



Marshal Smuts Shellhole

P.O.Box 246, Somerset West, 7129
Cnr. Drama & Swalle Streets, Somerset West, 7130



BULLSHEET

January 2012

Editorial

Welcome to 2012. May the year bring happiness, health and prosperity to all. We start the year by celebrating two special birthdays and are back to our regular meetings on 20 January. In December we had a most enjoyable Christmas lunch in place of our meeting on 17 December. We have also received word from the Cape Town Branch of the SA Legion that they are in communication with the RCEL (Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League) regarding Mrs Aston whom we visited on their behalf.

Important Date:

20 January: Shellhole Monthly meeting at 18:10

2012 marks the 85th birthday celebrations of the MOTH's. We have therefore included a brief overview in this newsletter about the Order.

SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS AT MARSHAL SMUTS



Moth Alf Hilder, the oldest member at the Shellhole will celebrate his 93rd birthday on 21 January.

Little known facts:

- a regular smoker since 1933
- the father of five daughters

Other Birthdays:

- 7th - Moth Pierre Olivier
- 20th – Moth Gail Jordaan
- 29th – Good Comrade Liz Walker



Moth Derek McLean, recently promoted to Shellhole Life Member will celebrate his 90th birthday on 20 January.

Little known facts:

- also known as Derek McClown
- served as Wee Bill at Overlord Shellhole

Sunset Call

Mr Gordon Bickley from Johannesburg, who contributed voluntarily to the Light of Remembrance Project, passed to Higher Service on Saturday the 10th of December

We will remember him

Memorable Order of Tin Hats

MOTH

Information reproduced here is taken from a brochure drawn up by Moth Peter Drayton during 2009 on behalf of Cape Western Dugout. Additional information and images from the MOTH Website Editor - Moth Philip McLachlan Old Bill Marshal Smuts Shellhole 2011/12

Guide to New Members

- The Order is a brotherhood of ex-service and serving men and women who have served their country in the armed services.
- The Order is based on concord and harmony and operates independently of race, religion or politics in order to maintain the living spirit of frontline comradeship.
- The Order sets itself the goal of protecting and advancing the interests of military veterans and their families and operates as a SARS registered Public Benefit Organisation¹

History



Our Memorable Order was founded after the Great War by an extraordinary man determined to continue the spirit of mutual assistance and the lessons of fraternal support learned in the trenches of Gallipoli and the Western Front.

London-born Charles Evenden served at Gallipoli in the Australian armed forces. After being demobbed, he settled in Durban where he worked as the cartoonist on the staff of the Natal Mercury. His cartoons were published under the pseudonym "EVO"², a name by which he would soon become popularly known.

In 1927, at a time when memories of the sacrifices made during the Great War were beginning to dim, he saw a war film that included an impressive scene of marching troops wearing tin hats and muddy uniforms. Looking at the scene, he wondered what had become of his comrades in the army, where they were and what they were doing. This line of thought inspired a cartoon on "*Forgetfulness of comradeship*" which was published in the Natal Mercury on the 7th of May 1927³.

From this one idea, others came to the fore and after discussions with colleagues and friends, he suggested that the time was ripe to form an association of old soldiers, too keep alive the memory of fallen comrades! On the 27th of May the Order was started in Durban!

Organisation

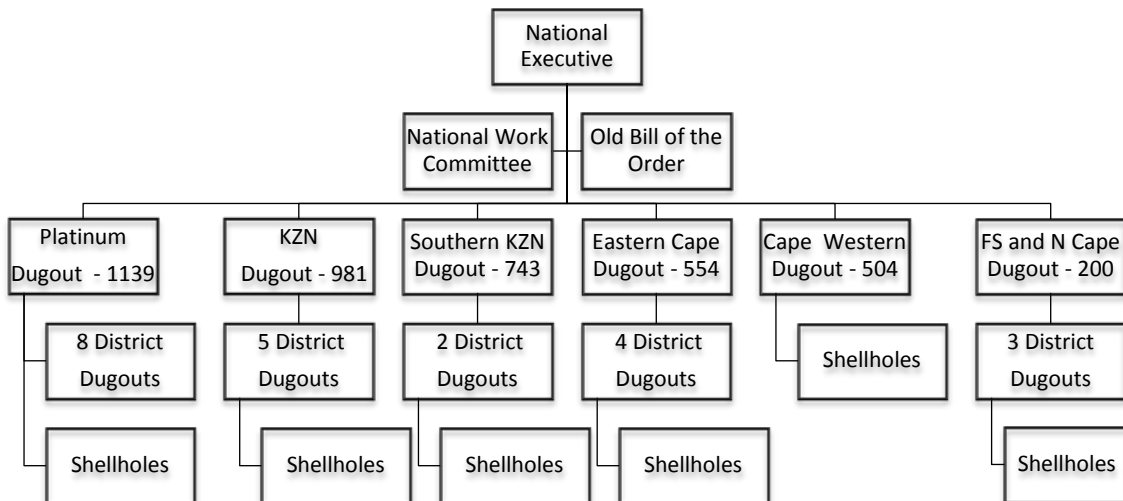
Control of the Order is vested in a governing body known as MOTH General Headquarters (GHQ) situated in Durban.



