



Van Arty Association and RUSI Van Members News May 28, 2019

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 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 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 need your support to keep the lunches going. Hope all you regular attendees can keep coming. The Mess serves 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 and friends. Dress - Jacket and tie, equivalent for Ladies. For serving personnel, uniform of the day is always acceptable at lunch.

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

Jun 08 2472 (15 Fd RCA) Cadet Corps Annual Ceremonial Review
39 CER D-Day Mess Dinner

World War 2 – 1944

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

May 29th: U549 sinks the Escort Carrier USS Block Island and a destroyer before being sunk herself. Allied attacks out of Anzio take Campoleone and Carroceto, as the Canadian Corps starts moving up Route 5 from the recently liberated Ceprano. Japanese tanks at Biak almost push part of the American landing force back to its beach. Captain William Wylie Galt of the 168th Infantry commandeers a tank destroyer and leads it from behind its turret to revitalize a stalled attack by his battalion at Villa Croceta in Italy. Directing its gun and personally firing its .50 calibre anti-aircraft machinegun, he knocks out an anti-tank gun and kills some 40 of the enemy before being mortally wounded. He is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

May 30th: 8th Army troops take Arce (after a rather determined struggle), while in the Anzio sector, US troops close in on Velletri. German troops open up the summer's fighting on the Eastern Front with a local counterattack on Konev's men near Jassy.

May 31st: A full month after indicating he was incapable of mounting further attacks, the commander of the Japanese 31st Division at Kohima finally orders the last survivors of his division to retreat – after being repeatedly ordered to stay. In Italy, the British X Corps takes Sora; the Canadian Corps takes Frosinone, while the US 36th Division rips a hole in the Caesar Line by capturing Velletri. On New Guinea, US troops continue to face a difficult situation at Biak and Arare, while the Australians -- no doubt making ribald remarks -- take Bunabum. The destroyer escort USS England, caps off a very busy two weeks in the South Pacific; having sunk the Japanese submarine I16 on May 19th, RO106 on 22nd May, RO104 on May 23rd, RO116 on May 24th; RO108 on May 26th, and finishing the spree with RO115. Admittedly, the ship was part of a hunter-killer group, but she fired the killing shots on all six submarines – a record never matched by any other ship.

June 1944: The Great Crusade Begins

“You will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world. Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped, and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.” -Extracts from Eisenhower’s pre-D-Day message to his troops

General: Although the main focus of Allied air forces is on transportation this month, UK-based heavy and medium bombers also hit some of Germany’s oil production sites while dropping some 135,000 tons of bombs this month. The Luftwaffe is badly hampered by a 67% reduction in aviation fuel, but the first Me-262s enter operation service.

Jun 1st: On New Guinea, the Americans are still on the defensive at Aitape and return to the offensive at Biak with impressive results despite determined Japanese counterattacks. Ears prick up all over France as the first part of a Verlaine verse puts the Resistance on standby for the coming invasion. The RAF whacks a German supply convoy to Crete, sinking several vessels; hereafter the Germans are reluctant to run ships there. The Soviets contain the German counter-offensive near Jassy and mount some local attacks of their own. US II and VI Corps, having cracked the Caesar line, push for Rome through the Alban Hills. Kesselring orders German troops to withdraw (slowly) to the north of the city.

Jun 2nd: In New Guinea, the US attacks at Biak continue, spearheaded by the 186th Regiment. Kesselring’s troops pull back (in the usual stubborn German style) all along the front while US troops take Valmontone. The French Committee of National Liberation restyles itself as the Provisional Government. In the Auvergne, local resistance units are unable to contain themselves and start the Liberation of France early by openly engaging German soldiers. Fighting in the region goes on for three weeks and the Resistance Forces (heavily reinforced by the SOE and OSS) disengage to go on to other tasks. The siege of Myitkyina in Burma enters its final stage. The Japanese Americans of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team have no shortage of heroes, and Private Sinyei Nakamine is among them. Today, near La Torreto, Italy, Pte Nakamine eliminates a German machinegun post by himself, spots another and leads an attack

on it, and has identified a third but is killed as he leads another automatic rifle team to engage it. His initiative and daring has saved his company from receiving many casualties. He is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Jun 3rd: A Japanese attempt to reinforce Biak fails, and their situation starts to rapidly crumble. The Germans abandon Rome (for a measure of peace from local resistance fighters), while the advancing Americans pick up Albano and Frascati and the Canadians take Anagni. When his 12-man patrol is ambushed by five times their number in a night action near Valmontone, Italy, Private Elden H Johnson stands in the open, firing his BAR from the hip after telling his comrades to withdraw. He advances at a slow walk under enemy fire, knocking out one machinegun crew, and continues fighting until he is killed. His sacrifice enables the rest of his patrol to escape and results in the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor.

