



Paris
Branch

Newsletter

May 2022



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*This month's
lunch*

*Thur 26/5
1215 for 1230*

*See below for
menu*

Message from your Chairman.

Welcome to this month's Newsletter.

Chairman's report.

On the 24th April Janet, Pierre, Patrick Gautier, Noreen Riols, David Bean and myself attended the RAF Memorial at Maisons-Laffitte. There was a good turn out and a warm welcome from the Mayor and the local band played. It was nice to meet up



with some of our members whom I had not seen for some time at the Holy Trinity church service before the ceremony. The exhortation was read in English by Richard and in French by Roger Warby.

On the 27th April we had a full house for the monthly lunch at RBL which I had prepared. Again it was nice to meet up with new and longstanding members who all said that they enjoyed the lunch. After the lunch Pierre and two of his friends put on an

interesting display of historical military figurines and dioramas that they had produced, which were much admired and appreciated by those in attendance. (see photo)

This month I shall be attending the RBL annual conference online. We have submitted one motion and I have put forward a question as to whether RBL London will be opening a base in Europe where members will once again be able to purchase Legion ties, badges etc. Currently, under Brexit regulations it is not possible to obtain these items without paying an import tax, which makes them ridiculously expensive. I recently purchased a badge from 'Awards Medals' and having paid postage I then had to pay the post woman who delivered it nine euros import tax



- as much as the cost of the badge.

A new National Chairman of the RBL, Jason Coward, has been appointed. He previously served as a trustee as well as on the membership council. Jason takes over from Una Cleminson who steps down this month having completed her full term of three years. Lynda Atkins has been elected as National Vice Chair. Lynda also previously served as a trustee. I shall give feedback on the conference in the June edition

of the newsletter.

This month's lunch is programmed for Thursday the 26th of this month, which is Ascension day. I shan't be there to prepare the lunch as I am busy invigilating exams at Kingsworth International school in Paris until 1.30. However Helen, my wife, has said she will prepare the lunch. (See menu below) and I hope to arrive in time to sample it.

On Sunday 8th May our Ambassador Mena Rawlings accompanied by our military attachés attended the 77th anniversary of VE day at the Arc de Triomphe.



Your membership secretary, seen here, was late for lunch and relegated to a quiet corner to amuse himself as he could



Lastly Caroline, our PR is to be congratulated on having come second in a pistol shooting competition at the Police shooting range which is located deep underground near the Arc de Triomphe. Well done Caroline. Get your marksman badge and you'll catch up with me.



Don't forget to book in for this month's lunch.

Thursday 26 May
1215 for 1230

Only €23 - Pay on the day
(in cash please)

Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or
richard.neave05@gmail.com

*Book soon to be sure of a place.
(Cancellations up to 48h before)*



LUNCH MENU 26th MAY

APERITIF

STARTER

Mixed cheeses with walnuts, cress and dressing

MAIN COURSE

Mixed cold meats with salad

DESSERT

Fresh strawberries and cream

WINE SERVED WITH THE MEAL
White

COFFEE OR TEA

THE MONTHLY QUIZ

1. A person who is Impartial in a particular matter would be described as :
a) Noninterested, b) Disinterested, c) Uninterested, d) Deinterested
2. The kuna is the common currency in which country?
a) Georgia, b) Brazil, c) Croatia, d) Laos
3. Triceratops is a dinosaur from which of the following periods?
a) Jurassic, b) Cretaceous, c) Devonian, d) Cambrian
4. When was the death penalty abolished in the UK?
a) 1808, b) 1908, c) 1949, d) 1998
5. According to Greek legend, who killed Paris (of Troy fame)?
a) Achilles, b) Diomedes, c) Philoctetes, d) Menelaus
6. In physics, what is Hooke's Law?
a) A law of gravity, b) A law of motion, c) A law of thermodynamics, d) A law of elasticity
7. What is the capital of Zambia?
a) Lusaka, b) Banjul, c) Lilongwe, d) Abidjan
8. On what day of the month does the US national holiday Juneteenth take place?
a) 10th June, b) 17th June, c) 19th June, d) 28th June
9. What does the 'M' stand for in the name of English painter JMW Turner?
a) Michael, b) Mark, c) Morgan, d) Mallord
10. Complete the title of a seminal novel by Alice Walker – The Color.....
a) Of The World, b) Of Love, c) Purple, d) Of Hate

Answers: See last page.

