



## Van Arty Association and RUSI Van Members News July 2, 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](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 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.

**NOTE:** There will not be a lunch on Sept 11. Mrs Lum will be out of town.

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

**Sept 11 NO LUNCH - mark your calendars! Mrs Lum away.**

### World War 2 – 1944

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

**Jul 3<sup>rd</sup>:** US forces in the Cotentin start driving towards St Lo but the hedgerow country begins in earnest and progress becomes very slow. In Italy, the French Corps liberates Siena, the British liberate Cortona and the Americans reach Rosignano. In New Guinea, Allied casualties mount at Numfoor but the beachhead is expanded and a paradrop results in the capture of the airfield at Kamiriz. Minsk is captured and many elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> German Army are pocketed to the East; Army Group Centre is rapidly disintegrating.

**Jul 4<sup>th</sup>:** TF 58 hits Iwo Jima, Chichi Jima and Guam. In Normandy, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division takes Carpique Village, but 12<sup>th</sup> SS Hitlerjugend awaits them at the airfield and they won't be easy to budge; meanwhile, US VII and VIII Corps are still slogging through the hedgerows. Attacks by

1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front take Polotski and Army Group North (now commanded by General Freissner) is nervous about its position with such a wide-open southern flank. Army Group Centre has lost something like 400,000 men dead, wounded and captured since Jun 22<sup>nd</sup>. Another para battalion lands at Numfoor and takes heavy casualties in its debut operation.

**Jul 5<sup>th</sup>:** The Japanese stage an unsuccessful counterattack on Numfoor. In Normandy, US troops liberate le Haye de Puits. A battalion of Soviet paratroopers is dropped to block German withdrawals near Smalyavichy in Belarus. The paratroops run into fierce opposition before they reach their objective but one of their rifles is in the hands of the trained sniper Corporal Tatyana Nikolayevna Baramzina and she uses it to great effect, downing 20 German soldiers. But casualties are also heavy, and she has nursing training so she is soon running an ad hoc aid station. While here she is captured after being wounded; but soldiers in most armies don't generally take snipers as prisoners and she is killed. She posthumously becomes a Hero of the Soviet Union

**Jul 6<sup>th</sup>:** Hitler reacts to the situation in Normandy by swapping Rundstedt for Kluge. In Italy, the Polish 3<sup>rd</sup> Division forces a German withdrawal on the Adriatic coast (saving the usual stubborn rearguard) clear up to the Arno. Soviet troops liberate Kovel and Svir. US aircraft land at the Namber Airfield on Numfoor after it is cleared. Admiral Nagumo and General Saito face defeat on Saipan and so they commit suicide while their subordinates plan a massive banzai attack. DeGaulle arrives in Washington for five days of talks.

**Jul 7<sup>th</sup>:** Three US Corps (VII, VIII and XIX) in Normandy line up for a major push against the Germans while the British summon battleship support from HMS Rodney for another push at Caen. In Italy, US 34<sup>th</sup> Division liberates Pignano. Between 3,000 and 5,000 of the remaining garrison on Saipan lines up for a charge against the Americans – it does close to hand-strokes, but almost all of those who participate in it are shot dead. The Vichy Police Chief Darnand orders the execution of a former government minister and leading anti-collaborationist Georges Mandel. PFC Harold Christ Agerholm of the 10<sup>th</sup> Marines spends three hours pulling 45 wounded men to safety under fire after the Japanese Banzai attack on Saipan overruns an artillery battery; as he goes to the aid of two more men, he is fatally shot. For his prolonged display of self-less courage, he is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

**Jul 8<sup>th</sup>:** 2,500 tons of bombs are dumped on Caen as the city is enveloped by British and Canadian attacks; the American attacks continue in the Hedgerow country. The leading elements of Rokossovsky's front are midway between Minsk and Brest Litovsk. Three US battleships begin working over Guam, preparatory to the invasion. Sgt Grant Frederick Timmerman of the 6<sup>th</sup> Marines is a tank commander on Saipan and is at the point of the attack on a Japanese position. He makes much use of the .50 caliber machinegun on the top of his turret but has just issued orders to his gunner for the tank's main gun when a grenade starts to

come through his hatch. He clutches the grenade to his chest, shielding his crew from its effect and earns a posthumous Medal of Honor.