¹ PBO 930007653

² Also known as Moth "O"

³ Official birthday of the MOTH



The National Executive consists of the National Chairman (Moth Cas Aucamp), National Vice-Chairman KZN (Moth Tony Munnik), National Vice-Chairman Outside KZN (Moth Dave Gush), National Treasurer (Moth Mike Adrain) and the day-to-day affairs of the Order are managed by the General-Secretary Moth Robert Pegram.

The National Work Committee consists of Moths Andy Boden (Website), Richard Clarke (Warriors Gate), Brian Coward (PRO), Bruce Michler (Property Management), Brian Porter (Cyber Shellhole), Andre Coetzee (Recruiting) and James Stofberg.

The Old Bill of the Order is an honorary position and he/she automatically becomes an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. For the 2011/12 MOTH year Moth Bruce Michler was appointed to this position.

The six provinces are controlled by Provincial Dugouts consisting of a Provincial Old Bill, Deputy Old Bill, Adjutant and Pay Bill. Under each Provincial Dugout are District Dugouts and then the various Shellholes. Shellholes are controlled by an Old Bill, Deputy Old Bill, Adjutant and Pay Bill assisted by the Shellhole committee consisting of the Sergeant-Major, Quartermaster, Padre etc. These members are elected at the Annual General Meeting during July.

Members are addressed and write their title as Moth

The Order is referred to as MOTH or by its full name – not as the MOTH Order!

Cape Western Provincial Dugout

The Cape Western area extends coastwise from Saldanha to Hermanus with an inland arc including Worcester. Dugout Headquarters are situated in offices at Dawn Patrol Shellhole Childrens Way, Bergvliet. The Dugout Executive consists of Moths Graham Stuck (POB), Dave Revell (DPOB), Peter Drayton (Adjutant) and Daphne Moreira (Pay Bill).

<u>Shellholes</u>		
Admiral Halifax – Rosebank	Battledress – Fish Hoek	Blaauwberg Cuca - Killarney
Bomb Alley – Kraaifontein	Crusader/Commando – Sea Point	Dawn Patrol - Bergvliet
Komesho – Wellington	Marshal Smuts – Somerset West	Pip Ack - Newlands
Red Barn/ToTS – Southfield	Seagull – Hermanus	Snoekie - Simons Town
Tommy Rendle VC - Brooklyn	Weskus Quartel – Saldanha Bay	

Under control and management of Cape Western Dugout one will also find the MOTH Holiday Cottages at Bakoven, MOTH Residential Cottages at Lakeside and the MOTH Ex-Servicemen's Cottage Association

(MESCA) Cottages at Southfield. Also in operation throughout the Province are the Cape Rollers Raider Group and Moth Motorcycle Association (MMA).

Associated to the Order, operating from a few Shellholes and managing the Haven (Old Age Home) at Plumstead, one will also find the MOTH Women’s Auxiliary (MOTHWA) doing benevolent work within the province.

Traditions

During the founding decade of the Order, much emphasis was placed on *“Harmony”*, the cordial friendship found at Shellhole meetings. The tradition of always enjoying liquid refreshments by holding the glass in the left hand comes from this era; this enables the member to spontaneously greet fellow members. Whilst this is still important, the emphasis within in the Order has now shifted to *“Mutual Help”* by way of providing accommodation and welfare services for ex-servicemen and their families. At present more than 1600 people are accommodated in MOTH and MESCA cottages throughout the Republic.

The MOTH Badge

The tin hat and lighted candle signify the perpetuation of front line comradeship, which transcends race, rank and material worth. The rifles with fixed bayonets, leaning as if thrust into the battlefield soil is crossed to signify sacrifice and are reversed in a token of remembrance. The circle of stars denotes the eternal universe, forever the divine example of harmony. The twelve stars as in a clock indicate the hours of the day, reminding us that every hour presents opportunities of promoting harmony among mankind through Tolerance and Mutual Help.



