



The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH



LE GROGNARD!

May 2012

Committee 2011/2012

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NOTE: This Month's Branch Meeting

Tuesday 22th May, 7:00pm

Atlas Room, Hellenic Club in the City,

13 Moore St, Canberra

Branch News:

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The guest speaker for the May Branch meeting will be ACT Branch Member Graham Wilson, who will talk about his recently released book *Bully Beef and Balderdash Some Myth of the AIF Examined and Debunked*. Graham will talk about the book itself, and also the reaction to it.

As always, please let me know if you would like to give a presentation in the coming months, or can put forward the name of a suggested guest speaker. I'd also like to hear from you if there are any particular military history topics you might suggest that the Branch address at some point in the future.

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STOP PRESS - Biennial Conference of the Military Historical Society of Australia

PLEASE NOTE that this year's conference, which will be hosted by the ACT Branch, has been brought forward to Saturday 8 – Sunday 9 September 2012. [Originally scheduled for November the change has been made to enable participants, should they have an interest, to also attend the international history conference - "Kokoda: beyond the legend" - which will be held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra on Thursday 6 - Friday 7 September 2012.]

No theme has been set for the Society's conference – it is hoped that a wide range of military history topics will be covered. Members who would be interested in presenting a paper at the conference should contact the ACT Branch President – Ian Stagoll [ian.stagoll@gmail.com].

The conference will be held at the *Hellenic Club in the City*, 13 Moore St, Canberra, which is at the same location as the former RSL Club where the year 2000 and 2002 Society's conferences were held.

The fee for the conference, and for the conference dinner to be held on the Saturday evening, has not yet been finally determined. However, it is anticipated that the total cost to financial members of the Society will not exceed \$100.

Further details, as well as the conference Registration Form, will be available shortly on the Society's website: http://mhsa.org.au/national_conferences.html

Ian Stagoll

INTREP

Military Quote of the Month

"The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike him as hard as you can, and keep moving."

Ulysses S Grant

The Tatsinskaya Airfield Raid 1942. By December 1942, the Soviets had surrounded the German 6th Army in Stalingrad, cutting off all lines of supply except through the air. Seeking to sever this last German lifeline, Soviet Command decided to launch a raid with the entire 24th Tank Corps to seize the airfield at Tatsinskaya, the primary operating base for the German airlift efforts. On 17 December, the 24th Tank Corps advanced toward Tatsinskaya, seizing the airfield on Christmas Eve. The Soviet tankers succeeded in destroying many Luftwaffe aircraft on the ground, but afterwards found themselves isolated and out of fuel behind the German lines. Generalfeldmarschall Erich von Manstein rapidly organized a

counterattack with elements of two panzer divisions, crushing most of the raiding force between 26 and 28 December. Just before the raiding force was annihilated, it received permission to abandon its heavy equipment and escape back to Soviet lines on foot. Thus, the raiders accomplished their mission of severely disrupting the airlift to Stalingrad, but at the cost of an entire tank corps.

...And a Sickly Season? During the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), nearly 21 percent of Japanese majors and lieutenant colonels were killed in action (263 of 1,260) as were 15 percent of lieutenants and captains (1,453 of 9,694).

News From the UK Archives. This month sees the centenary of the creation of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). The RFC existed between 1912 and 1918. In July 1914 the RFC's naval wing was detached to form the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). On 1 April 1918 the two services were merged again to form the Royal Air Force (RAF). Read the TNA's research signposts on looking for RFC airmen and officers, and search and download digitised RAF records. The army campaign medal records also list over 26,000 members of the RFC and nearly 27,000 men of the RAF, also available on the TNA website.

US Pacific Carrier Operations 1944-45. Beginning in June 1944, during months of active operations, on average American aircraft carriers conducted strike operations about three out of every five days, normally executing 1.5 sorties per day for each aircraft embarked, of which about 25-30 percent of fighter sorties were primarily defensive. Operational tempo peaked at 20 days in one 30 day period in April-May of 1945, during the Okinawa Campaign and strikes against the Japanese Home Islands.

The Manning of the *Mary Rose*. King Henry VIII famous ship *Mary Rose* sank during an action against the French on 19 July 1545, her loss a combination of bad handling and bad luck. After the French withdrew, an attempt to salvage the *Mary Rose* was unsuccessful, and after some years the site of the wreck was forgotten. Rediscovered in 1971, *Mary Rose* was found to be in surprisingly good condition, and was raised in 1982. Since then the ship, conserved and preserved at Portsmouth, has revealed much about life, technology, and war in Tudor England. One of the more interesting results of the raising of the *Mary Rose* has been some insights into the human condition in mid-sixteenth century England, for in the wreck were found the remains of 179 sailors. Forensic analysis of the skeletons has determined that the crew comprised:

- Children, under 12 1
- Adolescents, 13-17 17
- Adults, 18-29 54
- Middle Aged, 30-40 15
- Older 1

Close examination of the bones revealed that many of these men and boys were not very well nourished in childhood. In addition, the bones showed indications of very heavy work from a young age. There were also healed or partially healed injuries, including 14 fractured skulls, three broken noses and three broken ankles. In addition, 84 percent of the crew were missing teeth.

