



Flying Spirit

March 2021

President's Message



Col Mike Louw (Ret)

Well, in a few weeks we will have had a full year's experience of what it is like living in a state of lockdown with its varying levels of risk abatement.

It is at times like this that it would be easy to lose our hopes and brood over the negative side effects of this event, especially when as a community we are battling a global pandemic. However, for every low, there is a high and even this current scenario indeed has a silver lining to it. For many of us, this past year has helped to build genuine relationships. Previously we had all been so busy living the "life" that many of us had lost those real, genuine moments we have with our loved ones. It could have been the busy schedules, participating in the rat race, and rushing to be in urgent meetings that blurred our vision.

We have also made entire lifestyle changes to practice better hygiene. Being hygienic is no longer just a good habit, but the very skill we need for survival. Times have changed, and we are now aware of how important it is to keep ourselves clean. As social animals, the very engineering of humans is the ability to emote and connect with fellow beings.

That is not going to change, and that is something we cannot change. But these recent times have made us all aware of how to do that more hygienically.

Many of us have found innovative ways to stay connected and to assist others, particularly the most vulnerable. The lockdown has welcomed new ideas, hacks, tips, and tricks to beat the restrictions and help our communities. We are going to survive this and when we do it is going to be a different world that will be waiting for us.

Enough of "Aunty Rhona", let's get onto some serious SAAFA business.

As you well know by now Congress 2021, over the period 18 to 21 May 2021, will be hosted by our Durban Branch at one of the most vibrant and popular attractions in the eastern KZN Province at the St Ives venue situated in the Midlands Meander. Delegates have the opportunity to arrive a

few days early or extend their stay and explore some of the delights that the Midlands Meander has to offer. With the roll-out of the Covid vaccines and the declining number of active cases, we can expect the Country to soon enter a less restrictive period. Notwithstanding, we as SAAFA will ensure that Covid-19 prevention measures will continue to be strictly observed, and the necessary protocols put in place to ensure compliance with National Legislation and Regulations. Further details regarding the arrangements and program for Congress 2021 will be circulated in due course.

As many will no doubt be aware, our Whale Coast Branch Chairperson, Marthie Visser, proposed that consideration be given to the publication of a coffee-table book detailing a Century of Air Power in South Africa as described in newspaper cuttings and to include the 75 years of SAAFA history. The publication is intended to be in celebration of SAAFA 75 and SAAF's 100.

We are now in search of material for the book and request that all SAAFA Branches and members scour their bottom drawers and scrapbooks for any SAAF or SAAFA-related cuttings; for the SAAF any cuttings from 1912 and for SAAFA any cuttings from 1945, hard or electronic copies. Please also

give some thought to any other possible sources who might not be reading this Newsletter. Anything SAAF or SAAFA related will be relevant and most welcome. The material can be submitted in the form of actual news cuttings, or electronically in high-resolution.

Please advertise this appeal far and wide, the quality and relevance of our book are entirely dependent on the material received. The acknowledgment will be given to all contributors. Please submit electronic material to; newspaperhistory@saafa.co.za or contact our National Secretary, Marianne Mostert, at 012 651 5921 for hard-copy submissions or queries. The support of all SAAFA members is eagerly anticipated with much gratitude; let us together make this an extremely successful project.

Let us continue to truly live out the values of our Association in being a source of comfort and strength to those most vulnerable among us, and to continue to maintain and foster friendship, comradeship, and good fellowship among all members. Let us continue to bear one another's burdens during the challenging and unknown times that still lie ahead.

God bless.

Mike Louw

National President: South African Air Force Association



MILITARY ATTACHÉ AND ADVISOR CORPS'



MAAC

With the MAAC activities having almost ground to a halt due to Tannie Rona and her knock-on effects, it might be opportune to give some background about the Diplomatic Corps in South Africa in general and also as related to SAAFA.

There are a total of 186 Foreign Diplomatic Missions based in Pretoria comprising 136 High Commissions and Embassies along with 50 Consular Offices spread between the other major centres in the country. This figure includes 23 non-resident High Commissioners and Ambassadors who are accredited but not resident in the country. High Commissions are those missions from countries that, like South Africa, are members of the Commonwealth. South Africa has in turn some 154 Diplomatic Missions across the world.

