



## Van Arty Association and RUSI Van Members News June 12, 2018

Newsletters normally are emailed on Monday evenings. If you don't get a future newsletter on time, check the websites below to see if there is a notice about the current newsletter or to see if the current edition is posted there. If the newsletter is posted, please contact me at [bob.mugford@gmail.com](mailto:bob.mugford@gmail.com) to let me know you didn't get a copy.

**Newsletter on line.** This newsletter, and previous editions, are available on the Vancouver Artillery Association website at: [www.vancouvergunners.ca](http://www.vancouvergunners.ca) and the RUSI Vancouver website at: <http://www.rusivancouver.ca/newsletter.html> . Both groups are also on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=vancouver%20artillery%20association> and <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=rusi%20vancouver>

**Wednesday Lunches** - We serve a great 5 course buffet meal for only \$20. Hope to see you all there. Guests are always welcome, and we encourage members to bring their significant others. Dress - Jacket and tie, equivalent for Ladies. **Note: NO lunches on June 20 and 27. Mrs Lum is on vacation.** Lunches resume on July

**Upcoming events – Mark your calendars** See attached posters for details.

June 20 **No lunch**

June 27 **No lunch**

July 01 1200hrs, Canada Day Salute, Hallelujah Point, Stanley Park

### World War 2 – 1943

*John Thompson Strategic analyst - quotes from his book "Spirit Over Steel"*

**June 16<sup>th</sup>:** US aviators from Henderson Field claim 93 kills of Japanese aircraft as they mass to attack US shipping. Convoys of new troops designated for the invasion of Sicily leave the US and the UK.

**June 18<sup>th</sup>:** Churchill kicks Wavell upstairs by making him Viceroy of India, and Auchinleck receives a similar promotion to Commander in Chief of Forces in India. Both, Wavell particularly, deserved better, having handled far greater responsibilities with far fewer resources than their successors would have to face.

**June 20<sup>th</sup>:** The Japanese attack on the 17<sup>th</sup> Australian Brigade near Mubo on New Guinea goes nowhere, while General Kreuger forms the 6<sup>th</sup> Allied Army HQ far to the rear at Milne Bay.

RAF bombers hit Friedrichshafen on a “shuttle” trip to North Africa and will hit Spezia on their return trip on the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Somebody has to be the worst shot in the fleet -- I26 surfaces off Estevan Point in British Columbia and attempts to hit the lighthouse with its deck gun; after 25 missed shots they submerge and leave Canadian waters.

**June 21<sup>st</sup>:** Marine raiders land on the southern tip of New Georgia, but the Japanese are absent. Jean Moulin, who united the French Resistance for General de Gaulle, is captured near Lyons; he will be brutally interrogated until he dies. Vice Admiral Takeo Takagi receives his last assignment. After being involved in the invasion of the Philippines and commanding Japanese forces in the Battle of the Java Sea, he is assigned to command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet (a submarine force) on Saipan. Heroes of the Order of the Golden Kite are expected to set an example, and he will fall in battle on land during the defence of Saipan, a year hence.

**June 22<sup>nd</sup>:** The Free French decide that Giraud will command their forces in Africa, while DeGaulle will be the overall commander of all their forces.

**June 23<sup>rd</sup>:** In Australia, Prime Minister Curtin’s government beats a censure motion by one vote, and so he decides to call an election. American troops land on Woodlark Island off New Guinea.

## **D-Day Vet Taking Leap of Faith, 74 Years Later**

*Brigadier- General, (Retired) Ernie Beno*



*Brigadier-General (Retired) Ernie Beno congratulates Major (Retired) Jack Commerford, (right) on his ‘Leap of Faith’, presenting him with an Airborne Gunner T-shirt and coin. Jack is the newest, and amongst the oldest, of the Canadian Airborne Gunners.*

Jack Commerford of Ottawa, born in Newfoundland, joined the Army at 18. He served in Normandy 1944 in the 8<sup>th</sup> Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> HAA Regiment, RCA. He believes that he is the last surviving member of the 8<sup>th</sup> HAA Battery (a Charlottetown PEI/Saint John NB Battery). After the War he went on to serve in 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment but just as they were to go to Korea he became a Legal Officer. His Platoon in the RCR was ambushed, and he lost many a friend including the Platoon Commander, his best buddy. He went on and rose to the rank of Major in the JAG Branch.