The MOTH Flag and Colours

The flag comprises three equal perpendicular panels of dark blue, red and light blue and carries the Tin Hat and Lighted Candle symbol in the centre in white. The three panels are in harmony with the three ideals of the Order and also represent the three forces – dark blue for Navy, red for Army and light blue for Air Force. The red panel also denotes the sun which rises and falls on the world’s battlefields above all known and unknown graves.

The MOTH Salute

The only salute of the Order is the *“Rest to arms reversed”* position; right hand over left hand with elbows parallel to the ground.

The Three Ideals

True Comradeship	Mutual Help	Sound Memory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicing front line comradeship in civilian life • Harmony and Good Humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the personal and collective obligation to help each other as in front line service • Selfless service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembering the fallen as a living companionship • To serve their memory in practical actions

The Tin Hat Lapel Pin

- The lapel pin is the recognised emblem of the Order and this is worn on the left hand lapel of the blazer or shirt.

Remembrance Sunday

- The most important date on the MOTH calendar, commemorated annually on the Sunday closest to the 11th of November

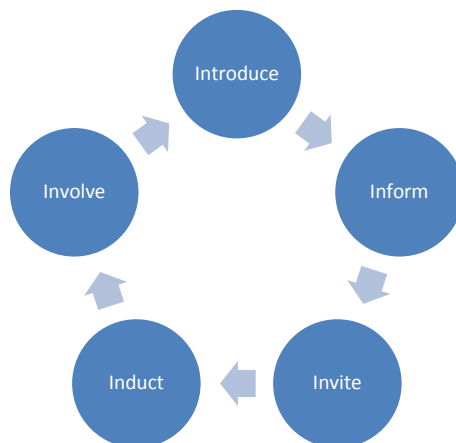
MOTH Credo

In memory, in honour, in silence do we pause, our humble tribute to those who died for freedoms' cause – by their sacrifice in passing, when comrades went to rest – Moths vow they will be remembered, of their kind the best

MOTH Prayer

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old – age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn – at the going down of the sun and in the morning – we will remember them!

The Recruitment Cycle⁴



By pledging your zeal to the Order and giving your comradeship to the Shellhole, always bare the following in mind:

- The Shellhole is organised in accordance with the MOTH Constitution and General Standing Orders (GSO).
- The Shellhole is managed according to approved Standing Orders (MSSO) of which a full copy is available for perusal at your own time.
- Monthly Shellhole meetings will be held on the third Friday of each month except December, commencing at 18:10.
- The day and time of the monthly meeting may be changed should this become necessary for a particular reason.
- Any member who wishes to raise any matter not on the Agenda may record a "*Supplementary Item*" at the start of the meeting and will be given the opportunity of having his/her say before the closing of the meeting.
- Only Moths who are in good standing (i.e. fully paid up) may vote at meetings but any member may raise any matter relevant to the Shellhole, Dugout or the Order.
- Whilst a meeting may be held in a relaxed atmosphere the rules of accepted MOTH decorum will always be observed and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies will be conducted with due solemnity.
- Shellhole members will always respect the **Vacant Chair**, by saluting when entering the parade room before meetings.

⁴ We are looking for Moths, not members

Mount Memory

MOTH Sanctuary in the Drakensberg near Escourt

(Marshal Smuts affixed a plaque in memory of fallen Shellhole comrades since 1946 at the shrine after a meeting decision taken during August 2011)



Warriors Gate – Durban – Spiritual home of the Order



2012 MOTH 85th BIRTHDAY

Join the party from 1 to 6 May 2012. To celebrate the MOTH 85th Birthday in Durban. Efforts are being made to get as many Moths from around the country to attend.

Should you wish to join the Marshal Smuts group please contact Old Bill Philip.

S.A. Naval College

Contrary to popular belief, the letters "GB" and anchor on the mountainside above the Naval College does not stand for Gordon's Bay, but for "General Botha" College, giving the town of Gordon's Bay permission to use it as a symbol for the College as well as the town.

The South African Naval College, situated at the foot of the Hottentots-Holland Mountains in the picturesque Gordon's Bay, has a long and interesting history that has its origin in the training ship General Botha. When the ex-cruiser HMS Thames, housing the SA Nautical College General Botha was scuttled off Simon's Town in 1947 due to her aged condition, General Smuts, the then Prime Minister, gave approval for the training of merchant cadets to move to Gordon's Bay on 25 April 1948. The facility which was made available for this purpose was a former

SAAF Motor Boat Station, which was established during the Second World War.

