



Van Arty Assoc and RUSI Van Members News Jan 13, 2015

Wednesday Lunches

The 15 Field Officers Mess is the only Mess left still holding weekly lunches (the BCR Mess has a monthly lunch) and these lunches can only survive if sufficient numbers attend regularly. Attendance numbers went down the last few weeks of the year and we need your support to keep the lunches going so, if you are in the area on a Wednesday, drop in and join us for lunch. We serve a 5 course, 'homemade' meal for only \$15- you won't find a better meal, or a better deal, anywhere.

The Mess is back to 'winter' dress so dress for Wednesday lunches is suit/blazer/sports jacket and tie. Dress for ladies is the equivalent. Your guests are always welcome.

Christmas Lunch break – Lunches start again tomorrow – Jan 14th

From the Journal of Capt Fred G Coxen RFA - 1914

Jan. 2nd to 23rd: During this period it was the usual give and take. We fired every day at any targets that presented themselves, and were occasionally shelled, very often at night. The REDOUBT was retaken and lost many times, each attack meaning a fierce couple of hours work, till at length it was [undecipherable] 'no man's land' for neither side could hold it.

World War 2 - November 1939

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

Jan 8th: Ration books are introduced in UK for bacon, butter and sugar – 3 of the UK's 4 food groups! All is well, however, as tea remains plentiful because Britain has taken pains to accumulate large stocks ahead of time.

Jan 10th: A plane carrying two German staff officers and the plans for the attack on the West strays off course and lands in Belgium – where the pair is detained. The Belgians pass the plan to the Allies. Hitler had intended to attack the West on Jan 17th, but postpones the attack again.

Jan 11th: The French decide on controlling food sources too: Fridays are to be meatless, and no beef, veal or mutton will be sold on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Jan 14th: In Japan, Prime Minister Abe's government resigns and Admiral Yonai is appointed form a new one. The British decide to arm all merchant vessels.

Canadian Government Project to Highlight Victoria Cross Winners

DAVID PUGLIESE Published on: January 9, 2015



Filip Konowal of Ottawa. Victoria Cross winner.

The Canadian government is spending \$488,000 on a visual and educational program that will inform Canadians about the wartime actions and sacrifices of the country's soldiers during the two world wars. The "Toll of War" project will be managed by the Milton F. Gregg Centre for the Study of War in New Brunswick, according to the government. The project will receive \$488,155 to create a national

banner campaign and produce educational material about Canada's Victoria Cross recipients. It is hoped this will encourage Canadians to learn more about these VC winners.

The Victoria Cross was conferred "for most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy." It was created by Queen Victoria in 1856 and was awarded to Canadians in all conflicts up to the end of the Second World War. The last Victoria Cross to be awarded to a Canadian was in 1945. There have been 1,351 Victoria Crosses awarded worldwide and 98 to Canadians (Canadian-born, serving in the Canadian Army or having a close link to Canada).

Stop starving the Navy

NATIONAL POST EDITORIAL BOARD | December 30, 2014

As 2014 draws to a close, pundits and news organizations have been busy picking their "stories of the year." But there are many equally important news stories that do not receive the same kind of coverage. One of the most interesting news items this year, and one that all Canadians should know about, was the sudden early retirement of several of the Royal Canadian Navy's ships. We understand that this is not an exciting story. Canadians support their military, in the abstract, but rarely think about it. They trust that it will be there when they need it. But, through no fault of the men and women who serve our country, that trust may be misplaced. Our Armed Forces are desperate for new equipment and personnel, and 2014 may go down in history as the year that our Navy was finally pushed too far. None of the stories were huge news on their



own, but when we add them all up, it becomes apparent that the Navy has been severely limited in its ability to conduct operations close to home or abroad.

