



**Vancouver Artillery
Association News**



RUSI News
Vancouver

Van Arty Assoc and RUSI Van Members News June 11, 2013

Wednesday Lunches

Lunches in the 15th Field Officers Mess continue with Mrs Lum cooking at home and bringing the food in. The decision has been made to renovate the upstairs (Mess) kitchen at an estimated cost of \$30-35,000. A good start has been made on fundraising and efforts are continuing; watch this newsletter for events and campaigns.

Your guests are always welcome – just don't forget to tell them that jacket and tie are required for men, equivalent for women.

Lunches will continue through the summer.

Remember to drop your lunch ticket in the bowl when you pick up your soup & salad.

And finally, PLEASE DO NOT PARK IN THE VEHICLE COMPOUND!!

Remembering the Alamo: My Year in Afghanistan - Chapter 3

By Colonel Peter Williams Publication date: 13 December 2012

Col Williams is currently deployed on Operation ATTENTION as commander of the KMTC Training Advisory Group. He is the senior serving Canadian gunner officer in the Afghan training program at this time.

Since I last wrote, Remembrance Day has come and gone. For the team here at Camp Alamo, it was significant for two reasons: first we were graced with a visit by the Honourable Peter MacKay, our Minister of National Defence, and second, all the contingents assembled for the Remembrance Day ceremony, including our Afghan National Army colleagues. During his short stay with us, Minister MacKay found the time to meet senior representatives from all the many national contingents at the Kabul Military Training Centre (KMTC), speak to the troops, give out awards, join a ball-hockey game and even score a goal, and eat supper with the soldiers. By coincidence or not, supper was one of the dining facility's specialties: home-made hamburgers. (The ones with the jalapenos are best!) We were glad for the presence of our Afghan colleagues at the Remembrance Day ceremony they even wore poppies for the occasion, and they laid a wreath. All in all it was an 11 November with a difference and one that I'm sure we'll remember for a while yet.

The "relief in place" (RiP) of *Operation ATTENTION* is now complete, so the Canadian contingent here at KMTC is all new faces except for me and Regimental Sergeant-Major; we are here for a year. The new rotation comes mostly from Canadian Forces units in Quebec, so the Newfie count here at Camp Alamo has accordingly reduced to two, I'm told. One of the treasures of camp life is a rock band called the Alamo Phylve, originally formed by a group of U.S. contractors. Whenever we have a major turnover of people, there is concern that the new group will not be musically inclined. We had no fears with the current Canadian contingent,

however, so Minister MacKay was treated to some tunes notably material from Stevie Ray Vaughan during his visit. The minister even signed a few guitars for the band members. The Alamo Phyve play weekly sets if ever you're in the neighbourhood.

The capacity and capabilities of our ANA colleagues continue to progress, which is the main reason why we're here. We have reduced the number of training advisors as the ANA increasingly demonstrate the ability to carry on in our absence. KMTC is one of the most-visited ANA installations in Kabul, and more and more the Afghans are organizing these visits from start to finish themselves, rather than let us do it, as was past practice. And so, at very short notice, KMTC hosted a very successful visit by journalists from the *Los Angeles Times*. A pity they didn't bring their weather with them as the mornings here are starting to get a bit chilly! Likewise, when KMTC recently suffered a power outage, I was impressed at how our Afghan colleagues handled it. After first receiving assurances that critical functions such as the clinic or the kitchen would not be affected, I decided that the KMTC Training Advisory Group would do nothing, and let the ANA respond. And respond they did, with improvised indoor lighting, so their weekly Commander's Conference could proceed uninterrupted, and we all continued to have chai at our first meeting in the morning. With no help from us, the KMTC staff achieved full restoration of power in a few days. A small thing perhaps, but for the largest ANA training centre in Kabul, and one which will have to be self-sustaining by the time we leave, I thought this was a good sign for the future.

Snow is starting to appear on the surrounding mountains, and we're already thinking about which member of our Alamo family will play Santa Claus.

Battle of Midway: An unexpected victory

By Jason Kelly: – June 2, 2013

This week, the Navy will commemorate the 71st anniversary of the Battle of Midway. The battle, which took place June 4 to 7, 1942, changed the course of the war in the Pacific and highlighted naval aviation's vast capabilities. In this blog, the Naval History and Heritage Command explains why the Battle of Midway was an unexpected victory.



