



THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION

NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH BRANCH

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Branch news

The SAAF Remembrance Sunday Service at St Paul's Church in Tucker Street, Parsons Hill, conducted by our own Padre, Rev R Johnson, on Sunday 8th June at 11:00, was not that well attended by SA Legion members.

Then the Sea Service too at the same venue on 26th June at 09:00 lacked many SA Legion members as well. A major reason was that those who normally attend Church Parades are mostly dual members, ie SA Legion and Moths. On Sunday 26th June there was a large continuant of Moths, who are all SA Legion members as well, working at the Kirkwood Wild Life Festival. There they manned the gates and controlled the crowds over the whole weekend, earning some welcome funds. 🍷

Who killed the Red Baron?

This month I compiled an article for the Outspan Shellhole newsletter on who killed the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, on 21st April 1918. As many SA Legion members are also Moths, I did not want to duplicate the article in our newsletter, but in addition to the newsletter article, there are 21 pages of investigations, medical evidence from several sources, and other reference material, that make extremely interesting reading. So if any one would like to have a copy of this evidence, kindly contact the Branch and I am sure we will be able to arrange for a copy for you. It is just too much for our simple newsletter. 🍷

Something different

This month, instead of just some military information, I thought a little bit of additional nonsense could provide a change of pace. It was inserted because I was remembering some past events 30 years ago when I was convinced that I had the second best job at General Motors, while the best job belonged to a colleague, Alf Schultz. We often compared notes on our respective positions. Some PE people may remember Alf, who led a group of four intrepid hikers, who used to regularly traverse a special route they developed in the Strydomsberg Mountain Range. Normally a strenuous three to four day hike. The team was Alf, Clifty Stone, Andy Anderson, and our intrepid Treasurer, in the days when he could still walk well. It is possible that our Treasurer is the group's last surviving member. So now we need to get the other two names added to the small Cairn that was built on the top of the Strydomsberg Mountains, after Clifty Stone passed on from a brain tumour. Perhaps this is where our new Secretary may be of assistance. For he is a teacher at Woodridge School, who have a strong Outward Bound program.

What an exercise to lead the boys on over a long weekend, up the Strydomsberg to the Cairn and back. So if it ever happens, here are some tips for improving your hiking.

How to sleep comfortably while fastened to a sheer mountain cliff.

Mountain climbers have perfected the technique of fastening themselves to the open rock face of a mountain when they need to sleep for the night. Here are a few tips and techniques for making it a more comfortable night. First, find a nice wide ledge on the cliff to sleep on. Most cliffs have ledges that are 2 to 3 inches wide. To get a good night's rest, it's best to find a ledge about 3 or even 4 inches wide. If you sleep on a 2-inch ledge, you'll be tossing and turning all night.

Next, fasten yourself to the cliff. You can do this by nailing pitons, metal spikes, into the rock face. To get your piton firmly connected to the rock face, use a heavy hammer and swing your nailing arm far back from the cliff. Really reach back.

Now weave your climbing rope around your body and limbs and attach yourself to the spikes in a way that keeps at least one arm partially free. If you tie yourself to the rock face in a way that your arms are not free, you'll be spending more than one evening attached to the mountain. To help you fall asleep you might want to read some passages from your favourite book. Heavier books are favoured by climbers. Some mountain climbers carry multi volume reference book series with them.

If you reach the end of a book before falling asleep, find a ledge to rest the book on, and then attach the book to the cliff using pitons and rope. As you continue your ascent you can leave your books attached to the cliff. Other climbers will be so grateful to come across your books when they're climbing.

Once in a while when you're attached to a cliff you'll encounter howling winds, biting sleet and hungry birds of prey. These are all minor annoyances that will go away if you just ignore them. You will know you've gotten a good night's sleep on the mountain cliff if you feel like jumping out of bed in the morning. Resist the urge to do so. Phil Shapiro.

Marketing freeze dried water.

I first thought of the idea of freeze-dried water while on a camping trip with a friend. We had just hiked about eight miles along a mountain trail, and had found a nice clearing in the woods to pitch our tent.

My friend had brought with some freeze-dried beef stew and some freeze-dried spaghetti and spaghetti

sauce. We were so hungry we started eating before the food had fully finished cooking. It was then that the idea of freeze-dried water first came to mind.

All through those eight miles of hiking the weight of the water bottles in my back pack felt heavier and heavier on my shoulders. If only there were a way of dehydrating water to make it lighter.