For purposes of comparison, the countries which host the largest number of Diplomatic Missions are #5: England (236), #4: Russia (243), #3: China (258), #2: France (267) and #1: USA (271).

(It should be noted that the figures noted above are the most likely option from a substantial number of different ones!)

In South Africa we are fortunate to have with us 62 Defence and/or Military Attachés, the title depending on the representatives' countries preference. We also have 3 non-resident Attachés from Australia, the Netherlands and Portugal. The Netherlands had until recently a resident Attaché, but budgetary and relevance considerations resulted in this becoming a non-resident representation. Belgium similarly had a resident Attaché in Pretoria, but due to the same considerations as the Netherlands, there is now no representation at all, not even non-resident. In making these decisions, the countries concerned will weigh up the perceived relevance and benefit related to actual cost and real value and if there is a negative return withdraw

their representatives, which is a pity.

In most cases, there is but a single Military Representative of a country in South Africa, but in others, there might be considerably more. The Peoples Republic of China, for example, has 4: the DA (Maj Gen), DDA (Col) Assistant to the DA (Lt Col) and Secretary to the DA (Lt Col). The DA must surely be a busy fellow.....

The largest Diplomatic Defence Section present in South Africa is that of the USA, which is headed by the DA/Navy Attaché (Capt, Navy), USAF Attaché (Maj/Lt Col), Army Attaché (Maj/Lt Col), Assistant Army Attaché (Maj) and Marine Attaché (Maj/Lt Col).

The Republic of China (Taiwan) has an Ambassador and Defence Attaché resident in South Africa, but political cow-towing may not be referred to as such as they have no diplomatic accreditation. The Embassy is thus called the "Taiwan Liaison Office", the Ambassador the "Representative" and the DA the "First Secretary", all of which is something of a travesty. There are few if any, Diplomatic Missions in South Africa that make a greater effort to market their country and make friends than our friends from Taiwan, absolutely wonderful people.

The Republic of Korean (South, not North!) is also an extraordinary Embassy that goes to extreme lengths to remember those members of 2 Sqn who fought in their conflict (1950-1953). They have an annual "Turn towards Busan" function where those who did not return are remembered with great reverence and the Veterans and now often their surviving

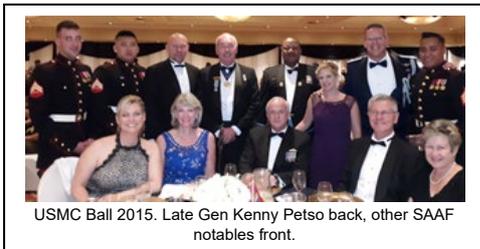
spouses fêted for their contribution to Korea that exists today. Col Dirk Louw, President of SAKWVA, goes to considerable effort to continually enhance the already excellent relationship with Korea.

The SAAF Association relationship with MAAC dates back to 2003, when by happenstance a personal friendship developed with the then RAF Attaché at the time, Wg Cdr Peter Lancaster. As a consequence of this friendship, invitations to Diplomatic functions followed and with the passage of 18 years, SAAFA now enjoys relationships with 35 High Commissions and Embassies and is privileged to count 19 DAs and DDA's as Honorary Members.

The various Defence Missions differ sometimes vastly in what they do and how they do it. One will only very, very seldom encounter a representative of the People's Republic of China on their own, there is invariably someone nearby who listens to every word spoken. With the average SAAFA member's proficiency in Mandarin being somewhere between none and zero, not much is said. Spain has wonderful National and Defence Days, where there are Sangria and Paella in abundance.

The British High Commission celebrates a Defence Day where the fare is pork pies and bangers and mash, washed down with jolly good Bombay Sapphire G & T's. Japan hosts glorious National and Defence Days, where one is presented with table upon table of sushi, sashimi, deep-fried prawns, and excellent Japanese Roku gin. The Taiwan National Day, which ironically always has a South African Minister or Deputy Minister in attendance presents guests with table loads of fine Chinese cuisine. The United States Embassy celebrates in particular the 4th of July and the US Marine Corps birthday. The excellent 4th July event is a large one with American fare being a highlight. The event that must surely rest at the top of the heap is the US Marine Corps Ball, a formal event with 256-year-old traditions being carried out. After the traditional duties are fulfilled, there is a storming of the bar which does not stop until the lights are switched off! A truly splendid function!

The Military Attaché and Adviser Corps have for many years contributed to our SAAFA events and functions, as we have had the pleasure of joining them for their national functions and festivities.



