



Marshal Smuts Shellhole

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BULLSHEET

JULY 2011

Editorial

July is the official start of the new MOTH year. All Shellholes are winding up their affairs of the last year and nominating members for their next Executive Committee. At Marshal Smuts only the Paybill and the Sergeant Major have made themselves available to serve on the next committee and looking at the nominations it is going to be quite a few new enthusiastic faces in all positions at the top table. Please make the extra effort to attend the AGM on 15 July when the next committee will be elected and installed by a Dugout executive member.

We are also sending the proposed updated Shellhole Standing orders to all our members. They have been virtually rewritten and we will be voting on their acceptance at the AGM as well.

We report on an enjoyable winter lunch with our Widows and WWII veterans on 11 June and we have part 3 of the story of South Africa and the War against Japan. We will be taking a break from Jan Smuts the philosopher.

Shellhole Calendar

**15 July: AGM - Shellhole,
18:00.**

**17 July: Delville Wood
Parade –
Gardens 11:00**



This month we focus on the commemoration of the battle at Delville Wood. Military veterans of all ages will be attending Remembrance parades on Sunday 17 July. Our local parade will be held, as usual, at the memorial in the Company's Gardens Cape Town at 11:00. All attending, please to be seated by 10:45.

Delville Wood memorial, Company's Gardens Cape Town.

This Bullsheet is dedicated to the memory of **Private Christian Frederick Cook** of the 1st SA Infantry Brigade who died of wounds received during the Battle of Delville Wood, on the 20th of July 1916; the only person from the Hottentots-Holland Area who was killed during this famous battle.

We will remember him!

DELVILLE WOOD 1916 - 2011

The Times (1917): *"No battlefield on all the Western Front was more bitterly contested than was Devil's Wood, where fighting, practically uninterrupted and intense, went on for six consecutive weeks from mid July till August 26 of 1916. It was in the first week of the struggle that the South African forces won their imperishable fame – grimly hanging on against overwhelming odds and repulsing counter-attacks by troops five and six times their number."*

Ian Uys: *"The Battle of the Somme marked a turning point in warfare. Beforehand cavalry was the supreme weapon; afterwards the tank and aircraft reigned. Cavalry was used at the beginning of the Delville Wood fight and tanks at the conclusion in September 1916. For a brief spell it was the war of the infantryman alone. At Delville Wood the 1st South African Infantry Brigade was to show what that meant. Their feat can never be surpassed."*

John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir): *“There were positions as difficult, but they were not held so long; there were cases of as protracted a defence, but the assault was not so violent and continuous. As a feat of human daring and fortitude the fight is worthy of eternal remembrance by South Africa and Britain, but no historian’s pen can give that memory the sharp outline and the glowing colour which it deserves. Only the sight of the place in the midst of the battle – that corner of splinters and churned earth and tortured humanity could reveal the full epic of Delville Wood.”*

The South Africans in Europe - I.S. Uys

The 1st South African Infantry Brigade was recruited at Potchefstroom in August and September 1915 for service overseas. It comprised four battalions of infantry. In order to render these battalions as representative as possible, they were designated as follows:

- 1st South African Infantry Regiment (Cape of Good Hope Regiment)
- 2nd South African Infantry Regiment (Natal and Orange Free State Regiment)
- 3rd South African Infantry Regiment (Transvaal and Rhodesia Regiment)
- 4th South African Regiment (South African Scottish Regiment)

The first three battalions were representative of all four provinces of South Africa, whilst the fourth was strongly representative of the Scottish military tradition in the country. In overall command of the brigade was Brig Gen H.T. Lukin, a seasoned campaigner who had seen service in the majority of South African campaigns during the preceding 35 years. Lt Col F.S. Dawson commanded 1st South African Infantry Regiment; 2nd South African Infantry Regiment was commanded by Lt Col W.E.C. Tanner; 3rd South African Infantry Regiment was commanded by Lt Col E.F. Thackeray; and 4th South African Infantry Regiment by Lt Col F.A. Jones, DSO. All the members of the brigade were strictly volunteers.

