



THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION

NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH BRANCH

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Branch news

Well what is happening at the local Port Elizabeth Branch. Why nothing, absolutely nothing at all. And why? Well the hard working committee has taken a break over the Christmas and New Year period. We held no meeting in January as we would have met only 7 days after the 1st of January, and we all probably still were feeling the effects of the lavish parties that most members seem to think all committee members do. Unfortunately it is not true, we are not yet in Government, but maybe one day, and then we can also join in the Tee Shirt, Bags, Caps, and Party brigade.

However one committee member has done something and that is your honourable Treasurer. He has been organising the Mendi Church service once again. This will take place at St Paul's Anglican Church in Tucker Street, Mount Croix, on Sunday 17th February at 11:00. He was whinging about the Secretary doing it; by the Secretary is a past master of ducking and diving out of tasks. After all he was infantry trained, and a basic rifleman for many years so is easily able to by pass tasks suggested by a navy oke, and besides the Secretary has enough to do with the newsletters.

So lets see as many of you Legionnaires there as possible. Look at it as a church service with good snacks afterwards. If you are going to attend give Alex Farquhar a call so that that we can arrange for sufficient snacks for after the brief service. 🍷

A project for the Branch

Last year it was mooted by our Chairman that we, as a Branch, look at the possibility of taking over the responsibility of looking after the grave of the late Lt James Craig, VC. This is because there are three VC buried within the NMMM area. One being at Uitenhage, looked after by the Moths Crown and Anchor / Dinkie Di Shellhole, and the grave of James Dalton, in the Russell Road Cemetery, now looked after by the Moths Sunset Shellhole, who took over from the Prince Alfred Shellhole when they closed. The Outspan Shellhole look after the Addo Memorial at Addo.

The question of looking after the third VC grave in the NMMM area was raised at a meeting of all the local Shellhole Old Bill's but it appears the Shellholes are rather fully committed at present. So why do we not grab the bull by the horns and do it? All we need to do as a committee is to band together on a Saturday, and go and have a look at the grave site to see what needs to be done. That is Stage 1. We can then plan for Stage 2.

Information on James Craig (VC)

James Craig VC was a Scottish recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

He was 30 years old, and a Colour-Sergeant in the Scots (Fusilier) Guards of the British Army during the Crimean War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 6th September 1855 at Sebastopol, Crimea, Colour-Sergeant Craig volunteered and personally collected other volunteers, to go out under heavy fire to look for a Captain of his regiment who was supposed to be wounded. Sergeant Craig brought in the body of that officer whom he found dead, and while doing so was himself wounded.

He later achieved the rank of Lieutenant. His VC is on display at the Guards Museum, Birdcage walk, London, SW1E 6HQ.

His Citation:

"For having volunteered and personally collected other volunteers to go out under heavy fire of grape and small arms on the night of 6th September, 1855, when in the right advanced sap in front of the Redan to look for Captain Buckley, Scots Fusilier Guards, who was supposed to be wounded. Sergeant Craig brought in, with the assistance of a drummer boy, the body of that officer, whom he found dead, in the performance of which act he was wounded".

Date won, 6th September 1855 at Sebastopol, Crimea War.

Date Gazetted, 20th November 1857.

Date of birth, 20th May 1834. In Ayr, Scotland.

Date of death, 18th March 1861, Swartkops River.

Place of burial, St Mary's Cemetery, Port Elizabeth.

Remarks. Committed suicide by drowning. 🍷

The Italian Black Shirts

The MVSN is the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale (or Fascist Militia).

The MVSN started out as an organization not unlike the German SA (Brown Shirts). They were purely a **"Party"** orientated organization, and like their German Counterparts wore a distinctive uniform, a Black Shirt and a Fez. This led to their popular nickname of Black Shirts (Camicie Nere). Camicie meaning shirt and nere meaning black). Later the term CCNN was adopted for Black Shirt military units, and is taken directly from the initials of Camicie Nere. MVSN and CCNN are generally interchangeable, however the former primarily refers

to political orientated parts of the Black Shirts, while the latter is generally used in reference to combat units.