Members' Hobbies

Our Chairman's guns.

I have several hobbies. However about eighteen months ago I started a new one, collecting WW1 & WW2 hand held replica firearms. It began after I discovered that it is possible to purchase replica firearms in both gun shops in Paris and also through the internet from different suppliers.



I have always had an interest in WW1 & WW2 firearms. When I served in the army I was fortunate enough to have been able to handle and fire on a range a number of these firearms along with modern rifles, submachine guns and pistols.

I purchased my first replica a M1911 .45 single - action, semi - automatic pistol from a gun shop in Paris, which is a nonfiring replica. It weighs the same as an original and is all metal with wooden hand grips. The magazine has an internal spring and is

detachable. I also bought dummy shells to go with it. The pistol was manufactured by a company called Denix which is a Spanish company that produces both WW2 and vintage replicas. The M1911 automatic is a weapon which frequently figures in war films, documentaries and even in gangster films.

The M1911 .45, also known as the Colt 1911 or Colt Government, was designed by John Moses Browning who was an American firearms designer who developed many varieties of military and civilian firearms, cartridges, and gun mechanisms - many of which are still in use around the world. Browning made his first firearm at age 13.

The U.S. Military procured around 7 million M1911 and M1911A1 pistols during its service life and it served as the standard-issue sidearm for the United States Armed Forces from 1911 to 1985. The unit cost was \$26.38 (1938), equal to around \$508 now. I paid 98euros for my replica. I have since discovered that it's possible to buy an air gun version that fires .177 pellets which sells for around 240euros. I might just get one.

The second replica that I purchased is a Sten, submachine gun carbine, machine, sten, 9mm. Mark 11 version. I bought mine through Ebay and it too was manufactured by Denix. It is a good replica in so far as the size and weight are the same as an original and is made of metal. However, I had to make a spring to fit the magazine as it does not come with one. Again, I managed to buy dummy cartridges to fit the magazine.



Most people who know the Sten associate it with having been used during WW2 by the Commandos and Resistance groups. It was designed by Major Reginald V. Shepard OBE and Harold Turpin in 1940 and manufactured by the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield. Hence the

term "STEN" which derives from **S**hepard, **T**urpin and **E**n the latter standing for **Enfield** small arms factory. The unit cost in 1942 was £2.6s. 3.7-4.6 million were manufactured. It fired 19mm bullets and had an effective range of 100m.

The Mark 11 tended to attract affection and loathing in equal measure due to its questionable reliability from some front-line troops, and gained nicknames such as "Plumber's nightmare", "Plumber's abortion", or "Stench Gun". A common statement heard from British forces at the time was that the Sten was made "by Marks and Spencer out of Woolworths". It could be very temperamental, and could accidentally discharge if dropped or even if laid on the ground whilst the gun was cocked. They also occasionally fired full-automatic when placed on 'single' or single shots.



My third replica is a Webley MK V1 Revolver. I purchased this from a German company named Umarex who produce a range of WW2 replica hand held firearms, as well as modern firearms. The Webley I purchased is made under licence from the Webley company, and is thus a high-quality standard. It corresponds in every detail to a real one and came with cartridges that have the Webley markings. The cartridges each have a plastic bullet head into which you insert a round metal ball, known as a BB. To fire

this MKV1 Revolver you insert a small CO2 canister that fits into the handle of the pistol. The CO2 powers the BB to exit at high speed just like in an air pistol. I have fired it at targets and it has proved to be quite accurate. Umarex also produce a .177 pellet firing version of the Webley MK V1 as well.

The Webley MK V1 known as the top-break Revolver or Webley Self-Extracting Revolver was first produced in 1915. The Webley Mk V as well as the Mk 1V however, were around at the time and these were issued first to officers, pipers and range takers, and later airmen, naval crews, boarding parties, trench raiders, machine-gun teams, and tank crews before being issued to many Allied soldiers as a sidearm.

