

Halifax Herald



December 2018

Please note:

CHRISTMAS IS CANCELLED

**Apparently, YOU told Santa that
YOU have been good this year...**



He died laughing



From the
editor's
desk

It's the end of the year again. Is it just my imagination, or do the years seem to be going quicker.

From next year I will be allocating a member of the Shellhole each month to write an article for the Halifax Herald.

Those that do not comply will be flogged and then made to walk the plank. (Hey, you want to be a naval Shellhole don't you).

This year I am determined that we are going to do a bit more than meet just once a month. Things such as visit other Shellholes, arrange outings and events, and be involved in a community project or two. Even if I have to become a one-man band and do things on my own.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and yours a peaceful Christmas and a really good New Year.

Until next February. YUTTH.

Matt

What's in this month's issue?

On page 3 this month there is a story from Servaas about Admiral Halifax, the man after whom our Shellhole is named.

On page 6 there is an article from John Verster on Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph.

On page 8 is an article on the Remembrance Day parades that Admiral Halifax attended this year. (There were three of them).

On page 11 is a short tribute to Richard Lawrenson.

On page 12 there are five photographs. I will be giving a prize to the person who can come up with the best captions for them. The best captions will also be printed in the February issue of Halifax Herald.

Finally, on the back page, there is our Christmas greeting to all the other Shellholes and individuals that read Halifax Herald.

FRONT COVER

I wasn't sure what photograph to use for this year's cover. So I went with a cartoon. Hope you enjoy it.

Admiral Halifax

Who was the man after whom our Shellhole was named?

By Servaas van Breda.

Rear Admiral Guy Waterhouse Halifax was borne on 21 June 1884. He was the son and brother of other Rear Admirals in his family.

At the age of 15 he joined the famous training ship Britannia and later climbed the ladder of success during WW1. At different times he commanded the cruiser HMS CARLISLE and the

famous battle ship HMS MALAYA, flagship of the Home Fleet. Promoted to Director of signals at the Admiralty in 1934, he reached the rank of Rear Admiral the following year, before he retired to become secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, the then Governor General of

South Africa. After his term of office he and his wife settled in South Africa. There were no children born

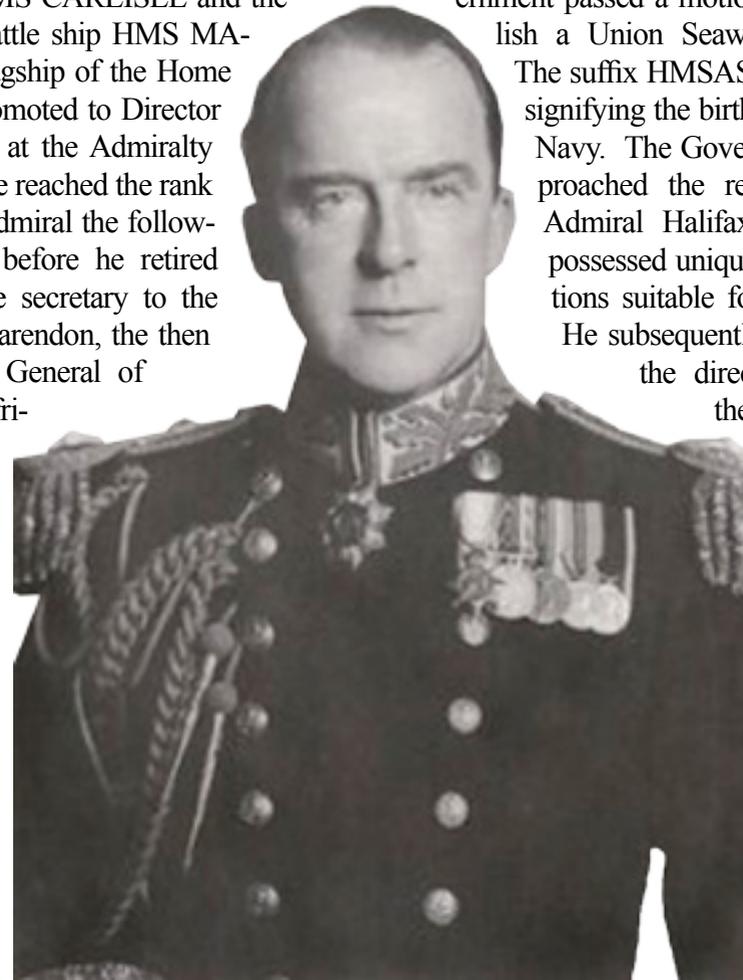
to the couple. When war was declared in 1939 (WW2) the SANS did not exist. THE RNVR (SA) was formed from Union forces. In 1938 this force consisted of four converted trailers whose main purpose was to check the bona fides of all shipping that passed through SA waters.

