



The Military Historical Society of Australia  
ACT BRANCH



# ***LE GROGNARD!***

August 2012

**Committee 2011/2012**

**President:** Ian Stagoll - Ph: 6254 0199 (h) 0414 291 971 (m) [ian.stagoll@gmail.com]

**Vice President:** Tim Lyon - Ph: 0418 410 633 (m) [tim.lyon@smartchat.net.au]

**Secretary/Treasurer:** James Smith - Ph: 0414 946 909 (m) [jackieandjames@vtown.com.au]

**Assistant Secretary/Treasurer:** Bill Hooper - Ph: 0431 541 414 (m) [whooper1@vtown.com.au]

**Newsletter Editor:** Graham Wilson - Ph: 0415 594 057 (m) [duty\_first@hotmail.com]

## **This Month's Branch Meeting:**

**Tuesday 28 August, 7.00pm - AGM**

***Hellenic Club in the City***  
**13B Moore St, Canberra**

---

## **Branch News: SOME IMPORTANT MATTERS!**

**NB.** This month's Branch meeting - 7pm, 28 August at the *Hellenic Club in the City* - is the occasion of the **Annual General Meeting for the Branch**. Please make a point of attending, and help to determine the future strategy and forward program of the Branch.

Following the tabling of reports, the election of office-bearers for the coming year, and any other business, we will have an entertainment, of sorts – with prizes!

Third Prize: US\$ 1,000,000 to your designated Nigerian bank account!

Second Prize: A bottle of quite a nice red!

First Prize: Free registration to the Society's **Biennial Conference** [Saturday 8 - Sunday 9 September 2012] or a refund of the conference registration fee, should it be that you've already registered.

**A reminder**, for those who haven't already attended to it, that it's annual **membership renewal** time! The fee for Ordinary Membership has been maintained at \$40, and the fee for Family Membership has been reduced to the same amount - two for the price of one! You'll find a copy of the Membership Subscription Form elsewhere in this newsletter, and it is also available on the Society's Website [<http://www.mhsa.org.au/documents/membership-forms/mhsamembershipform-act.pdf>]. Should you not renew your membership before the end of this month you will no longer continue to receive the Society's journal *Sabretache*. If for any reason you have decided to discontinue membership of the Society I would much appreciate to hear why this is the case.

And a further reminder about the **Biennial Conference of the Military Historical Society of Australia - 2012** [Saturday 8 - Sunday 9 September 2012: *Hellenic Club in the City*, 13B Moore St, Canberra] - the conference will run over the two days from 10.00am to around 5.30pm., and a wide range of military history topics will be covered, with 16 presentations in all. If you haven't yet registered please do so without further delay. You'll find a copy of the Conference Registration Form elsewhere in this newsletter, and it is also available on the Society's Website [<http://www.mhsa.org.au/documents/conferences/MHSA-2012Conf-RegForm.pdf>]. Should you choose to attend for one day only the applicable fee is \$15. Further, if your spouse/partner wishes to attend the applicable fee is \$5 per day.

Please note that former Branch member Barry West passed away earlier this month.  
Vale Barry.

I draw attention to the circumstance that the Gallipoli lone pine at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance which had been irreversibly damaged by disease has been felled. Chairman of the Shrine Trustees, Air Vice-Marshal Chris Spence, advises that salvaged timber will be used in the proposed Galleries of Remembrance project at the Shrine. The tree is to be replaced by another propagated in 2006 from the Shrine's lone pine - a grandchild of the original in Turkey.

A number of Australian soldiers are said to have collected pinecones from the trees that the Turks had cut down to cover their trenches at what became known as Lone Pine, and that some of these eventually found their way back to Australia. The 80-year-old tree at the Shrine was one of four seedlings propagated from the seed of a cone collected from the Gallipoli battlefield by one such veteran.

The other three trees of those seedlings are still alive. They are planted at Wattle Park in suburban Melbourne, at the Soldiers Memorial Hall at The Sisters, near Terang, and in Warrnambool's Botanic Gardens.

Lastly, 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 aspects of military history you might suggest that the Branch address at some point in the future.

Ian Stagoll



# Upcoming Conference of Interest

The annual conference of the Australian Branch of the Orders and Medals Research Society will be held at Olim's Hotel, Ainslie, over the weekend of 19-21 October 2012. The conference attracts OMRS members from around Australia and from overseas (past conferences have been attended by Society members from Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom) and will feature presentations on a variety of medals related topics, both Australian and non-Australian, displays by members, a bourse (hopefully) and a conference dinner on the Saturday night.