**Jul 9<sup>th</sup>:** Britain's top U-Boat killer, Captain William Walker, dies of a stroke on his bridge. Saipan is secure for a loss of 3,400 US dead and 13,000 wounded while Japanese military and civilian dead number some 27,000 dead and 1,700 prisoners have been taken. Faced with strong international pressure and the first taste of what Allied bombing can do, Horthy orders the curtailment of deportations of Hungary's remaining Jews – now only some 124,000 – and will do what he can to retard their shipment to German camps. 3<sup>rd</sup> Belorussian Front closes in on Grodno and Vilna. US 88<sup>th</sup> Division liberates Volterra. Canadian troops finally take Carpiquet Airfield and the northern half of Caen; American troops continue struggling towards St Lo. It usually takes a lot to make Gurkhas pause. When his company of Gurkha riflemen stalled in the teeth of very heavy machinegun fire near Taunggyi Burma, Major Frank Gerald Blaker knew what he had to do to encourage them – he charged alone. His example, even after sustaining a mortal wound, allowed his men to capture and hold the objective. Blaker was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.

## **MWO Ken Surges Awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> Bar to CD**



*MWO Ken Surges receives the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bar to his CD from LCol White, Chief of Staff, 39 Canadian Brigade Group. This picture was taken in the Band's new rehearsal room in the Major General Bert Hoffmeister Building, HQ of 39 CBG*

A few weeks ago, Master Warrant Officer Ken Surges was presented with the third bar for his Canadian Forces Decoration. The third bar is presented for reaching 42 years of service with the Canadian Armed Forces. MWO Surges has served all that time with the 15 Field Artillery Regimental Band and we believe that he is the only member of the Regiment to have received his third bar by earning it through his service in 15 Field alone. Others may have done it but through accumulated service with other units.

Congratulations Ken

## **Why Did a British Soldier Shell a Maternity Hospital On D-Day?**

*Billy Moncure Feb 3, 2019*

The scale and complexity of the Allied D-Day landings in World War II was immense, so some shocking events were inevitable. However, the French citizens of the small quiet commune of

Bénouville got a particularly nasty surprise when a British soldier turned a captured anti-tank gun on the historic Château de Bénouville, which served as a maternity hospital. How could such a terrible thing happen, and what was the soldier's motive? The attack came in the context



of the remarkable Pegasus Bridge assault in which British soldiers landed in Horsa gliders near several crucial bridges shortly after midnight on D-Day. The men sent to secure these bridges were members of D and B companies, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Ox and Bucks light infantry, Royal Engineers of 249<sup>th</sup> Field Company, and the Glider Pilot Regiment. This mission was crucial to protect the Allied flank from a potential German counterattack after the landings were underway.

*Pegasus Bridge, 9 June 1944; Horsa gliders can be seen where they landed.*

The British totally caught the Germans by surprise and quickly captured their objective. They took two casualties including Den Brotheridge, who is generally considered the first Allied casualty of D-Day. During the firefight they destroyed one German Panzer and captured an anti-tank gun. Paratrooper reinforcements from the 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion arrived at around 3:00. However, the bridge would need to be held for hours until more reinforcements could arrive. In the meantime, they would have to hold off a German counterattack and protect the bridges.

*A Horsa glider near the Caen Canal bridge at Benouville, 8 June 1944.*

The German counterattack came in full around 7:00 AM, around the same time



the Allies began landing on the beaches. Fortunately for the British, the nearby 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division was not able to join the German counterattack. As part of the German reserve they could only move upon direct orders from Hitler, who was asleep at the time. As the sun rose German snipers became increasingly effective and the British were unable to move over any open terrain. The only countermeasure they could take was to use the captured anti-tank gun to fire on possible sniper locations.