At least one author, Victor Madeja, has suggested that the Black Shirts might well have been called the "**Red Shirts**", adopting the traditional colours of Garibaldi's famous units from the Italian Wars of Unification, had not red been synonymous with "**Communism**" and "**Marxism**". However, it would seem more likely that Black was adopted, as it had been the uniform of the Arditi (Shock Troops); who had represented the elite of the Italian Army in World War I. The Arditi were the Italian equivalent of the German Stosstruppen (Storm Troops), and in both countries, fascist groups adopted these troops uniforms as a means to attract Great War veterans to their ranks, and to generally emphasize their links with Veterans Organizations. This was all part of their political aims and plans to recruit public support.

It is possible that many served in the Black Shirt Militia Units for a chance of immortality (or Glory, such as Garibaldi's Red Shirts achieved) or in support of republican political views (which didn't necessarily mean long term support for the fascists).

Either way there was plenty of loyalty towards fascism and the fascist party in the Black Shirts, but certainly none towards the King and the Monarchy.

Mussolini was a sort of "**de facto**" Commander in Chief, although only an Honorary Corporal, and "**just one of the boys**". It was he who exercised real power over the organization, rather than the Console Generale! However, unlike their German counterparts (who were literally exterminated in the "**Night of the Long Knives**") the Black Shirts were reasonably secure and stable. Both Mussolini and the Fascist Grand Council required the Black Shirts, as muscle, since the armed forces were controlled by Monarchists (who saw Mussolini as a threat to their own power) and there was possibly concern (or paranoia) about how much support the Fascists really had. It has been suggested that a sizeable portion of the population may have sided with the Monarchists (and the King) if forced to choose, however support for Mussolini and the Fascists (and also for Hitler and the Nazis in Germany) was probably a lot more widespread in their respective countries than people concede today!

Technically the Black Shirts consisted of volunteers who had completed their 18 months compulsory service. Volunteering meant a term of service of 10 years, albeit very part time service! Volunteering was usually seen as mandatory (like all totalitarian regimes of the early 20th Century, enlisting in some form of party organization was actively encouraged, but was not usually compulsory, unless a Public Official such as School Teacher or Government Officer). It certainly was not enforced, and many avoided enlistment. The MVSN were very short of Officer and NCO material for cadres, and this too contributed to the sometimes-low level of enlistment.

Italian Fascism did not seem to include the genocide and level of racism promoted by Hitler and the

National Socialists in Germany. Furthermore, although the Italians did not have an equivalent of the SS (an army of fanatics with allegiance sworn to one man) and although admittedly there were some similar comparisons between the MVSN and the SS, at the start of the war (both were para-military organizations not very well equipped for genuine military service). The MVSN were not involved in mass genocide like the SS, nor did they (later in the war) become an elite private army who got the best of everything.

Finally, the Black Shirt Officers were often appointed for political zeal, and loyalty (not necessarily to the Fascist Grand Council, but to the "**Ras**", the local Party Organisation Chief. The Italians took a very individualistic approach to many things, including politics; so, the Fascist Grand Council often had little input, everything being controlled by the Duce and the Party Secretary (who essentially rubber stamped everything the Duce did). While the Ras in each area did as they pleased, since they believed they were directly subordinate to the Duce (including building Militia that were, hopefully, loyal to them personally!) Ultimately this meant that the Militias were not always as well led, as they should have been. 🍌

Naval assault units

"Everyone has the jitters, seeing objects swimming about at night, and hearing movements on ships' bottoms. It must stop!"
Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, Commander in Chief of Britain's Mediterranean Fleet.

From their Italians first triumph in March of 1941, the British were nervously on guard of a potential surprise attack by the most effective and devastating branch of the Italian military of World War II; the Navy Special Assault Units.

The Duke of Spoleto, who was a motor boat enthusiast, helped dream of the idea of a naval assault unit for the Italian Navy. These units utilized explosive motor boats, torpedo boats, miniature submarines, and the infamous Human Torpedoes (AKA: SLC or Maiale). By the end of the war, these units had sunk, or severely disabled, 86,000 tons of Allied warships and 131,527 tons of merchant shipping.

In October of 1935, two sub lieutenants proposed a radical new weapon that would eventually become known as the Human Torpedo. The Italian Navy was so excited and aware of the potential of this new weapon that they ordered a testing in La Spezia 3 months later.