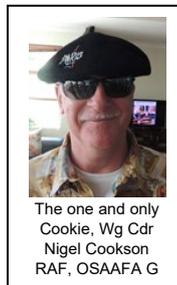
USMC Ball 2015. Late Gen Kenny Petso back, other SAAF notables front.



Wine lesson from Col Jean-Marie Monot, French Air Force, Vlammie of note and supreme host



Indian High Commission Holi Festival, quite a mess, great fun!



The one and only Cookie, Wg Cdr Nigel Cookson RAF, OSAFA G



MAAC Golf, some serious hackers blended with some expertise, always good!





- ◆ There a Virtual Zoom Meeting held on 20 January 2021.
- ◆ Invoices have been sent out to all members and there has been a good positive response.
- ◆ BEC is extremely grateful and humbled by the large and small donations that are made by members, which helps us in our efforts.
- ◆ The Branch monthly lunch for January 2021 did not take place due to current lockdown restrictions.
- ◆ There were still a few contributions for the Lunches for Love initiative during January which is sincerely appreciated.
- ◆ The Pretoria Golf Day that was scheduled for 26 March 2021 has had to be postponed due to lockdown restrictions and the state of financial affairs of potential sponsors.
- ◆ The AGM will also be postponed until 12 March 2021 and a communique has been sent out in this regard.

SAAFA



- ◆ At the end of January 2021 there are officially 80 members listed on the Whale Coast Branch database. Of these 80 members, 73 members are classified as active members. In addition to these 80 members, 1 member has resigned and 4 members have deceased since the inauguration of the branch.
- ◆ It is with great sadness that we were informed of the passing of one of our members, Julius Moolman, who answered the Sunset Call on 13 January 2021.
- ◆ The 1st issue of Whale Coast Newsletter 2021 was distributed on 29 January 2021.
- ◆ The next meeting is scheduled for 24 February 2021, once again COVID-19 permitting.

SAAFA



- ◆ The Pietermaritzburg Branch did not hold a lunch in the month of January 2021.
- ◆ No parades or functions were attended during January 2021.
- ◆ The Capitation Fees for 10 members was paid on 28 January 2021.

SAAFA



- ◆ No parades or functions were attended during the month of January 2021.
- ◆ The lunch for February 2021 has been cancelled due to the current lockdown and pandemic.
- ◆ The Capitation Fees for 63 members was paid on 28 January 2021.

SAAFA



- ◆ There are currently no welfare cases at the branch.
- ◆ Freda Garzouzie's husband, John, is receiving dialysis and is at home with the family.
- ◆ No collaboration with Club Omuthiya was carried out due to the Lockdown.
- ◆ 22 Members on the books.
- ◆ Nothing has been planned for February due to the Lockdown.

SAAFA





East Rand



Johannesburg



Outeniqua



West Coast



Port Elizabeth



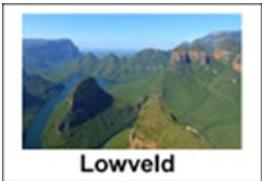
Cape Town



Stilfontein



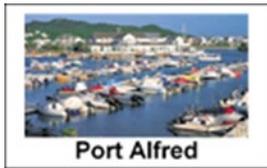
Soutpansberg



Lowveld



Lower South Coast



Port Alfred

SAAFA

SAAFA CONGRESS 2021

St Ives Lodge and Venue



SAAF/SAAFA Garden of Remembrance



A Garden of Remembrance

(an area of land containing cultivated plants, trees, etc. to commemorate the dead)

The SAAF/SAAFA Garden of Remembrance is a memorial garden dedicated to the memory



SAAF Memorial site with the Remembrance Garden on bottom left

of all those who gave their lives in the Cause of Freedom in service to our country. The Remembrance Garden is located on the site of the SAAF Memorial on Bays Hill in Swartkop outside Pretoria and overlooks Air Force Base Swartkop, the first air force base of the SAAF.