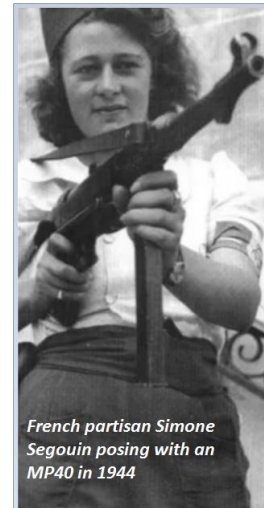
The MK V1 proved to be a very reliable and hardy weapon, well suited to the mud and adverse conditions of trench warfare. Several accessories were developed for the MK V1, including a bayonet (made from a converted French Gras bayonet). Speed loaders were produced. During WW2 the official service pistol for the British military was the Enfield No.2 MK 1 .38/200 calibre revolver. However due to there being a critical shortage of handguns, a number of other weapons were also adopted (first as an unofficial but pragmatic solution but subsequently officially) to alleviate the shortage. As a result, both the Webley Mk 1V in .38/00 and Webley MkV1 in .455 calibre were issued to personnel during the war. The MKV1 had an effective firing range of 50 yds (45.7m) with a rate of fire 20-30 rounds per minute.



My fourth replica is an MP 40 (Maschinenpistole 40) which again I purchased from Umarex who have been licenced to produce an accurate replica. It is indeed a fine piece of work and correct in

every detail. I managed to obtain an original leather shoulder strap for it from another German company. Like my Webley it fires BBs which slot into the magazine along with the CO2 cartridge. It fires single shot and rapid and has a safety catch as does the original. Having tested it, it has proved to be powerful and accurate when firing at targets.

The MP 40 was designed in 1938 by Heinrich Vollmer and Erma Werke Haenel with inspiration from its predecessor the MP 38, it was heavily used by infantrymen (particularly platoon and squad leaders), and by paratroopers, on the Eastern and Western fronts as well as armoured fighting vehicle crews. It was often called "Schmeisser" by the Allies, after Hugo Schmeisser, who designed the MP 18, although he was not involved in the design or production of the MP 40. From 1940 to 1945, an estimated 1.1 million were produced by Erma Werke. Unit cost of production was 57 RM (1940) 230 EUR being the current equivalent. It fired 9x19mm Parabellum at a rate of fire of 500-550 rounds per minute and had an effective firing range of 100-200 m. Maximum firing range 250 m. During WW2 the resistance and Allies sometimes captured MP 40s to replace or supplement their own weapons.



My latest replica is the Lee Enfield No1 Mk111 rifle affectionally known as the SMLE. I had to wait over six months before I could get the one I wanted due to there being a heavy demand for this particular replica. It is distributed by the S&T Armament company who purchase it from the Taiwan Gun Company. It is a superb replica, extremely accurate in every detail and constructed from metal and wood just as was the original. One could indeed replace most of the parts from those of a real Lee Enfield which gives an indication of just how precise the details are. I shall be changing the butt plate for an original butt plate because the butt plate on the replica is not brass as on the original. Again, I was able to get an original shoulder strap dated 1940 for it from the same company from which I bought the strap for my MP40. Like my MP 40 and Webley it fires BBs which fit into the magazine. It doesn't use a CO2 cartridge but an air spring as in an air rifle and is extremely accurate. It even has the wrist guard markings dated 1918 with "G.R" under the crown which stands for George Rex the reigning monarch at the time the rifle was manufactured, as did the original.

I gained my marksmanship badge firing a Lee Enfield No 1 MK111 and later began my sniper training using the Lee Enfield rifle No. 4 MK 1. The accuracy requirement was the ability to place seven of seven shots in a 5 inch (12.7cm) circle at 200 yds (183m) and six of seven shots in a 10 inch target (25.4cm) circle at 400 yards (366m) which I managed to do.



The Lee Enfield No 1 MK 111 short rifle known as the SMLE or 303 takes its name from the designer of the rifle's bolt system, a one James Paris Lee, and the factory in which it was designed, the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield. The No1 MK111 was used by British and Commonwealth troops from 1907 to early 1960s. It had a 10 round magazine capacity that held .303 inch

cartridges which came in clips of five that were top loaded into the rifle which allowed a well-trained rifleman to perform the "mad minute" firing 20 to 30 aimed rounds in 60 seconds, making the Lee-Enfield the fastest military bolt-action rifle of the day. The current record for aimed bolt-

action fire was set in 1914 by a musketry instructor in the British Army, a Sergeant Snoxall who placed 38 rounds into a 12 inch (300mm) wide target at 300 yds (270m) in one minute. There are several First World War accounts that tell of German attackers who reported that they encountered machine guns, when in fact it was simply a group of well-trained riflemen armed with SMLE MK111 rifles.