Since 1958 the most important development in the history of the College and one which was to ultimately change the nature of its training program was the take-over of the College by the SADF on 17 December 1958 under the command of Commander S.C. Biermann (later R Adm). The need to separate the Merchant training from the Naval training eventually resulted in a move of the Merchant Academy to Granger Bay on 30 March 1966. The SA Naval College therefore formally came into its own on 1 April 1966.

This year as has become customary the members of Marshal Smuts Shellhole were invited to attend the annual Passing out Parade at the College on the 9th of December. In total nine Shellhole members attended and enjoyed the parade thoroughly. Today, the mission of the SA Naval College is still to provide quality Naval Officers through dynamic training. Following from this mission is the task to prepare young and vibrant midshipmen for appointment as Officers in the Navy through a thorough grounding. For the 2011 Passing out Parade the College presented 51 well trained young Officers, of which 47 are members of the SAN and 4 Namibian Navy midshipmen. The holding of the parade represented the culmination of tireless efforts by the well-disciplined and dedicated staff to achieve and accomplish the task given by Chief of the Navy.

PARATROOPING PIONEER

David McCombe, South Africa's first serving paratrooper *Col McGill Alexander*

During the years of conflict in which South Africa was involved in Namibia and Angola, the South African Army built up a formidable airborne force in the shape of 44 Parachute Brigade. This formation had its origin in the establishment of 1 Parachute Battalion in Bloemfontein on 1 April 1961; founded by fifteen South Africans who had been trained as parachutists in the UK the previous year, 1 Parachute Battalion is popularly regarded as the first South African parachute unit. However, the UDF had already established a paratroop company during the Second World War. In

recent years some information has been published on this scarcely known paratroop company, which was formed as a sub-unit of the SAAF Regiment, very little has been written about the individuals involved in the early efforts to provide South Africa with an airborne capability. Captain David McCombe, the first South African serviceman to be trained as a paratrooper, was one of these men and played a crucial role in these efforts. His story is an interesting aside to the history of South Africa's airborne forces, as well as her participation in the Second World War.

David McCombe was the first South African to make a detailed study of the military application of vertical envelopment.

At the start of the Second World War in 1939, the Allies had not yet developed an airborne doctrine. Airborne operations simply did not form part of their military thinking and no true airborne forces existed in the Allied Order of Battle. In contrast, the Germans had studied this form of warfare and had integrated it into their Blitzkrieg concept. During the invasion of the Low Countries and Norway in 1940, the Germans used their paratroops and glider borne troops to exceptional effect. The Allies were dumbstruck and quickly began a frantic programme of research and training to build up a similar airborne capability.

It is a little known fact that South Africa was well ahead of Britain and the other Allies in grasping the value of the airborne concept. As early as 25 June 1940, the UDF had conducted an airborne exercise, having commandeered a fleet of Junkers Ju52 trimotor aircraft from the South African Airways for war service. A Company, 1st Transvaal Scottish, was airlifted in eight aircraft from Swartkops to Pietersburg for the exercise and flown back on the same day.

This exercise was a precursor to the detailed planning of an actual airborne operation by South Africa, after intelligence reports had indicated that the Germans were planning to seize Delagoa Bay. To prevent this, South Africa had to prepare! The newly formed 6th South African Infantry Brigade (the Police Brigade), commanded by Col F W Cooper, was instructed to train two police battalions to carry out an air landed operation. A series of exercises were held between 9 and 15 July 1940, during which these troops were airlifted from Waterkloof Air Station, mock attacks by Hawker Hartbees aircraft were carried out on the Wonderboom airfield and the troops were then air landed from Ju52 aircraft approaching at 50 feet (15,25 metres) above ground level. The troops deplaned on landing and captured aircraft

Although the exercise had many shortcomings, it illustrated a clear understanding of the essence of airborne operations - speed of deployment over a long distance, culminating in an unexpected direction of approach across all natural obstacles and concluding with a quick extraction.

hangars and other key buildings. The brigade subsequently worked out detailed load manifests, weights and loading tables in preparation for the actual operation. Although the airborne occupation of Lourenzo Marques was ultimately never necessary, much can be said for South Africa that such an imaginative operation had been planned at a time when the Allies had not yet carried out any airborne operations.

