



July 2019

Delville Wood

A personal account

Phonetic Alphabet

Do you know your Alpha from your Bravo?

Reserve Force Seniority



From the
editor's
desk

Well here we are again. Another issue of Halifax Herald is done and dusted.

It's 1.00 am and I'm sitting in front of my computer and finishing off this issue so I can e-mail it off to everyone. I've been up working since 6.00 am, making it another 19 hour day. What fun.

I wish I could say that now that Halifax Herald is done I can take a bit of a break. Not much chance of that. I've still got Military Despatches to work on, plus a few other projects.

For those of you that don't know, I have taken over from Brian Porter as the Old Bill of the Cyber Shellhole. So I've got some pretty large shoes to fill. Hopefully I can keep up the high standards of those that ran this project so well for so long.

Sunday 21 July is the Delville Wood Parade. Please guys, make an effort to attend. We have more than 500 Moths in Cape Western. Wouldn't it be great to see at least 100 of them on parade.

Until next month. YUTTH.

Matt

What's in this month's issue?

Another three articles this month. First up is a rather interesting take on Delville Wood.

It's taken from the diary of Walter Giddy, a soldier that actually was at Delville Wood. It looks at things through a very personal perspective. Good job on finding this article Servaas.

The second story is on the phonetic alphabet that most of us should be familiar with. The current international phonetic alphabet has been in use since 1956. Before that nearly everyone had their own version of the phonetic alphabet.

The last article looks at the South African National Defence Force Reserve Force. These units, although many of them remain the same, have taken over from the old Citizen Force. It's sad to think that no fewer than 18 of these units are more than 100 years old. Most of them have long and proud histories. Yet I believe that they now want to change the names of many of these units.

FRONT COVER

The Delville Wood Cross which is on display at the Castle of Good Hope. To the best of my knowledge this cross was carved from one of the actual trees that stood at Delville Wood.

Delville Wood

A personal account

A South African soldier's diary captures the horror of the battle.

By Servaas van Breda.

Most of us are familiar with the history of the Battle of Delville Wood. Every year we hold a parade to remember those, especially those of the 1st South African Infantry Brigade, that paid the ultimate sacrifice.

But what better way to understand the carnage witnessed than by reading the writings of the young South African's tasked to "hold the wood at all costs". Walter Giddy was one such man - and he kept a diary.

Walter Giddy was born at Barkly East, Cape Province, South Africa, in 1985. He was the third son of Henry Richard Giddy and Catherine Octavia Dicks/Giddy.

Walter was schooled at Dale College in King Williams Town.

He volunteered, together with friends, for overseas service in 1915. He served in the in the in the 2nd SA Infantry Regiment.

Having survived the Battle of Delville Wood, he was killed by shrapnel on 12 April 1917 near Fampoux.

Walter Giddy is commemorated by a special Memorial in Point du Jour Military Cemetery, Athies.

His diary was copied by his younger sister Kate Muriel Giddy/Morris.

Extracts from Walter's diary

4th July 1916

Still lying low in Suzanne Valley. The artillery are quietly moving up. We shifted up behind our old firing line, where the advance started 2 or 3 days ago. The dead are lying about. Germans and our men as well, haven't had time to bury them. The trenches were nailed to the ground, and dead-mans-land looked like a ploughed field, heaps must be buried underneath...

5th July 1916

...it rained all night and we only have overcoats and waterproof sheets, but I cuddled up to old Fatty Rose, and slept quite warmly. There are no dug-outs where we were at present, and the shells are exploding uncomfortably near. Had a man wounded last night for a kick off. The Huns are lying in heaps, one I noticed had both legs blown off, and his head bashed in. Some have turned black from exposure. They are burying them as fast as possible. Brought an old fashion powder horn, Hun bullets nose-caps of a shell ect., back with me, but I suppose they'll be thrown away.

6th July 1916

Told to hold ourselves in readiness, expecting an attack. Received draft (5 pounds) from Father.

7th July 1916

Made to sleep in the trench on account of the Huns shells flying a bit to near, had a cold rough night, but things have quietened a bit this morning, so we are back to our little shack made out of waterproofs. Bloody Fritz, he had stated shelling the road, about directly 400 yards away directly in line with us. A Frenchie was standing on the parapet and beckoning us to us. He put up his hands and point to a communications trench ahead. Couldn't make out what the beggar was driving at, so we ran up to him, ahead were dozens of Hun prisoners filling out of the trench. It rained so hard our shack was just a mud pool, busy drying out our kit.