After his military career he served as a Pension Advocate at Veterans Affairs for 18 years. Jack participated in the D-Day ceremonies at the Juno Beach Centre in 2014, the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day. He intends to be there for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2019. On June 9, 2018, he completed a tandem parachute jump in Gananoque Ontario to celebrate his recent 94<sup>th</sup> Birthday and in honor of D-Day. *See CBC item "D-Day vet taking leap of faith, 74 years later"*

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/jack-commerford-parachuting-after-second-world-war-1.4693469>

### **Jack's Story:**

I started as a boy soldier on reaching the age of 17 in June 1941. At age 18, I became a machine gun instructor and received training as an anti-aircraft gunner. During the summer of 1943, I proceeded overseas and was posted to the 8th Battery of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment. I served as an anti-aircraft gunner on the English coast (Dover, Folkstone, Hove and Brighton) until the summer of 1944. It was then we landed on Juno Beach in Normandy, France. After the landing, my battery was mostly in a field role at Caen and Falaise during the Battle of Normandy. After Normandy we proceeded up the coast of France, engaging the enemy at Boulogne, Calais, Cap-Gris-Nez, (exchanging fire with the cross-channel guns) and Dunkirk. From Caen to Dunkirk our battery fired over 20,000 50 lb. shells. From there we advanced through Belgium, the Netherlands and into Germany. On VE Day (May 8, 1945) I was somewhere in Northern Germany. We had been given the order to cease fire on May 5, 1945 and Germany's surrender became official on May 8<sup>th</sup>. I had an overwhelming sense of freedom which I expressed by walking away from my battery position into unknown German territory. I was extremely grateful that the war was finally over and I was still in one piece. From that point on I simply looked forward to going back home. The men of my battery were mostly farmers, fishermen, and miners from the Maritimes.

### **Juno75 the 75th anniversary of D-Day on June 6 2019:**

Gunner/Major Jack Commerford intends to attend next year's 75th anniversary of the Juno Beach landing and battles for Normandy. He wishes to be part of the Juno Beach Centre ceremonies and the dedication of the 25 pounder monument at Point 67, south of Caen, to take place just after the D-Day ceremonies.

The Juno Beach Centre is Canada's Second World War museum and cultural centre located in Normandy, France. The Centre pays homage to the 45,000 Canadians who lost their lives during the War, of which 5,500 were killed during the Battle of Normandy and 359 on D-Day. Opened in 2003 by veterans and volunteers with a vision to create a permanent memorial to all Canadians who served during the Second World War, the Centre's mandate is to preserve this legacy for future generations through education and remembrance.

The Juno Beach Centre helps to give visitors a better understanding of the contribution that Canada made to the Second World War. At the same time, by showcasing contemporary Canada, the Centre allows visitors to learn more about Canadian values and culture.

The [permanent](#) and [temporary](#) exhibits alternate between areas of emotion, reflection, discovery and remembrance, eliciting the visitor's participation.

