

The "Gate" is linked with every Shellhole

BY MRS EVO
(Widow of the Founder of the Order)

WHEN Evo built Warriors Gate in the historic Old Fort Grounds, Durban, before WW II, he determined that it would not become a musty museum, or a cheap stockpile for bombs and shells.

Evo's aim was to make this headquarters of the Tin Hat brotherhood alive and unusual. The result is that the "Gate" is linked with every shellhole with a shield, with the famous battlefields by stones and with war leaders by their hats.

The task of collecting unusual souvenirs was not an easy one, but Evo had an able ally in Colonel Molyneux, who was the brother of the famous Paris dress-designer.

The Colonel secured the site for Warriors Gate and the stones which form the boundary wall. These came from the beach, in front of the Edward hotel, where they had been placed to protect the Marine Parade from rough seas.

Colonel Molyneux was a scrounger after Evo's own heart. He ordered the Corporation to deliver the stones to Warrior's Gate, and this was done.

There were ways of working such things in Durban in those days.

Every Sunday a fatigue party of Moths mustered at the "Gate" to build the wall. It was heavy work. Some of the stones are twice as big as they look because they are buried deep in the ground.

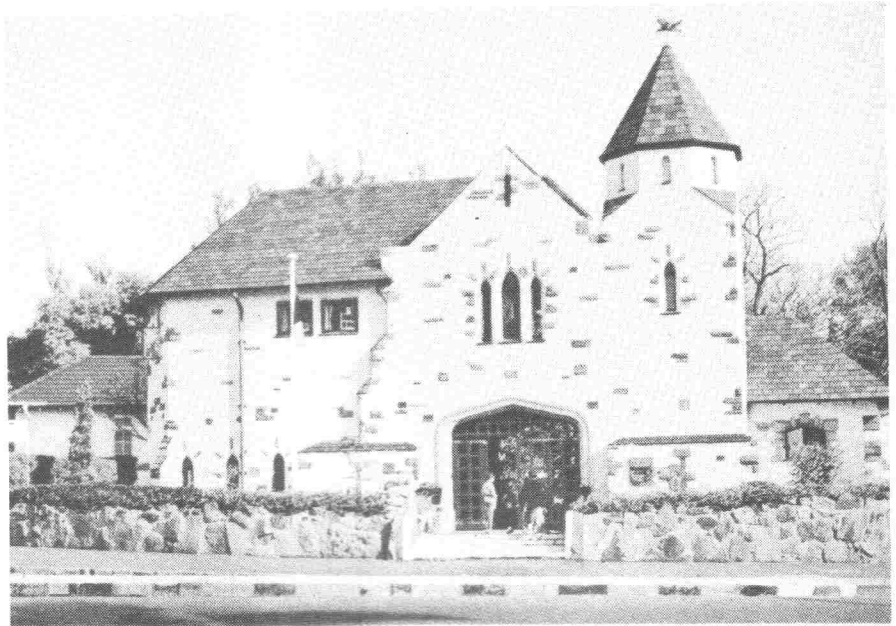
Afterwards, members of the working party had tea in the Old Fort before going home.

At that time there were two tame Zebras living in the Old Fort's grounds. They often wandered into town and Colonel Molyneux was called to collect them, by the police and others.

Eventually, one of the Zebras was killed by a passing train and its mate was so distraught that it ran after the train trying to bite the guard's van. After this incident the surviving Zebra was moved to a place of safety inland.

But, back to the unusual things of Warriors Gate. The paving stones, which lie round the Custodian's cottage, came from the Pine Street side of Durban's Post Office.

The Post Office was extended round about 1940 and "Evo" helped himself to the stones which had formed part of the pavement. On the under side they are stamped with the date they were made — between 1896 and 1899.



The gate is linked with every shellhole

The story of the battlefield stones, which are set in the walls of Warriors Gate, is well known. These are about 40 of them. They come from places as far apart as Ypres and El Alamein, Cassino and Halfaya Pass. They are all authentic.

Some of the stones were difficult to secure, particularly the one from Gallipoli. The Turks would not allow anything to be removed from this battlefield — not even a stone.

However, Colonel Hamilton, who was revisiting Anzac, managed to slip one into his kitbag and he brought it back to Evo. As far as I know nobody else has a stone from Gallipoli.

I do not want to give the impression that Warriors Gate is built of stone. It is not. Coronation Brick provided the bulk of the building materials. The roof was originally covered with shingles, but the sea air caused these to curl.

All the proceeds from Evo's book "Old Soldiers Never Die", collected up to that time, were used to re-roof the "Gate". It cost R1 500 for slates.

Visitors will notice that most of the "Gate's" floor, in the upper room, is wood, but part is tile. The tiles mark the extension that was

made after the visit of the King and Queen in 1947. The King remarked that the Upper Room looked "a little small" to him so the Moths set to and enlarged it.

The cost of the extension was R8 000. The late Charlie James donated the money. He was the anonymous donor who gave Evo R3 500 in 1937 to build Warriors Gate. These figures are a measure of the effects of inflation over a 10-year period!

As Mr James would not allow it to be known, whilst he was alive, who had put the money up there is no foundation stone. Instead, Evo designed a plaque for the central fire-place incorporating lines from Wardsworth's Happy Warrior".

"Who is the Happy Warrior? Who is he That every man in arms should wish to be?

It is the generous Spirit,
Whose high endeavours are an inward light

That makes the path before him always bright."

Evo's fondest hope was that something would be formed in this gatehouse that would live in South African history.