HMCS Protecteur in 2009

Cpl Roderick Hopp, Esquimalt Imaging Services

The supply vessel HMCS Protecteur was damaged in an engine room fire in February and was towed back to port; repairing the elderly ship was not considered cost effective and she was retired. The HMCS Preserver, our other

supply ship, was found to have serious hull corrosion issues; given her advanced age and high cost of operation, she too was immediately, and permanently, taken out of service. Two of our three destroyers, Iroquois and Algonquin, were also suddenly retired this year, and for the same reason — they were too old to be kept operational in a cost-effective way. That leaves the Royal Canadian Navy with zero supply ships, one elderly destroyer that will be withdrawn from service shortly, four troubled submarines that are only now becoming fully operational 14 years after they first entered Canadian service and 12 frigates that are in the middle of a major upgrade program and only partially available for duty. The sudden and expected loss of the four ships could not have come at a worse time. Canada has three oceans to patrol, has sent ships to European waters to shore up NATO's defences due to the risk of further Russian aggression and tries to maintain a constant naval presence in the always-volatile Middle East. The supply ships make these missions much more sustainable and also support allied efforts in the region, while our destroyers served as capable, valuable platforms for command and control. These capabilities will be missed and cannot be quickly or cheaply replaced.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government likes to talk up its support of the Armed Forces, but has neglected the Navy's real and worsening needs for years. It boasts of its National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy, but after nine years in office, has yet to deliver any new combat vessels to the fleet, at a time when new ships are desperately needed (and don't ask them about those Sea King helicopter replacements, either). We're running out of ships at a moment in our history where all the branches of our military are in high demand. Canada's military is adept at doing more with less and wringing every last bit of service out of a piece of equipment that it can possibly deliver. This is especially true of the Navy, which has been well aware of its increasingly precarious position for years. In 2014, however, the Navy simply hit the wall. There was no more life to be wrung from those ships. This was predictable — indeed, it was inevitable, unless the government took action. The government did not take action, which is why we're running out of ships at a moment in our history where all the branches of our military are in high demand. This may not be the single most important news story of the year, but it's something that we cannot afford to ignore any longer.

At home and abroad, the Navy works to keep Canadians and our allies safe. We owe it the tools to do the job properly. Right now, it don't have them. If the Tories want to continue to boast about their commitment to the Armed Forces, immediately getting the Navy some new ships — which really isn't an unreasonable thing for a Navy to have, all things considered — would be an excellent place to start.

Sonia d'Artois - Obituary

Sonia d'Artois, born May 14 1924, died December 21 2014

Sonia d'Artois was a British agent who parachuted into occupied France to aid the Resistance and infiltrate the Nazis. 29 Dec 2014



Sonia D'Artois in uniform

Sonia d'Artois, who has died aged 90, risked her life as an SOE agent in German-occupied France in the Second World War. On the night of May 28 1944, nine days before D-Day, Sonia was dropped by parachute at La Cropte, south-east of Laval, in the Sarthe, north-west France. Code-named Blanche (and also Madeleine)

and with identity papers in the name of Suzanne Bonvie, her job was to join the “Headmaster” circuit of Sydney Hudson, code-named Albin. Accompanying her were Raimond Glaesner, a native of Alsace, and Eugène Bec. One of her jobs was to train the Maquis in the use of weapons and explosives. Initially, some of them objected to being instructed by a woman, but her professionalism quickly won their respect. Her other task was to act as courier and carry messages by bicycle or deliver money, wireless equipment and other vitally needed supplies.

She pedalled long distances and was in constant danger of being pulled in for questioning. Most of the other Resistance fighters in the area had been arrested by the Gestapo; a container with her clothes in it had been discovered by the Germans and she had to keep on the move. Rarely spending two nights in the same place, she became accustomed to sleeping in barns and haystacks. In June, she was stopped at a roadblock and taken to the German HQ. There she was interrogated, locked in a cell, and her papers closely examined before she was released.

The forest of Charnie, about 25 miles west of Le Mans, was chosen as a base for the Maquis. They lived in tents or under tarpaulins, local villagers supplied them with food, and Sonia delivered arms and explosives. Shortly afterwards, the Gestapo struck. A member of the Resistance revealed under torture the location of the base and guided a company of German

soldiers to a clearing in the forest where a party of the Maquis were preparing for a container drop. Some were arrested. Bec sacrificed his life to allow the others to scatter and escape. The Germans discovered the signalling procedures used by the SOE and seized two planeloads of containers. In addition, the circuit lost three cars and a million francs. The disaster, Hudson said afterwards, was shattering but he was greatly encouraged by Sonia's refusal to let it get her down. On the way back to Le Mans, the two were riding on bicycles. There was a long, steep slope leading into the town. Sonia spotted a German sentry lounging in the road outside a property which the Germans had requisitioned. She put on speed, tore down the hill and made straight for the sentry, forcing him to leap out of the way to avoid being run down.