David McCombe was a Scotsman who came to South Africa in 1936 for the Empire Exhibition. Born in the County of Dumbarton, he was an



accountant by profession and, as a widower; he was looking for a new life. He clearly liked South Africa, as he decided to stay on and adopt the country as his own. Working for the Board of Executors Trust, he became an estate agent. When South Africa declared war on Nazi Germany in 1939, McCombe joined the UDF in a civilian capacity. The following year, on 10 June 1940, he joined the South African Air Force and was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the

Radio Signals Company, at the ripe old age of 34, after only one month in uniform. Having attested in Johannesburg, McCombe initially served with the SAAF Radio Signal Company at the Showground's in Pretoria, where he had probably been involved in a civilian capacity prior to this. McCombe was promoted to the temporary rank of lieutenant in January 1941 and the next month was transferred to the SAAF Signal Training School in Tempe, Bloemfontein (the current base of 44 Parachute Brigade). He was not there for long, however, and was then posted to Air Force Station, Kimberley. He was promoted to the acting rank of captain in May 1941 and to temporary captain in October of that year.

In the meantime, in the upper echelons of the UDF, the concept of airborne operations continued to receive serious consideration. Perhaps the idea was kept alive because, in December 1941, a frantic request from the Middle East had been received in Pretoria for details of the airborne training carried out by the Police Brigade earlier that year. This information was apparently required by the British, who were in the process of building up their own airborne forces. By March 1942 the Chief of General Staff, Lt-Gen Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, was propagating the establishment of an airborne brigade in the Union. Although this was a pipe dream, given South Africa's shortage of manpower and Britain's inability to provide the required equipment, the idea of an airborne force persisted.

David McCombe was then recalled from Kimberley to Pretoria and briefed for a special mission. He was to investigate the viability of establishing an airborne force in South Africa and, for this purpose; he would be detached for Special Duties to the United Kingdom Forces in July 1942. According to his widow, Mrs Doris McCombe, the driving force behind his appointment for this task was Air Commodore 'Bunty' Frew, DSO, MC, AFC (later Air Vice-Marshal Sir Matthew Frew), and head of the

British Air Liaison Mission in South Africa. On 26 July 1942 McCombe embarked on the SS Stratheard and, on his arrival in Britain, he reported to the High Commissioner at South Africa House in London. During the next six months he undertook an exhaustive study of every known aspect of airborne operations then available in Britain. He gathered masses of documentation, including blueprints for erecting parachute training apparatus and detailed content of parachute course programmes. All this he forwarded to the UDF authorities via the office of the High Commissioner. In addition, McCombe qualified as a parachutist at the Royal Air Force's Central Landing Establishment in Ringway, Manchester, becoming the first South African serviceman to have undergone parachute training. He also received training in gliders. Badgered by the Defence Headquarters to provide recommendations regarding gliders and glider pilot training, he consulted the British Ministry of Aircraft Production at Millbank about the possibility of manufacturing the Horsa troop-carrying glider in South Africa.

Unfortunately, the non-availability in South Africa of aircraft spruce, the only type of wood from which the Horsa glider could be manufactured, put an end to that possibility. The British recommended that the South Africans try the US-built Waco (Hadrian) glider, which was produced largely from steel tubing and canvas fabric. This too, came to naught, as the Allies did not regard the development of airborne forces by South Africa as a priority. McCombe, adhering doggedly to his task, also obtained information on US paratroop training. He made contact with the Polish engineers who had constructed some of the British parachute training apparatus. Lt-Col George Iwanowski of the Polish Forces' Engineer Training Centre in Falkirk had designed and erected three parachute training towers for the British Airborne Forces. He provided McCombe with photographs and drawings of his towers and expressed his willingness to help in any other

way possible. By 15 December 1942, McCombe had produced an incredibly comprehensive 'Report on British Airborne Troops with Special Reference to Training and Equipment of Parachute Troops and Air Landing Troops.' It was a monumental study: a fine example of thorough and detailed staff work which had eleven files of documents as appendices. Included were aspects such as organisation, training, equipment, air support, operational exercises and a host of technical data, as well as US training techniques. Having arrived back in South Africa on 26 January 1943, McCombe took leave to marry Doris Roberts, a South African girl living in Johannesburg.

Within a month, the dour South African Scot's report was being acted upon. In February 1943, the Chief of General Staff issued instructions that the Director-General of the Air Force and Captain McCombe were to be involved in consultations to consider the means and equipment required for the establishment of a South African airborne unit consisting of two companies - one of parachute troops and the other of glider borne troops. The initial grandiose ideal of an entire airborne brigade, just a year previously, had by then shrunk more soberly to the size of an under-strength battalion.

On 6 March 1943, McCombe, again illustrating his penchant for impeccable staff work, submitted a 'Memorandum on Requirements for a Proposed Parachute and Glider Training Unit Establishment.' As before, he concentrated on the crucial technical issues of training, rather than on the operational unit itself. However, this report clearly indicated that the project would be neither cost nor time effective. Reality, it seems, had caught up with the idealists and the idea of a South African airborne force appears to have been shelved.