In 1995 the SAAF Association, celebrating its 50th anniversary, approached the SAAF, celebrating its 75th anniversary, with a request to consider the concepts of a SAAF Roll of Honour Memorial Wall and a Garden of

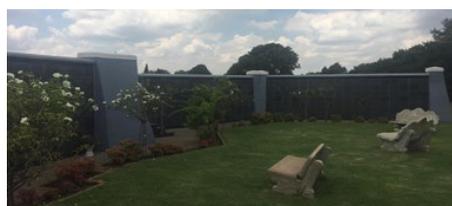
Remembrance. However, the project lay dormant for several years until the then Chief of the Air Force, Lt Gen Roelf Beukes, and the then National President of the SAAF Association, Derrick Page again raised the issue, and progress was made.

In mid- 2003 the Air Force Board and SAAF Association National Congress approved the proposed plan for the Garden of Remembrance and detailed plans, drawings, consultations, authorities, and funding were completed in November 2003.

Work commenced on site in February 2004 under site management of Colonel Frik Botha of the Directorate Base Support Systems, Air Command, and his support staff and AFB Waterkloof support staff under the command of Colonel Trevor Dawes.



During the following weeks, despite un-seasonal heavy rains, phase 1 of the Garden of Remembrance progressed and the commemoration plaque was unveiled on 7 May 2004 during Congress 2004. A significant milestone was reached on 10 September 2005 when the first niche was occupied.



Inside the Garden of Remembrance

What are cremation niches?



Similar to a mausoleum, there is usually a wall with recessed compartments for placing cremation urns permanently. The purpose of a cremation niche is to give the family a place to visit their loved one's cremated remains.

Who Qualifies?

To qualify for use of a niche in the Air Force Memorial Garden of Remembrance, a user must have served as a *bone-fide* member of the South African Air Force or is a member of the South African Air Force Association, excluding an honorary or associate member. The spouse(s) or partner(s) of a user may also use an adjoining niche.

The cost of a niche?

A once-off payment of R2 500 including the initial engraving cost is required. No further payments are expected.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
What do I get if I buy a niche?	A 250mm x 170mm x 170mm niche for the storage of a box of the cremated mortal remains of one person, with a black/grey granite face cover which can be engraved to specifications. The niche is for use over an unlimited period.
Can I buy a niche even if I have no ashes to store therein?	Niches can be kept for an unlimited period before being used to store the ashes. Niches are often purchased just to use empty in memory of a loved one.
Who places the ashes?	The Custodians only provide the facility - that is the allocated niche and the granite face cover. It is the function of the client/next of kin to place the ashes. Arrangements must be made with the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Zwartkop to remove the granite face cover and to reseal the cover after the ashes have been placed.
What of the engraving work?	Engraving is to be done before the placing of the ashes in the niche. An Engraving Form, obtainable from the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Zwartkop, is completed and accepted. The granite face cover is removed and taken with the engraving form to the contracted engraver for engraving.
Who pays for the engraving?	Payment for the initial engraving costs is included in the purchase costs.
Is there free access to the Garden of Remembrance?	The Air Force Memorial site, where the Garden of Remembrance is, is open from 09:00 to 15:00 Monday to Sunday except Good Friday and Christmas Day. The entrance is free.
Can I select a specific niche?	If the specific niche has not yet been sold, it can be allocated to a client. Records of the niches sold/allocated are available to view at the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Zwartkop.

What confirmation do I receive that I have purchased a niche?	A title certificate with an allocated niche number is issued to the client.
Can I exchange a niche?	A niche can be exchanged provided that the criteria/conditions laid down by the Custodians are met and before the niche is in use.
Can I change a niche position?	Position can be changed provided the niche is not in use. Requests for changes are administratively handled by the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Zwartkop.
Must I use the niche immediately after purchase?	Niches can be kept for an unlimited period before being used to store the ashes.
Can I place personal items and mementos in the niche?	The niche can only be used for the storage of ashes or remain empty.
Can I purchase more than one niche and group them?	If adjoining niches are available.
Can I visit the Garden of Remembrance before a decision is made?	The Air Force Memorial site, where the Garden of Remembrance is, is open from 09h00 to 15h00 Monday to Sunday except Good Friday and Christmas Day. The entrance is free.
Can I use the Air Force Memorial Chapel for a memorial service?	The Air Force Memorial Chapel can be used. This must be coordinated through the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Zwartkop.
How do I contact the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Zwartkop?	The SAAF Association National Headquarters is manned working days, Monday to Friday half-day, 08h00 to 16h00. Telephone 012 651 5921 and fax 086 218 4657. E-mail nationalhq@icon.co.za
What is the cost of a niche?	A one-off payment of R2 500 including initial engraving costs, is required. No further payments are expected. Donations are welcome. Members interested in purchasing a niche are welcome to arrange to pay a niche over instalments. A certificate will then only be issued when the full amount has been settled. Don't wait; purchase one today!