Scene on board USS Yorktown (CV 5), shortly after she was hit by three Japanese bombs, June 4, 1942. Dense smoke is from fires in her uptakes, which was caused by a bomb that punctured them and knocked out her boilers. (US Navy photo)

What was it about the Battle of Midway that's important enough to talk about today and why are people still surprised – 71 years later – that the US Navy was victorious? The Battle of Midway, which was fought over and near the tiny US mid-Pacific base at Midway Atoll, represented the strategic high-water mark of Japan's Pacific Ocean war. Prior to the battle,

Japan possessed general naval superiority over the United States and could usually choose where and when to attack. The Battle of Midway shifted the naval power dynamic of WWII. After Midway, the two opposing fleets were essentially equals, and that shift enabled the United States to take the offensive.

The battle began when Japanese naval forces moved on the base in an effort to draw out and destroy the US Pacific Fleet's aircraft carrier striking forces, which had embarrassed the Japanese Navy in mid-April during the Doolittle Raid on Japan's home islands and then again at the Battle of Coral Sea in early May. Japan's navy planned to quickly knock down Midway's defenses, follow up with an invasion of Midway's two small islands and establish a Japanese air base there. Their plan was for the US carriers to arrive at Midway too late to save island and for Japanese forces to have a sweeping victory after US naval forces proved insufficient compared to well-tested strength of their carrier air power.

How did the US Navy seize the victory and shift the naval power dynamics? The easy answer is superior intelligence. American communications intelligence deduced Japan's plan well before battle began and allowed Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, US Pacific Fleet commander, to establish an ambush with Navy carriers ready and waiting for the Japanese. On June 4, 1942, the trap – the second of the Pacific War's great carrier battles – was sprung. US naval aviators' perseverance, sacrifice and skill, and a great deal of good luck on the American side cost Japan four irreplaceable fleet carriers; only one of the three US carriers present was lost. Although the base at Midway was damaged by Japan's air attack, the base remained operational and later became a vital component in the American trans-Pacific offensive.

Why is Midway still remembered as one of the most important WWII battles?

"This memorable American victory was of cardinal importance, not only to the United States but to the whole Allied cause...At one stroke, the dominant position of Japan in the Pacific was reversed." Winston Churchill

US Special Operations Command Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md (US Army News Service)



Army researchers are responding to a request from the US Special Operations Command for technologies to help develop a revolutionary Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit. The Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit, or TALOS, is an advanced infantry uniform that promises to provide superhuman strength with greater ballistic protection. Using wide-area networking and on-board computers, operators will have more situational awareness of the action around them and of their own bodies.

The US Army Research, Development and Engineering Command, known as RDECOM, is submitting TALOS proposals in response to the May 15 request.

"There is no one industry that can build it," said SOCOM Senior Enlisted Advisor Command Sgt Maj Chris Faris during a panel discussion at a conference at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla, recently reported Defense Media Network. The request, currently posted on Federal Business Opportunities, is looking for technology demonstration submissions from research and development organizations, private industry, individuals, government labs and academia to support the command-directed requirement issued by Adm William McRaven, USSOCOM commander.

"[The] requirement is a comprehensive family of systems in a combat armor suit where we bring together an exoskeleton with innovative armor, displays for power monitoring, health monitoring, and integrating a weapon into that -- a whole bunch of stuff that RDECOM is playing heavily in," said. Lt Col Karl Borjes, an RDECOM science advisor assigned to SOCOM. TALOS will have a physiological subsystem that lies against the skin that is embedded with sensors to monitor core body temperature, skin temperature, heart rate, body position and hydration levels.

Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are currently developing armor made from magnetorheological fluids -- liquid body armor -- that transforms from liquid to solid in milliseconds when a magnetic field or electrical current is applied. Though still in development, this technology will likely be submitted to support TALOS.

"RDECOM cuts across every aspect making up this combat armor suit," Borjes said "Its advanced armor. Its communications, antennas. Its cognitive performance. Its sensors, miniature-type circuits. That's all going to fit in here, too."