8th July 1916

3rd SA's were relieved by the Yorks who went over this morning 400 strong and returned 150 strong. Then our SA Scottish went over with a couple of Regiments and took the wood, and I believe lost heavily, but are still holding the wood. Seaforth, Black Watch, P.A., G.P.S. are going over in the morning, so there will be some bloodshed if they get at close quarters with cold steel. Hun sent over some tear shells, which made our eyes smart, but were too far to cause

much trouble. Two of our companies were sent up to the front line, and T. Blake, of our platoon acting as guide, had his jaw bone shattered and another man his head blown off. 3 guns of the 9th R.F.A. were put out of action, they say the Huns must "smelt a rat", brought up 12 inch and 9.2 guns up, so I guess we shall have a lively time. I'd love to see the 4 "Jock" Regiments go over in the morning. The Huns hate them like poison, yet I do not think there hate exceeds their fear. For them, 100 and more prisoners have been brought in, past us. The Huns were sending shells over our heads, all day, one dropped in the valley, below, killing two and wounding five R.F.A.

9th July 2016

Shall never forget it, as long as I live. Coming up the trench we were shelled the whole time, and to see a string of wounded making their way to a dressing station, those who walk and hobble along; another chap had half his head taken off, and was sitting in a huddled up position, on the side of the trench, blood streaming from his boots, and Jock lay not 5 yards further with all his stomach burst open, in the middle of the trench. Those are only a few instances of the gruesome sights we see daily. A I am writing here, a big shell plonked into the soft earth, covering me with dust, one by one they are bursting around us. I am just wondering if the next will

catch us (no it was just over). Oh ! I just thought one wound just past us, it killed old Fatty Roe, and wounded Keefe, Sammy who was next to me and Sid Phillips, poor beggar, he still lying next to me, the stretcher are busy to fetch him away. The Manchesters had to evacuate the wood below us, and we the one along here. I'm wondering if we still will be able to hold this wood, in case of an attack, as our number is so diminished, I've seen so many cruel sights today. I was all covered in my little dug out, when old Sammy was wounded.

10th July 1916

Still hanging on, and the shells flying around, three more of our fellows wounded, out of our platoon. Took Fatty Roe's valuables off him and handed them over to Sergeant Restall... We have no dug-outs, just an open trench. Of course we've dug in a bit, but it's no protection against German shells... Harold Alger had been badly knocked about. I'm afraid that he won't pull through, arm and leg shattered by shrapnel. I had a lucky escape while talking to Lieutenant Davis, a piece of shrapnel hit my steel helmet, and glanced past his head. He remarked "That saved you from a nasty wound", (referring to my steel helmet). The SA lads in our platoon have stuck it splendidly, it had been a tough trial this. We heard cries from the wood further down, and Geophan and Edkins went to investigate, find-

ing three wounded men lying in the open. They had been lying there for three days among their own dead, and had been buried a couple of times by their own shells, and the one brought in had been wounded again. They asked for four volunteers to bring in the other two, so off we went. It was an awful hour, but we were repaid by the grateful looks on their haggard faces. Poor old Geoghan was hit, his head was split off shrapnel. Four of us buried him this morning.

11th July 1916

We were relieved by our Scottish, and are back at our former camping ground, but I feel so lonely, out of our mess of 5, only 2 of us left and my half section gone as well. We were right through the Egyptian Campaign tog, as half sections. A Yorkshire man brought in a prisoner over this morning, while we were still in our trenches, and halted to have a chat. Our Corporal could speak German, so gave the prisoner a cig. and he told us all we wanted to know. He was a Saxon and was hearty sick of war, and our artillery was playing up havoc with their infantry, since the begging of the battle of the Somme. I did not say anything, but their artillery had given our men us much as they could bear.

12th July 1916

About 2 miles back and still the Huns had the neck to put a shell into

us, killing one man and wounding another. The Rev Cook was killed while helping to carry the wounded. I have been watching the Huns shelling the wood we came out of yesterday. It looks as though the wood is on fire, the smoke rising from the bursting shells. The Scottish (ours) relieved us too, and we lost 16 out of our platoon in it. It was a cruel three days especially when Manchester were driven out of the woods, 700 yards, in front of us, we were expecting the Huns over any minute, but the Huns would have got a warm reception. Then the Bedfords retook the wood, the full morning, which strengthened our position.