*Commandos of No4 Commando, 1<sup>st</sup> Special Service Brigade, and troops of 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division in Bénouville after the link-up between the two forces, 6 June 1944.*



Corporal Wally Parr jumped on the gun, and with permission from his commanding officer Major John Howard he began firing on a water tower near the town that would have provided a perfect location for snipers. After hitting the tower, he noticed a nearby château and thought he saw light reflecting off something on top. Thinking that it was either a sniper's scope or binoculars observing his position, he opened fire. Parr shouted out "Number One Gun" and gave orders to other men operating the gun to adjust it to fire on his new target. He then proceeded to put several rounds through the roof of the Château de Bénouville. A horrified Major Howard soon rushed over and ordered him to cease fire, as the top floor of the château was used as a maternity hospital.



*Château de Bénouville, south front.*

*Photo: Pradigue CC BY-SA 3.0*

Fortunately, after reinforcements arrived, the battle was won, and the dust cleared, it turned out that nobody had been injured in the Château. In a twist of irony, it turned out that Madame Lea Vion, who operated the Château de Bénouville, was actually a member of the

French Resistance. She used her trips for medical supplies as a cover to contact agents in different nearby cities, who then reported to the Allies. For what it's worth, it seems that Parr was partially correct in his assumption about the reflection of light that he thought he saw. A German lieutenant was indeed on the roof to observe the British. Madam Lea Vion had unsuccessfully tried to stop him from going to the roof.

Later in the war this event was spun differently in some Allied media, largely due to assumptions about German barbarism in the war—though to be fair, these assumptions were not exactly unfounded. An American magazine reported that the Germans, out of rage and spite at losing the battle, had intentionally shelled a maternity ward during their retreat. Later in life Wally Parr looked back on his mistake with wry amusement. He once stated in an interview that “This was the first and last time I had shelled pregnant women and newborn babies.” Today the Battle of Pegasus Bridge is remembered as one of the most daring and heroic actions the British undertook during the war. In fact, the name Pegasus Bridge is in honor of the paratroopers’ Pegasus insignia. The original bridge, dented by a defective German bomb that was dropped on it during the battle, is preserved as part of a museum. The Château de Bénouville still stands as a landmark and is a tourist attraction for both its historical significance and architecture. Although perhaps little more than an amusing anecdote now, it is interesting how even during such a heroic and historic event mistakes like this can still happen. War truly is messy, and soldiers face difficult split-second decisions all the time. At least this one has a happy ending.

## **New US Army Ammunition Developments Coming Soon**

From guns to formations to soldiers, the Army is finding old and new ways to bring back some big firepower. *Todd South*

*June 4, 2019*



*A US soldier carries a 155mm artillery shell as his section prepares to fire an M777 howitzer on Firebase Saham, Iraq, in December.*

*Photo: (Sgt 1<sup>st</sup> Class Mikki L Sprenkle/Army)*

FREDERICKSBURG, Virginia — The Army can't simply rely on Cold War-era munitions stocks as even the age-old artillery shell and the humble small-arms ammunition are seeing major upgrades that weren't possible just five years ago. At this year's National Defense Industrial Association Armament Systems Forum, Brig. Gen. Alfred Abramson, head of both

the Picatinny Arsenal and newly renamed Joint Program Executive Office Armaments and Ammunition, formerly known as PEO Ammo, ticked off a list of projects his group is developing as it continues to maintain the munitions that are the lifeblood of combat. A key piece of weaponry is the standby indirect fire munition, the 155mm. Developments in Precision Guidance Kits have given soldiers greater range and control, but more remains to be done.

Abramson said that the Army is aiming to hit the 70km range, more than doubling what's capable for the round now. So far, the PGK works well to the 30km range, but developers are still having problems with the kit out to the 70km range, he said. But, that's part of the development process and where work is being done. At the same time, that round, about as low tech as an armament could get going back a century, now has vulnerabilities because of its precision. The kit has to hit its target when and where the artillery wants it to. But now it must survive a jamming and spoofing environment. "Something we didn't have to think about five years ago," he said. "We have to think about it today." And the platform that's carried that round into battle, the M777 towed howitzer, is "not going to work for the future," Abramson said. The answer to that problem hasn't been totally solved yet. The Army is looking at putting the 155mm on a mobile, wheeled platform.