On 6 September 1939 the Union Government passed a motion to establish a Union Seaward Force.

The suffix HMSAS was used, signifying the birth of the SA Navy. The Government approached the retired Rear Admiral Halifax since he possessed unique qualifications suitable for the task.

He subsequently accepted the directorship of

the proposed naval force. In September 1939, Col H.T. Newman, a Royal Marine Officer, was sec-





ROSEDALE SERVICE CENTRE: In case you can't remember where we meet, this is the place.

ended to the SADF and served as Deputy Director of SA Coastal Defences at the General HQ in Pretoria. He, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence had discussions with Admiral Halifax and Commodore C.G. Stuart DSO on the subject of Simon's Town as he was the Senior Naval Officer in Simon's Town. Commodore Stuart had misgivings about forming this force and wrote to Adm Halifax on 25 September 1939: "I am perfectly prepared to make the best possible (use) of what I am sure is a bad job, if it is on the lines of co-operation with you at the SANS.....the more I look into details of the proposed new scheme the more despondent I become about it ever becoming possible to make a reasonable success of it.....A naval organisation based on military or semi-military lines

has in all history...(never) produced satisfactory results."

On 25 October 1939 the Prime Minister informed the British High Commissioner: "For reasons that are already well known to you, it has been considered necessary (that) the Union forces should accept full responsibility for certain services in connection with the defence of Union ports and (the) coast-line. It has, therefore, been decided to form a new force which is to be titled the South African Seaward Defence Force. This force will consist of both Permanent and Active Citizen Force units and will be organised, trained and administered by the Defence Department.

Admiral Halifax visited all the RNVR bases to explain the situation. Initially the response was poor.

On 15 December 1939 authority was given for the establishment of 98 Officers and 515 men for the SDF. This included the crews for eight anti-submarine vessels and 21 mine sweepers. Admiral Halifax set up a temporary HQ at the Castle in the Lady Ann Barnard room. His senior staff consisted of Commodore H.R. Gordon Cumming RN, Lt Cdr W.S. Finlayson and Paymaster Lt C.S. Ricketts. The remainder of the staff were housed in requisitioned railway carriages at the Cullomberg goods sheds. At first there were not sufficient uniforms to go around and boiler suits were worn by all ranks until uniforms were made available.

On 15 January 1940 the Seaward Defence Force was formally constituted with 15 ships commissioned and a number of shore establishments set up with a total complement of 428, of whom 47 were officers.

That same day the Lady Ann Barnard room was evacuated and HQ transferred to a five story building facing the entrance to Table Bay Harbour. Also on that same day the SADF formally took over the responsibility of operating the minesweepers and anti-submarine services, as well as the Port War Signal Stations and the Examination Services of all the SA Ports.

In January 1941 a small detachment of the SDF was established at Walvis Bay where two minesweepers were based. During March 1941 Admiral Halifax inspected the new detachment. On 28 March the aircraft in which he and his staff were returning to Cape Town struck a hillside in heavy mist near Baboon

point 74 kilometres north of Saldanha Bay. There were no survivors. Admiral Halifax and his staff, including the aircrew were all interned in one grave at the Plumbstead cemetery.

During 1944 South African sailors that were stationed in Cape Town and Simon's Town wanted to establish a Naval MOTH Shellhole based on the current MOTH traditions. At first permission was obtained from Rear Admiral Halifax's widow to name the Shellhole after her husband.

Admiral Halifax Shellhole was formed on 12th September 1944.

The Shellhole first held meetings at the White House Hotel in Cape Town. During 1962 MOTH Stan Ward organised that the Shellhole meet at The Cape Town Society of Model and Experimental Engineers, where he was also a member. During 1992 the Shellhole moved to the SA Legion Rosedale Service Centre where the Shellhole currently meets every second Saturday of the month.

Editor's Note

I've been a member of Admiral Halifax Shellhole for four years now.

Admiral Guy Halifax, the man after whom we have named our Shellhole, is buried in Plumstead Cemetery. That is a mere 13,9 kilometres away from where we meet.

In those four years I have never visited the grave of Admiral Halifax. Isn't it about time that we did something about this?

Remembrance Day 2018 - a Post-mortem

Our Deputy Commander reflects on this year's Remembrance Day.

By John Verster.

Remembrance Day 2018 in the city of Cape Town was indeed a memorable occasion with which to mark the 100th anniversary of the official cessation of WW1.

From the inclusion of Municipal Law Enforcement, attachments from all four arms of the SANDF, Ambassadors, Consulate Generals and Guards of Honour from across the globe, thought provoking addresses by the Deputy Mayor of Cape Town Alderman Ian Neilson as well as

Chaplain (Rev) PW Vass, to the totally professional renditions by the Army Band and the Cape Welsh Choir (not to mention the nicker soiling precision of the Cape Field Artillery !) it was all slick, assured and extremely impressive.