13th July 1916

Allyman found us again bending. I thought we were so safe for a bit. A shell planked the next dug-out next to mine, killing Smithy and wounding Edkins, Lonsdale, Redford and Bob Thompson, 3 of them belonging to our section. Only 3 of us left in Sammy's old section. It's a cruel war. Just going to dig graves and burry our dead. We buried Private Redwood, Smith and Colonel Jones, of the Scottish. General Luken was at the funeral, he looked so worried and old.

14th July 1916

News very good this morning. Our troops driving the Hun back, and cavalry passed have just passed, they

look fine. The Bengal Lancers were among them, so I was told. We're under orders to shift at a moment's notice. It rained heavily this morning. I hope it does not hamper the movements of the cavalry this morning. If this move ends as successful as it began, it will mean such a lot to the bringing of the war to an end. Our chaps are getting so tired of the mud and the damp. There's such a change in the sun burned faces of Egypt, and this inactivity makes us as weak as a rat. The cavalry have done excellent work, now it remains to us infantry to consolidate the positions. We're ready to move forward...

15th/16th July 1916

We (South African Brigade) went into Delville Wood and drove the Huns out of it, and entrenched ourselves on the edge, losing many men, but we drove them off, as they would come back and counter attack. The snipers were knocking our fellows over wholesale, while we were digging trenches, but our chaps kept them off. I got behind a tree, just with my right eye and shoulder showing, and blazed away. We held the trench, and on the night of the 16th July made a hot attack to on our left, 16 of them breaking through, and a bombing party was called to bomb them out (I was one of them picked). We got four and the rest cleared out. It rained all night, and we were ankle deep in the mud, rifles covered

in mud, try as we could keep them clean.

17th-20th July 1916

The Huns started shelling us, and it was murder from then until 2 o'clock of the afternoon of the 18th, when we got the order get out as best as you can. I came out with Corporal Farrow, but we managed it, goodness knows, men lying all over shattered to pieces, by shell fire, and the wood was raked by machine guns and rifle fire. Major McLeod of the Scottish was splendid. I have never seen a pluckier man; he tried his level best to get as many out as possible. We fall back to the valley below, and formed up again. I came on to camp and was ordered by the doctor to remain here, having a slight attack of shellshock. I believe that the 9th took the wood again, and were immediately relieved, but the lads are turning up again in camp, the few lucky ones. If it was not for a hole in my steel helmet, and bruise on the tip, I would think it was an awful nightmare... The lads stuck it well, but the wood was absolutely flattened, no human being could live in it. Major McLeod was wounded, and I gave him a hand to get out, but he would have I to push on, as I would be killed. Many a silent prayer did I sent up, for strength to bring me though safety. I found a Sergeant of the first of a shake, suffering from shell shock, so I took his arm and managed to get him to the

dressing station. Just shaken hands with my old pall John Forbes. He is wounded in the arm and is off to Blighty. I quite envy him. A sad day of SA...They say we made a name for ourselves but at what cost. All the 9th are resting on the hillside. Small parties of 25 to 40 men form the companies, which were 200 strong a short two weeks ago. We have been taken back several miles....

21st July 1916

Had a bathe in the Somme, and a change of underwear, now lying on the green hillside listening to our Division band a happy day for the lads that were lucky enough to get through.

22nd July 1916

...General Luken had us gathered around him, and thanked us for the splendid way in which we fought in Delville and Bernafay woods. He said we got orders to take and hold the woods at all costs, and we did it for four days and four nights, when told to fall back on the trench, we did it in a soldier like way. He knew his boys would, and he was prouder of us now, than ever before, if he possibly could be, as he always was proud of South Africans. All he regretted was the great loss of gallant comrades, and thanked us from the bottom of his heart for what we had done.

Mind your P's and Q's

Spell "Alpha Delta Mike India Romeo Alpha Lima, break, Hotel Alpha Lima India Foxtrot Alpha X-ray."

Now most of you will recognise that as 'Admiral Halifax' spelt out using the phonetic alphabet.

The phonetic alphabet is commonly used when speaking via radio. It is not uncommon for there to be static or interference when communicating via radio and it is easy to mishear what is actually being said - even when someone spells out a word. The letter C could be misheard as B, D, E, G, P, T or V. Likewise, Q and U sound similar. This is why the phonetic alphabet was introduced.