There were proportionately fewer Afrikaans speaking personnel in the Brigade. This may well have been due to the fact that the Afrikaner military tradition was predominantly orientated towards cavalry and not infantry. Further, the recent Rebellion of 1914 may possibly have cast a shadow over recruiting. However, it should be noted that before the end of the War their representation in the 1st South African Infantry Brigade had increased from 15% to 30%. It should be noted, within this context, that after the publication of his work *The South African Forces in France*, John Buchan wrote in the flyleaf of one of the copies: *“It is invidious to compare the worth of gallant men, but I think all soldiers would agree that at any vote the South African Infantry Brigade had no superior. The large Boer contingent, many of whom had fought against us in the South African War, gave it a special romance.”*

The Brigade, numbering 160 officers and 5 648 other ranks, embarked for England from Cape Town. The spirit of these young South African *colonials* exuded the highest degree of enthusiasm and patriotism. One of these young volunteers, Arthur Betteridge, later recalled the *esprit de corps* then prevailing within the brigade, and stated that *“Every one of the five thousand men who left these shores in 1915 was proud to call himself a South African.”*

The 1st SA Infantry Brigade arrived in England early in November 1915 where it underwent training at Bordon, Hampshire. Two months later the brigade was in action in Egypt against Senussi tribes. Following its successful conclusion of the campaign in mid-April 1916, the brigade embarked for Marseilles whence it entrained for Flanders where it was attached to the famous 9th Scottish Division for intensive training and front-line experience. The division was commanded by Maj-Gen W.T. Furse.

At the end of May the division moved into the Somme area to take part in the coming allied offensive, the 9th Division formed part of XIII Corps of Gen Rawlinson’s 4th Army on the right flank

of the British Army Group. On 1 July the *'Big Push'* began. The South Africans were initially the reserve brigade of the 9th Division. However, on 8 July the 2nd S.A.I. relieved the 27th Scottish Brigade at Bernafay Wood. Trones Wood, immediately to the east, was attacked constantly but was not taken.

Due to the heavy losses inflicted by enemy artillery, the 2nd Regiment was relieved by the 4th. On 11 July, Col Jones of the SA Scottish was killed by a shell splinter. The Springboks, who by that time had suffered over 500 casualties, were withdrawn for the impending assault on the village of Longueval, and the adjoining Delville Wood. In the early hours of Friday 14 July, Gen Furse launched an attack with the 26th and 27th Brigades on Longueval which was found to be heavily defended with strong points, machine-gun posts, and tunnels. The 1st S.A.I. under Dawson was sent to their assistance. By sundown the southern half of the village had been taken. That night the brigade numbered 121 officers and 3 032 men. At 6:00 the following morning the remainder of the brigade, with the exception of two companies of the 4th S.A.I. entered Delville Wood.

Delville Wood is slightly less than a mile square and is criss-crossed by open avenues. The wood is bisected from east to west by Princes Street. The rides to the north of Princes Street are named after London streets and those to the south after Edinburgh streets (of which one is, of course, Princes Street itself). Tanner established his headquarters at the corner of Princes and Buchanan Streets.

The 3rd S.A.I. moved rapidly to the eastern perimeter where two fighting patrols successfully attacked German trenches beyond the wood. Meanwhile, the 2nd S.A.I. cleared the northern area with the exception of the strongly held north-western corner. The remainder of the day was spent in repulsing strong enemy counter-attacks. Two companies of the 4th S.A.I. were in reserve in the wood, while the remaining two companies assisted in an attack on Waterlot Farm, south of the wood.