The after-dinner speaker for this year's conference is David Mason, a Canberra raised lawyer who currently works for the Department of Defence, officer in the Army Reserve, former member of the *2e Régiment Étranger de Parachutistes* (2nd Foreign Parachute Regiment) of the Foreign Legion and author of *Marching With the Devil*, the highly acclaimed account of his time in the Foreign Legion.

Non-OMRS members are welcome to attend.

Any member who is interested in attending can contact Graham Wilson (OMRS member) at [duty\\_first@hotmail.com](mailto:duty_first@hotmail.com) for further details.

.....

## INTREP

### Military Quote of the Month

“God is not on the side of the big battalions, but on the side of those who shoot best.”

Voltaire

**Death of Sir John Keegan, KBE.** Sir John Keegan, one of the most well-known and highly respected military historians in the English speaking world died at his home in England on 2 August 2012. John Keegan, who was a lecturer in history at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst for 26 years is perhaps best known to the general public for the ground breaking television documentary and its companion book *Soldiers, a history of men in battle*, which he co-wrote for the BBC with Richard Holmes in 1985 for the BBC. If you have not seen the documentary, it is highly recommended and has been released on dvd. Keegan was one of those rare historians who believed that while the stage of history might be set by kings, presidents, dictators and generals, the history itself is written by grubby, exhausted and probably terrified soldiers who stand their ground on some muddy, blood soaked field far from home. INTREP credits Sir John Keegan for opening his own eyes to the “personal factor” in war and for putting him onto paths less trodden. Strangely, John Keegan never had any military service, a result of a childhood illness that left him with a mild disability which barred him from military service; he was always the first to acknowledge the irony of this when commenting on his choice of profession and his personal historical interests. Keegan was not without his critics in the historical world, especially those who challenged his contrary views

on Clausewitz, however, even one of the most vocal of those critics of his “anti-Clausewitzian” stance, Sir Michael Howard, could still state publicly that Keegan was “at once the most readable and the most original of living historians.” Sir John Keegan died quietly at home of natural causes and with his passing the world of military history has lost one of its guiding lights.

**Toot, toot!**

In the 1930s the Royal Air Force had a string of staging bases around the world, essential in those days of short range aircraft and no mid-air re-fuelling. Many of these bases were located in places that could at very best be describes as “God awful!” and apparently one of the most God awful was RAF Station Masirah, on the island of Masirah, about 20 kilometers off the coast of Oman, in the Arabian Sea. When the base was first established there were no roads and as all stores, equipment, personnel, rations, etc. had to be delivered by sea until the construction of a permanent airfield in the 1960s, the RAF built and operated a light railway from the sea front jetty to the station. The railway was constructed in 1930 by RAF engineers with the assistance of a detachment of Royal Engineers and was run and operated by RAF technicians trained at the British Army’s railway training school at Longmoor. The railway only operated between November and February, as it was impossible for ships to dock during the south-west monsoon period (March to October). The railway was decommissioned in 1961 following the opening of the station airfield and was originally abandoned and fell into disrepair; however, it was soon resurrected by volunteers with lots of time on their hands and not much else to do with it, and the railway operated most days, taking off-duty station personnel to and from the RAF water sports club at the old jetty, right up until the station was decommissioned and handed over to the Royal Air Force of Oman.



**RAF Station Masirah Narrow Gauge Railway**

**“Dawn Patrol” – RAF Station Masirah.**

One of the features of Masirah is that it is the site of the largest breeding ground for Loggerhead turtles in the world and also one of the rare locations for breeding Olive Ridley turtles. During the turtle breeding season airmen from RAF Station Masirah would be rostered on the “Dawn Patrol” to carry turtles back to the sea after they had exhausted themselves laying their eggs - if this had not been done many of the

exhausted adults would have perished within a very short time once the sun arose. Not surprisingly, the station badge of RAF Station Masirah featured a Loggerhead turtle.

**On Friday We're All Catholics.** INTREP was recently doing some research into the history of Grovely Army Camp during the Second World War and discovered a personal reminiscence of a man who had trained there who recalled that on Fridays, Catholics were provided with fish based meals in the mess. Apparently there was a regular mass conversion to Catholicism on Fridays in an attempt to cash in on the special Friday "Rock Crusher" fare, which was a welcome change from the usual dreary weekly meals on offer!