These days there is an international phonetic alphabet, and everyone uses it. It has been in use since 1956 and is as follows.

A - Alpha
B - Bravo
C - Charlie
D - Delta
E - Echo
F - Foxtrot
G - Golf
H - Hotel
I - India
J - Juliett
K - Kilo
L - Lima
M - Mike
N - November
O - Oscar

P - Papa
Q - Quebec
R - Romeo
S - Sierra
T - Tango
U - Uniform
V - Victor
W - Whisky
X - X-ray
Y - Yankee
Z - Zulu

Now while this is the phonetic alphabet as used throughout the world today, this wasn't always the case.

During World War II the British and Americans had their own phonetic alphabets that they used.

British Army

A - Ack
B - Beer
C - Cork
D - Don
E - Eddy
F - Freddy
G - George
H - Harry
I - Ink
J - Jug
K - King
L - London
M - Emma
N - Nuts
O - Orange
P - Pip
Q - Quad
R - Robert

S - Esses
T - Toc
U - Uncle
V - Vic
W - William
X - Xerxes
Y - Yellow
Z - Zebra

It is interesting to note that both the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force had their own phonetic alphabets.

American Army

A - Able
B - Baker
C - Cast
D - Dog
E - Easy
F - Fox
G - George
H - Hypo
I - Int
J - Jig
K - King
L - Love
M - Mike
N - Negat
O - Option
P - Prep
Q - Quack
R - Roger
S - Sail
T - Tare
U - Unit
V - Vice
W - William
X - X-ray
Y - Yoke

Z - Zed

I personally recall being in the Ops room at a place called Okalongo when an infantry captain was sending a radio message through to his headquarters at Ngongo.

His version of the phonetic alphabet was something to behold. His alphabet included words such as Alcohol, Brandy, Castle, Gin, Rum, Tequila and Whisky (at least he got this one right). He sounded like a walking advertisement for a bottle store.

The poor signaller was turning red in the face trying to suppress his laughter. Of course it didn't help when the person on the other end of the radio, a major, said, "Use the right blerry words man. Who learned you the blerry radio alphabets."

It was too much for the signaller who fell off his chair, doubled over with laughter. It earned the poor young troopie seven extra duties. I at least managed to run out of the ops rooms before I cracked up with laughter.

I'm sure a few of you out there must have an amusing story or two about the subject. So how about telling the rest of us? Or how about coming up with your own phonetic alphabet.

I had a mate who was a pilot and he came up with his own phonetic alphabet which, unfortunately, I can't print here. Every word was a swear word.

Reserve Force Seniority List

Known in the days of the SADF as Citizen Force Units, these days they are known as Reserve Force Units by the SANDF. Yet who is the oldest of these units?

Many of our readers served in the old South African Defence Force (SADF). Others served in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Some even served in both.

Many of our readers did compulsory military service in the SADF. It was commonly known as 'National Service'.

National service began in 1968 when it was decided that all white South African males would be required to do a period of compulsory military service.

Note carefully the use of the word compulsory. It was not a request, it was an instruction and it was backed up by an act of parliament. Every white male who was a South Africa citizen or had permanent residence was required to register with the South African Defence Force in the year that he turned sixteen.

Once you had completed your schooling or decided to leave school, the South African Defence Force required your services. The particular act went something like this:

All white male South African citizens between the ages of 17 and 55 years are liable for military service in

terms of the Defence Act (this would later include the Defence Act Amendment, 1982).

This includes immigrants under the age of 25 who, in terms of the Citizenship Act, automatically become South African citizens after five years permanent residence in South Africa unless they specifically choose not to do so and thus lose their permanent residence rights and work permit.

Initial full-time service: This lasts for a maximum of 12 months (in 1978 this was increased to 24 months) and must be performed by all medically fit white male citizens from the year in which they turn 18, subject to exemptions or deferments described below.

The intake dates for full-time service are at the beginning of January and July every year, the January intake being the larger of the two.

The initial full-time service is followed by:

- Twelve years service in the citizen force, divided into six two-year cycles.
- In each cycle a maximum of 120 days service is performed, of which no more than 90 days may be imposed during one year. A total, therefore, of 720 days.