The following morning, at 10:00 two companies of the 1st Regiment attacked the north-western corner unsuccessfully. Private Mannie Faulds was to win the Victoria Cross during this attack. Heavy shelling of the wood, especially of the perimeter, then began. The attack was repeated early on the 17th but again failed. Lukin then visited the wood and found the South Africans to be exhausted. He reported his observation to Furse who told him that the wood was to be held at all costs. Were they to give way, the flank of the British offensive would be enfiladed by the enemy. The enemy artillery bombardment increased during the day, reaching an estimated rate of 400 shells a minute that night. Tanner was wounded in the thigh at 19:00 and was evacuated. Command in the wood then passed to Thackeray.

On the 18th a bombardment began at 8:00 which was to last for seven-and-a-half hours resulting in the obliteration of the defences and the wood's reduction to a shambles of churned earth and splinters. At 15:30 waves of fresh German troops commenced an assault on the wood. In the east 3rd Regiment was isolated and most of the survivors were taken prisoner. In the north, 2nd and part of 1st Regiment were almost annihilated. Thackeray rallied the survivors who fell back on his Headquarters and with their assistance he endeavoured to hold the south-western corner of the wood against repeated German assaults during the following two days.

At 6:00 on 20 July, elements of the 3rd Division finally relieved the bone-weary South Africans. Thackeray led two wounded officers and 140 men out of the wood. The following day the remnants of the brigade, five officers and 750 men, paraded before Lukin who took the salute with head bared and tears running down his cheeks. The saga of Delville Wood will be remembered when other battles have long been forgotten!

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL MEMORIAL – DELVILLE WOOD, FRANCE

The memorial at Delville Wood, which was designed by Sir Herbert Baker, with sculpture by Alfred Turner, consists of a flint and stone screen either side of an archway, with a shelter at each end of the screen. On top of the arch is Turner's bronze statue of two men and a war horse. The main inscriptions are in both English and Afrikaans.

To the Immortal Dead from South Africa who at the call of Duty made the Great Sacrifice on the battlefields of Africa, Asia, Europe and on the Sea, this Memorial is dedicated in proud and grateful recognition by their countrymen.

Other inscriptions include the location of the South African campaigns (France, Flanders, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Egypt, Palestine, the Sea). On the archway are the following shorter inscriptions, again in English and Afrikaans:

Their ideal is our legacy , Their Sacrifice our Inspiration

The Afrikaans-equivalent inscription reads: *Vir ons is hul ideaal 'n erfenis, hul offer 'n besieling.* Above these inscriptions, on the very top part of the archway, is carved the French phrase "AUX MORTS", signifying that this is a monument to the dead.

Following the war, Delville Wood was purchased by the author and politician Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, and presented to South Africa. This was followed by the standard French policy of repurchasing the land for one franc and granting South Africa the land in perpetuity for memorial purposes. The memorial was funded by public subscription. Among those involved in organising the memorial was General Henry Lukin, who was appointed Deputy Chair of the Delville Wood Memorial Committee in July 1921.

The memorial was unveiled on 10 October 1926 by the widow of General Louis Botha. Also present were General J. B. M. Hertzog, the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa; Sir Percy Fitzpatrick; Field-Marshal Earl Haig; and Lukin's widow. The former Governor-General of South Africa, and member of the British Royal Family, Prince Arthur of Connaught was present, and representing the British Army was Brigadier General W. E. C. Tanner. The religious ceremony, which included the consecration of the nearby cemetery, was jointly conducted by the Right Reverend Dr Furse, Bishop of St Albans, and the Reverend Dr. Van de Merwe, Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Over 1,200 people paid their respects at the unveiling ceremony, and Sir Percy Fitz-Patrick read out a message from Edward, Prince of Wales.

Two replicas of the memorial were made, both in South Africa, one at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, and one in Cape Town.