Italian Frogmen

The idea of a manned torpedo was furnished from previous manned torpedo actions that occurred in both the Revolutionary War and World War One. But it was the Italian 10th Light Flotilla, formed in 1940 that would perfect this deadly new weapon. The 10th Light Flotilla was responsible for 28 ships sunk or damaged in World War II. These ships included the battleships *HMS Queen Elizabeth*,

HMS Valiant, the cruiser *HMS York* and 111, 527 tons of merchant shipping.

Partial listing of ships sunk or crippled by the 10th Light Flotilla.

Name	Tonnage	Location	Date
Durham	10,900	Gibraltar	Sep, 1941
Baron Douglas	3,900	Gibraltar	July, 1942
Raven's Point	1,900	Gibraltar	July, 1942
Kaituna	10,000	Mersin	July, 1943
Meta	1,600	Gibraltar	July, 1942
Camerata	4,900	Gibraltar	May, 1943
Stanridge	6,000	Gibraltar	Aug, 1943
Queen Elizabeth	32,000	Alexandria	Dec, 1941
Valiant	31,000	Alexandria	Dec, 1941
Harmattan	4,600	Algiers	Dec, 1942
Jervis	1,700	Alexandria	Dec, 1941
Mahsud	7,500	Gibraltar	May, 1943
Fernplant	7,000	Iskenderun	Aug, 1943
Empire Centaur	7,000	Algiers	Dec, 1942

Italian frogmen were not only deadly, but also very ingenious in their methods of attack. Known as the "***Floating Trojan Horse of Gibraltar***", Italian frogmen used an imaginative method of destroying enemy ships.

Gibraltar was very tempting to the Italians for their safe shelter of British warships and allied merchant shipping. The Italian frogmen originally used a Spanish villa that was located 2 miles from Gibraltar.

It was owned by an Italian officer married to a Spanish woman named Conchita Ramognino.

This villa held the frogmen who would sneak out into the harbour and attack unsuspecting British warships. But this proved very difficult and costly. The harbour was very well protected by netting, patrol boats and search lights. Because of this difficulty, the Italians decided to use a battered Italian merchant ship docked across the bay of Gibraltar. It was the 4,995 ton *Oltorra*.

Italian frogmen secretly replaced the crew with divers and technicians, and built a workshop to house, build, and maintain human torpedoes. A door was then cut six feet below the surface to allow these 2-man human torpedoes to come and go undetected. Replacement torpedoes were shipped from Italy disguised as boiler tubes. When the Italian frogmen commenced their attacks on British warships from this location, it proved just as costly. Five out of six frogmen never returned. But when the Italians decided to attack the merchant shipping, which was less protected, they were rewarded with easy prey. Italian frogmen sank or damaged a total of 42,000 tons of Allied shipping.

The British never did find out where these frogmen came from.

The feats of the Italian frogmen brought much envy and respect from the British. When the British decided to create its own naval assault units, the trainees placed pictures of 10th Light Flotilla on their walls for inspiration. 🇮🇹

The Gatling gun

The original Gatling gun was a black powder field weapon, which used multiple rotating barrels turned by a hand crank, and firing loose (no links or belt) metal cartridge ammunition using a gravity feed system from a hopper. It was first used by the Union Army during the American Civil War. Unlike earlier weapons, such as the mitrailleuse, which had limited capacity and long reloading times, the Gatling gun was reliable, easy to load, and had a high firing rate. The gun was designed by the American inventor Dr Richard J Gatling, in 1861 and patented in 1862.

The Gatling gun may have been the first "***machine gun***", depending on how '***machine gun***' is defined, as it was capable of firing continuous bursts of fire. Unlike designs like the Maxim gun, which operated the mechanism using a fraction of the power of the fired cartridge, the Gatling gun relies on external power, such as a hand crank, or motor. Some time later, Gatling-type weapons diverted gas from the barrels to spin the rotating barrels. The term Gatling gun is used to refer to modern rotating-barrel cannons such as 20 mm M61 Vulcan.

History

Gatling guns were used by the US side during the Spanish-American War, most notably during the battle of San Juan Hill.

