



Van Arty Assoc and RUSI Van Members News Dec 23, 2014

I am taking a short break over the holiday period. I will send out an abbreviated newsletter each week keeping the two war journals updated, printing urgent articles only. Next regular newsletter will be published on Jan 7th.

Wednesday Lunches

Mess is closed for the holidays. The first lunch of 2015 will be Jan 14th.

New Year's Levée

The Levée will be a 'hit and miss' event this year. Some Messes will be open but others will be closed. What have heard so far is that the Jericho Mess will be open, where the Seaforths will host the Levée (there Armoury is still being renovated) but the Commander 39CBG will not be in attendance. 15 Fd and Westies will be open. I have heard but not confirmed that the Engineers and Service Bn will be open but the BCRs will be closed. 15 Fd Messes will open for visitors at 1100hrs. A light lunch will be served starting around noon.

From the Journal of Capt Fred G Coxen RFA - 1914

Dec 24th: We took up position at CAMBRIN. CUINCHY and GIVENCHY were just on our left; all were in a state of ruin, for heavy scrapping had been recently taking place. George and I took over the wires of the 47th Bty, and were very busy firing up our communications. We had a grand observing station – a ruined brewery – It was beautifully furnished – but everything was ruined, lovely carved furniture and ornaments – in pieces – a piano, and large gramophone, everything had been left as it stood. I secured plates, cups and an assortment of cooking utensils and took [them] back to the guns. Late that night I had orders, to get into communication with 2nd Infantry Brigade. It was uncomfortable laying the line on account of rifle bullets, but did the job without mishap and got back to my dugout. The thoughts of the previous Christmas Eve were with me, and I felt anything but happy.

Dec 25th: I forgot it was Christmas Day for I was busy firing up communications all day. All was very quiet – it was a mutual truce. I had a piece of bacon for dinner – one of the chaps secured a chicken and some vegetables, and at night we had a feast. George came down from the observing station, and with couple more, we went to a large house nearby and collared a piano, and brought it to the guns. We had a concert, it was not a great success – but we made the best of it. There were many poor devils much more worse off than us.

Dec 26th: Rather quiet, occasional shelling. [I] had a sorely needed wash, the first for four days. [We] did little firing. [The] dugout [was] swamped, [so we] moved into a small shed at rear of farm. [It was] very cold and drizzling rain.

Dec 27th – 28th: Nothing unusual, [we] fire at intervals, at working parties of Germans, and [into] trenches. They search for us but all over, and save for a shell now and again, nothing near us. Kept up very slow fire at long intervals throughout nights. Am on duty day and night with phone, but am so used to it, that it takes little or no effect, although I never have a complete night's rest when in action.

Dec 29th and 30th: Did much firing – and were credited with smacking up a German Field Battery near LA BASSEE.

World War 2 - December 1939

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

Dec 24th: Pope Pius XII issues a call for peace, but his carefully nuanced public neutrality achieves nothing and will be misinterpreted by many commentators after the war.

Dec 25th: The Soviets start knocking on the Mannerheim line again, without much improvement in the results.

Dec 27th: The latest Soviet assault on the Mannerheim line ends. Near Suomussalmi and on the Keralian Front, the Finns start their "wood-cutting" counteroffensive – chopping the stranded 163rd Division at Suomussalmi into bite-sized pieces. Indian troops arrive in France as part of the BEF. 114 Warsaw residents, including eight Jews, are shot in reprisal for the deaths of two German policemen.

Dec 28th : On the Keralian sector, The Soviet 18th and 168th Divisions are cut off and surrounded by Finnish ski troops. Meat rationing begins in the UK. The battleship HMS Barham is torpedoed and damaged by U.30. Since September 1st, over 40,000 Poles have been murdered, mostly by SS Einsatzgruppen; most victims so far have been from Poland's educated and social elites. The Soviets are hard at work on similar tasks.

By **Dec 31st**, 1940, Western Europe will be quiet because almost all of it is in German hands.