Then it occurred to me in a flash. If camping stores sold freeze-dried water then we wouldn't have to carry so much weight on our backs. When we needed water for cooking or drinking, we could just open up one of the freeze-dried water packets and just add water.

Well, by the next day I had the idea all figured out. Freeze-dried water packets could be produced in large factories. On the outside of the packets would be pretty pictures of waterfalls and sparkling, bubbly blue water. On the inside of the packets would be shiny aluminium foil, placed right on top of a plastic inner liner. In the very middle of the packets would be the concentrated freeze-dried water.

The freeze-dried water would almost be invisible. That's because the water would be dehydrated so well in our factories that only the very essence of the water would remain.

But hikers and campers would only be the beginning. NASA would be interested in buying freeze-dried water to send up with the astronauts on the space shuttle. The Red Cross would be interested in buying freeze-dried water to distribute to families during droughts. Sailors would be interested in buying freeze-dried water to take out with them to sea.

Imagine how much financial savings NASA would have if they could use freeze-dried water, rather than heavy tap water. Imagine how many lives could be saved in a drought if the Red Cross stockpiled thousands and thousands of packets of freeze dried water. And think of the convenience to sailors to have packets of freeze-dried water right on the ship with them.

They say that necessity is the mother of invention. As I was hiking those eight long miles with the heavy water bottles bouncing around in my back pack, I knew that a great moment of invention was about to occur. Who could have thought that such a great invention would have such humble beginnings?

Phil Shapiro. 🍌

The P38 folding can opener

Virtually all 3rd generation troopies know this can opener, excepting perhaps those who served in actual luxury, like the two blue jobs, the light blue and the navy blue. I still have mine issued to me in the mid seventies with my rat pack. World War II veterans, if I recall, mainly had those large black handled army knives, with a large marlin type spike on the one side. They had tin and bottle openers, plus a large heavy knife blade, and that served them well. I do not recall ever seeing any South African soldiers returning from WWII with a P-38, so it may

have only been issued to American troops. However all us 3rd generation troopies know it well. It was developed in just 30 days in the summer of 1942 by the Subsistence Research Laboratory in Chicago, and never in its 52-year history has it been known to break, rust, need sharpening or polishing. Perhaps that is why many soldiers, past and present, regard the P-38 C-ration can opener as the Army's best invention. C-rations have long since been replaced with the more convenient meals, such as Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), but the fame of the P-38 persists, thanks to the many uses stemming from the unique blend of ingenuity and creativity all soldiers seem to have.

"The P-38 is one of those tools you keep and never want to get rid of," said Sgt Scott Kiraly, a military policeman. ***"I've had my P-38 since joining the Army 11 years ago and kept it because I can use it as a screwdriver, knife, anything".*** ***"The most vital use of the P-38, however, is the very mission it was designed for"***, said Fort Monmouth, NJ, garrison commander Col Paul Baerman. ***"When we had C-rations, the P-38 was your access to food; that made it the hierarchy of needs"***, Baerman said.

"Then soldiers discovered it was an extremely simple, lightweight, multipurpose tool. I think in warfare, the simpler something is and the easier access it has, the more you're going to use it. The P-38 had all of those things going for it".

The tool acquired its name from the 38 punctures required to open a C-ration can, and from the boast that it performed with the speed of the World War II Mustang P-38 fighter plane.

"Soldiers just took to the P-38 naturally", said World War II veteran John Bandola. ***"It was our means for eating 90 percent of the time, but we also used it for cleaning boots and fingernails, as a screwdriver, you name it. We all carried it on our dog tags or key rings"***. When Bandola attached his first and only P-38 to his key ring a half century ago, it accompanied him to Anzio, Salerno and through northern Italy. It was with him when World War II ended, and it's with him now. ***"This P-38 is a symbol of my life then"***, said Bandola. ***"The Army, the training, my fellow soldiers, all the times we shared during a world war"***.

Sgt Ted Paquet, swing shift supervisor in the Fort Monmouth Provost Marshal's Office, was a 17-year-old seaman serving aboard the amphibious assault ship USS New Orleans during the Vietnam war when he got his first P-38. The ship's mission was to transport Marines off the coast of Da Nang.



On occasional evenings, Marines gathered near Paquet's duty position on the fantail for simple pleasures like ***"Cokes, cigarettes, conversation, and C-rations"***. It was during one of these nightly sessions that Paquet came in contact with the P-38, or ***"John Wayne"*** as it's referred to in the Navy.