SOCOM demonstrations will take place July 8-10, at or near MacDill Air Force Base. The request asks participants to submit a white paper summary of their technology by May 31, describing how TALOS can be constructed using current and emerging technologies. A limited number of participant white papers will be selected and those selected will demonstrate their technologies.

The initial demonstration goal is to identify technologies that could be integrated into an initial capability within a year. A second goal is to determine if fielding the TALOS within three years is feasible. US Army science advisors, such as Borjes, are embedded with major units around the world to speed technology solutions to Soldiers' needs. The Field Assistance in Science and Technology program's 30 science advisors, both uniformed officers and Army civilians, provide a link between Soldiers and the RDECOM's thousands of subject matter experts.

Will Archaeology Confirm Crécy (1346) as the First Battle Honour of the Royal Artillery?



Battle of Crécy an Illustration from Froissanrt's chronicles (Wikipedia Commons)

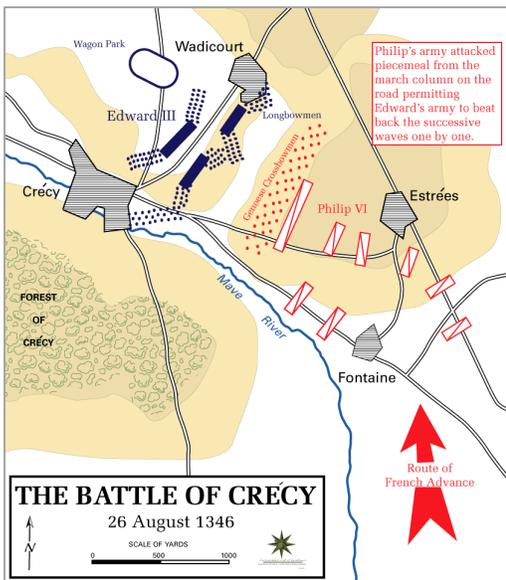
The battle of Crécy (1346), alongside Agincourt (1415) has gone down in history as the triumph of the English foot soldier armed with the longbow over the French Knights. It has been known for a long time that Edward III had four cannons with his army, but their role on the battlefield has been dismissed, as having no effect beyond announcing that fire-power had arrived on the battlefield.

However, in a speech to the Battlefields Trust, Professor Michael Prestwich argued that we should

re-examine our interpretation of the Battle of Crécy and that Edward III's cannons had a much bigger impact than as a mere gimmick of alchemy.

Edward III's unexpected victory over the French at Crécy-en-Pontieu near Abbeville overturned the presumption that knights would ride down foot soldiers. This established the Longbow as an important weapon, the yeoman archers of England as heroes, and demonstrated the fighting power behind Edward III's claim to the French throne which started the Hundred Years War. King Edward III landed in Normandy in July. Having captured Caen he moved East to cross the Seine and then headed North along the coast, pursued by a larger French Army under King Philip VI of France. Edward crossed the Somme after winning the Battle of Blanchetaque on August 24. Tired from their marching and fighting the English army encamped near the Forest of Crécy. Philip raced towards Crécy with his men, keen to defeat the English and angry that he had failed to trap them between the Seine and Somme. It is generally accepted that Edward deployed his men along a ridge between the villages of Crécy and Wadicourt and divided his army into three divisions. The right division was assigned to his sixteen-year old son Edward, the Black Prince. The left division was led by the Earl of Northampton, while Edward, commanding from a vantage point in a windmill, commanded the reserve. These divisions were comprised of dismounted men at arms supported by large numbers of archers equipped with the English longbow. The English improved their position by digging ditches and laying obstacles in front of their position. The baggage train was in the rear of the English position. Sometimes accounts mention that four cannons were positioned in the front line. The leading parts of Philip's army, advancing North from Abbeville arrived near the English around mid-day on August 26. The French started the battle before the whole French army had arrived on the battlefield. The French advance was led by several thousand mercenary Genoese crossbowmen, followed by thousands of French knights organised into divisions under the leading nobles, while King Philip commanded the rearguard.