Unexpectedly, a new development in the Allied strategy injected fresh hope for the proponents of a South African airborne capability. The success of British and US paratroops in North

Africa in November 1942 had resulted in a concerted effort by the Allies to increase their capabilities for airborne operations. With the invasion of Europe by the Allies becoming an ever more imminent likelihood and with the assault on Sicily already being planned, a call went out for more volunteers for the paratroops. The Imperial General Staff in London instituted a scheme to recruit volunteers from the Dominions for the British Airborne Forces. South Africa was requested to raise a parachute company for service with a British parachute battalion in the Middle East. In South Africa, the scheme was approved in principle by Field-Marshal Smuts. However, owing to the shortage of manpower and the need to bring the 6th South African Armoured Division up to full strength, Defence Headquarters in Pretoria ruled that no volunteers could be drawn from armoured, infantry or artillery units in the Union and that the SAAF would have to provide the company. The 9th Battalion, Reserve Brigade, which was serving as a reinforcement and training unit in the Middle East was also made available for this purpose. Unfortunately members of this unit were only permitted to come forward as volunteers until the end of July 1943.

On 1 August 1943, the SAAF Regiment (Armoured and Airborne) was established. Its airborne component, the Paratroop Company, was to be formed at 75 Air School, Lyttelton (the present location of the 101 Air Supply Unit). There was a quick response to the call for volunteers in the Middle East, and 36 were soon recruited. More than half of these were drawn from the 9th Reserve Battalion, but others had managed to worm themselves in from other units, including six from the 6th SA Armoured Division and several SAAF personnel. Three officers had also made themselves available for the new unit. While recruiting in the Union commenced, Captain McCombe was sent to the Middle East to look into possible alternatives for the training of the paratroop company. He left

Pretoria by air on 3 August 1943 and arrived at South African Base Helwan in Egypt on 6 August. For the purposes of his investigation, he was entitled to the local acting rank of major for one week.

He then returned to the Union, arriving back at Swartkops Air Station on 3 September. In his by then expected professional manner, he submitted a report spelling out all the options and their implications. It was very clear that the only viable course of action would be to train those volunteers already in the Middle East at the British Parachute School at Ramat David, in Palestine, while volunteers undergoing infantry training at Lyttelton, Pretoria, could later also be sent to Palestine to undergo their parachute training there. As the volunteers in each group completed their training, they would be attached to the British 11 Parachute Brigade, initially as a South African platoon and ultimately as a company. This was the battalion with which these men were earmarked to eventually go into action. The SAAF Parachute Company at Lyttelton had, in the meantime, been recruiting hard from the limited source at its disposal. By the end of October, it had managed to gather some 66 volunteers. According to one of the officers who served with the company, Captain Ossie Baker, the volunteers included many veterans of the returned 1st South African Infantry Division, as well as a number of 'new-boys' who had been 'washed' from the pilot's course.

Officers were another matter, as there was a need for experienced combat veterans as leaders. The company commander, Captain Tony van Niekerk, MC, had served in the 4th SA Armoured Car Regiment in the Western Desert. Captain Ossie Baker, himself a veteran of the 1st SA Infantry Division, had been an instructor at the Armoured Corps Battle School at Premier Mine and, when the Paratroop Company had been put through a one-month course at the school, he had been recruited to join them as the second-in-command. Following Tony van

Niekerk's death when he rolled a Jeep on the parade square of the Military College, Ossie Baker took over command of the company.

The company trained hard, simulating parachuting by jumping from the top of a 17-metre high cliff into a deep pool of water and from the back of a truck moving at speed across a parade square. Unfortunately, this training proved in vain. At the end of November 1943, the battle for manpower resulted in a mortal blow to the SAAF Paratroop Company when the Chief of General Staff decided to cancel all plans for an airborne company and the SAAF Regiment was ordered forward to provide reinforcements for the 6th SA Armoured Division. The unit amalgamated with the Natal Mounted Rifles to form an armoured regiment. The South African 'paratroopers' had not even completed a single parachute jump. The volunteers from the 9th Reserve Battalion and other Middle East units, whose numbers had by then dwindled to nineteen, had been left waiting expectantly at Mustapha Barracks in Alexandria, Egypt, from July until the end of November. They were never sent on a parachute course and were eventually also posted out as reinforcements to the 6th SA Armoured Division in Italy. Ossie Baker and one other officer were the only ones to eventually serve in action as paratroopers. Contrary to the position of other ranks, the UDF had a surfeit of officers, 65 were permitted to volunteer for service in British airborne units. Twenty-six of these, including Baker, served in units of the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade Group in Italy, the south of France and in Greece.