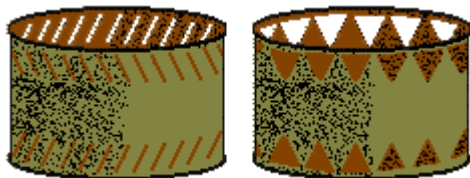
Paquet still carries his P-38, and he still finds it useful. While driving with his older brother, Paul, their car's carburettor began to have problems. **"There were no tools in the car and, almost simultaneously, both of us reached for P-38s attached to our key rings"**, Paquet said with a grin. **"We used my P-38 to adjust the flow valve, the car worked perfectly, and we went on our merry way"**.

Paquet's P-38 is in a special box with his dog tags, a .50-calibre round from the ship he served on, his Vietnam Service Medal, South Vietnamese money and a surrender leaflet from Operation Desert Storm, provided by a nephew. **"It will probably be on my dresser until the day I die"**, Paquet said.

The feelings veterans have for the P-38 aren't hard to understand, according to 1st Sgt Steve Wilson of the Chaplain Centre and School at Fort Monmouth. **"When you hang on to something for 26 years"**, he said, **"It's very hard to give it up. That's why people keep their P-38 just like they do their dog tags. It means a lot. It's become part of you. You remember field problems, jumping at 03:00 and moving out. A P-38 has you reliving all the adventures that came with soldiering in the armed forces. Yes, the P-38 opened cans, but it did much more. Any soldier will tell you that"**. Story by Maj Renita Foster.

How to make a C-ration stove

The small cans included in the meal were ideal for making a stove. Using a **"John Wayne"** pierce a series of closely spaced holes around the top and bottom rims of the can. This stove was satisfactory, but did not allow enough oxygen to enter, which caused incomplete burning of the blue Trioxin heat tablet, causing fumes, which irritated the eyes and respiratory tract. A whole heat tab had to be used.



A better stove was created by simply using the can opener end of a **"church key"** (a flat metal device designed to open soft drink and beer containers with a bottle opener on one end and can opener on the other commonly used before the invention of the pull tab and screw-off bottle top) to puncture triangular holes around the top and bottom rims of the can which resulted in a hotter fire and much less fumes.

With this type of stove only half a Trioxin heat tab was needed to heat the meal and then the other half could be used to heat water for coffee or cocoa. A small chunk of C-4 explosive could also be substituted for the Trioxin tablet for faster heating. It would burn hotter and was much better for heating water. A stove was usually carried in the back pack or cargo pocket and used repeatedly until the metal began to fail. Australian troops were always issued

with hexamine stoves and so did not have to create this type. I am not sure just what a hexamine stove is but SA troopies were initially all issued with the flat folding stove in their early rat packs. These worked well, and in fact my wife still uses mine for making her tea when the power goes off in preference to the gas bottle. 🍷

Hadrian's Wall

Why the wall was built. **"Just when you think you are at the world's end, you see smoke rising from East to West as far as the eye can turn, and then under it, also as far as the eye can stretch, houses, temples, shops and theatres, barracks and granaries, trickling along like dice behind one, long, low, rising and falling, and hiding and showing line of towers, that is the wall"**. Rudyard Kipling from **'Puck of Pook's Hill'**.

The year 55 BC, was the year in which the Romans first invaded Britain under Julius Caesar, but it was not until almost a century later in 43 AD, during the reign of the Emperor Claudius that the full-scale Roman conquest and occupation of Britain really began. By AD 70 a powerful army led by the Roman Governor of Britain Julius Agricola, had captured most of southern Britain and advanced into the northern part of our country. Here they defeated two great Celtic tribes, the Brigantes at Scotch Corner to the south of the Tees, and the Picts at the Battle of Mons Grapius in Caledonia.

Victory over the Picts was not difficult for the might of the Roman army, but the wild mountainous terrain of Caledonia made the total subjugation of this remote Highland people a formidable and rather unprofitable task. When the Roman Emperor Hadrian visited Britain in 122 AD he recognised the difficulties in establishing control in Caledonia and saw that it would be impossible to introduce the Picts to the Roman way of life. The Emperor therefore ordered the construction of a great defensive wall, which would mark the northern limits of his empire and consolidate the hold on those parts of Britain already subdued. Hadrian's empire would not include Caledonia.

Romans and Barbarians

A biographer of Hadrian's time summed up the purpose of the Emperor's great wall when he recorded that its construction would **'Separate the Romans from the Barbarians'**. The **'Barbarians'** in question were of course the Caledonian Picts and the great local tribe called the Brigantes, whose territory lay on both sides of Hadrian's Wall.