When the Genoese crossbowmen approached close enough they fired a series of volleys at the English. These proved ineffective compared to the English response which devastated the Genoese and forced them to retreat. This in turn provoked some French Knights to cut down the retreating Genoese as for their cowardice. The failure of the Genoese is attributed to several factors. A brief thunderstorm before the battle had wet their bowstrings. The decision to start the battle early, meant that they fought without their pavise's wooden shields behind which they could shelter while reloading. Also, the rate of fire of a longbow was far in excess of a crossbow, with a longbow-man loosing three or four arrows to each cross-bow bolt. The French knights fell into confusion as they collided with the retreating Genoese. Continuing the attack, the French knights were forced to negotiate the slope of the ridge and the man-made obstacles. Cut down in large numbers by the archers, the felled knights and their horses blocked the advance of those to the rear.



At some point in the battle Edward received a message from his son requesting assistance. This King Edward refused, stating “I am confident he will repel the enemy without my help,” and “Let the boy win his spurs.” As evening approached the English still held their position after repelling sixteen French charges, and felling their attackers with arrows. This was a huge English victory. But, this interpretation is based on conflicting and fragmentary sources surviving from medieval records. Michael Prestwich pointed out the accepted interpretation is largely based on a selective choice about which sources to accept and which to reject. Even the location is uncertain. Geoffrey le Baker refers to the field of Crécy, while Froissart writes that battle took place near a wood, somewhere between

Crécy and La Broie, (five miles apart) and the king was on the mound of a windmill, at the rear of his army. While another source, Henry Knighton mentions another place name, Westglyse, identified as Watteglise, which is to the north-east.

Michael Prestwich also drew attention to Italian sources which give a very different version of the battle from the English and French, and for work done by Richard Barber in an as yet unpublished work on Crécy. These accounts are dismissed as being written at third hand and in a third country. But there were large number of Italian Genoese present at the start of the engagement. One of these accounts, by Giovanni Villani, who died in 1348, “stressed above all the English encampment of carts. The whole army, he said, in three battalions, was enclosed in a ring of carts, with a single entrance. Bombards were placed under the carts, and the archers shot from them, their arrows stacked in barrels.” The same account also includes a description of the effectiveness of the artillery “The English guns cast iron balls by means of fire... They made a noise like thunder and caused much loss in men and horses... The Genoese were continually hit by the archers and the gunners... [by the end of the battle] the whole plain was covered by men struck down by arrows and cannon balls.”

Professor Prestwich also quoted a second Italian account which dates from about 1360, and thanked Richard Barber for this. According to this account “Edward surrounded his army with iron chains, fixed to posts, in a horseshoe plan. Carts were then placed outside the chains, tipped up with their shafts in the air. Ditches were dug to reinforce the defences. Archers were hidden in the woods and cornfields – the author noted that as it was very cold in northern France, corn was not harvested until September, and in Crécy it was still standing (the battle was 26 August). The Genoese had to climb a slope to approach the English position. They could not shoot their crossbows and were mostly cut down. The English archers, advancing through the corn, shot at the French cavalry and did so much damage that the battle was lost. There is a telling detail in this account. The Genoese crossbowmen’s problem was not that their bowstrings were damp – this account explains that the difficulty was that the ground was so muddy and soft that they found it impossible to put the crossbows down and hold them there with the stirrup for reloading. “

These Italian accounts are usually discredited because it is hard to reconcile the accounts of the carts with known practices of the time. But perhaps the Genoese were describing something they had not seen before and could not understand. What they may have been looking at is the vehicles needed to support a gun battery – the world’s first wagon lines. Guns need a lot of vehicles, to transport the pieces, protect the ready use ammunition from the elements, carry ammunition and all the services to support the men who serve the guns. Edwards’s battery may have needed the ability to cast or carve their own shot, carry and possibly manufacture gunpowder. Edward’s army was on the move. It had prepared to fight at Crecy and it may have made sense to retain the ammunition and stores needed for the guns close by rather than banishing them to the baggage train.

As artillery evolved all the vehicles were held in the wagon lines where they would be protected from enemy fire. But at Crecy there was no enemy artillery fire, and contrary to Hollywood, flaming arrows were not a normal medieval battlefield weapon. A separate wagon lines would be additional risks to an English army marching through hostile territory and faced with a superior mounted enemy. And the wagons and carts might also have provided cover for archers.