We believe an important part of our journey with grief is how we choose to redefine our relationship with our person/people who have died. One way to remember them is to visit their place of rest.

Your loved one's niche, the place where their ashes will be stored, can feel very meaningful. There's a comfort to be had in just giving yourself some time to sit with them there. If you like, you can also bring a wreath, bouquet. In Victorian times, people would often use flowers to send messages: each one had a special meaning. This old mourning custom is still a lovely way to express how you feel. E.g. rosemary for remembrance, white periwinkle for happy memories, an oak-leaved geranium for true friendship, or marigolds for grief.



A Tribute to the Crew Of Puma 164

Shot down at Mapai, Mozambique
6 September 1979

By
Neill Jackson



The Crew of Puma 164
Pilot: Captain Paul Denzel Velleman
Co-pilot: Lieutenant Nigel David Osborne
Flight Engineer: Sergeant Dirk Wilhelmus Marthinus (Dick) Retief

Captain Paul Velleman



Paul, who would have turned 25 on 15th September 1979, had nurtured a lifelong ambition to be a pilot in the South African Air Force. He was the youngest of three brothers and matriculated from Pretoria Boys High School. He joined the South African Air Force immediately after completing his National Service and was said to have been a very dedicated pilot, who took his flying very seriously. He was described as being an extremely friendly young man, with a gentle yet strong personality. He lived with his mother in Umhlanga Rocks and cared for her. She never recovered from the shock of Paul's death and died of a broken heart two years after the loss of her beloved son.

Lieutenant Nigel Osborn



Nigel turned 21 on 15th August 1979, less than one month before his death. He matriculated at Durban High School and joined the Army for six months until he was old enough to join the South African Air Force. He was an outstanding golfer with a bright future in the game, having represented Natal Junior Schools, but flying was his first love. He was flying Impalas in the SAAF before he even obtained his driving license. He was known as an exceptional pilot and had previously made news headlines for his part in the rescue of six foreign seamen from their sinking ship off the Natal coast.

Sergeant Dick Retief



Dick was 29 at the time of the crash and had been married to his 21-year-old wife Lynette for less than a year. They had a four-month-old son, DuWayne. Sergeant Retief had grown up and been schooled at

Koster, in the Western Transvaal, and was the eldest of four children. He was a keen golfer and fisherman, and he and Lynette would often go on fishing trips together. Dick had taken the place of a good friend, Sergeant Willie Beurain, who had volunteered for the operation but then had elected to stay behind for the birth of his daughter.

Background to Operation Uric/Bootlace

In September 1979, Rhodesian Combined Operations headquarters issued the orders for a massive air and ground strike against Frelimo and ZANLA positions in the Gaza Province of Mozambique.

This action was given the codename of Operation Uric and was separately known as Operation Bootlace in South Africa, in an attempt to conceal the involvement of Rhodesia's only allies in the cross-border strike.

From a political point of view, Operation Uric was designed to strike a decisive blow against the ZANLA forces based in Gaza Province, and thereby hopefully weaken Robert Mugabe's bargaining power at the upcoming Lancaster House conference. It was also hoped that by severely damaging Mozambique's economic infrastructure, President Samora Machel would be convinced that he had to persuade Mugabe to remain at the negotiating table until a settlement was reached, to prevent further expensive damage to his fragile economy.

Operation Uric - The Plan

To achieve its aims of restricting the movement of Frelimo troops and ZANLA terrorists into the south-east of Rhodesia, Op Uric was split into three main phases:

Phase One was the disruption of road traffic by the planting of more than 300 landmines on all major and minor roads used by military vehicles and the destruction of rail and telephone communication links in the province.

Phase Two was the destruction of five strategic bridges, which combined with the mining program, would effectively isolate Gaza Province from its main sources of supply, being Maputo and Inhambane on the Mozambique coast.

Phase Three was the exploitation of the Frelimo 2 Brigade Headquarters at Mapai, from where all troop movements into and out of Rhodesia were controlled.