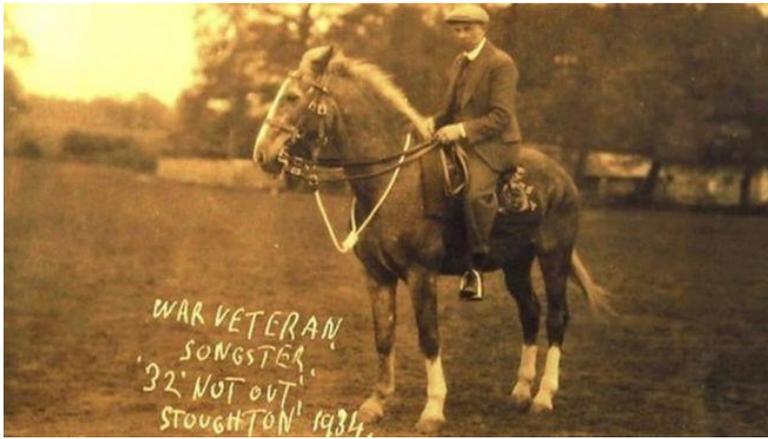
June 6, 2019 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign. The Juno Beach Centre looks forward to welcoming thousands of Canadians through their door during this important anniversary year. Several Canadian travel companies will be offering a variety of options for travelling to Normandy in 2019. If you're interested in joining their tours, or planning your own trip to Normandy, take a look at the information in the links below!

<https://www.junobeach.org/planning-a-trip-to-france-for-d-day75/>

<http://www.junobeach.org/juno75/>

## **Indomitable War Horse 'Songster' to Get New Cross**

Cross to be rededicated to Leicestershire Regiment's horse that served in WW1. 3 June 2018



*After World War One Songster was cared for by war veteran Sgt Major Harry Poole at his Leicestershire farm*

Songster was sent to France in 1914 and returned home five years later to be cared for by Sgt Major Harry Poole on a farm. The war horse with an "indomitable spirit"

became a local celebrity. He died at the age of 40 in 1940. About eight million mules and horses died in the war and thousands more were slaughtered at the war's end.

*Songster was 14 in 1914 so was considered somewhat old and small for a war horse at the time*

Mary Baird, co-organiser of the rededication ceremony on Sunday, said Songster was one of a handful of horses to return home in 1919.

She said most were killed in the fighting or sold for meat or glue in the final days. "Songster was lucky to have been found again in France by Bert Main and then bought again at auction in London by those who were aware of his strength of character," Ms Baird said. "That he survived so long was down to his indomitable spirit, the care and love he had, both in France and back again in



England, and I imagine a perverse streak that kept him going." "Perhaps it was the beer that he drank in The Old Boot Hotel in Loughborough," she added. Songster died in his stable on the farm in 1940. He was also buried there with the medal ribbons he had earned.



*Songster's original grave marker is on display at the Carillon War Memorial Museum in Loughborough*

## **Britain Tried to Kill Kaiser Wilhelm in 1918 With RAF Bombing Raid**

In Germany it might well have turned the increasingly unpopular Kaiser into a martyred war hero and so perhaps even have saved the monarchy from collapse.

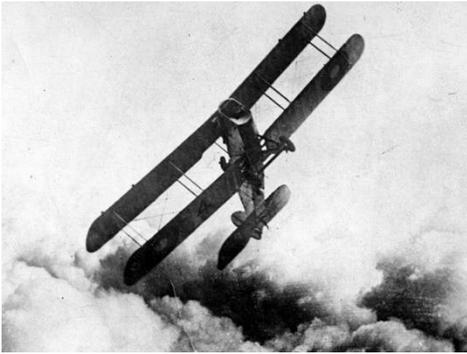
*David Keys 29 May 2018 The Independent Online*



*It would have been unprecedented for Britain to target a head of state – especially a royal one who was the British king's first cousin  
(US Library of Congress)*

Remarkable unpublished evidence has revealed that in the final year of the First World War Britain attempted to kill Germany's leader, Kaiser Wilhelm II. The secret mission failed – but only just. The evidence – largely unpublished documentation in the RAF Museum's archives and documents in a private archive in France – show that exactly 100 years ago this Saturday, a squadron of 12 bombers took off from an airfield near Boulogne to bomb a French chateau which, intelligence work had revealed, was being used by the Kaiser as his secret Western Front operational residence. The full story – partly revealed in a new book just published – started in late March 1918 when the German army launched the first of a series of major new offensives against the Allies.

