

MEMORABLE ORDER OF TIN HATS



INCHANGA/QUEEN'S OWN SHELLHOLE

The Inchanga/Queen's Own Shellhole is an amalgamation of two earlier units of the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (M.O.T.H.) that served the communities of Inchanga and Camperdown in Pietermaritzburg District. The story of the present shellhole would be incomplete without their inclusion.

In 1955 a group of ex-servicemen in the Camperdown area got together and formed the Queen's Own Shellhole, which was presented with a Charter by M.O.T.H. General Headquarters on 7th February 1955. At first their meetings were held in the old school building but subsequently the venue was moved to the Camperdown Agricultural Hall. This wood and iron building was originally erected as a temporary measure for the Camperdown and District Agricultural Society about 1902 but had served since then as the focal point for the community's social activities.

The patching up of the old building later became a major problem, which led to the shellhole committing itself to the construction of a modern hall to benefit the Moths and the community generally. The shellhole was assisted by the donation of a site and by a large financial donation from the Camperdown and District Hall Association. Thereafter, within ten months, the shellhole raised a third of the total cost of the new hall. Building activities commenced before the end of 1977, and before long the shellhole occupied a splendid new home.

Founder Executive Members of the Shellhole were Moth A D Evans (Old Bill), Moth Geo Pierson (Wee Bill), Moth J Jones (Adjutant) and Moth Pop Squires (Paybill). They were assisted by Moth W H Squires (Sgt Major), Moth F J Heyns (Quartermaster) and Moth T Loader (Playbill). Moth A D Evans continued as Old Bill until 1961 and at the same time served as a Proxy Member of the M.O.T.H. National Executive. It was whilst performing duty in the latter capacity that he and his wife were tragically killed in a motor accident en route to the Remembrance Day Service at Mount Memory Shrine.

The Squires family made a most impressive contribution to Queen's Own Shellhole over many years, as reflected on the Shellhole Executive Committee Honours Board. Moth G E Squires was Wee Bill from 1962 to 1965, thereafter Old Bill until 1976. Moth L J Squires was Paybill for 20 odd years from 1956. Moth W H Squires was Sgt Major at the time of Chartering until 1961 and then Quartermaster until 1966.

Mrs Sheila Cusins who today lives at the Pietermaritzburg & District M.O.T.H. Cottages recalls the days when her late husband, Moth J A Cusins was Old Bill from 1960 to 1965. There was no television in those days, and the splendid Moth Hall in Camperdown served as the focal point for most of the entertainment and social activity in the District. She remembers especially the dances held in the hall. Her husband, who worked at the Ferroloys Plant in Cato Ridge brought along all the young men from the plant to attend these very popular events.

With declining membership over the years, it was decided in 1989 to amalgamate with the Inchanga Shellhole. The hall was sold to private enterprise, and the funds generated were transferred to the new unit, where put to charitable use in the purchase of two 'park homes' within the Inchanga Park Country Village complex at Inhanga. The memorabilia of the Queen's Own Shellhole was taken on the strength of the new shellhole. This memorabilia included the original Charter, the banner, the honours board, as well as an excellent collection of extrinsically priceless items and pictures. One such is a photograph of "Nancy", the Springbok mascot of the 4th South African Infantry Battalion leading a ceremonial parade during WW 1.

The other 'ancestor' of Inchanga/Queen's Own Shellhole was Inchanga Shellhole which received their Charter from M.O.T.H. G.H.Q. on 6th May 1984. The founder Old Bill of this shellhole was Moth Norman Coleman, today better known as "Our Mfundisi", or more correctly, The Rev. Moth Norman P Coleman, holder of the M.O.T.H. Certificate of Merit, (Mothdom's highest award) and a resident in one of the shellhole park home units.

Moth Norman Coleman came to live in Inchanga Park Country Village in the early 1980s, finding several ex-servicemen present but no shellhole, a situation he promptly rectified. He left Inchanga during 1986 for Zululand, after his marriage to Yvonne, but returned again after the formation of the amalgamated unit. Although the life of Inchanga Shellhole was a brief five years, the unit distinguished itself through the prowess of its members on the bowling greens. The shellhole competed regularly in the M.O.T.H. National Bowling Tournaments with considerable success. In 1985 at Edenvale, the team won the "B" Consolation Section. In 1986, they were winners of Section 24 at Pietermaritzburg. Two years later, they were Section 4 winners at Johannesburg, and the following year, were Section 1 winners at Durban. Moths Ivor Atherstone, Bernie Flockhart, Eric Bentley, Alf Lyon and Rodney Atherstone feature regularly in these events.

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Another member of the shellhole to have been awarded Mothdom's highest award is former Old Bill, Moth George Watson, who continues to serve the Order as the Paybill of the Pietermaritzburg & District Dugout. The shellhole can be proud too that three present members have the distinction of having "50" year M.O.T.H. ties, in recognition of each having fifty years of unbroken service in the Order. They are Moths Jimmy Little, Roy Chadwick and Terry Ross.

Inchanga/Queen's Own Shellhole's 'home' is the Inchanga Park Country Village, in premises provided through the courtesy of the Village Management. It is here that shellhole memorabilia is proudly displayed, and where the regalia and memorabilia of the 'ancestor' units are preserved. In addition, the shellhole maintains a "Memorial Cairn" in memory of the Fallen. This is sited in tranquil surroundings, set into the gardens in the vicinity of the Village swimming pool. It consists of a simple cemented stone cairn, supporting a granite slab engraved "We Will Remember Them". The whole is surmounted by a Tin Hat and a symbolic 'candle' which is illuminated at night and when memorial parades are held. The cairn was dedicated on 5th May 2001 by the Rev. Moth Norman Coleman, assisted by the Old Bill, Moth Pepsi Lavis.

INCHANGA
January 2002