Friendly Forces

Ground forces: The frontline troops committed to Op Uric comprised 112 specialist troops from all three squadrons of the Rhodesian SAS, 72 highly trained operators from South Africa's 1 Reconnaissance Commando, 192 para-trained commandos from the Rhodesian Light Infantry's Support Commando and 1 Commando, and 12 specialist demolition experts from 1 Engineer Squadron.

A total of 388 frontline soldiers, with a large administrative and intelligence back-up.

The air effort:



8 Hawker Hunter



6 Canberra bombers



12 Dakotas



6 Cessna 337 Lynx



6 Bell 'Cheetah'



12 Pumas



10 Alouette



2 Super Frelon

Enemy Dispositions and Targets

FPLM forces in the Gaza Province were estimated to be in the region of 3 500 strong, with 70% of this number being deployed along the line of rail/road between Choque and Malvernia, the area of interest of Op Uric. The heaviest concentrations of troops were at Mapai, Malvernia, and Mabelane. In addition to this, there were assessed to be approximately 5000 ZANLA terrorists in Gaza Province, either resident in the vicinity of Frelimo bases or transit to and from Rhodesia.

Malvernia Town contained a Frelimo Battalion HQ, and was protected by 250 to 300 troops, backed up by anti-aircraft and heavy weapons including 4 x 12,7mm and 8 x 14.5mm heavy machine guns, 4 x 23mm, and 1 x 37mm anti-aircraft weapons plus 6 x SAM 7 anti-aircraft missiles, 75mm, 82mm and 107mm recoilless guns, 60mm and 82mm mortars and 122mm rocket launchers, and also the possibility of armoured personnel carriers. Malvernia was targeted for airstrikes only, with no ground troop deployments.

Mabelane contained another Frelimo Battalion HQ, with approximately 200 soldiers of various support units in residence. Various anti-aircraft weapons including 14,5mm, 23mm, and 37mm were identified at this base. 75mm recoilless guns and 122mm rocket launchers plus tanks and APCs had also been observed during aerial reconnaissance. Mabelane was also earmarked for air strikes only.

Mapai contained the 2 Brigade HQ with an Infantry battalion, one tank regiment, and a 76mm recoilless rifle battalion based in the huge camp adjacent to the town. The tank regiment was equipped with 18 x T34 tanks, 4 x GSP ferries, and various armoured personnel carriers. 6 x 122mm rocket launchers and 6 x BM-21 (122mm Multiple rocket launchers, also known as Stalin Organs) had also been identified at the base. Anti-aircraft weapons included up to 20 x 37mm and 23mm anti-aircraft positions surrounding the base plus SAM-7 and possibly SAM-3 radar-assisted anti-aircraft missiles.

Mapai was scheduled for a combined ground and air attack on 6th September 1979.



Besides, four heavily armed Motorised Infantry Detachments (Mobiles) began operating in Gaza Province during April 1979, tasked with providing a quick reaction force to any trouble spots over the entire Province, and concentrating mainly on the strategic rail and road routes.

Five strategic bridges were designated for destruction on 5th September:

Barragem Bridge, an expansive wall damming the Limpopo River, with road and rail access over the top, and containing sluices vital for the release of water for the downstream irrigation projects. The destruction of this massive structure was allocated to the Rhodesian SAS.

Canicado Bridge, a newly built bridge over the Limpopo River, linking the towns of Canicado on the east bank, and Choque on the western side of the river. This bridge was allocated to 1 Commando, RLI, and the specialist demolition experts from 1 Engineer Squadron. This group was flown to their target bridge by the Pumas of Hotel section, including the ill-fated Puma 164 (Hotel Four), flown by Paul Velleman, Nigel Osborne, and Dick Retief, and fourteen of these men were on board when this aircraft was shot down the following day.

Folgaes, two relatively small but vital canal bridges on the Macia to Choque road.

Maximchopes rail bridge over a tributary of the Incomati River.

Changane River Bridge on a major access route in the east of the area. These bridges were all successfully dropped by the 1 Recce operators with the minimum of fuss.

In total, 40 targets were identified and designated in Gaza Province for attention during Operation Uric. These ranged from Frelimo military headquarters, base camps, and outposts, through economic targets such as bridges, dams, canals, roads, and railway lines, to ZANLA transit camps and storage facilities.