Modern Gatling guns

After Gatling guns were replaced by lighter, cheaper blowback-style weapons, the approach of using multiple rotating barrels fell into disuse for many decades. However, Gatling gun-style weapons made a return in the 1940–50s, when weapons with very high rate of fire were needed in military aircraft such as the Lockheed AC-130 gunship and ship-based CIWS. For these modern rotating-barrel cannons, electric motors were used to rotate the barrel.

One of the main reasons for the resurgence of the Gatling gun-style design is the weapon's tolerance for continuous high rates of fire. For example, if over 2 000 rounds were fired non-stop at high rate from a conventional single-barrel weapon, this would likely result in overheating, or a weapon jam.

Ultimately the limiting factor is the rate at which the shells can be loaded and the empties extracted. In a single barrel design these tasks must alternate. A multiple barrel design allows them to take place simultaneously, with different barrels at different points in the cycle. In contrast, a five-barrelled Gatling gun-style weapon firing 2 000 rounds fires only 400 per barrel, an acceptable rate of fire. Their high rate of fire also makes them popular for systems that often have little time to engage their

targets, such as CIWS', which defend against fast-moving anti-ship missiles.

The M61 Vulcan 20 mm cannon is the most commonly used member of a family of weapons designed by General Electric and currently manufactured by General Dynamics. It is a six-barrelled Gatling capable of more than 6,000 rounds per minute, a rate unachievable with a conventional machine gun. Similar systems are available ranging from 5.56 mm to 30 mm (there was even a 37 mm Gatling on the prototype T249 'Vigilante' AA platform); the rate-of-fire being somewhat inversely proportional to the size and mass of the ammunition (which also determines the size and mass of the barrels).

During the Vietnam War, the 7.62 mm calibre M134 Minigun was created as a helicopter weapon. Able to fire 6,000 rounds a minute from a 4,000-round linked belt, the Minigun proved to be one of the most effective non-explosive projectile weapons ever built and is still used in helicopters today. When used in Vietnam, the Minigun was nicknamed "**Puff the Magic Dragon**" because it fired red tracers that gave the appearance of breathing fire.

They are also used with lethal effectiveness on USAF AC-47, AC-119 and Lockheed AC-130 gun ships, their original high-capacity cargo airframes able to house the items needed for sustained operation. With sophisticated navigation and target identification tools, Miniguns can be used effectively even against concealed targets. The crew's ability to concentrate the Gatling's fire very tightly produces the appearance of the '**Red Tornado**' from the light of the tracers, as the gun platform circles a target at night.

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, many modern systems have the advantage of being externally driven (as opposed to relying on the energy from fired cartridges). This increases their reliability, as cartridge-firing failure will not interrupt the operation cycle. Additionally, certain other stoppages, such as faulty extraction and many feeding-related problems are eliminated or reduced considerably due to the external power source. It should however be noted that, although complex mechanically and uncommon, modern systems that derive power from the ammunition do exist.

The world's fastest Gatling-style weapon, which is the 10,000 RPM GSh-6-23 uses a gas-operated drive system. 🤖

What are you worth?

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a R50, 00 note. In the room of 200, he asked, "**Who would like this R50, 00 note?**"

Hands started going up. He said, "**I am going to give this R50, 00 to one of you, but first, let me do this!**"

He proceeded to crumple up the R50, 00 note.

He then asked, "**Who still wants it?**"

Still the hands were up in the air.

Well, he replied, "**What if I do this?**"

And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe.

He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty.

"Now, who still wants it?"

Still the hands went into the air.

My friends, we have all learned a very valuable lesson.

No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth R50, 00.

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or will happen, you will never lose your value.

Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who do love you. The worth of our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by who we are and whose we are.

You are special, don't ever forget it!

Pass this simple message on. You may never know the lives it can touch, the hurting hearts it can speak to, or the hope that it can bring.

Remember; always count your blessings, not your problems.

If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.

And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing that good work and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you.

Philippians 1:6 (amplified). 🤖

And remember

We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill. 🤖

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter reflect the personal views of the Editor and are not the official views of the Port Elizabeth Branch of the SA Legion.

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