I still have a number of WW1 and WW2 hand held guns and intend to expand my collection. However it takes time to find a good replica and - and they can be expensive.

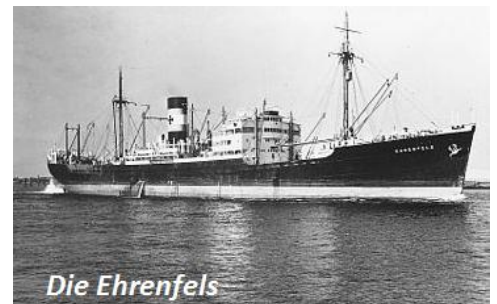
I should add that it is legal to collect replica firearms in France, as it is to own BB and pellet firing versions.

I know those of you of my generation who have served in the British forces will be familiar with the weapons I have mentioned and the illustrations here may bring back memories.

Richard Neave

OPERATION CREEK

Operation Creek (also known as Operation Longshanks) was a covert military operation undertaken by the Special Operations Executive in World War II on 9th March 1943. It involved a nighttime attack by members of the Calcutta Light Horse and the Calcutta Scottish against a Nazi German merchant ship, the *Ehrenfels*, which had been transmitting information to U-boats from Mormugao Harbour in neutral Portugal's territory of Goa. The attack was successfully carried out, and the *Ehrenfels* and three other Axis merchant ships were sunk, stopping the transmissions to the U-boats.



With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, three German freighters operated by the DDG Hansa, the *Ehrenfels*, the *Braunfels* and the *Drachenfels*, took refuge in the harbour of Mormugao, Goa. They did so because Portugal was neutral during the war while the British territory of India was not. In 1940, they were joined by an Italian vessel, the *Anfora*. All British citizens on board were permitted to disembark. However, the ships soon ran out of supplies which led to some crew members abandoning their vessels to pursue odd jobs in Goa for

money. While the British were aware of the presence of the ships, they did not perceive them to be a threat since they were merchant ships.



However, in 1942 the India Mission of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) at Meerut intercepted coded messages to German Navy U-Boats, relaying detailed information on the positions of Allied ships leaving Bombay Harbour in the Indian Ocean.

Subsequently, in autumn of that year forty-six Allied merchant ships were attacked. The SOE then discovered that a Gestapo spy, Robert Koch (known as "the Trumpet") and his wife Grete were living in Panaji, the capital of Goa. SOE agents Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Pugh and Colonel Stewart went to Goa in November 1942 and kidnapped Robert and Grete Koch on 19th December. The couple were taken to Castle Rock, Karnataka, for questioning as part of Operation Hotspur.

The Kochs vanished from the records shortly afterwards, with conflicting reports on their ultimate fate. The SOE now suspected that a secret transmitter aboard the Ehrenfels was guiding German U-Boat attacks on Allied shipping, on instructions from Koch. Attacks in the Indian Ocean continued, and in the first week of March 1943, German U-boats sank twelve American, Norwegian, British and Dutch ships: a total of roughly 80,000 tons.



The British could not infringe on Portugal's neutrality by openly invading its territory. Hence the SOE decided to attempt a covert operation avoiding the involvement of regular British armed forces. They recruited members of the Calcutta Light Horse 1,400 miles (2,300km) away in Calcutta, who were on military reserve but consisted mainly of middle-aged bankers, merchants, and solicitors. Lt. Col. Pugh contacted his friend Bill Grice, the Colonel of the Calcutta Light Horse, and after swearing him to secrecy laid out the basic facts. Pugh needed 15-20 men. Their target was the Ehrenfels, which they would either capture or sink. The volunteers would be given some crash commando training. However, because it was a top-secret mission, they'd get no credit, no pay, no pensions should anything go wrong and no medals. Grice wryly observed, "How attractive you make the conditions sound, Lewis." but agreed to call a special meeting to ask for volunteers.