Events Leading to the Downing of Puma 164

In the early hours of Saturday morning, 1st September 1979, 13 SA 330 Puma and 2 Super Frelon helicopters took off from AFB Swartkop near Pretoria and routed via AFB Pietersburg, where the crews were briefed on the upcoming operation in Gaza Province.

The Pumas flew low level to Chipinda Pools in the south-eastern Lowveld of Rhodesia, in three loose formations of four aircraft each, with good friends Capt Paul Velleman and Lt Mark Dutton bringing up the rear, using call signs Hotel Three and Hotel Four, respectively.

Capt John Church flew the one spare aircraft to Chipinda Pools. This was Puma 164, and it was the thirteenth helicopter in the formation.

The Puma crews were in action shortly after arriving at the forward base, tasked with flying troops and supplies to the external Admin Base, code-named Oscar Bravo, situated near the disused Banhine National Park airstrip, 160 kilometers inside Mozambique. The Puma pilots were all amazed at the numerous places from which they attracted hostile small arms and RPG-7 fire, even from the most innocent looking small villages, and two helicopters were damaged by ground fire on this first day.

In fact, after the week involved in Operation Uric, only two of the thirteen Pumas returned to South Africa without damage from enemy fire, and these two were reported to have had most of the paint missing from their undersides, due to the ultra-low level flying of their cautious pilots!

Paul Velleman and Mark Dutton, operating as a pair of aircraft, were returning to the base at Chipinda Pools after a re-supply run when Mark Dutton's Puma suffered a fuel booster pump failure, which rendered a significant amount of their fuel unusable. Whilst Mark and his co-pilot Craig Reid were searching around frantically for a suitable landing zone, the Puma's engines suffered a flame-out due to fuel starvation, necessitating a forced landing in amongst some dense brush and trees.

This resulted in severe tip damage to the main and tail rotor blades of their aircraft. After Flight Engineer Pine Pienaar had refuelled from a spare drum on board the Puma, Mark Dutton lifted off carefully and flew the damaged helicopter slowly back to the base at Chipinda Pools.

Immediately after landing, the two pilots were tasked with another re-supply run to the external Admin Base, and Mark Dutton, Craig Reid, and Pine Pienaar transferred their kit over to the spare Puma, whilst their damaged aircraft was attended to by the SAAF ground technicians.

This spare aircraft was Puma 164.

Taking off again as a pair, with Paul Velleman in the lead, the two Pumas set off into Mozambique once again. About halfway to their destination, Paul called that he had just passed a group of buildings to his left, and both choppers veered to the right. However Mark Dutton's flight path took him directly over the buildings, and the anti-aircraft artillery opened upon them. Despite taking some strikes Mark flew on doggedly, nervously watching his instruments for any warning lights that would indicate they had taken hits to the Puma's engines. Landing at the Admin Area, they discovered that Puma 164 had suffered a 12,7mm strike through the main spar of one main rotor blade, grounding the aircraft

overnight whilst a new blade was flown in via Chipinda Pools the next day.

There followed a few days of routine re-supply runs from Chipinda Pools to the external Admin Base, whilst the Operation Commanders waited for the low cloud to clear before they could give the go-ahead for the launch of Op Uric.

On 5th September, the bridge demolition phase was launched. The four Pumas of Hotel Formation were tasked to fly the 48 RLI and Engineer troops, under the command of Captains Joe du Plooy and Charlie Small, plus their explosive kits, to their target bridge over the Limpopo at Canicado. During this briefing, fate started playing its hand. The task of carrying the bridge demolition team and explosives was designated to Hotel Four in the orders, but Paul Velleman, being the more experienced commander, took over this assignment and Mark Dutton was moved to the Hotel Three position as a trooping helicopter. The two pilots switched call signs and Paul became Hotel Four, in Puma 164.

After dropping the troops and demolition team at the small town of Canicado, the formation flew a short distance away and landed in a clearing, where they waited for the Rhodesian troops to carry out their tasks on the bridge and in the adjacent town. This they accomplished without any trouble, and then radioed to the waiting helicopters that they were ready for uplift.

After picking up the troops the Puma formation set a heading back to the Admin Base. All was going smoothly until suddenly Paul called on the radio saying that he had flown into wires and was losing pressure in one hydraulic system. He immediately landed and the other aircraft turned back to see what was happening. They saw Flight Engineer Dick Retief removing the wires which had snagged around the left undercarriage and which had severed a hydraulic pipe. After Dick had made makeshift repairs Paul took off again and made it safely back to the Admin Base.