The massive attacks were initially successful – but nevertheless some German soldiers were captured by the Allies. Some of these German PoWs were interrogated by French Intelligence – and one of them revealed to his interrogators that the Kaiser had just taken up residence at a chateau immediately outside a small French village called Trelon, three miles from the Belgian frontier. By coincidence, one of the intelligence section's interpreters on the staff of the famous French general, Philippe Pétain, was the owner of that chateau. In mid-April 1918 he was given the job of interrogating the German prisoner-of-war in more detail – and, by using local knowledge, to check the veracity of the revelation. This interrogator (a French officer named Frédéric de Merode) and his commanding officer then went to tell Pétain what they had discovered. At some stage – probably in May and presumably in conjunction with the British – an "in principle" decision was taken to bomb the chateau. Indeed, De Merode (the chateau owner) was asked by the French military to give them permission to bomb the building. Patriotically, he agreed. German sources reveal that the Kaiser stayed there on at least three occasions – from 21 March to 2 April; from 5 April to 15 April; from mid-May to 1 June and possibly from around 26 April to around 1 May.



*A dozen RAF De Havilland-4 bombers dropped bombs on the Kaiser's secret Western Front residence (Detroit Public Library)*

It may well be that British intelligence wanted to learn further details before any final political or military green light could be given to try to kill the Kaiser.

After all, they would probably only get one opportunity. If it failed, he would nevertheless realise that the Allies knew exactly where he was living and he would therefore promptly change his Western Front operational residence. British intelligence officers in Amsterdam in neutral Holland had frequent contact with an underground espionage network in German-occupied Belgium and northern France called La Dame Blanche (The White Lady). It is known that the LDB had agents in the Trelon area – so it is likely that further information on the Kaiser's movements was passed on (via Amsterdam) to British intelligence HQ in London. However, there was always a time delay – so information was always slightly out of date. At the same time that the Allies discovered the precise location of the Kaiser (and more importantly realised that he was within bombing range), the German Spring offensive was giving British and French forces a terrible battering. The Germans were succeeding in pushing the Allies back more than 40 miles. What's more, in late May, at the battle of Chemin des Dames, the Germans captured 45,000 Allied troops and 400 field guns. For the Allies, it was a catastrophe. At that stage, even in late Spring, 1918, they must have feared that the Germans might even win the war.

*Chateau owner Frédéric de Merode gave permission for the building to be bombed (Les Meloures)*



So, it was in those dire circumstances that the French and the British appear to have finally decided to try to kill the German emperor.

Having taken off from Ruisseauville Airfield (near Boulogne-sur-Mer) at 4.50am on Sunday 2 June, 12 RAF De Havilland-4 bombers reached the Kaiser's secret Western Front residence at Trelon at 5:25am. They dropped up to a dozen 50kg bombs and up to 24 11kg ones. However, unbeknown to British Intelligence, the same German military successes that had probably triggered the bid to kill Kaiser Wilhelm, had also led him to leave the chateau to congratulate his generals at the front. As a result, he had left his Western Front operational residence 19 hours before the RAF struck. What's more, the British aircraft chose to attack at an altitude of only 500 feet – and to do so in single file. As a result the smoke from the initial few bombs billowed skywards and prevented many of the succeeding pilots from seeing their target.

The chateau itself therefore remained largely unscathed – although the Imperial cars parked in front of the building were destroyed, their petrol filled tanks and rubber tyres no doubt

contributing to the, in this case quite literal, fog of war. However, as the bombing raid unfolded, one of the emperor's Imperial trains was heading at high speed along the private railway line that led to the chateau's private station. The British aircraft succeeded in pumping 800 rounds of machine gun fire into its five carriages. It's likely that a number of people on that train were killed and injured. But the Kaiser was relatively safe and sound – 25 miles away. But ironically he was not in a good mood. For by the time he had reached the front, the German advance had finally been repulsed. Covered in dust, he confided to his aides just how disappointed and downcast he felt. Bizarrely, it seems that even four days after the RAF attempt to kill him, nobody had informed him or his aides about the raid on his secret Western Front residence. Indeed, the diary of a senior adviser, records a discussion in which they reflected on how dangerous it was where they were (by the side of a large ammunition store) and how it would be better to return to the safety of the chateau. In the end, however, they just moved a few miles away.

