

THE Editor of Home Front has received from the General Secretary the following (abridged) extract from the files for 1927...

"A member of the staff unearthed a cutting from The Natal Mercury dated Saturday 12 November 1927," he writes. "The Moths in those days, led by Evo, certainly had no inhibitions about 'letting their hair down.'"

"Sadly most of those present have answered the Sunset Call and too many of their successors are themselves rather long in the tooth for such goings-on, as gran was wont to say.

"We still have our parade every year but none of the hilarity of days gone by. Pity, but then the Old Order changeth, giving way to the new.

"Maybe you could publish this cutting and make some old timers eat their hearts out for the good old days."

Under the main headings "Moths' monster muster" and "Victorious attack on City Hall," the report read:

When Mr Charles Evenden, of Durban, began in a quiet way to found the organisation known as the Memorable Order of Tin Hats, he little dreamed what he was letting loose in the country.

That the Moths today speak with a mighty voice was proved beyond a shadow of doubt last night when the Armistice concert took place in the Town Hall, preceded by a remarkably impressive march through the central thoroughfares of Durban.

After paying solemn tribute to the honoured dead at the anniversary ceremony in front of the Cenotaph in the morning, Moths devoted the evening to an effective celebration of the ninth anniversary of Armistice in the form of a regular back-of-the-line concert.

Substantially over 3 000 were present, and the demonstrations which marked the evening proved conclusively that the indomitable spirit which ultimately triumphed in the Great War is not a thing of the past, but may be conjured into life the moment the circumstances demand it.

The tremendously successful affair began with a mass parade of Moths in front of the Criterion Theatre on the Esplanade at 7 pm. Long before this hour troops began to assemble at this marshalling point, and by the time the full column was due to move off at 7.30 a bewildering number of Shellhole sections had put in an appearance.

That arch culprit, Charles Evenden, head of the Order, as "Old Bill," was to be seen actively engaged in assembling individual bodies of troops into columns of four as they arrived on the parade

Moths' night out in Durban was 1927 highlight



ground.

In addition to the now famous Durban Shellholes, it was good to see the City represented by "Nurse Cavell No. 1," while the South Coast was prominent with the "Hard Tack" Shellhole from Umkomaas, present in strength, and "Picardy," Doonside, mustered a strong contingent. It was estimated that close on 3 000 men fell in at the parade ground by the time the column moved off at 7.30 o'clock, headed by the Durban Light Infantry band.

Following the band was G.H.Q. Staff, with "Old Bill," supported by General Wylie and Colonel Molyneux in the leading file. "Twinkle" Shellhole followed, and by the time the van reached West Street, passing along Field Street, the tail of the column was still falling into line on the Esplanade.

The march followed the route of Field Street, West Street and Gardner Street, and as each section reached the Cenotaph, troops marched to attention and turned "eyes left" in passing the Memorial.

The ground floor of the Town Hall presented a remarkable scene when all troops had entered, seats having been arranged in a sociable manner, and a special sand-bagged platform having been erected on the east side. It is almost impossible to describe the scenes that followed. The typically front-line notices with which the Hall was sprinkled kept all in a good humour from the beginning, while the unforgettable melodies of the War period, to which the White Diamond Orchestra treated the troops, set the ball rolling at a merry pace.

Early in the evening Mr George Bull, Editor of "The Latest," was invested with the robes and title of Lord Mayor of Durban in recognition of his generous support to deserving ex-Servicemen — an item which found spontaneous favour with the troops in every part of the hall.

A little later the head of the Order,

the aforesaid "culprit," Charles Evenden, "Old Bill" of the Order, was court-martialled for being "a — nuisance in having been responsible for founding the organisation."

Taken all round, it was a wonderful evening with thrills galore. Who could have failed to respond with enthusiasm on hearing such unforgettable melodies as "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty," "Tipperary," "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "Who's Your Lady Friend," and the dozens of other War-time songs?

Two competitions during the evening created considerable hilarity. The first was that for the most effective Shellhole domestic flag or banner, and a splendid array of bunting was seen. Cheers greeted the passage of each across the stage.

The second contest was for the most effective and lifelike "Old Bill," and here again competition was keen, and a wonderful variety of exponents of Bairnsfather's immortal character paraded across the stage to the accompaniment of deafening cheers and flashing humour. The judges were General Wylie, Colonel Molyneux, and Sister Derringer whose task in arriving at final decisions was no easy one.

"Prince's" Shellhole won the flag contest with a unanimous vote, while "Windy Corner" was placed second, and "No Man's Land" third. The aspirant from the "Snipers" Shellhole won the "Old Bill" competition.

The musicians took the stage for some final joyous moments, playing War-time songs with gusto, and finally brought a memorable evening to a close.

In the language of Old Kaspar, in discussing the Battle of Blenheim, "Twas a famous victory."

ON ACCOUNT

MR Ginsberg had a call from his bank manager to tell him his account was overdrawn. "Say, Meester Meneger, wot was dit at zent of last mont?"

The manager tapped his computer and told Ginsberg it was R2 000,00 in credit.

"Funny ting, Meester Meneger, I don't remember you phoning me then!"

Newsletter Overlord SH