



## Van Arty Assoc and RUSI Van Members News May 28, 2013

### Wednesday Lunches

Lunches in the 15<sup>th</sup> 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!!

This week is 'Navy Day' and members of NOABC will gather for lunch. A speaker is usually arranged for but one has not yet been announced.

### The RCA Heritage campaign latest newsletter

The RCA Heritage campaign has published its latest newsletter. This 16 page newsletter is too big to include with this newsletter but it can be viewed, along with additional Heritage campaign information, at the national Artillery website link:

(to access this site, Control+click on the link below or copy & paste into your browser)-

<http://www.artillery.net/beta/heritage-campaign/>

Be sure to check out the whole website if you have never visited it before.

### Remembering the Alamo: My Year in Afghanistan - Chapter 1

*By Colonel Peter Williams Publication date: 6 September 2012*

*Col Williams is the senior serving Canadian gunner officer in the Afghan training program at this time.*

The Alamo, as most people know from Hollywood movies, is a former Roman Catholic mission and fortress compound and the site of the Battle of the Alamo, fought in 1836. It is now a museum in downtown San Antonio, Texas. To those of us here in Kabul, however, it is the 14-nation coalition base that is home to the Kabul Military Training Centre Training Advisory Group (KMTC TAG), which I command, and other components of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission that assist and advise the Afghan National Army, or ANA. There are many stories about how the camp came to be called "Alamo", but those have

been, as we say, lost in the mists of time. I think it helps give those of us who live here a fierce sense of pride, and that isn't a bad thing.

I'm here on a year-long tour actually my second tour in Afghanistan, the first being in Kandahar in 2006 and in this series of articles I hope to give people back home a sense of what we are all doing here as part of *Operation ATTENTION*, which is Canada's contribution to ISAF and, in particular, the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan or NTM-A. Until March 2014, Canada is maintaining a contingent of up to 950 troops in NTM-A. Our training mission may not receive as much attention as the combat mission in Kandahar (*Operation ATHENA*), but it is just as important indeed, possibly more decisive. It will result in the orderly transition of the security lead across Afghanistan from ISAF to Afghan leadership.

KMTC is the ANA's premiere training institution, responsible for all basic and some advanced training for its recruits, non-commissioned officers and officers, including female officer candidates. Courses here train soldiers in subjects such as literacy, computers, weapons handling, tactics, leadership, driving and instructional technique. My team is partnered with the Afghan trainers, and we advise them on everything from the conduct of individual training, to Public Affairs, finance, supply, business planning, and the myriad functions normally found on a Canadian Forces base for example, health care, food services, military police and engineering but on a much larger scale. To put it in perspective, the student population of KMTC student often exceeds 6,000, and KMTC graduates about 40,000 students per year. That's quite a feat; to put it in perspective, consider that the entire Regular component of the Canadian Forces totals about 68,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen.

After nearly three months at KMTC, I consider myself very fortunate to be the senior advisor to the Commander, Brigadier-General Aminullah Patyani. He has served in Kandahar, where his troops fought alongside ours, and we Canadians have a particular kinship with him, a partnership I hope to further cement in the year ahead. Since 2006, when I last served in Afghanistan, the Afghans have made great and very evident strides in developing their army. Even a year ago, it would have been NATO troops doing the actual instruction, but now the Afghans take the lead while coalition advisors concentrate on refining the ANA trainers' skills in planning, logistics, maintenance, training design and delivery, and resource management. That is quite a leap for them in just a few years.

Canadians and Newfoundlanders can indeed take great pride in the role we play, along with our coalition partners, in helping the ANA achieve these milestones at KMTC. Our team here at Alamo is over 500 strong, including some 200 Canadians of whom quite a few hail from the Rock. At least, that's how it seems at the gym in the early morning, where I keep hearing accents from places such as St Mary's, Grand Falls-Windsor, Upper Island Cove and Merasheen Island. It reminds me quite a lot of home. (As for mine, I'm a Townie.)