- After completion of service in the citizen force, there follows a further five years in the active citizen force reserve. During this period there is no formal service obligation, other than what may be imposed by the Minister of Defence in the light of SA Defence Force operational requirements.

- After five years in the active citizen force reserve, these members are liable for service in the commando force until their 55th year, with a maximum service obligation of 12 days a year.

These days in the SANDF there is no more compulsory military service. There is also no longer a commando force.

There is also no longer a citizen force. Many of the citizen force units were disbanded. Others, however, we retained and became part of the SANDF Reserve Force.

Those that serve in the Reserve Force are either permanent force or volunteers.

Recently I came across an article from the SANDF on the Reserve Force Seniority List.

The article also stated, "The names of certain of the SA Army Reserve Force Units will be changed shortly in order to ensure that they represent a balance view of South Africa's rich military heritage."

Now you need to take into account

that 18 of these units are more than 100 years old. Two of them are in fact 164 years old.

Personally, I see no reason to change the names of these units as they already have a very rich military history. But that is just my personal view and, after all, the SANDF has the right to change things as they see fit.

Now please remember, this is the list as given by the SANDF. So please don't have a go at me and point out that your old unit is older than that unit, because your unit fought with Joshua at the Battle of Jericho.

All I am doing is giving you the list as published by the SANDF.



Cape Town Rifles (Dukes)

SA Army

Reserve Force Unit	Date of Establishment	Age
Natal Carbineers	15 January 1855	164 years
Cape Town Rifles (Dukes)	28 November 1855	163 years
Cape Field Artillery	26 August 1857	161 years
Natal Mounted Rifles	25 September 1862	156 years
Umvoti Mounted Rifles	18 October 1864	154 years
Durban Light Infantry	2 April 1873	145 years
First City	7 October 1875	143 years
Kimberley Regiment	14 August 1876	142 years
Prince Alfred's Guard	8 January 1877	142 years
The Buffalo Volunteer Rifles	20 December 1883	135 years
Cape Town Highlanders	24 April 1885	133 years
Natal Field Artillery	4 May 1902	116 years
Light Horse Regiment	12 December 1902	116 years
Transvaal Scottish	12 December 1902	116 years
Witwatersrand Rifles	1 May 1903	115 years
Transvaal Horse Artillery	17 March 1905	114 years
Rand Light Infantry	1 October 1905	113 years
Pretoria Regiment	1 July 1913	105 years
3 Field Engineer Regiment	1 July 1926	92 years
Vrystaat Artillerie Regiment	1 July 1926	92 years

Regiment Botha	1 April 1934	84 years
Regiment De La Rey	1 April 1934	84 years
Regiment De Wet	1 April 1934	84 years
* Regiment Louw Wepener	1 April 1934	84 years
Regiment President Steyn	1 April 1934	84 years
Regiment Westlike Provincie	1 April 1934	84 years
South African Irish Regiment	1 November 1939	79 years
Regiment Christiaan Beyers	1 May 1946	72 years
54 Signals Unit	1 May 1946	72 years
71 Signals Unit	1 May 1946	72 years
15 Maintenance Unit	1 May 1946	72 years
* Reg Potch Universiteit	1 August 1946	72 years
Cape Garrison Artillery	1 August 1946	72 years
Regiment Oranjerivier	1 July 1952	66 years
Transvaalse Staatsartillerie	1 January 1954	65 years
Regiment Mooirivier	1 January 1954	65 years
Regiment Piet Retief	1 January 1954	65 years
Regiment President Kruger	1 January 1954	65 years
Regiment Oos Rand	1 January 1954	65 years
Regiment Vaalrivier	1 January 1954	65 years
Johannesburg Regiment	1 January 1954	65 years
Durban Regiment	1 January 1954	65 years

This is not the full list, but it's all we have space for. There are another 29 units that are part of the reserve force. * denotes a unit that is dormant.

Important Notice!

Please note that the Delville Wood Parade that was to be held at the Gardens in Cape Town will no longer take place on Sunday 14 July.

The parade will now take place on Sunday 21 July.



14th



21st

no - nee - nein - non - não - net
nahin - óchi - uimh - Īe - la
tidak - aihwa - cha - na - hayi
hapana - negative

yes - ja - jawohl - oui - sim - da
haan - naí - tá - hai - nem fielaan
ya - ehe - yebo - ie - ewe
ndiyo - positive

Hopefully you understood at least one of the above words.