After D-Day, sabotage operations by the Maquis on trains and canals, bridges and enemy fuel dumps greatly increased as did attacks on German troops passing through the area on the way to reinforce the units in Normandy. Sonia believed that there was no safety in keeping her head down and hoping to remain undetected. She therefore made a habit of eating in black market restaurants where she would strike up an acquaintance with the more approachable German officers and act in an open and friendly manner. After the liberation of Le Mans, she was accused of being a collaborator. Young women suspected of consorting with the Germans were being marched through the streets with placards around their necks branding them as collaborators. Then, in the town square, they would be mocked by the crowd of onlookers, spat upon and roughed up before their heads

were shaved. Sonia's practice of sharing her meals with German officers had not gone unnoticed and, had it not been for the timely intervention of her friends in the Maquis, she would have suffered the same humiliation.

Sonia Esmée Florence Butt was born at Eastchurch, Kent, on May 14 1924. Her father served as an officer with the RAF in the Second World War, but separated from Sonia's mother soon after his daughter was born. Sonia was brought up by her mother in the south of France and educated locally. After the Germans invaded France, she managed to get back to England and joined the WAAF. She did clerical work, which she found unexciting, and, after transferring to the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (the FANYs), she was recruited for training with SOE F Section. During this period, she met fellow agents Violette Szabo and Nancy Wake and fell in love with, and married, Guy d'Artois, an officer in the Canadian army. In August 1944, Sonia and Hudson helped intelligence officers in the US Third Army by gathering valuable information about the disposition of the enemy forces in German-occupied areas. On one occasion, they were stopped at an enemy roadblock while driving a staff car painted in the Wehrmacht camouflage colours and with the French tricolor draped over the side. They

explained that they were dedicated collaborators who had come to warn them of the approach of Allied units. On another, their excuse that they were visiting a grandmother barely held up and they were fortunate to suffer nothing worse than the confiscation of their vehicle.

As the German retreat from the Falaise pocket turned into a rout, the two were able to obtain



documents – passes, permits and identity cards – which authorised them to ignore curfews, to travel virtually unimpeded in forbidden zones and even to carry weapons. They realised that if they were unmasked it was tantamount to a death sentence. At the end of the month, they set off to reconnoitre the area between the Seine and the Marne. On the way back, near Bar-sur-Seine, they found the bridge guarded by armed German soldiers and the SS.

Hudson put his foot down and crossed the bridge at high speed. The Germans opened fire, blowing out the rear window and wounding him in the shoulder. Seeing that they were hemmed in by roadblocks, they abandoned the car and set off across country. Soon they were stopped by a German patrol and, having been turned back, walked into Bar-sur-Seine. The Germans were afraid of being attacked by the local Resistance and Hudson was held hostage in a café overnight. At dawn, an officer arrived. Hudson showed him his Gestapo-stamped identity card and

was released. He then went to the house of the family that had accommodated Sonia for the night. Sonia told him that she had gone back to the café the previous day to collect his coat which he had left there by mistake. Two German soldiers had searched her at gunpoint, she said, and had raped her. But they had not discovered the German passes. At a checkpoint outside Bar-sur-Seine, an NCO examined their papers once more. His face, as Hudson said afterwards, was full of suspicion but he let them go. They walked for two days along deserted roads, crossed the Seine using the remains of a demolished bridge and were eventually picked up by an American jeep. At Divisional HQ at Troyes, they were able to report to the intelligence officer that the Germans appeared to have made few preparations for the defence of the River Marne. In September Sonia was reunited with Captain Guy d'Artois who had commanded three battalions of the Maquis in Burgundy and was subsequently awarded a DSO and the Croix de Guerre. Hudson was awarded a DSO and Bar and the Croix de Guerre.

Sonia returned to England the following month. After the war, she went to Canada with Guy and set up home near Montreal. In 1945 she was appointed MBE (Military Division) and was also mentioned in dispatches. In 1948 Guy d'Artois was awarded a George Medal for his part in rescuing a badly injured missionary in the far north of Canada the previous year.

In the early 1960s her son was driving home with a friend after having had dinner together at Como, Quebec province, when they were pursued by three thugs in their own vehicle and forced to stop. The three ruffians jumped out of their car and began to intimidate the two young men. By coincidence, this happened in front of a house where Sonia was having dinner. Hearing the commotion, she decided to take charge. She hit one of the men in the face, smashed the car door on his leg and held the other two until the police arrived. Sonia, known to her friends as Toni, married Guy d'Artois in 1944. He died in 1999 and she is survived by their three sons and three daughters. For the last seven years of her life, John Tozer was a devoted companion.