**Imperial Germany's Finnish Battalion.** In 1916, the Imperial German Army activated the *Königliche Preussisches Jäger-Bataillon 27* (Royal Prussian 27th Light Infantry Battalion), composed of some 2,000 Finnish nationalists seeking independence for their country from Russia. The *Jägers* fought with the 8th German Army from 1916 on the northern flank of the Eastern Front. After the outbreak of the Finnish Civil War, *Jägers* who wanted to fight on the "White" (anti-communist) side in the war were quietly released and given assistance to return to Finland. The *Jägers* provided 165 officers to the White forces, including three generals, 10 lieutenant generals and 12 major generals.

**The Spanish Pretender.** During the Second World War, the Spanish Ambassador to the British Court of St James was the formidably aristocratic Duke of Alba, Jacobo Maria del Pilar Carlos Manuel Fitz-James Stuart Falcó Palafox-Portocarrero y Osorio. An experienced and highly regarded professional diplomat who had served as Spanish foreign minister before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the duke had originally been appointed Franco's official representative to Britain during the civil war and had then been appointed ambassador with the formal British recognition of Franco as legitimate leader of Spain in 1939. Highly regarded by both sides of British politics, despite his aristocratic background in some cases, he was also well regarded by the British Royal Family, somewhat surprisingly given that he was a direct descendant of the deposed Stuart kings of England, and thus a legitimate pretender to the British throne!

**A Friend On High?** In 1855, during the planning for the Anglo-French invasion of the Crimea, Empress Eugénie of France reportedly have consulted her husband's late uncle, the Emperor Napoleon, for guidance, through the use of a Ouija board.

**Napoleon's Guards.** Speaking of the Corsican Corporal, by the end of 1812, out of some 1,050 who had begun the Russian Campaign, Napoleon's *Grenadiers á cheval* numbered only 127 men.

**Two Presidents.** The 23rd Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a Union infantry regiment during the American Civil War, can claim the unique distinction of having had two future Presidents of the United States serve in its ranks. Rutherford P. Hayes (President 1877-1881) was appointed major in the 23rd Ohio when the regiment was raised in 1861; Hayes had a tumultuous and exciting war, being wounded five times in battle and gaining recognition for his personal courage and eventually reached the rank of Major General of Volunteers. William McKinley (President 1897-1901) enlisted in the 23rd Ohio as a private at the same time as Hayes; Hayes, well-educated and from a trading family, was quickly promoted to Commissary Sergeant, although this did not keep him out of action and he fought with the 23rd Ohio at a number of actions, was eventually commissioned and finished the war as a major. After the war Hayes was offered a permanent commission in the US Army, but declined in order to return to the family business.

## The Russo-Turkish Wars

Countries that are neighbours are often at war with one another, and few have a longer record of neighbourly conflict than Russia and Turkey. Though the two countries have been at peace for nearly a century now, in the 350 years between 1568 and 1918 they came to blows over a dozen times, totaling nearly 50 years of hostilities, actually eclipsing England and France in the number of conflicts during the same period.

Prior to the mid-1500s, the two empires had little interaction, their territories being separated by the Tatar Khanate of the Crimea, to which the Russians paid tribute, and the Khanate of Astrakhan, both client states of the Ottoman Empire. That began to change in 1556, when Ivan the Terrible (*r.* 1533-1584) conquered Astrakhan.