It is worth noting that when Hadrian's Wall was first built, many of its forts actually faced south into the heart of the Brigantian territory. This suggests that initially it was not the Picts who were the greatest threat to the Roman occupation of northern Britain. The Picts and the Brigantes were neither English nor Scottish by origin, but were tribal descendants of earlier inhabitants of Britain. When Hadrian's Wall was built neither the English nor the Scots had

yet settled our country, England or Scotland simply did not exist in Roman times.

One thing should therefore be made absolutely clear about Hadrian's Wall, it did not act as a boundary between England and Scotland. The English and the Scots did not settle in Britain until three centuries after Hadrian's Wall was built. In Hadrian's time the ancient race called the Scots inhabited Hibernia (now called Ireland), while the English, or more accurately the Anglo-Saxons, were a Germanic race that inhabited the central mainland of northern Europe.

It is an even greater mistake to think that Hadrian's Wall forms a boundary between England and Scotland today, for the simple reason that most of Northumberland, England's northernmost and very Anglo-Saxon county, actually lies to the north of the Wall.

A multi-cultural zone

Hadrian's Wall was eighty miles long, six metres high, three metres wide and built of stone, (though the Cumbrian sections were originally built of turf). Its defences were supplemented by a northern ditch, a military road, and an earthwork called the '**Vallum**'. Together these features formed a '**Military Zone**', which restricted the movement of people to the north and south of the wall. This military zone was a '**No-Go**' area for armed '**Barbarians**'.

The defences of the Military Zone were supplemented by Milecastles, which housed garrisons of up to sixty men. These were built at intervals of one Roman mile and between each of these stood two smaller defensive towers called turrets, which held small garrisons of four men.

Most important of the military garrisons along the wall were of course the great forts, of which there were sixteen, each housing between five hundred and one thousand men. The men who occupied these forts and the other Wall defences were sometimes recruited locally, but more often than not they were brought in from some distant corner of the Roman Empire.

Soldiers garrisoned on the wall, thus came from as far away as Spain, Switzerland, Hungary, Germania, Romania and even North Africa. Surprisingly very few of the Roman soldiers originated from Rome or Italy. Instead the wall was a Multi-National Military Zone whose people had brought with them many different customs, languages and religions.

Civilian towns

The 'Multi-Cultural Society was further developed by small Civilian towns called Vicus which grew up around the Roman forts. These were inhabited by women, children, craftsmen, traders and retired soldiers who brought the wall to life in the way that Kipling superbly describes in '**Puck of Pook's Hill**'.

It can therefore be seen that Hadrian's frontier was not just a dull and simple stone wall, far from it! Hadrian's wall was an active military zone, a

customs barrier, a line of defence, and above all '**a way of life**'.

*Towns stood upon my length, where garrisons
were laid.*

*Their limits to defend and; for my greater aid
With turrets I was built where sentinels were
placed*

*To watch upon the Pict; so me my makers
graced.*

Michael Drayton '**Poly Oblion**' (1613)

Hadrian's Wall was occupied for almost three centuries and at the height of its importance had been the home to thousands of men, women, and children. Today, at eighteen hundred years old, Hadrian's Wall may be a mere relic of its magnificent past, but it is still nevertheless the most impressive monument to the Roman occupation of Britain, as well as being a very important feature of the heritage of North Eastern England.

The end of roman occupation

From the middle of the third century AD, the Empire of Rome came increasingly under threat from raiding Vandals and Goths on its eastern frontiers in continental Europe. This resulted in heavy demand for Roman troops in Europe and caused a gradual depletion in the number of Roman soldiers stationed in Britain.

The movement of troops from Britain was bad news for the native Welsh speaking Britons of the Wall Country as the presence of the Roman army provided them with much needed protection from raiding Picts. By 367 AD the number of Roman troops on Hadrian's Wall had reached an all time low and pre-empted the so called '**Barbarian Conspiracy**' in which the Picts overran Hadrian's Wall in conjunction with the Scots (from Ireland) who invaded western Britain and the Saxons (from Germany), who invaded the south and east.

For a short period following the Barbarian Conspiracy the Romans managed to restore law and order to the Wall Country, but by the year 399 AD the Roman Empire was crumbling with further trouble in Europe. The full-scale evacuation of Roman troops from Roman Britain began. 🍷

Disclaimer

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