It's almost certain that the Kaiser must have learned about the raid shortly after that move – for a senior aide's diary indicates that he never again returned to the chateau at Trelon. Now that the Allies knew he had been staying there, it had obviously become a potentially very dangerous place for him to base himself. The attack has remained largely unknown since it took place exactly 100 years ago. The British and the French obviously did not want to tell the world about a failed mission – and, of course, the Germans did not want to advertise the fact that their emperor was still alive due only to good luck. Knowledge of some aspects of the attack lived on in and around the village of Trelon and in the memories of the descendants of some of those pilots and others involved. But it does not feature in any major published works on First World War history or on the early days of the RAF. The author of the book, *The Kaiser's Dawn*, due for release this weekend, found out about the secret raid from the grandson of one of the RAF pilots. “As president of the Guild of Battlefield Guides, I was leading a tour of the Western Front and became aware of some unpublished First World War RAF documents. I was astonished. I had stumbled across an historically important treasure trove that revealed secrets which have been largely hidden for a hundred years,” said writer, military historian John Hughes-Wilson, a retired Colonel in British Intelligence.

But there are still three major mysteries surrounding the attack. Trying to assassinate your enemy's head of state, especially a royal one who was the British king's first cousin, was to put it mildly, a very serious, sensitive and potentially controversial matter. So, who was it in Britain who actually authorised the attack? It's very likely that the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, would have had to authorise the mission, especially as it involved the RAF. But there is no proof that he did so, or even that he knew about it beforehand. Deliberately trying to kill an enemy head of state was a very rare event in history and it is not the sort of thing civilised governments were supposed to do. After all, it was an accusation of state complicity in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand – not even of a head of state – that had triggered the war in the first place. Certainly there is no evidence that Britain ever tried to assassinate a major enemy's head of state in the many wars of the 18th century, in the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century or even in the Second World War. Indeed, the only British plan to

assassinate Adolf Hitler was, in the end, vetoed by Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill. The raid on Trelon in 1918 is therefore potentially unique – and an aberration from normal political and military convention. The second mystery is the timing of the raid. Was it triggered by German military success in March, April and May 1918. Was it therefore an act of Allied desperation? Or had it, in principle, been envisaged long before – only to be carried out when appropriate intelligence information came to light? But the third mystery is a more mundane tactical one – but in a sense equally interesting. Why did the RAF attack in single file, when they might have been expected to realise that smoke would risk compromising a low level single file approach?



*The Kaiser's Dawn: the untold story of Britain's secret mission to murder the Kaiser in 1918' by John Hughes-Wilson (Unicorn Publishing)*

The chateau still stands – and is today a popular local tourist attraction. Remarkably, many of the key documents relating to the secret raid – including RAF pilots' logbooks, a hand-drawn map of the target area and the original French Intelligence report – have survived unpublished in British and French archives. “This is a sensational revelation and one can only wonder how world opinion would have reacted if the raid had been successful. In Germany it might well have turned the increasingly unpopular Kaiser into a martyred war hero and so perhaps even have saved the monarchy from collapse less than six months later, providing the defeated nation with an element of stability in an otherwise revolutionary situation full of future menace,” said the world's leading expert on Kaiser Wilhelm II, Professor John Röhl of the University of Sussex. John Watts, the grandson of one of the RAF airmen involved in the raid, believes that much more information on the raid must still exist in as yet un-studied files in archives in Britain, France and possibly Germany. “My grandfather's role was always part of family folklore. The remarkable new details now emerging from sources in northern France and RAF files is at last beginning to reveal what really happened,” said Mr Watts, a West Midlands military history enthusiast.

