 1943 in a field at Casablanca, North Africa. Between 15 June 1942 and 1 April 1945, 556,513,795 pieces of V-mail were sent from the U.S. to military post offices and over 510 million pieces were received from military personnel abroad. In spite of the patriotic draw of V-mail, most people still sent regular first class mail. In 1944, for instance, US Navy personnel received 38 million pieces of V-mail, but over 272 million pieces of regular first class mail.

Bomber Command Statistics. Latest research from the UK gives the numbers in the table below for those who died on active service with Bomber Command during the Second World War:

Force	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	Total 1939-47
Royal Air Force	319	2661	4473	6183	11510	11749	2882	60	26	39863
Royal Australian Air Force			127	613	1083	1794	478			4095
Royal Canadian Air Force			470	1724	2920	3961	1108			10183
Royal New Zealand Air Force		31	181	531	452	398	110			1703
Polish Air Force		20	178	354	196	153	65	10	1	977
Free French Air Force			1		4	121	92			218
Royal Indian Air Force			4							4
Royal Norwegian Air Force					16*	17	2			35
South African Air Force						6	5			11
Women's Auxiliary Air Force			1	10	15	9	4	2		41
Attached personnel										
Royal Air Force	2			13	4	10	13		1	43
Royal Canadian Air Force						1				1
Royal New Zealand Air Force				2						2
Fleet Air Arm		7	1		3		1			12
United States Air Force			2	10	20	36				68
Women's Auxiliary Air Force						1				1
Army				8	4	1				13
Civilian				2	2					4
Total	321	2719	5438	9450	16229	18257	4760	72	28	57274
	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	Total 1939-47

Oops!   On 21 July 1915, the Swedish submarine and the depot-ship *Blenda* left the Swedish naval base at Ystad bound for the Baltic. While *Hvalen* sailed on time, *Blenda* was delayed, with the result that the distance between the two ships when the depot-ship cleared Ystad was almost two kilometres. At about 7.30 a.m. a German armed trawler sighted the submarine and, mistaking it for a British vessel, opened fire. The trawler fired between five to eight rounds at *Hvalen* before *Blenda* was able to get the German's attention and advise them frantically that they were firing at a neutral ship. Although none of the German shells actually hit *Hvalen*, several were near misses and one of these critically wounded a Swedish crewman, who died in Ystad hospital later the same day. The unfortunate man was one of approximately 900 Swedish naval and merchant seaman who died as a result of armed action during the First World War. These men are commemorated on a plaque in Skeppsholmen Church, in Stokholm.

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Irony Corner.   In 1886, Captain Henry W. Lawton, 4th US Cavalry, led the expedition that pursued and cornered the Apache leader Geronimo and it was Lawton who brought Geronimo in to surrender to General Nelson A. Miles at Skeleton Canyon, Arizona on 4 September. On 18 December 1899, during the Battle of Pay in the Philippine-American War, the now Major-General Lawton was killed by an insurrectionist soldier under the command of *insurrecto* leader Licerio Geronimo.

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