Edward’s army may have been accompanied by more than the four bombards. According to Michael Prestwich, Edward had ordered 100 small guns, known as ribalds, in October 1345. These had, it seems, wheeled carriages, and were probably multi-barrelled. So maybe the battle of Crecy was the world’s first battle where artillery played a significant part in the battle. So far this is a bit of speculation based on an after dinner speech by an eminent historian and information sources hiding in plain sight on the Internet. But the early gunpowder era is interesting for lots of reasons, not least because modern archaeological techniques have been able to establish new facts about medieval battlefields from the evidence that gunpowder weapons leave. In the last couple of years Glenn Foard rediscovered the battlefield of Bosworth from the cannon balls. Perhaps it is time to start a project to search for cannon balls from Crecy that may have sunk in the wet soil.

Equitas Society Legal Action against the Federal Government

In the latest action on May 31, 2013, Government lawyers submitted their Notice of Application and Written Arguments which are now posted on Equitas Society's website under the tab "Legal Action." To view go to:

http://equitassociety.ca/?page_id=1006

Red Tails and Dragon Tales Summit

A three-day summit – entitled Red Tails and Dragon Tales – will bring together, for the first time ever, two groups of WWII veterans that faced discrimination: the Tuskegee Airmen and Chinese-Canadian veterans. Both groups' military contributions were instrumental to helping the Allies win the war and also to changing societal attitudes in their home countries. While most of their ranks have passed away, a few remaining veterans, now mostly in their late 80s and 90s, will meet to share their stories.



During WWII, the Tuskegee airmen were the first group of African-American aviators to fly in combat for the US armed forces. At the time, the American military was still racially segregated. Many felt African-Americans lacked the intelligence and skill to perform anything beyond basic, menial tasks in military duty. Despite this segregation and prejudice, the Tuskegee Airmen went on to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups in the war. They were dubbed “the Red Tails” after one fighter group painted the tails of their P47s, and later P51s, red.

Meanwhile here in Canada, men and women of Chinese descent, who were born in Canada, were not deemed citizens. As well, the 1923 Exclusion Act was still in effect. That Act essentially banned Chinese Immigration to Canada. Despite this discrimination, when the WWII broke out, Chinese men and women volunteered in the hundreds to fight for Canada.

They enlisted in every branch of the armed forces and participated in every theatre of war. The result: on May 14, 1947 Chinese-Canadians were finally granted the right to vote.

This event will take place from June 28-30 at various venues. For more information go to: <http://www.ccmms.ca/features/red-tails-and-dragon-tales-summit/>

Appointment to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board

Ottawa – The Honourable Steven Blaney today announced a new and highly qualified appointment to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) in Veteran Owen Parkhouse CD, MA. In addition to his duties as a Member, Mr. Parkhouse will also serve as the Board's Vice Chair. This marks the first time in the history of the Board that a member with his military credentials has held a senior leadership position.

Owen Parkhouse began his career in the military within the ranks, eventually receiving a commission before retiring as a lieutenant-commander. Following his military career, Mr. Parkhouse was employed within the Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) program as a project coordinator, development officer and peer support coordinator. In these roles, he created and delivered numerous professional development presentations and developed social support programs for Canadian Armed Forces members and Veterans affected by operational stress injuries.

To read the full news release, go to:
<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/department/press/viewrelease/905>

Book Jacket Design Contest

The Management Committee overseeing the publication of Vol III of **The Gunners of Canada-History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery 1967-2012**, has decided to conduct a contest aimed at selecting a design for the book jacket (AKA the dust cover). They are also encouraging all Gunners to contribute information or anecdotes about what they saw or did during their service

William Rawling PhD has been selected as the author of Volume III. Dr Rawling is a highly regarded Canadian military historian with twenty years of experience in the Directorate of History and Heritage. He has written eight books and many articles in both English and French and has co-authored the official histories of the RCN and the RCAF.

Vol III is expected to be published in 2017. For more information on the book and contest, go to:- <http://www.artillery.net/beta/gnr-of-canada-vol-iii/>

From the ‘Punitary’

The environmentalist rode his bike 20 miles in the morning and 20 miles more in the evening. He loved recycling.

Murphy’s Rules of Combat Operations.

Helicopters have been described as nothing more than 50,000 parts flying in close formation. It is the mechanic’s responsibility to keep that formation as tight as possible.

Quotable Quotes

People might not get all they work for in this world, but they must certainly work for all they get. - *Frederick Douglas*