As I write this, our Afghan comrades (like Muslims worldwide) are celebrating the holy month of Ramadan, which is called "Ramazan" in Afghanistan. This involves fasting during daylight hours, after which they "break fast" with water and dates, followed by a full meal. To help us understand and appreciate their culture, we invited our ANA counterparts to break their fast

with us at Alamo, where some members of our team are also observing Ramazan. The Afghans reciprocated by inviting us for dinner in their dining hall. Both events were memorable for all of us, and I've found our Afghan hosts to be incredibly hospitable. I've even asked if I can get their rice recipe! As we say at home, it was *wicked*.

Ramazan is followed by Eid-ul-Fitr, which is roughly translated as "The festivity of breaking the fast." Eid is an occasion for people to meet family, friends and neighbours to share the joy of this celebration. It's a time of blessings, forgiveness, kindness, brotherhood and love of humanity. To mark this event, I plan to give General Patyani some Newfoundland goodies such as Purity candies and bakeapple (or cloudberry for the uninitiated) tea and jam. I'll let you all know how that goes in my next article, though I can say that Purity jam cookies are a hit with my coalition friends. So stay tuned!

*More next week.*

## **Code in letters sent home by WWII British PoW is revealed after 70 years**

The letters sent back home by Sub-Lieutenant John Pryor from a German prison camp seemed innocent enough. They often started with 'My Dear Mummy & Daddy' and talked about mundane things such as gardening and a 'vegetable patch'. But the British wartime letters actually contained hidden messages, which have only now been deciphered by academics. It is also the first time the captured serviceman's family has been able to understand the secret messages. Sub Lt Pryor was captured at Dunkirk in 1940 and sent to a prisoner of war camp. He was held for the next five years but as a reward for good behaviour, he was allowed to send letters home to his parents in Saltash, Cornwall. Those letters contained secret messages for the British military - and involved a fiendishly complex alphanumeric code. In one letter, he hid intelligence about the sinking of a British submarine by writing about the PoW camp's vegetable garden.

He wrote: 'Many seeds are left, being saved from several plants which did very well some time ago. 'Our last year's harvest was extremely good. Well worth repeating again for this year.' But it meant: 'HMS Undine attack failure. Trawler depth-charged, scuttled in 70 feet, three burnt.' From this, experts were able to deduce a coded message about the sinking of the British submarine, the HMS Undine, which was destroyed in 1940.

John Pryor was born in 1919 and died in 2010, aged 91. He was a naval officer and was evacuating troops from the beaches at Dunkirk in 1940 when he was captured by the Nazis.

He spent the rest of the war imprisoned in the notorious Marlag und Milag Nord death camp in north-west Germany, from where he penned 20 letters home containing secret codes. After returning to Britain, he continued serving in the Navy until his retirement.

Mr Pryor wrote his memoirs in 1980 and attempted to include extracts of the letters but by then could not remember how the codes worked - and never told his family about them. The secret codes were deciphered after his son Stephen Pryor, a chancellor at Plymouth University, showed the letters to a PhD student studying PoW escape plans. They were then cracked by a team of mathematicians, historians and geography experts - 70 years after they were written.

Marie u. Hing Nord  
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4/15/42

My Dear Mummy & Daddy, last week I received a short letter from Robert. The envelope had the marks of one of the R.A.F. censors. I can't imagine what his new number on the envelope means, maybe he has been turned over to rather different occupations, which of course I can't know anything about. I am glad the information I sent you, especially about the Uffa Fox and other books of the sailing variety, reached you. As regards other possible books, my present desires seem mostly for interesting literature of events in our country's history. A subject I am unfortunately very weak in. The gardens are improving, borders of wire which require a net to keep the football off. Possibly a move to Marbury Wood in the late summer may prevent getting all advantages from some of the later plants, but we hope that. During the course of the last days we obtained some chairs, from local sources I believe, also some tables, which give the recreation room a much better appearance. A few weeks ago we arranged a rather useful scheme, so men could get "liquor" by remitting money at home for that received here. After another year - year and a half my clothing requirements etc. will be but a mere trifle. As I have received all your clothing parcels sent off up to the end of 1941. The suitcase in the last one arrived a bit battered but still quite usable. Private cigarette & tobacco parcels seem to be coming in better now, so I am hoping to get another shortly as my last one arrived in November. Now I must stop, hoping you are all as well as I am. Remember me especially to Mary. Your very loving son  
John

Stephen, 58, of Saltash, Cornwall, said: 'I had known for 30 years that my father had these letters but their contents lay hidden. 'His letters from the camps were always addressed to my grandfather but would have already passed through German censors.