Stalin Adopts the Profit Incentive. Finding that neither the lavish distribution of medals nor the systematic execution of "shirkers, defeatists, and cowards" were sufficient to properly motivate the men of the Red Army to fight harder, in 1943 Stalin introduced a system of cash

rewards for outstanding performance in combat. A lengthy schedule of cash payments was instituted to recognize outstanding performance in the field:

- Snipers, 500 rubles per kill, plus 200 for the sniper's assistant
- Anti-tank troops, 500 rubles per tank killed for the gunner, and 200 for each assistant
- Tankers, 500 rubles per tank killed to the commander, the gunner, and the driver, plus 200 for any other personnel
- Artillerymen, 500 rubles per tank killed to the commander and the gunner, plus 200 for each soldier serving the gun
- Aviators, 500 rubles per airplane killed to the commander, and 200 for any other aircrew
- AA troops, 500 rubles per airplane killed to the commander and the gunner, plus 200 for each soldier serving the gun.

Troops could also earn rubles by salvaging equipment on the battlefield. For the salvage of tanks, for example, there was a sliding scale depending upon type: for each KV or other heavy tank, 500 rubles, for T-34s or other medium tanks, 2,000 rubles, for T-60s or other light tanks, 500 rubles, with the money shared among the men effecting the recovery.

To put this in perspective, in 1943 the base pay of a private in the Red Army was just 600 rubles a year, a little more than \$20 at the prevailing exchange rate.

Ah, France! Tried for prematurely surrendering the fortress at Metz and his army to the Prussians in 1870, Marshal Achille Bazaine defended himself by saying, "There was no government, there was no order, there was nothing"; to which the old veteran, the duc d'Aumale, president of the court martial replied, "There was still France."

Private Young, 12th PA. On January 9, 1904, when Samuel B. M. Young, the first Chief-of-Staff of the U.S. Army, retired, he presented his lieutenant general's stars to his successor Adna Chaffee, with a note that read "From Private Young, Co. K, 12th Pennsylvania Volunteers". This was a reference to the unit in which Young had enlisted at the outbreak of the American Civil War on 25 April 1861. Young rose to high commissioned rank in the Union Army during the Civil, stayed on in the army as regular after the war and at his retirement in 1904 had spent a total of 15,599 days on active duty.

The Introduction of the Bayonet into the English Army. The origins of the bayonet are rather obscure. The weapon is traditionally associated with Bayonne, a port city at the foot of the Pyrenees in southwestern France, a town apparently noted for a type of hunting knife with a long slender blade. Various tales are told of how the practice of putting one of these at the end of a musket arose. One tradition holds that during feuds, local uprisings, or perhaps bandit excursions, some folks, having run out of ammunition, jammed their hunting knives into the muzzles of their muskets to improvise a spear. Another tale has it that men hunting bear or boar in the Pyrenees would jam a knife into the muzzle of their musket after firing rather than try the long process of reloading, just in case their target took offense. It's quite possible that there is an element of truth in both traditions. The first references to the military use of the bayonet come from about 1660. Soon afterwards it began to become common in both Spanish and French armies. By tradition it was introduced into the latter by Jean Martinet, who rose to Inspector General of the French Army before being killed by "friendly" artillery fire in 1672 (not "fraggd" as is commonly reported). The first allusion to bayonets in the English army, however, is found in a Royal Warrant of King Charles II dated April 2, 1672, which reads:

Our will and pleasure is, that a Regiment of Dragoones which we have established and ordered to be raised, in twelve Troopes of fourscore in each besides officers, who are to be under the command of Our most deare and most entirely beloved Cousin, Prince Rupert, shall be armed out of Our stoares remaining within our Office of the Ordinance, as followeth; that is to say, three corporalls, two sergeants, the gentlemen at armes, and twelve souldiers of each of the said twelve Troopes, are to have and carry each of them one halbard, and one case of pistolls with holsters; and the rest of the souldiers of the severall Troopes aforesaid are to have and to carry each of them one matchlocke musquet, with a collar of bandaliero, and also to have and to carry one bayonet or great knife. That each lieutenant have and carry one partizan, and that two drums be delivered out for each Troope of the said Regiment.

About Time. Between 1932 and 1935 the two land-locked South American nations of Bolivia and Paraguay fought a savage and bloody war known to history as The Chaco War. The war resulted in a resounding victory for Paraguay and saw an armistice signed between the two nations. The war was not officially over however, until 28 April 2009, when a formal peace treaty between Bolivia and Paraguay was finally signed.



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 249, Jamison Centre ACT 2614, or visit the Society's website: www.mhsa.org.au.