Army Times reported in November on the first-ever fires of both a mobile 105mm and 155mm system. The BRUTUS is the 155mm and similar to the French CAESAR, in operation since the early 2000s. The 105mm system is called the Hawkeye and uses a Humvee made by AM General as the mobile platform for the howitzer. Both were fired at the annual Maneuver Fires Integration Experiment at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, home of the Army's artillery school and the Fires Center of Excellence. The Army also has an armored mobile howitzer, known as the Paladin, which has seen major upgrades in recent years. Abramson's projects also include smaller items such as a one-way tracer that's been under development for a few years. They work with "terrain shaping obstacles," basically complex minefields that can be controlled by a person and moved as needed to present new threats in certain terrain. As these new projects develop, the one-star said there's been increases in both procurement and research and development across the ammunition spectrum.

*Return of fires: How the Army is getting back to its big guns as it prepares for the near-peer fight*



Procurement funding rose from \$2.2 billion to \$2.5 billion but there was also an "uptick" in research and development monies. The total ammunition funding has risen from \$3.25 billion to \$4.5 billion between 2017 and 2020. Last year alone, his group procured

908 million direct-fire rounds, 1.95 million indirect-fire rounds, 250,000 Air Force and Navy bombs, and demilitarized 49,000 tons of conventional ammunition and about 14,000 tons of missiles and missile components, some of which were in bunkers since the 1960s. At the same time, Abramson said, more modernization is needed. He pointed out that each of the explosives and munitions manufacturing plants are a “single point of failure” for producing ammo stocks. And nearly all were built in the World War II era or earlier and some of their manufacturing technology remains as dated. For example, the Holston Army Ammunition Plant in Tennessee is the sole manufacturer that the U.S. government has to produce explosives. “If it has explosives in it, it comes from here,” Abramson said. The Radford AAP in Virginia makes all propellant. The Lake City AAP in Missouri manufactures all small calibers up to .50 caliber. The Scranton AAP in Pennsylvania makes artillery and mortar shells. The Iowa AAP produces all of the packaging to transport the rounds. All are single points of failure. If they go down, there isn’t a ready replacement, he said. Funding is going into modernizing some of the plants. Holston is expected to be completed within the next two to three years.

## **Reservists to Receive Higher Pay Rate with New Structure**

*Mishall Rehman June 2019*

Reservists will now receive a higher pay rate now under a new structure that will match the Regular Force pay “where the demands of service are similar,” announced the federal government this week. Under the new structure, reservists will receive the same base pay as the Regular Force, instead of the current 85 per cent of Regular Force, plus the elements of the Military Factor that apply to reservists. This is an overall increase of 7.8 per cent. According to a Department of National Defence press release, this means that “the pay rate for a first-year corporal will increase from \$140 to \$153 a day. Basic pay for a lieutenant “A” will increase from \$147.62 to \$161.18 a day.”

The new rate will begin at the end-month pay in August 2019. The rate is retroactive to April 1 of this year. “This important initiative laid out in Canada’s defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged will ensure that our Reserve Force members are fairly compensated for their service. It is a clear demonstration of how our government and all Canadians value the dedication and sacrifices of all members of our Canadian Armed Forces,” said Harjit Sajjan, Minister of National Defence in a statement. Since Reservists cannot be posted to different locations or sent away from their families on operations or exercise without their personal consent, separation and posting turbulence is not applied as part of the Military Factor. The Military Factor compensates Canadian Armed Forces members for additional requirements that don’t impact most public servants. Military Factors elements that will now apply to reservists include personal limitation and liability, overtime, and acting for supervisors. “Because of the sacrifices that our military personnel make every day, Canada remains among the safest and most secure countries in the world. Whether assisting in the recent spring flood relief efforts in New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario, or deployed on a peacekeeping mission halfway around the world, the Reserve Forces are a vital part of the Canadian Armed Forces as a whole, and the new pay structure reflects that,” said LGen Wayne Eyre, Command, Military Personnel Command.

According to the DND press release, Reservists on Class A and Class B periods of service are paid on a daily rate, based on their rank and time in that rank. Reservists on Class C periods of service, for example, those on deployment, receive the same pay as Regular Force members. “The Reserve Force is an integral component of the Canadian Armed Forces and restructuring pay is just another way of integrating both components into a total force that can deliver on our defence mandate. As an organization, we are always learning, growing and reviewing our programs and policies to reflect the changes we think are best for CAF, our members and their families. It’s wonderful to see this change because I think it recognizes the operational and professional commitment of the Reserves to the defence of Canada,” said MGen Rob Roy MacKenzie, Chief of Reserves and Employer Support.