*One of the letters sent by Sub Lt John Pryor to his family from a German prison camp. Subtle markers such as underlining his name at the bottom indicated the message contained a secret code*

'My father was among tens of thousands of young men who as PoWs lost the best years of their youth and could never hope to regain them. 'But I can now see that despite their plight, he and his peers took incredible risks and it has only made me admire their resilience and ingenuity even more.' The research began after military intelligence expert Barbara Bond, a pro-chancellor at the Plymouth University, Devon heard about the letters from Stephen, a university governor. Despite several efforts, they failed to decipher the codes and it took mathematics Professor David McMullan to finally crack them. Using the little information available about codes used by the

MI9 section of British Military Intelligence, he revealed the coded words alternated between every fourth and fifth word. However, if those words happened to be 'but' or 'the', it triggered an intricate alphabetic and numeric sequence which Sub Lt Pryor used to hide requests for items such as maps, passports and currency. MI9 was the British Directorate of Military Intelligence

Section 9 - a department of the War Office between 1939 and 1945.

*Part of the alphanumeric key that was needed to decipher the PoW's messages*

Key	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
WGT	222	111	333	222	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111	333	111
COM	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223
PWW	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331	223	112	331
HBW	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111	331	221	111
OVC	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222	111	333	222
ISC																										
BRG																										

During the war, it was tasked with aiding resistance fighters in enemy occupied territory and recovering Allied troops who found themselves behind enemy lines. It also tried to communicate with British prisoners of war and sent them advice and equipment. Experts say an escape committee inside the PoW camps decided what needed to be included in the messages.

Dr Harry Bennett, associate professor of history at Plymouth University, said: 'Coded messages played a huge part in the war effort on both sides, as they were undoubtedly the best way to get messages or instructions through. 'The MI9 code was especially important, as their chief



mission was to source equipment and supplies for prisoners of war who would then attempt to orchestrate an escape. 'But from these letters we now know they were also passing on information about key German sites, such as munitions dumps.

'The letters go to emphasise just how invaluable the code writes were to the Allied war effort.

## **Commander Rowland Bourke, VC, DSO**



*On Wednesday, May 8, 2013, a Memorial was unveiled at the Royal Oak Burial Park in Victoria, BC to honour Commander Bourke.*

*Cdr Bourke was a member of the NOABC.*

Commander Bourke was born in London, England in 1885. At 17, he came with his family to Nelson, BC. When World War One broke out, he left the family fruit farm and volunteered to enlist in the Canadian forces, but was rejected in all three arms of service because of defective eyesight. Undaunted, he returned to England at his own expense and successfully joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve to serve on the motor launches.



In April 1918, raids were arranged to block the Belgian harbour of Zeebrugge-Ostend, most heavily defended of all the German U-boat bases. Bourke, a Lieutenant at the time, immediately volunteered his vessel for the rescue of crews whose ships were sunk in the blockade effort. He was again rejected due to his poor eyesight. Despite being told most of the men would not make it back, Bourke persisted in offering his motor launch (ML) as a standby in case one of the chosen rescue motor launches was disabled.

As a result, on the night of April 23, Bourke's launch picked up 38 sailors from the sinking blockship HMS *Brilliant* and towed the crippled ML 532 out of the harbour. For this latter achievement Bourke was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

When the second operation against Zeebrugge-Ostend was called, Bourke's motor launch was found to be too damaged for the work. But Bourke was so eager to take part that he offered to give up his command in order to participate in the operation on another vessel, ML 254. Finally, however, his own ML was accepted as a standby. Bourke had just 24 hours to completely re-fit his vessel and find a new volunteer crew.

He succeeded, and on May 9-10, Bourke's ML followed the blockship HMS *Vindictive* back into the Belgian harbour. While backing out after the raid, he heard cries from the water. Bourke made a prolonged search of the area amid very heavy gunfire at close range. He found a Lieutenant and two ratings from the RN ship badly wounded in the water. Bourke's own launch

was hit 55 times and two of the crew were killed. Nevertheless, he managed to bring out his vessel in one piece.