Jun 4th: Elements of the 88th US division nose into Rome, liberating the Eternal City (er, after other Allied units who led the way are halted so US troops can go in first). Troops for the invasion of France have put to sea, but the invasion has been postponed by Eisenhower for a day because of foul weather: All of Southern England is at a high pitch, as the forces and supplies marshaled for the invasion are in their waiting areas. The Germans in Normandy use the bad weather as an occasion to relax; for instance, Rommel heads home on leave. The Destroyer Escorts USS Chatelaine and USS Pillsbury do yeoman service in capturing U505 – the capture secures more Enigma codes and the first examples of Germany ‘s new acoustic homing torpedoes to fall into Allied hands. Sometimes Mars keeps the brave long under his hand: Mookhudin Umurdinov was an Uzbek and an NCO in the 1122nd Rifle Regiment who had survived 18 months in combat and lived to come home again, despite furiously leading several assaults. He was also in the habit of lunging out after capturing an objective and launching small spoiling attacks on incoming German counterattacks. His consistent effectiveness earned him the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on this day. By way of an epilogue the American military historian Henry Sakaida – author of several books on Soviet heroes -- found Umurdinov’s medal in a shop in Germany in 1997. It had been recently stolen from the Umurdinov family in Uzbekistan and Sakaida arranged for its return to the hero’s son at the hands of a US Marine General in 2002.

Westcoast Motorcycle Ride to Live

The 10th annual Westcoast Motorcycle Ride to Live kicked off Sunday morning at Trev Deeley’s Harley Davidson location on Boundary Road at 0930hrs. 15th Field had been asked to start the event by firing a blank round but unfortunately the organizers met with a very touchy bureaucrat at city hall who told them the city would not allow the gun to fire a shot to start the event so the Regiment set up a gun just for display and the Vancouver Artillery Association joined them with the Museum’s FAT and 25pdr. There were a lot of bikes at the event. Didn’t get a count but it took over 5 minutes for all the bikes to pass the start point.



FAT and 25pdr at Ride to live event. Doug Loney at right, Andrew MacRae in the Commanders hatch and Capt James Morrison, OIC of the Regiment's Gun display.

Harry Moon from Western Command also joined us with his 1941 Lynx Scout Car.



After the starting ceremony the 105 returned to the Armoury and the Association moved to Mountain View Cemetery and we searched some of the veterans' sections to see how many Gunner graves we could locate. We got a good start, but it looks like it will be a long process to get a list of all the Gunners there.

The Brave Women of the Battle of Britain

Micheal Chimaobi Kalu from War History online Jan 19, 2019



The Battle of Britain was the first major all-aircraft campaign of World War II. It was marked with several episodes of intense aerial combats. Swarms of Luftwaffe planes surged through the skies, bearing destruction on their wings. The British Royal Air Force (RAF) patrolled the airspace, determined to keep their homeland safe. The Battle of Britain was not just another platform that put

the spotlight upon men. There were women in the limelight, too, women of outstanding devotion and courage.

WAAF Corona System Radio Operators: "German-speaking WAAF radio operators in England eavesdrop on German frequencies." The Corona system was where WAAF operators would eavesdrop on Luftwaffe night-fighter frequencies and attempt to countermand their orders to cause confusion.



Sergeant Joan Mortimer, Sergeant Helen Turner, and Flight Officer Elspeth Henderson were members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) stationed at the RAF Biggin Hill, Kent. RAF Biggin Hill was at the center of the Battle of Britain and suffered some of the most brutal Luftwaffe strikes. During the Battle of Britain, the WAAF was crucial as they maintained communication with the air commands, highlighting positions of enemy aircraft. As sporadic, small-scale German attacks slowly intensified, Hitler's air force continued to push their way into southern England. By the 30th of August 1940, South East London was under siege. With the Luftwaffe's aim of crippling the British air force, RAF Biggin Hill became a primary target. Sergeant Joan Mortimer, Flight Officer Elspeth Henderson, and Sergeant Helen Turner of the WAAF were discharging their duties as telephone operators when the alarms began to sound. The Luftwaffe had come upon them. Members of the WAAF were ordered to the air raid



shelters. RAF squadrons took to the air in readiness, as the attacks loomed even closer. The Luftwaffe struck, dropping bombs and letting their guns roar. The RAF engaged, firing their weapons at the raiding enemy formations. Planes dropped out of the sky as the two sides exchanged hostilities. The enemy planes retreated, leaving the aerodrome in a mess. Thirty-nine personnel at the airbase lost their lives in that attack, while a number of others sustained various degrees of injury.