David McCombe had never served in the short-lived Paratroop Company. According to his widow, he was 'recalled' to Britain because of his specialist knowledge. Whatever the reason, McCombe underwent a medical examination at Mobile Air Force (MAF) Depot on 24 March 1944 and on 4 April he emplaned at Swartkops Air Station: destination - Cairo. He arrived there three days later and on 14 April was seconded

to the British Army for duty with Headquarters, Airborne Forces. At the same time, he was transferred from the SAAF to the General Service Corps (Volunteer). He had already signed the General Service Oath nearly a year earlier, on 3 May 1943. McCombe soon found himself back in England and on 20 April he was granted paratroop pay of 2/6 per day. No doubt he expected to participate in the D-Day Landings, but that was not to be. By 22 June 1944, with the 6th British Airborne Division having jumped into France ahead of the amphibious landings on 6 June, McCombe had been posted to the 1st British Airborne Division, which had been left behind. He reported to the Divisional Commander, Maj-Gen Roy Urquhart, to take up his appointment as GS03 (Air) at Divisional Headquarters. There he was involved in the planning of airborne operations. Some, such as Operation COMET, never came off. Early in September 1944, however, the real thing occurred: the hurried planning of Operation MARKET-GARDEN, the ill-fated 'Bridge too far'.

On 17 September, McCombe parachuted with the first wave of the division onto a dropping zone near Arnhem in Holland. He was subsequently involved in some of the heaviest fighting in and around the Divisional Headquarters at the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek. The division was cut off by the Germans when the British link-up force was unable to break through to them. The Allies' bold plan of laying an 'airborne carpet' of three divisions, two American and one British, across the rivers and canals of Holland to enable an armoured force to roll over into Germany, had been thwarted. After nine days of almost continuous combat, the division had effectively been annihilated. Only some 2000 remnants of the 10000 who had landed succeeded in escaping across the Rhine River to rejoin the Allies. McCombe was one of these; however, he had been injured in the jaw during the fighting, although it did not appear to have been a very

serious injury at the time. Four days later, David McCombe was flown back to England where he was immediately hospitalised for treatment of his lacerated chin. His one compensation was the award, on 1 October 1944, of an increment of 2/6 per day on completion of three years in the rank of captain. Six weeks later, he was granted a ration allowance of 2/- per day and a lodging allowance of 3/- per day. This would indicate that he had been discharged from hospital on 18 November and had to find his own billet.

McCombe arrived back in Pretoria on 3 January 1945 and barely had time to be reunited with his wife before he was admitted to No 133 Military Hospital on 12 January 1945. Thereafter, constantly troubled by his wound, he spent the rest of the year in and out of hospital, fluctuating between admissions, discharges and sick leave. The war ended and McCombe awaited his turn as the thousands of volunteer soldiers were demobilised. He was eventually released from full-time service at the Johannesburg Demobilisation Depot on 3 May 1946, having served in uniform just a month short of six years.

David McCombe returned to the Board of Executors after the war. Later he and his wife Doris moved to what was then Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). He continued to work for the Board of Executors there, while he also did occasional work for Safmarine. He played a significant, though typically low-profile role in Rhodesia, particularly with regard to facilitating contracts with the South African Government. For the rest of his life, McCombe suffered from blackouts and memory lapses as a result of the head wound he had sustained during the Battle of Arnhem. He died in 1972, at the age of 66. Captain David McCombe was an unknown and unsung pioneer of airborne operations. While few have heard of him, even fewer realise that he made what was probably the most comprehensive study ever undertaken by a South African of a concept that

is today the key to rapid deployment of military forces. Not only a theoretician and an outstanding staff officer, McCombe also insisted on a 'hands-on' approach and gained practical experience in what is arguably considered the most famous of all airborne battles.

Sadly, David McCombe's experience and knowledge was never tapped by South Africa when 1 Parachute Battalion was finally established in the sixties, less than twenty years later. Owing to the international isolation of South Africa which was commencing at this time, all the technical data required to set up a

parachute training facility was not freely available. Nevertheless, Commandant Willem Louw and his fourteen fellow paratroopers demonstrated admirable innovation in the design and construction of the necessary apparatus. All this time, however, McCombe's blueprints and voluminous reports lay stacked on shelves, gathering dust, in the Defence Force Archives. Even though his labours bore no fruit, the debt owed to the memory of David McCombe as a pioneer of paratroops in South Africa cannot be denied.