## **Vancouver Artillery Association Yearbook Updates**

The weekly updates are a little slim as your editor has been busy organizing a beer tasting event in Langley. Check out the details here. [www.tipntatse.com](http://www.tipntatse.com)

Here's the latest additions to the website. Have you got any photos or stories to share?

The 9 Pounder Club <http://www.vancouvergunners.ca/9-pounder-club.html>

Russia Tour <http://www.vancouvergunners.ca/battlefield-tour-2019.html>

Christmas Card 1962 <http://www.vancouvergunners.ca/1962.html>

12th Canadian Field Artillery <http://www.vancouvergunners.ca/2018.html>

Keep those stories, calendar events and pictures coming! Contact Leon Jensen at [president.vcrgunners@gmail.com](mailto:president.vcrgunners@gmail.com)

## Who Is It



**Last Week:** These dedicated Gunners are hauling a 9-pr Muzzle Loading Rifle up a very steep slope, dressed in best ‘bib and tucker’. In reality, we removed helmets and jackets. Here, two detachments have combined to pull the first teams’ gun up and then would pull the second gun up. Horses would have been walked up separately, likely backpacking the ready use ammunition. The gun is a similar model to the one we now proudly display on the Armoury floor.

**This Week:** We return to something a bit more to the taste of some of you this week with a very nice photo of two distinguished gentlemen. Most of you will recognize the illustrious warrior on the right, but, in case you don’t, I won’t tell you. Looking at his chest, one can see that he was awarded almost as many medals, orders, and decorations as a DPRK general (or US Army sergeant). So, not too many points for identifying him.



However, the other distinguished gentleman might not be familiar to most of you. Nonetheless, he saw honourable service in the armed forces, and, even more so in his post-war civilian life. In fact, most who know of him have forgotten his military service, so over-shadowing was his service to the world at peace. Our question concerns him. Who was he? There is one clue, and one only. The setting of this photo is that of what once was the UBC Faculty Club.

Send your erudite and scholarly responses to our equally erudite editor, [bob.mugford@outlook.com](mailto:bob.mugford@outlook.com) or to the author, John Redmond ([johnd.redmond@telus.net](mailto:johnd.redmond@telus.net)). Remember, “Tuum Est”!  
**From the ‘Punitary’**

Why couldn't the leopard play hide and seek? Because he was always spotted.

## Murphy’s Other Laws

To err is human, to forgive is not company policy

## Quotable Quotes

They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. - *Andy Warhol*



*The Naval Officers' Association of British Columbia  
Founded 1919*

*MONTHLY LUNCH PROGRAM  
Wednesday June 27th 2018*

**LOCATION VENUE CHANGE**  
*Royal Vancouver Yacht Club  
3811 Point Grey Road,  
Vancouver, BC.*

*1130 am assemble  
1200 noon lunch  
1.00 pm-2.00 pm speaker*

*Dress – Business attire or blazers slacks tie*

*The topic is: “Ocean Strong Canada*

*Dealing with the Drifters in Canadian Waters 2014-2018 - A New Way”*

*L. Joseph Spears*

*Vice President  
Government Relations  
Viking International Response  
Managing Director Horseshoe Bay Marine Group*

**IMPORTANT-LUNCH ARRANGEMENTS**

- 1. If you are attending for lunch I MUST know on or before Sunday June 24<sup>th</sup> 2018. There will be a general and varied menu to order food from on the day but the RVYC want to know how many people are attending.*
- 2. PLEASE BRING CASH TO PAY FOR LUNCH – We have to put all lunches on one bill and individual Card Transactions will not be possible. There is no ATM cash machine at RVYC.*

*E mail or phone or text David Reece 778-227-8203 [dreese@telus.net](mailto:dreese@telus.net)*