Operations Room at No 10 Group Headquarters, Rudloe Manor (RAF Box), Wiltshire, showing WAAF plotters and duty officers at work.

Following the attack, every remaining member of the WAAF returned to duty. Perhaps some of them believed it was over, but this was just the first raid. The second episode was to be more accurate and more deadly. When the Luftwaffe struck the second time, RAF Biggin Hill was bound to be left in shambles. But even in the midst of the attack, the aerodrome did not cease its operations. Constant communication was maintained, and aircraft successfully took off and landed with proper guidance. Flight Officer Elspeth Henderson was instrumental throughout the raids. During the first raid, when several members of the WAAF were buried underneath a collapsed trench, she led the efforts to dig them out. When the second attack came, Henderson was in the operations room, communicating with Fighter Command Headquarters in Uxbridge. The operations room took a direct hit, falling apart as Ju 88 bombers struck. Orders came for the room to be evacuated immediately. Everybody headed for safety, but Henderson stood her ground, unwilling to break contact with headquarters. She only made her way out of the room, through a broken window, when there was nothing else she could do since the roof was melting and bombs were dropping everywhere around her. In the same building during the air raid was Sergeant Helen Turner who was serving as a switchboard operator when the evacuations began. However, she maintained her position for as long as she could, only leaving when the building gave way to the fires.



WAAF radar operator Denise Miley plotting aircraft on a cathode ray tube in the Receiver Room at Bawdsey 'Chain Home' station, May 1945.

Sergeant Joan Mortimer was in the armory room when the chaos came, she was surrounded by explosives as she operated a telephone switchboard. Yet she bravely continued working at her post, relaying messages to all the RAF defense positions in the airfields. At one point, she went outside with bundles of red flags. She sought out and marked every unexploded bomb with a red flag. In such a threatening environment, she remained undaunted, even when one of the bombs exploded nearby. In November 1940, Mortimer, Turner, and Henderson were told that they were to receive the Military Medal which was considered a “man’s medal.” In 1974, in their honor, three roads at RAF Biggin Hill were named after Mortimer, Turner, and Henderson.

Out of Fuel Pilot Landed on a Container Ship

The ship claimed the plane under salvage rights. *War History Online* George Winston Jan 17, 2018



*AV-8B Harrier of the USMC landing on *Illustrious* in 2007.*

An unusual incident involving a container ship and an aircraft from a nearby aircraft carrier occurred in June 1983, when NATO countries were staging an exercise in the North Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Portugal. Among the ships taking part was the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*, which after 32 years service has recently been decommissioned. As part of the exercise, two Sea Harrier VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) jet fighters were ordered to take off from the “*Illustrious*” and seek out a French naval carrier. One of the pilots was a relatively inexperienced sub-lieutenant aged 25, Ian Watson, popularly known as “Soapy.” The other pilot was more experienced. Because the exercises were simulating war conditions, the two pilots had to maintain radio silence and keep their radars turned off. After take-off, the two aircraft went their separate ways. They ascended to a fixed altitude and then surveyed the sea below, looking for the French vessel. Meanwhile, sailing in the vicinity of the exercise, there was a container vessel – called the “*Alraigo*” – which was registered in Spain. It was en route to the capital of the Canary Islands, Tenerife, with a load of cargo in its containers.

Having completed his assignment, Watson dropped to a lower altitude and flew to the area where he intended to rendezvous with the more senior pilot. However, the other aircraft failed to materialize. Watson decided that he would have to make his way back to the *Illustrious* on his own. He turned on his radar and radio and used all the instruments at his disposal to

navigate back, but he received no signals at all in return. By this time, Watson was getting a bit worried about the level of fuel in his aircraft and the presence of nearby shipping lanes. He flew eastward until he picked up a blip on his radar. It turned out to be the Alraigo. With very little fuel left, he realised he would have to eject and ditch the aircraft; he planned to do this near the ship he was approaching, so that they could rescue him. Watson made a close fly-past to attract the attention of the crew of the container ship. As he did this, he noticed that the containers effectively formed a platform large enough for him to attempt to land upon.