## Vancouver Artillery Association at Canada Day Salute



Members of the Vancouver Artillery Association (Vancouver Gunners) joined the Regiment again at the Canada Day salute in Stanley Park yesterday with the Regimental Museum’s Field Artillery Tractor and 25 pdr gun and limber. Because of problems with the gun light kit Bill Ingram brought his Iltis along to act as a follow vehicle

*The detachment posing in front of the FAT. L-R: Bill Ingram, Tony Gee, Andrew MacRae and Doug Loney*



## Vancouver Artillery Association Yearbook Updates

Here’s the latest activities from the members of the 15<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment RCA family.

A FOO photo was added to 2002 Yakima gun exercise

<https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/2002.html>

Captain Brent Purcell and Lieutenant Grayson McCready were photographed during their FOO course in 1995. <https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/1995.html>

Recent history on 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Regiment from World War II was discovered.

<https://www.vancouvergunners.ca/whats-new/15th-canadian-field-regiment-rca>

Still looking for that maintenance requirements for the ¼ Ton ILTIS?

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

## Who (or What) Is It?



**Last Week:** We don't know too much about this picture, but they are 19<sup>th</sup> century French Alpinist gunners and are man packing the parts of a French De Bange 80mm Mle 1877gun. That gunner must be quite strong as he is carrying both the barrel and carriage. Note the hood with eyepieces! Not much vision for someone climbing rough trails.

**This Week:** Anyone who has researched the many and sundry units raised by the Canadian Army in the Second World War cannot help but be impressed by the creativity shown by National Defence Headquarters in assigning, re-assigning, and re-re-assigning roles to these creations. Take for example, the BC Hussars, who, in 1939, while war clouds were forming on the horizon, happily gave up their swanky uniforms and sports cars, for the khaki bags of battledress, and the not-too-romantic role of 1<sup>st</sup> Searchlight Regiment (RCA). Before the next phase of the war had begun, that with Japan, this regiment had ceased to be more than some independent batteries, and had had much of its manpower siphoned off to form, first the 1<sup>st</sup> AA Regiment, which in turn ceased to operate, but formed elements of the 16<sup>th</sup> Bty of the 3<sup>rd</sup> AA Regiment. To follow the story, you need a good book, and "Battery Flashes of WWII" is just the ticket. Unfortunately, it is out of print, and its author, David Falconer, also gone.

So, we have only legend and gossip to turn to in explaining this week's photo. One has heard that the 113<sup>th</sup> Independent Field Artillery Battery (RCA), due to a typographical error, was accidentally posted to Little Dildo, Newfoundland in 1942, and more or less forgotten about. The unit was formed of Boer War veterans, seconded from the Veterans' Guard, and commanded by Capt. Vivian Fopdoodle, of Great War fame. Erroneously realizing that the greatest threat to Little Dildo was Nazi Zeppelins, he ordered the local conversion of his field artillery unit to an anti-aircraft one. However, as no suitable guns were available, he did what we were all taught to do; he improvised!



This error was only realized when the Treasury Board ceased granting overseas pay to the unit when Newfoundland joined confederation in 1949. This, in turn, alerted keen-eyed clerks at NDHQ to the fact that someone had forgotten to recall the battery at the end of the war. Sadly, by that time, around 1955, most of the gunners had died of old age, or wandered off into the bush, never to be seen again, as was the fate of

Capt Fopdoodle. So, can our enthusiastic reader(s) confirm this story, or is there something else that explains the interesting angle of this gun? Send your answers to our veterans' guard, Bob Mugford ([bob.mugford@outlook.com](mailto:bob.mugford@outlook.com)), or to the author, John Redmond ([johnd.\\_redmond@telus.net](mailto:johnd._redmond@telus.net)).

### **From the 'Punitary'**

Where was the Constitution of Canada signed? At the bottom of the page!

### **Murphy's Other Laws**

The dumber your superior, the more he or she will focus on useless chickenshit

### **Quotable Quotes**

Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves. - *Abraham Lincoln*