Coins Left on Tombstones

While visiting some cemeteries you may notice that headstones marking certain graves have coins on them, left by previous visitors to the grave. The ancients would place coins with the deceased with a belief that it would cover the fee for them to cross the river Styx. The tradition of leaving coins with members of the military, especially men or women that may have died in combat, dates back to the Roman Empire. These coins have distinct meanings and these meanings vary depending on the denomination of coin. These days a coin left on a headstone or at the grave site is meant as a message to the deceased soldier's family that someone else has visited the grave to pay respect.

Leaving a penny at the grave means simply that you visited. A nickel indicates that you and the deceased trained at boot camp together, while a dime means you served with him in some capacity. By leaving a quarter at the grave, you are telling the family that you were with the soldier when he was killed. According to tradition, the money left at graves in national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries is eventually collected, and the funds are put toward maintaining the cemetery or paying burial costs for indigent veterans. In the US, this practice became common during the Vietnam War, due to the political divide in the country over the war; leaving a coin was seen as a more practical way to communicate that you had visited the grave than contacting the soldier's family, which could devolve into an uncomfortable argument over politics relating to the war.

Some Vietnam veterans would leave coins as a "down payment" to buy their fallen comrades a beer or play a hand of cards when they would finally be reunited. The tradition of leaving coins on the headstones of military men and women can be traced to as far back as the Roman Empire.

Who is it?



Last Week: Didn't get one reply on this picture. Not surprising since most adults who were around at that time are no longer with us.

This Week: We have many shots of groups of soldiers from the past, but not too many with such a laughing, happy bunch as in this one. The photo probably dates from the early to mid-1960s, given the dress and the presence of some people, such as Vic Stevenson (rear row, right end), who appears to be a captain in this shot. There are a few non-gunners, and everyone is decorated like a Christmas tree. Kindly sergeants and WOs form the front row, with officers seated, and more junior ones standing, behind them. Two CWACs seem to be making George Chow very happy (3rd row left). The group has shown its commitment to diversity by allowing some bandsmen to join, as well as a gentleman in blue (on the left) who may be one of Vancouver's finest, or not.



So, were you there? If so, what year was this, and was it for Remembrance Day, or for some other ceremonial function? Let the editor, or the author (John Redmond: johnd_redmond@telus.net) know the results of your detective work.

From the 'Punitary'

Prince William would have joined the army but he disliked the phrase 'fire at will'.

Murphy's other Laws

As soon as you mention something – if it is good, it will go away; if it is bad, it will happen.

Quotable Quotes

You live longer once you realize that any time spent being unhappy is wasted. - *Ruth E. Renk*



The British Columbia Army Gala 2015



CELEBRATING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1945 - 2015

Come and enjoy a unique evening of fun and dancing in
the company of peers, comrades, long-lost-friends
and, of course, loved ones!

Venue: Hyatt Regency Vancouver
Date: Saturday, 28 March, 2015
Time: 6 p.m. 'till late
Dress: mess kit, Black Tie or equivalent



For all ticket information, including
Early Bird Specials, please visit
www.bcarmygala.ca or
phone (604) 225-2520 ext 2568.

DO NOT DELAY. LIMITED SEATING AVAILABLE!

South Korea Curry Lunch



*Hosted by:
The British Columbia
Regiment
Officers' Mess*

*Coordinated by:
The BC Regiment
(DCO) Association*



- Date:** Thursday, January 29, 2015
- Time:** 11:45 am - 1:30 pm
(bar opens at 11:45am)
(lunch starts at 12:25pm)
- Location:** Officers' Mess - The BC Regiment
620 Beatty Street, Vancouver, BC
- Dress:** Business Attire (jacket & tie, ladies similar)
- Price:** \$30/person (\$5 discount for those that confirm attendance by January 23, 2015)
- RSVP:** For more information or to register, please contact Bill Diamond at Bill@DukeaBear.com or 604.618.3607 (Please advise of any dietary needs with your RSVP)

Payment by cheque or cash will be accepted at the door
Cheques are payable to: The BC Regiment (DCO) Association
No cancellations after January 23, 2015

NEXT PLANNED LUNCH: Thursday, February 26, 2015