Thinking “in for a penny, in for a pound” and without further ado, he approached for a landing. He managed to set the Sea Harrier down on to the containers, but once stationary, the aircraft began to slip backwards. This continued until the rear end of the aircraft slipped right off the edge and came to rest on a van parked behind the container. The van was supposed to be delivered to a florist working in Tenerife. The master of the Spanish container ship insisted on continuing on his way to the Canaries. He radioed to the British government that they would have to collect the sub-lieutenant in Tenerife. When they docked there, they were met by many press photographers. The owners of the Alraigo, claimed the jet aircraft as salvage and they were awarded around £570,000. Ian Watson faced a formal enquiry on board the Illustrious when he returned there. However, both that and a second one released no report. It was only when some Royal Navy archives were opened in 2007 that the findings were revealed. They found that Watson had only completed three-quarters of his training. They found him partly to blame for flying under these conditions, but they also found his commanding officers to blame for allowing him to fly in an aircraft that had not been properly prepared. Watson was confined to a desk for a while afterwards, but eventually, he accumulated over 2000 flying hours, in Harriers and over 900 in other aircraft. He is sanguine now when he looks back and acknowledges the embarrassment caused to the Royal Navy, accepting that he was the main culprit in this unusual event.

Vancouver Artillery Association Yearbook Updates

Bombardier Roderick Cameron McDonald, MM. Lest we forget.

<https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/whats-new/military-medal-update8892934>

Battery Commander 85th Battery Siberian Expeditionary Force, Major Storms MC

<https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/whats-new/nominal-roll-update8754508>

Yearbook Update 2019

<https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/whats-new/yearbook-update-20199199977>

Another update to the Regimental Sergeants Major wall. Have you sponsored an RSM yet?

<https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/whats-new/rsms-wall-update7052912>

Keep those stories, calendar events and pictures coming! Contact Leon Jensen at president.vcrgunners@gmail.com

Who (or What) Is It?

Last Week: The gun shown in the photo is one of two Navy 7- inch Guns Mark II (#90 & #91) on Mark II Model 4 Pedestal Mounts on display at coastal defence Battery Randolph, Fort DeRussey, Oahu. From 1942 to 1944 they were in service at Harbor Battery, on Sand Island, Honolulu and were put on display at Battery Randolph after it became the Hawaii Army Museum. The guns are located at the emplacements which from 1913 to 1944 held two 14-inch guns on disappearing carriages.



This Week: This week's photo continues an eco-friendly theme first launched a couple of weeks ago with our Aleutian Alsatian. Animals, and we are referring the hairier of the two in the photo, have often attracted the attention and affection of our service personnel. Some are cute and cuddly, such as "Mrs. Fru-fru", feline mascot of the 458th Mobile Bath Unit (RASC) of North African Campaign fame. Others, such as "Igor", a hairy tarantula and mascot of the Women's Brigade of Death in the Russian Civil War (White side), were less cute.



So, ignoring the indescribable cuteness of the naval officer on the right, we come to our creature of the week. His distant cousin, "Winnie", gained immortal fame due to the pen of AA Milne, but our lad (we assume his gender, but may be proven wrong) is less well-known. In fact, you'd have to be quite the animal historian to know of him. So, are you up to the task? Who was he? On what ship did he serve? From where did he hail? And, how did he tragically expire? Your clever musings may be sent to the editor, Bob Mugford (bob.mugford@outlook.com), or the animal-rights upholding author, John Redmond (johnd.redmond@telus.net)

From the 'Punitentary'

What did the service dog say after a hard day at work? Today sure was ruff!

Murphy's Other Laws

Fortify your front and you'll get your rear shot up.

Quotable Quotes

Life is a long lesson in humility. - *James M. Barrie*



*The Commanding Officer of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment
&
Regimental Sergeant Major*

- and -

*Officer Commanding of 6 Engineer Squadron
&
Squadron Sergeant Major*

Cordially invite you to our

2019 D-Day Mess Dinner

*To be held at the Lt Col J.P. Fell Armoury
1513 Forbes Avenue, North Vancouver*

On Saturday, the 8th of June 2019

Reception at 1800 hrs followed by dinner at 1900 hrs

Dress: Mess Dress or Black Tie

Tickets available by advance reservation and payment only – no walk-ins

Please RSVP by May 29, 2019 to Capt Chris Beneteau via email to: DDayDinner2019@gmail.com
and we ask that serving and retired members include their Regimental affiliation

If applicable, please indicate dietary restrictions with RSVP

Tariff \$85 per guest

Payment due by May 29, 2019 via e-transfer to DDayDinner2019@gmail.com or via cheque payable to
“6ES Combined Mess” delivered to 1513 Forbes Ave, North Vancouver, BC V7M 2Y4