- **First Russo-Turkish War (1568–1570):** In 1568 the Turks undertook a somewhat belated attempt to throw the Russians out of Astrakhan, with offensives against Astrakhan and Azov, at the mouth of the Don, but committed inadequate resources and lost.
- **Second Russo-Turkish War (1571–1574):** The Turks launched a second attempt to wrest Astrakhan from the Russians, with much more substantial forces, and an alliance with the Tatars. Initially the Russians suffered severe setbacks, the invaders devastating the central part of the country and even burning Moscow. But the Russians recovered, and inflicted several major defeats on the invaders. The war ended as a draw, leaving Russia in control of Astrakhan.
- *Hiatus:* For century, although Russia and the Tatars often fought, the two empire were occupied elsewhere, the Turks trying to expand in the Mediterranean and the Russians to the east and northwest, while both pitched in against Poland.
- **Third Russo-Turkish War (1676–1681):** The Turks undertook a new war with Russia. The Turks' alliance with some of the Ukrainians alienated many of the Cossacks, who then supported the Russians. Despite some fierce fighting, the war was essentially a draw, though the Russians did cease paying tribute to the Tatars.
- **Fourth Russo-Turkish War (1686–1700):** Peter the Great (*r.* 1682-1725) allied Russia with the Habsburgs, Poland-Lithuania, and Venice against the Ottomans, and conducted successful campaigns against the Crimea, securing some territorial gains, expanding rights for pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and gaining some other concessions.
- **Fifth Russo-Turkish War (1710–1711) – The Pruth Campaign:** Following his devastating defeat by Peter the Great at Poltava in 1709, King Charles XII of Sweden (*r.* 1697-1718) took refuge with the Turks, whom he convinced to declare war on Russia. A Russian attempt to invade the Danubian Principalities (today part of Romania) failed miserably, and Peter was forced to return some of the territories he had annexed in 1700.
- **Sixth Russo-Turkish War (1735–1739):** Allied with Austria, the Russians undertook a war to annex the Crimea. Although the Russians were generally successful, the Austrians did poorly, and when Sweden threatened to attack Russia, a compromise peace was concluded.
- **Seventh Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774):** A series of border incidents caused Catherine the Great (*r.* 1762-1796) to declare open war, in which the Russians were generally successful on all fronts, even operating a fleet in the Mediterranean which supported rebellions in Ottoman territories. Russia gained direct or indirect control of vast territories, including Southern Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus, and the Crimea.

- **Eighth Russo-Turkish War (1787–1792):** A Turkish attempt to reverse the results of the 1768-1774 war led to Russian victories on land and sea, as well as defeats at the hands of Austria, with some notable gains by both Russia and Austria.
- **Ninth Russo-Turkish War (1806–1812):** After Russia suffered several defeats by Napoleon in Europe the Ottomans allied themselves with France and attempted to secure control of the Danubian Principalities. The Russians generally did well, but gained only Bessarabia in a peace hastily concluded on the eve of Napoleon’s invasion of their country.
- **Tenth Russo-Turkish War (1828–1829):** Taking advantage of Ottoman reverses in the Greek War for Independence, the Russians undertook a remarkably successful war, gaining territory on the Danube, and control of Georgia and parts of Armenia in the Caucasus. The Turks also had to recognise the full autonomy of Serbia and the Danubian principalities, which essentially became Russian client-states.
- **Eleventh Russo-Turkish War (1853-1856) – the Crimean War:** A complex diplomatic imbroglio over the control of Christian sites in the Holy Land provided a pretext for France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire and Sardinia to go to war with Russia. Although fought on several fronts, the campaign in the Crimea was the major one, and the Russians suffered the loss of Sebastopol. At the peace table, however, the Russians made no notable territorial concessions, although a clause prohibited both them and the Turks from having a fleet in the Baltic, which greatly favoured the latter.
- **Twelfth Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878):** Inspired by Turkish atrocities in the Balkans, the Russians first backed local rebellions and then invaded. Campaigning more or less successfully in the Balkans (allied with Romania and Serbia), Russia gained some territories in the Caucasus and restoration of its right to have a fleet in the Black Sea. Her allies Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro attained full independence, while Bulgaria became autonomous of the Ottomans.
- **Thirteenth Russo-Turkish War (1914–1918) - World War I:** When the Turks allied with Germany, Russia opened a front against them in the Caucasus, where they were generally successful, gaining considerable territory. Their operations, however, were interrupted by the Russian Revolution, which permitted the Turks to regain some territory, despite their devastating losses elsewhere in the post-war settlement.

Since 1918, Russian and Turkish relations have often been testy, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when the Soviets demanded partial control of the Dardanelles, and the return of territories in the Caucasus that had been ceded to Turkey in 1918. The latter crisis disappeared after the United States extended military and economic assistance to the Turks.



*Anyone who has an interest in the study 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](http://www.mhsa.org.au).*



# Military Historical Society of Australia

Australian Business Number (ABN) 97 764 781 363

## ACT Branch

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION [1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013]

Ordinary Membership [including Family Membership - a couple domiciled at the same address]: \$40

#### MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Surname: .....

Given Name[s]: ..... Title: .....

Postal Address: .....

..... Postcode: .....

Telephone: [H] ..... [W] ..... [Mobile] .....

Email Address: ..... Date of joining the Society: .....