The following evening, Grice addressed an assemblage of about 30 members, stating that he needed 18 volunteers for a secret mission against the Germans. "I can tell you nothing about it except that the operation should take about a fortnight and will involve a short sea voyage. There it is, gentlemen. I leave it to you. Is anyone willing to volunteer?" to a man, everyone raised his hand. The selection commenced. Those clearly too old or in poor health were dismissed. Among the accepted was the unit's corporal, Bill Manners, who asked, "What about me? You know I've only got one eye." (he had lost an eye in a school accident.) "It was good enough for Nelson,"



replied Grice, "Why shouldn't it be for you?" After the selection process there remained a few places to be filled, and four members from Calcutta Scottish, another auxiliary, completed the roster.

After being armed and trained by the SOE, some of the eighteen member-assault team embarked on a hopper barge, the Phoebe, at Calcutta and sailed around India to Goa; the rest took the train from Calcutta to Cochin and joined the barge and its crew there.

Around midnight of 9-10th March 1943, the town of Vasco da Gama, where Mormugao harbour is located, was celebrating the last day of the Carnival. One team member used SOE funds to throw a large party in Vasco, inviting the crews of all the ships in the harbour to attend – which left only a small standby crew on board the Ehrenfels.

Due to a "coincidence", both the lighthouse and the luminous buoy of Mormugao harbour were not working that night, allowing the Phoebe to enter the harbour in darkness. The British team attacked the Ehrenfels, killing its captain and some of the crew and capturing the ship and its transmitter. After its capture, however, some of the Ehrenfels remaining crew members opened the ship's sea cocks and sank it. The British team suffered no casualties in the operation, and left on the Phoebe.

The crews of the other merchant ships in the harbour, the Drachenfels, the Braunfels and the Anfora, seeing the Ehrenfels on fire and sinking, scuttled their ships to protect them from capture by the British. As the Phoebe left Mormugao harbour it transmitted the codeword "Longshanks" to SOE headquarters, indication that all Axis ships had been sunk. Five crew members of the Ehrenfels were reported dead (including the captain), with four more reported missing.

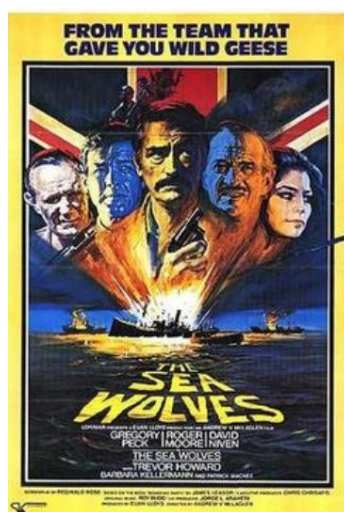
Following this attack and throughout the rest of March, a total of thirteen German U-Boats operating in the Indian Ocean managed to sink only one ship, the Panamanian Nortun of 3,663 tons. In the following month of April, they only attacked three ships.

The Calcutta Light Horse was disbanded in 1947, a ceremony fittingly carried out by its honorary colonel, the Last Viceroy of India, Earl Mountbatten of Burma. He was extremely proud of the Calcutta Light Horse and praised it for all the battles in which it had participated.

The world became aware of the exact events of the operation only in 1978, when the story of Operation Creek was revealed in the book "Boarding Party", by the journalist James Leasor. It was dramatised in the 1980 film *The Sea Wolves* starring Gregory Peck, Roger Moore and David Niven

In his foreword to the book, the Earl Mountbatten of Burma wrote of the Calcutta Light Horse:

"This book tells how fourteen of them, with four colleagues from the Calcutta Scottish, another Auxiliary Force unit, volunteered for a hazardous task which, for reasons the



author makes plain, no-one else was able to undertake. This happened shortly before my arrival in India in 1943, as Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, and I immediately saw how valuable were the results of this secret operation. I am pleased that, at last, credit may be given to those who planned and carried it out."

N.B. You may be interested to know that, at the moment, you can watch a remarkably good copy of the film "The Sea Wolves" on youtube. Click on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnLVUlrHbKk>

If it doesn't work directly go into youtube and search for "The Sea Wolves".