The Ceremony of the Unveiling of the Memorial on Sunday the 10th day of October 1926

Address of the Chairman of the South African National Memorial Committee – Sir Percy Fitzpatrick

I have no power to express it as you, Sir; Mr Prime Minister did in a few simple words when you consented to come here and to accept this trust and unveil this Memorial: - "*They are Our Dead.*" On the 10th of October 1908 the delegates from the Parliaments of the Four States of South Africa foregathered in Durban for the purpose of creating the Union of South Africa. You, Sir and I who were among them, recall it well. Our efforts were blessed with success; and the Union, which we so greatly prize, was the result. On this same day, eighteen years later, we meet together to pay our tribute to those who have built so greatly on the foundations which we had laid? It is for us to



realise the lesson which they have taught us in proving by their united efforts and by their glorious sacrifice the real meaning of Union. Here, as brothers, side by side they stood and here they died, *yea, and made their burial place altar of a nation!*

The Reply of General the Honourable J.B.M. Hertzog, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa

An occasion like this requires not many words. The solemn impressiveness of all that surrounds us, bids us be silent! We are assembled here today to do reverence to the gallant sons of South Africa, who have fallen in the Great War; to consecrate to them these grounds, hallowed by their lifeblood; and to dedicate to their memory this monument as a lasting tribute to their heroic self-sacrifice.

To save the world from militarism; to free nations from foreign domination; to ensure to mankind the blessings of a world peace, was the great inspiring call, worthy of their great sacrifice. South Africa feels proud of the deeds of valour displayed by her sons on the field of battle; yet prouder does she feel of the high purpose and noble expectations which impelled them to those deeds. Not in hatred; nor in the spirit of revenge, or of domination did they enlist or march to the encounter; but in humble obedience to what they felt to be the call of duty, and with the resolve to attain for the world and for mankind that high purpose which that call had implanted in their hearts as the ultimate object of their endeavours.

This monument, to these our sons, will stand here in remembrance of that Great Sacrifice – an inspiration and a warning. A warning against human passion and national folly; an inspiration to all that is good and noble in human action and devotion, and in national unity of heart and endeavour! I shall now request Mrs Botha, whose presence here today cannot but gladden the hearts of disconsolate mothers, to perform the proud task of unveiling this Memorial in honour of South Africa's fallen sons.

Marshal Joffre's Speech

Among all the innumerable battles which this action lasting several months comprised, the name of Delville Wood is one of those which will never be forgotten, for it has imposed itself with tragic force on our memory.

Field Marshal Earl Haig's Speech

The men whose glorious achievements and self-sacrifice we meet here to commemorate fought under my command, many of them on this spot where we now stand. It is as their former Commander-in-Chief, with full knowledge of the terrible ordeals they had to face and deep gratitude for the splendid service they so freely gave, that I join in the tribute which is now paid to them by their fellow-countrymen and by their old comrades in arms.

Following upon South Africa's participation in World War Two, an altar stone was erected in front of the central feature of the Memorial and was unveiled on the 5th of June 1952 to commemorate the South African dead of World War II. This unveiling was performed by the mother of Major Edwin Swales, recipient of the Victoria Cross.

In 1986, the South African Commemorative Museum, a five-pointed star-shaped building located behind the memorial, was unveiled by P. W. Botha, the President of the Republic of South Africa. The Museum follows the story of the South Africans from WW1 to Korea.



In Tribute to South African Forces – 11 November 1986 – Berna Maree

Seventy years after Delville Wood a large contingent of South Africans of all races visited Delville Wood on Armistice Day 11 November 1986. Although the group was by no means the first to undertake a pilgrimage to Delville Wood, it was by far the largest and most representative so far to attend a commemorative service and ceremony at the battle site. The South African State President, Mr P.W. Botha paid a private visit to France to open the new Delville Wood Commemorative Museum. In his opening address President Botha said: *“We have come together here today, to pay tribute to all South Africans who have given their lives for South Africa during the long course of its history. Let this commemorative museum honour the sacrifices of the past, and, for future generations, be a symbol of the steadfastness of purpose of the soldiers of South Africa.”*

WINTER LUNCH FOR WIDOWS AND WWII VETERANS

On 11 June we had a Winter Lunch at the Shellhole for the widows and WW2 veterans. The lunch was well attended by both groups if we take the weather into consideration. Father John Baardman said a blessing for the late Mrs Kathleen Noone in a short and beautiful little ceremony. Some of those that attended were:



Father John Baardman & OB Brian Porter;



Derek and Yvonne Mclean



Malcolm and Patricia Bower



Hester Pike, Toni Holtzhausen, Zelda de Kock, Joyce Dockrall, George Mann and Rene van der Merwe

Sound Memory

Coinciding with the Veteran and Widows Winter Lunch, a little ceremony was also performed at the Wall of Remembrance for the late Mrs Kathleen Noone. Father John Baardman, resident priest at the St Paul's Catholic Church Somerset West read a Blessing on a life well lived before consecrating her name on the Wall. In his speech before lunch was served, Old Bill Brian Porter made special

mention of the D-Day landings on the 6th of June 1944 and paid a special tribute to Moth Derek McLean, Shellhole member and a veteran of the landings, before all joined in a toast to absent friends. During lunch, Legionnaire Joubert entertained the guests to live music and a most enjoyable lunch was had by all.

The Light of Remembrance

Christian Frederick Cook; 1 SA Infantry Brigade - 20th July 1916

L.W. Syme; Gordon Highlanders - 29th July 1943

D. Cupido; Cape Corps - 17th July 1945

We will remember them!

South Africa and the War against Japan 1941-1945 - Andre Wessels (part 3)

The South African home front, 1941-1945

The Second World War once again emphasized the importance of the Cape sea-route and South Africa's harbours were of vital importance, particularly for storage and for repair work. The Japanese capture of the British bases in the Far East, especially those at Hong Kong (25 December 1941) and Singapore (15 February 1942), had an immediate effect on South Africa. New bases were required and the Union was the obvious choice. The country already had a well-developed harbour infrastructure and, for quite some time, the dry dock in Durban had been of immense strategic importance, being the largest of its kind between Singapore and Gibraltar. However, as this graving dock on its own was insufficient for the number of ships requiring attention, the Sturrock dry dock was built in Cape Town, capable of handling (like its counterpart in Durban) battleships and aircraft carriers. Also authorised was the dry dock for cruisers at East London.

As far as harbour facilities were concerned, perhaps the most important and far-reaching result of the war against Japan was the decision to build a complete new naval base at Salisbury Island in Durban. The vast construction works, which cost £2 million, included the building of a causeway to link the island to the mainland; raising the level of the island by some 3 metres; the building of wharves, workshops, barracks, a hospital, training and other facilities; and the

acquisition of a floating dock and a floating crane. The new base was however, only completed after the war against Japan had ended.

The war led to a dramatic increase in the sea traffic around the Cape and in the number of ships that visited the local ports. For example, the number of ocean-going ships (excluding warships) that called at Cape Town rose from 1 784 (1938-39) to 2 559 (1941-42) and 2 593 (1942-43) and, at Durban, from 1 534 to 1 835 and 1 930 respectively. The number of naval vessels that visited Cape Town rose from 10 (1938-39) to 251 (1941-42) and 306 (1942-43), while, in Durban, the numbers rose from 16 (1938) to 192 (1941) and 313 (1942). The extent of the increase in sea-going traffic around the Cape may also be gauged from the rise in the value of South African produce supplied for the visiting ships, from £142 209 in 1939 to £5 381 015 in 1945. About 400 convoys, carrying some six million men, visited South African ports in the course of the war and a total of about 50 000 ships passed through these ports en route to and from the Mediterranean and Far Eastern war zones. Of these ships, about 13 000 underwent repairs in South Africa's harbours. Thus it is quite remarkable that, throughout the war, there was not a single serious accident at any South African port. The workshops of the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H) were

requested to add the production of military material to their normal activities and they produced a variety of articles, including 100 barges of 250 tons each for India and 41 motor-boats for river-towing in Burma. Of all the private and government-controlled organizations, the SAR&H probably made the most important industrial contribution towards South Africa's war effort.