For this action, King George V decorated Bourke with the Victoria Cross. He was also presented with the French Legion of Honour. With characteristic modesty, Bourke asked his family not to inform the press of his achievements.

After the war the reluctant hero returned to Nelson, BC and married. In 1932 he and his wife moved to Victoria and Bourke started work at HMC Dockyard in Esquimalt as a civilian clerk. He was instrumental in organizing the Fishermen's Reserve, a west coast patrolling operation, just prior to World War Two.

He also served as a recruiting officer for a time but in 1941 again became an active serviceman, this time with the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve. He served as Commander at HMCS *Givenchy*, Esquimalt, and Burrard, Vancouver.

In 1950 Bourke ended his long and dedicated career with the navy, retiring as supervisor of civilian guards. He died in August 1958 and was buried with full military honours. Bourke willed his VC and other medals to the National Archives in Ottawa.

## **Final Journey of a Queen 50 Years Later**

*Yugoslav royal returned to her native country after being exhumed from Windsor's royal burial ground.*

*The Mail. Published: 29 April 2013*



*Queen Maria of Yugoslavia has been exhumed and will be sent to her home after 70 years of exile*

She was exiled from her country during World War II by the Nazis, but now the body of Queen Maria of Yugoslavia is finally being allowed to return home. The monarch, who is second cousin once removed of both Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, has returned to Serbia after being exhumed from the Royal burial ground at Frogmore, Windsor. Queen Maria's husband King Alexander I was assassinated a Bulgarian terrorist in 1934 as he drove through Marseilles, France. The couple's 11-year-old son, King Peter II, inherited the throne, but the family was forced to leave in 1941, after Yugoslavia was invaded. She spent the remainder of her life in a cottage in England, but the Communist leader who ruled the country from 1945, Marshal Josip Tito, refused to allow her body to be returned.

The Sunday Telegraph reported that with permission from Queen Elizabeth II, the Serbian royal family has arranged for Queen Maria's remains to return to her home country.

A spokesman said: 'This is very emotional for us. This is a huge moment for modern Serbia.' The Serbian royal family spokesman added: 'She was the first woman to drive a car in that part of Europe. She spoke five languages, she was very stylish, she was a great painter and a philanthropist. 'She was loved by so many.'

Queen Maria was born into the Romanian royal family, and was a great granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Her body was exhumed on April 26 and relocated to the Serbian Orthodox Church of St Sava in London the next day, where a Holy Liturgy and Memorial Service for her was held at in front of living members of the Serbian royal family. Her grandson, the Crown Prince Alexander, flew to Belgrade with her body following the memorial service. Serbia held a state funeral on May 26. Her last resting place will be the royal mausoleum in Topola, 80 miles from the capital.

The modern Serbian royal family have been allowed back into the country and have been working for seven years to repatriate the bodies of past relatives. Her son (King Peter II) was repatriated from the US in January, and his wife, Queen Alexandra, was returned from Athens this May.

## BCR Lunch

**Curry Lunch – a  
Mystery Country**



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

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



**Date:** Thursday, May 30, 2013

**Time:** 11:45 am - 1:30 pm  
(bar opens at 11:45am)  
(welcome at 12:15pm)  
(lunch starts at 12:20pm)

**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 May 24, 2013)

**RSVP:** For more information or to register, please contact  
Bill Diamond at [Bill@DukeofBear.com](mailto:Bill@DukeofBear.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 May 24, 2013

NEXT PLANNED LUNCH: Thursday, September 26, 2013

**NOTE: No BCR lunches over the summer - this is the last BCR lunch until September.**

## From the 'Punitentary'

When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it's a sure sign you're getting old. - *Mark Twain*

## Murphy's Rules of Combat Operations.

When you need Attack Helicopters, they'll be busy escorting the general's bird around.

## Quotable Quotes

The trouble with fighting for human freedom is that one spends most of one's time defending scoundrels. For it is against scoundrels that oppressive laws are first aimed, and oppression must be stopped at the beginning if it is to be stopped at all. - *Henry Louis Mencken*

7