Only one aspect was a little puzzling for me. Whereas the MOTH Military Veterans who braved the streets of Cape Town to boldly march down the Heerenracht were both smart and extremely proud, it is an indictment to note that, according to the latest nominal roll supplied by Provincial Dugout (and taking into account those who "could not" march or "were not" in Cape Town, there were a very significant number of "would not's".

This article seeks to specifically

address the "would not participate at all's". Indeed these "would not's" need to honestly review WHY they are MOTHs at all.

Ironically, on the Monday following Remembrance Day, the November edition of Gateway Magazine crossed my path.

In the editorial (entitled 11th of the 11th of the 11th), Justin Fox writes of the grandfather he never met – Grandpa Bertie Fox.

Bertie travelled from Cape Town to join the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in 1916. Shortly after his regiment arrived at the Somme in August 1916, he was moved to Messines Ridge where tunnels were dug UNDER the German lines with the aim of detonating mines under enemy trenches, followed by waves of infantry attacks.

At 03h10 on the day of the attack, the entire ridge was decapitated by the massive explosions.

Justin Fox continues "thousands of Germans were instantly vaporised. Bertie was part of the Fusiliers advance, charging into a scene of utter devastation".

The Third Battle of Ypres (or Passchendaele), in the summer of 1917, was a living hell.

Continual rain transformed the

terrain into an energy sapping, cloying mud and many soldiers simply drowned in the sludge!!!

After such a devastating exchange, it would be sound logic to rotate the troops involved so as to re-group and re-assess. But 'no, not you Bertie'.

Under persistent artillery fire, the Fusiliers were committed to the next assault at Menin Road and Bertie found himself in the aptly named "Imperfect Trench" where his war came to an end on 20 September 1917.

A German shell exploded in the dugout, killing most of his men and Bertie was buried alive by fall out from the next shell, where he remained for five hours before he was miraculously found and dug from the muck, blood and guts. He spent the next eight months being treated for severe shell shock and was eventually shipped back to Cape Town, a shattered and a broken man who could never be, even vaguely, the same again.

I have no idea whether Justin Fox is a MOTH or not. Nevertheless, when he discovered his grandfather's story and truly understood that his grandfather was one of "we gave our today for your tomorrow", he resolved to find the spot where Bertie's war ended and to plant a small cross

In the mielie field where human life was once no more than an expendable commodity.

So – all you "would not's" – consider Bertie Fox's war. Ponder the reality that he was only one of millions!!!

Come to the realisation that we are impelled to keep remembering, for fear of repeating the madness.

And then ask yourself "WHY AM I A MOTH?"

If you do not have an answer you have only two options :

1. Consult your shellhole to find an answer.
2. Accept that the MOTH is not for you and resign !!!

Ypres in Belgium, today, hosts THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL on which the names of 54,395 Commonwealth soldiers who are STILL MISSING from the WW1 battle fields around the town.

Entire panels are filled with the names of South Africans and I challenge those that are able to visit the memorial.

The Memorial plays host to a last post ceremony at 20h00 every night. It has been conducted on this spot for nearly 100 years.

If you are, perhaps, able to go on this pilgrimage, I further challenge you to keep a dry eye when an elderly gentleman calls out, in a voice as clear as a bell "Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them."

Observe the one minute silence that follows and know why YOU are a MOTH.

Remembrance Day Round-up

Admiral Halifax Shellhole attended three parades for Remembrance Day this year.

Photographs: Regine Lord and Andy Ward.

Remembrance Day this year marked the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice, which brought World War I to an end.

To mark the occasion, parades, functions and events were held around the world. In South Africa most of the major cities observed this momentous event.

I am happy (a rare occurrence I might add) that Admiral Halifax was represented at three Remembrance Day Parades this year.

The first event we attended was on 7 November at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town.

Besides doing incredible work, the hospital has an interesting history.

In 1941 the Western Cape Branch of the Medical Association of South Africa proposed the building of a children's hospital.

In 1945 the Cape Region of the South African Red Cross Society requested that the children's hospital should serve as a living memory to soldiers who contributed to the allied victory in World War II.

Discussions took place among the South African soldiers who, in 1945 after the war, were waiting in Italy to be repatriated back to South Africa to

be demobilised.

One issue was whether a war memorial should be built in South Africa, and if so, what form it should take.

The dominant view was that there should be a memorial, but that this should be a 'living' one that served the community, not merely a monumental structure.

After various proposals, the decision was that it should take the form of a top-class children's hospital.