As South Africa's geographic position safeguarded her against enemy attacks, industrial development was able to proceed unhindered. By 1942, the country's war economy was running smoothly. Industrial employment increased by more than 50% during the war and the number of blacks employed in industrial occupations also grew, as did the number of blacks in the so-called 'White' towns and cities. In due course, this would have serious political consequences. Apart from arms manufacturing, South Africa's industries supplied the UDF and other Allied forces with a large variety of personal and other equipment, some of which was exported to the East and used by personnel fighting against the Japanese. By the end of the war, South Africa had produced more than twelve million pairs of boots and shoes, five and a half million blankets and 2 435 million cigarettes to meet military requirements. About 80 different types of motor vehicles were also produced, resulting in a total of some 32 000 vehicles, including about 14 000 three and five-ton trucks. Japan's entry into the war had a profound impact on the demand for South African-produced war material as Australia, New Zealand and India then had to concentrate on their own defence requirements and could no longer supply the Allies in the West to the same extent as they had before. This placed increasing pressure on South Africa's industries.

South Africa's position, away from the main operational areas of the war, was both a blessing and a problem. The entry of Italy into the war on 10 June 1940 brought the conflict

nearer home, but, even by the middle of 1942, despite Japan's involvement since December 1941 and the increase of submarine activity along the South African coasts and adjacent oceans, there was still an almost general lack of appreciation by the average citizen of the fact that the country was involved in a war that, in more than one way, required total effort. Nevertheless, hardly any aspect of South African life remained unaffected by the war in some way. On 9 June 1942, Durban experienced its first - albeit not very successful - real blackout, a step that became permanent on 16 June 1942. The rationing of petrol further restricted the movement of people, while commodities like motor vehicles, building material, rubber, wood, paper and agricultural implements were declared to be controlled goods. A shortage developed in foodstuffs, such as meat, maize, wheat and sugar; wholesale and retail price indexes rose; and price control was introduced. The heavy demands made by visiting convoys aggravated shortages in certain foodstuffs and, by the beginning of 1943, there was greater austerity in the country. People were beginning to feel the pinch of shortages and the accompanying rising costs and the man in the street began to realise that the war had its price. Civilians began to feel the strain and even government supporters began to grumble. However, as the result of the 1943 election pointed out, Smuts and his UP enjoyed stronger support than ever.

While the Allies and Japanese battled it out in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in the Far East and, in the Mediterranean theatre, the Allies had invaded Sicily, South Africa was gripped in a campaign for the general (albeit almost exclusively white) election, which was held on 7 July 1943. The election was fought almost entirely on the war issue, but the race question was also fiercely debated. The HNP remained vehemently opposed to the Union's continued participation in the war against the Axis powers and, in particular, against Germany,

but the war against Japan was not specifically debated. While Smuts and his UP's victory appeared to be spectacular, the result was an artificial one and did not reflect the government's true standing. Within a short space of time following his appointment as Prime Minister in 1939, Smuts had consolidated his position and, by the time war against Japan

broke out, it did not really affect the South African home front that much. While the Smuts government's decision to declare war against Germany had evoked strong reaction from many Afrikaners, the same did not occur when the Union went to war with the '*non-white*' Japan. (To be continued)

Important Dates July

Birthdays: (08 July)

1836: Joseph Chamberlain
1838: Ferdinand von Zeppelin
1839: John D Rockefeller
1908: Nelson D Rockefeller
1946: Associate Member Cam Walker

Events: (15 July)

1799: The Rosetta stone is found in Egypt
1815: Napoleon Bonaparte surrenders aboard the HMS Bellerophon
1918: The Second Battle of the Marne begins
1997: Gianni Versace is gunned down outside his house
2011: Marshal Smuts Annual General Meeting at 18:10

Interesting reads on the Internet:

www.samilitaryhistory.org
www.dod.mil.za
www.firstworldwar.com
www.secondworldwar.com
www.61mech.org.za
www.redsockfriday.com
www.30degreessouth.co.za
www.cwgc.org
www.ninefoxtrot.org

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