Janet Warby

Baron Haussman goes with the flow

I hadn't been in Paris long and it was a dry and sunny day. Suddenly I noticed that the gutter was full of water. I'd seen it before but it hadn't really registered that this happens in Paris even when it isn't raining.

Something made me bend down and stare at it in detail. There was a movement. A closer look revealed it to be a tiny fresh water shrimp.

Now as an amateur biologist this intrigued me. Amphipods (to give them their proper name) are not like those African "rainfish". Those curious creatures hatch out of eggs which can survive in dry dust in wait for a shower of rain to leave a puddle. They mature and lay eggs so quickly that the reproductive cycle is completed before the sun dries up the water. Water fleas, on the other hand, cannot cope with the removal of their natural element. Where, I pondered, had they come from? What would they do when the gutter dried out?

This curiosity remained a mystery until I realised that there might be a relationship between the shrimp I had seen and the bits of rolled up carpet which decorated a surprising number of street corners, another oddity of the Paris scene. One day I



tracked one of these inexplicable flows of water back to its source. On the corner of a street I saw that the water was flowing from a grating. A bit of carpet was attached to it. A man equipped with a broom came along and kicked the carpet from right to left. The cleansing stream immediately stopped flowing to the left and obediently swept up all the cigarette ends in the gutter on the right. The grating had been cunningly installed at a corner where two adjoining streets both went downhill. The man wandered off and recommenced a desultory sweeping of the street into the now flooded gutter. This carpet business, I realised, was a brilliant low-tech solution to a simple problem; directing a flow of water in one of two directions. In Britain this, if it had existed would have been effected by some sort of metal



deflector. The Americans would probably have managed to computerise it. OK, maybe the bits of ragged carpet didn't look very nice but they were remarkably effective.

This led to another reflection; How could a municipality like Paris allow itself the luxury of pouring vast quantities of water into the roadway on a daily basis? It took me a while to find out and the intriguing fact is that Paris is - as far as I know - the only city with two separate water supplies. The regular one provides a (remarkably good) drinking water but another exists, not of drinking quality.

Well, it turns out that back in the 1870s the inevitable Baron Haussman extended his talents, not only to magnificent boulevards, one of which bears his name, but also to the creation of two separate water systems in Paris. One, of course, was for drinking but, with remarkable foresight given the current ecological situation a second one was installed, devoted to watering the parks, topping up the lakes - and cleaning the streets of Paris. Hausseman's sidekick, Eugène Belgrand who did the more practical work (along with digging the sewers) only got a street named after him, not a boulevard. The canal de l'Ourque was the source of this secondary system, feeding the "*Bassin de la Villette*" which still serves as a reservoir for this system. Since it is not drinking water, it is not treated and flows freely into the pipes through a simple but rather coarse filter which prevents fish from flopping around in the Paris streets but does not exclude some of the tiniest denizens of the reservoir. The fresh water shrimp which had originally attracted my attention back in the 1960's was certainly one of these and its presence in the gutter was at last satisfactorily explained.



The lock at the exit from the basin da la Villette

MY

Just for fun

Q. What's the difference between a cat and a comma?

A. A cat has claws at the end of paws, A comma is a pause at the end of clause.

Q. Why should the number 288 never be mentioned?

A. It's two gross.

Q. What did the Tin man say when he got run over by a steam roller?

A. "Curses! Foil again!"

Q. What did the bald man exclaim when he received a comb for a present?

A. Thanks- I'll never part with it.

Q. Where are average things made?

A. The satisfactory.

According to unofficial sources, a new simplified income-tax form contains only four lines.

1. What was your income for the year?

2. What were your expenses?

3. How much have you left.

4. Send it.

Restaurant Patron; "Waiter I'd like a bottle of wine."

Waiter. "What year sir?"

Patron. "Well, I'd like it right now".

I was visiting my son the other night when I asked if I could borrow a newspaper.

"Dad, this is the 21st Century". He said.

"I don't waste my money on newspapers. But if you like you can borrow my Ipad".

I can tell you this. That spider never knew what hit him.

Answers to Quiz:

1. b; 2. c; 3. b; 4. d; 5. c; 6. d; 7. a; 8. c; 9. d; 10. c