The servicemen, in overwhelming numbers, volunteered to donate two days' pay towards what was to become the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital at Rondebosch in Cape Town.

So it is only fitting that the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital holds a Remembrance Day event every year.

The MC for the event was Kevin Ashton and CEO of the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, Dr Matodzi Mukosi delivered the main address.

Paediatric Intensive Care Unit Consultant and Nephrologist Mignon McCulloch paid a moving tribute to the late Professor Beatty.

There was a religious observance by various religious leaders, followed

by a blessing and prayers.

Then there was a recording of an interview with our very own Richard Lawrenson, a survivor of World War II.

The Last Post was sounded by Bombardier Regan Daniels and this was followed by two minutes silence and the sounding of *Reveille*.

Wreaths were then laid by various individuals and organisations.

Provisional Old Bill of the MOTH, Deon van Rensburg, then read out the MOTH Credo and Prayer.

The event came to an end with the singing of the national anthem.

Music was provided by the Isivun-

gungu Youth Band and the Cape Field Artillery Pipes and Drums.

Admiral Halifax Deputy Commander John Verster attended the parade at the Cenotaph in Cape Town. Albeit as a member of the Cape Welsh Choir.

Still, he was representing the Shellhole as well. You can read his report on page six.

This year the Shellhole decided to attend the Remembrance Day Parade and service at Rosedale Service Centre. This was only fitting, because this is where the



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM: Shellhole Commander Servaas van Breda lays a wreath on behalf of Admiral Halifax Shellhole.



REMEMBERING THOSE THAT FELL IN THE WARS: The Rev. Ralph Thornley delivers the service at the SA Legion.

Shellhole meets.

No fewer than 14 members of the Shellhole attended the parade - a really excellent effort. I was sorry to see that some of our members did not attend. Some did have valid reasons as to why they could not be there.

The Cape Town Rifles (Dukes) Band provided the music.

After the guests were welcomed, Rev Ralph Thornley, SA Navy (retired) delivered a moving service.

The Last Post was played, two minutes of silence were observed, followed by the sounding of the Reveille.

Wreaths were then laid by individ-

uals and on behalf of various organisations.

One of those that attended the parade was Richard Lawrenson, a member of Admiral Halifax Shellhole and a veteran of World War II.

Sadly, it was to be Richard's last parade. He passed away four days later on 15 November. He was 95 years old (See page 11).

Thanks to all those that attended. You made me proud to call myself a member of Admiral Halifax Shellhole.



PAYING TRIBUTE: Peter Horsburgh lays a wreath on behalf of the Rhodesian Army and the Rhodesian African Rifles. Peter was a member of both.

Answering the Sunset Call

On Thursday 15 November 2018, just four days after attending a Remembrance Day Parade, Moth Richard Lawrenson answered the Sunset Call. He was 95 years old.

Richard was not only a long-serving Moth, he was also a long-serving member of Admiral Halifax Shellhole.

It was indeed a rare occasion for Richard to miss a Shellhole meeting. He always had a smile and a warm greeting for everyone.

He began his military career as a naval cadet at the SATS General Botha in Gordon's Bay. He was then transferred to the Royal Navy where he remained for the duration of World War II.

Richard was aboard the *HMS Carnarvon Castle* when she had a five-hour running battle with the German auxiliary cruiser *Thor*.

The *Carnarvon Castle* suffered heavily in the battle, sustaining 27 hits causing four dead and 27 wounded.

Richard also went through the entire Siege of Malta. Twice he was on ships that were torpedoed and he had to be rescued from the water on both occasions.

Yet Richard never spoke about his experiences during the war. He was a quiet man, a true gentleman.

I was privileged enough to spend an afternoon with Richard at his home. I had taken my video camera and set it up, hoping to get him to talk about



Richard Lawrenson
29 May 1923 - 15 November 2018

some of his remarkable experiences.

I was hoping to maybe get ten minutes of footage. Richard spoke, with amazing recall and clarity, for nearly five hours.

I am still trying to edit this down to about a one hour documentary. But I'm struggling to decide what I should leave it. It is all incredible.

Richard's passing will leave an empty space in our Shellhole. But I know he will always be there in spirit. We will remember him.

I would like to close with a quote from General George S. Patton.

"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."

Christmas competition



Write a caption for each of these pics and e-mail it to editor@hipe.co.za before 10 January and win a great prize.



Pay attention!

The Shellhole meeting on 8 December will start at 09h00 with our Christmas breakfast.



**This will be followed by the normal meeting.
If you are not there on time, I am going to eat your breakfast.**

**From all of us at Admiral
Halifax Shellhole, to all of
you....**



**Wishing you
everything of
the best
for Christmas
and a
peaceful and
prosperous
New Year.**