Deputy Old Bill Pierre Olivier

On the 7th of January Moth Pierre Olivier will celebrate his 66th birthday! Moth Olivier is the longest serving third generation Moth at Marshal Smuts, becoming a member on the 15th of September 1980.

Born in Van der Stel he completed his schooling at HHH before joining AEI for his apprenticeship as a Fitter and Turner at the beginning of 1964. During the same year he joined Stellenbosch Commando where he served as a volunteer (S-Sgt) until the Unit was disbanded during 2005. He completed a tour of duty in the operational area of SWA before joining as a Moth.

An enthusiastic mountaineer, he served as a volunteer Fire-fighter in the Hottentots-Holland Mountains from 1985 until 2000; joined the Strand Branch of the SA Legion during 1990 and now serves in the capacity of Deputy Chairman; served as a Voortrekker court-member (heemraad) for 13 years. He received training in Germany during 1993 to qualify as a Glass-fitter, helped Somchem to construct a TNT plant in Burma (Myanmar) during 1994 and sailed to Mauritius on a yacht during 1998.

In more than 31 years of service to the Shellhole, Pierre served as Deputy Old Bill from 1985 to 1987 and again during 2011/12; amongst his mentors he counts Moths Danie Wiehahn, Bill Paris and Tubby Hobart. Together with Moths Taffy Lloyd and John Hart he was a member of the famous Andrews Sisters Act performed by the Shellhole at Back-of-the-Line concerts during the 1980s. He considers the Shellhole members taking the homeless late Moth Guston Vassard under their wing (he later received a Certificate of Comradeship) as the best act of Comradeship performed at the Shellhole and says that the late Moth Jim Peddie was by far the truest Moth he ever met.

Interesting facts concerning Moth Olivier's service:

As DOB he refuses to sit at the Top Table during meetings and will never act as barman!

Form G.H.Q. 1.
 HIERDIE FORM MOET IN TWEEVULD VOLTOOH WORD WAARVAN EEN EKSEMPLAAR NA INDIENING AAN DIE DISTRIKS- OF PROVINSIALE "DUGGUT" VERSEND MOET WORD.

Memorable Order of Tin Hats

Aansoek om Lidmaatskap

Ek. P.J. OLIVIER
 (in BLOKLETTERS)

Adres BRIDGEWATER RD 33
SOMERSET WEST.

My Akliewe Diensentheid was STELLENBOSCH KOMANDO
 Ek het diens gedoen te ROM-D vanaf 1964 tot 1980

*Korrek Geseertifiseer. B.O. Eenheid

Ek lê ondergenoemde amptelike dokumente voor toevoering van my diens.

Ek was 'n lid van. Shellhole in 19. _____

Handtekening. _____ Datum _____

Voorgestel deur. P.J. Olivier

Jeekondeer deur. P.J. Olivier

Aanvaar as 'n lid van. _____ Shellhole

Stad of Sentrum. APRIL MABANOS

Hierdie. 5 dag van. SEPTEMBER 19 80

Adjudant. P.J. Olivier

*Moet deur aplikant se bevoegde Offisier voltooi word wanneer skakelike bewys van aanneembaarheid nie beskikbaar is nie.

1 Skrip indien nie van toepassing nie. (Sinnepoort)

In Memoriam

Aubrey Edward Noone

(17:05:1926 to 22:12:2011)



Born and raised in Cape Town, Aubrey Noone joined the training ship, General Botha at the beginning of 1942 to complete a two year academic course. He completed his apprenticeship with Blue Funnel Lines and went to sea early in 1944. With Blue Funnel Lines he served in the merchant navy for the remainder of the war years. In March of 1947 he qualified for his second officer's ticket before joining Safmarine. He married his wife Petrie on the 1st of December 1956 and the couple settled in Somerset West during 1961.

Aubrey became a member of Marshal Smuts Shellhole during 1962 and remained an active member until 2005. During his time at the Shellhole he served as both Adjutant and Deputy Old Bill and will be remembered for his

encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of the Shellhole and its members.

A memorial service was held on the 26th of December 2011 at the Methodist Church in Strand and Deputy Old Bill Pierre Olivier, Adjutant Gerda Olivier, Sgt-Maj Bob Fisher, Padre Angus Walker, Life Members Malcolm Boucher (and Patricia) and Derek McLean represented the Shellhole.

We will remember him!

Interesting reads on the Internet:

www.samilitaryhistory.org

www.secondworldwar.com

www.redsockfriday.com

www.ninefoxtrot.org

www.dod.mil.za

www.raf.mod.uk

www.30degreessouth.co.za

www.firstworldwar.com

www.61mech.org.za

www.cwgc.org