Military History Interests: .....

.....

I understand my details will only be used by the ACT Branch and the Federal Secretary of the Society to maintain correct records of my membership and for general administrative business, and by the Editor of the Society's Journal [*Sabretache*] for distribution purposes. I understand that the Society's constitution requires the Federal Secretary to maintain a membership register [including the *Sabretache* distribution address list].

In addition to information kept for those purposes:

I agree to my email details being included on the Federal Secretary's Econtact List which will be used solely to disseminate Society business and convey items of interest to members [including members' notices]: YES/NO

I wish to be included on the Members' Interests Register and give permission for my military history interests and my contact details to be included on the register: YES/NO

I understand that, at any time, I can revoke this permission for inclusion on the Federal Secretary's Econtact List and/or Members' Interests Register.

Please send the completed membership subscription form, together with Cheque/Money Order to:

ACT Branch Secretary, Military Historical Society of Australia  
PO Box 249, Jamison Centre ACT 2614

**OR:** Pay by direct deposit to MHSA ACT Branch Account: BSB Number 633-000, Account Number 144-324-712. [Reference details should include full name, suburb/town and postcode.]

**AND:** Forward the completed membership subscription form, together with a copy of the direct deposit receipt to:

ACT Branch Secretary, Military Historical Society of Australia  
PO Box 249, Jamison Centre ACT 2614

**OR:** Pay by direct deposit to MHSA ACT Branch Account: BSB Number 633-000, Account Number 144-324-712 [with appropriate reference details, as above], **AND** Email a copy of the completed membership subscription form, together with a copy of the direct deposit receipt to: [actsec@mhsa.org.au](mailto:actsec@mhsa.org.au)



## Military Historical Society of Australia

### Biennial Conference of the Military Historical Society of Australia - 2012

**Saturday 8 - Sunday 9 September 2012: *Hellenic Club in the City*, 13B Moore St, Canberra**

Anyone interested in presenting a paper at the conference should contact the ACT Branch President Ian Stagoll [ian.stagoll@gmail.com]. Fees for the conference have been kept to a minimum:

**Society Member: \$30**

**Non-Member: \$65 [includes 12 months subscription to the Society's Journal - *Sabretache*]**

Please note the cost of lunches is not covered by the conference fee, and thus will be at personal expense. The Club Bistro offers a good selection of meals within a price range of around \$10 to \$18.

**Optional Conference Dinner: \$35**

The dinner, which on this occasion will be informal, will be on the Saturday evening from 7.30pm at the ***O'Stratos Greek Taverna***, 9 Lonsdale St, Braddon [approx. 350 metres from the conference venue]. On offer will be a banquet menu, served at table, comprising entrees, salads, four main dishes, dessert, and tea or coffee. Again, please note that the cost of beer/wine/spirits/soft drinks is not included as part of the banquet menu and thus will be at personal expense.

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Surname: .....

Given Name[s]: ..... Title: .....

Postal Address: .....

..... Postcode: .....

Telephone: [H] ..... [W] ..... [Mobile] .....

Email Address: .....

<b>I am a Life Member/Fellow of the Society</b>	<b>\$30</b>
<b>I am a Corresponding Member of the Society</b>	<b>\$30</b>
<b>I am a Member of the .....</b>	<b>Branch of the Society \$30</b>
<b>I am not currently a Member of the Society</b>	<b>\$65</b>
<b>I wish/do not wish to attend the optional Conference Dinner</b>	<b>\$35</b>
<b>I wish/do not wish to bring a guest to the Conference Dinner</b>	<b>\$35</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$.....</b>

Please send the completed registration form, together with Cheque/Money Order to:

ACT Branch Secretary, Military Historical Society of Australia  
PO Box 249, Jamison Centre ACT 2614

**OR:** Pay by direct deposit to MHSA ACT Branch Account: BSB Number 633-000, Account Number 144-324-712. [Reference details should include full name, suburb/town and postcode.]

**AND:** Forward the completed registration form, together with a copy of the direct deposit receipt to:  
ACT Branch Secretary, Military Historical Society of Australia  
PO Box 249, Jamison Centre ACT 2614

**OR:** Pay by direct deposit to MHSA ACT Branch Account: BSB Number 633-000, Account Number 144-324-712 [with appropriate reference details, as above] **AND:** Email a copy of the completed registration form, together with a copy of the direct deposit receipt to: actsec@mhsa.org.au