At the nearby Barragem Bridge, a Rhodesian Air Force Bell helicopter had been shot down by an RPG-7 whilst

attempting to casevac a wounded SAS soldier. The technician, Leading Aircraftsman Alex Wesson was killed immediately, and the pilot, Flight Lieutenant Dick Paxton was pulled unconscious from the burning wreckage by a SAS Sergeant.

The Fateful Day

At the briefing for the assault on Mapai on the 6th of September, the plan was for Hotel Four to join the formation of Rhodesian Bells, as a replacement for Dick Paxton's aircraft, for the trooping task into the target area.

Mark Dutton expected to revert to his original formation position, but Paul said that he would rather remain as Hotel Four and take the opportunity to fly with the legendary Bells.

The two formations flew alongside each other on their way to the target, with the Bells flying to the right of the Puma flight, and with Paul's Puma 164 bringing up the rear of the Bell formation.

Flight Lieutenant Martin Bower, immediately ahead of Puma 164, suddenly experienced severe tail rotor malfunction, and had to pull out of the formation and make an emergency landing in the Mozambican bush. Paul Velleman moved up to take his position behind the last Bell.

Approximately 5 kilometers from the target area, the low-flying helicopter armada overflowed a small satellite air-defense base, which had been abandoned by most of the defenders as soon as the initial Hunter strikes had gone in on the Brigade HQ at Mapai, earlier that morning. However, a lone Frelimo soldier, armed with an RPG-7 rocket launcher, had remained at his post to confront the enemy.

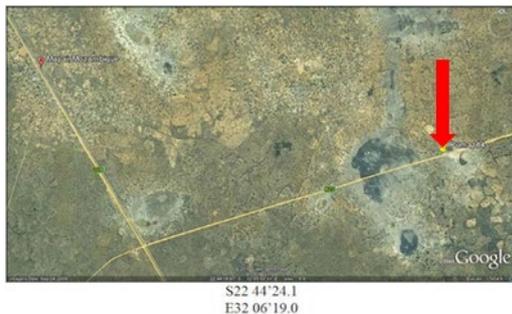


As the helicopters thundered at high speed over a low rise towards him, he aimed and fired his rocket towards the massed aircraft, just as they drew level with his position.

His rocket struck the right side of the last helicopter in the nearest formation, immediately behind the pilot's seat, detonating on impact and, it is thought, simultaneously igniting the fuel in the tank behind the pilot.

The stricken Puma 164 rolled to the right and plunged immediately into the ground, exploding on impact in a huge ball of flame.

Everything happened so quickly, and the helicopters were all flying so low, and so fast, that the eyewitnesses on board the other aircraft say that they heard two loud, almost simultaneous bangs, and by the time they looked across, all that could be seen of Hotel Four was a rapidly forming pall of black, oily smoke billowing skywards from the ball of flame on the ground.



The shocked pilots called in the tragedy to the Command Dakota, and one of the Bell pilots immediately dropped his troops to search for survivors. The rest of the helicopters were ordered to continue to Mapai.

The RLI troops, led by Lieutenant Gavin Wehlburg, advanced cautiously towards the crash site, but met with no opposition, and saw no locals.

The whole area was eerily deserted and strangely silent.

The Puma was found in a sparse tree line at the edge of a grassy clearing.

Immediately the soldiers realised that there could have been any survivors; the helicopter was destroyed, with only the engines remaining relatively intact.

The bodies of the men onboard Puma 164 had been scattered around the crash site by the impact of the aircraft and the subsequent

explosion, and were reportedly still intact, but unrecognizably burnt.

They had all died instantly in the searing heat of the explosions.

Plans to recover the bodies, and any recognizable aircraft parts, were thwarted by the intensity of the on-going battle at Mapai, and the reluctance of the Operation Commanders to risk any further loss of men and aircraft on a recovery attempt. Wehlburg and his men were ordered to withdraw from the area, and a Hunter strike was called in to destroy any evidence of South African involvement in the operation. This strike was unsuccessful.

With the complete withdrawal of Frelimo and ZANLA troops from the Mapai area, the local headmen decided to bury the bodies of the fallen men where they lay, and placed them in two large graves, next to each other.



These graves remained unmarked and unkept for thirty years their whereabouts unknown to all but the local population, who treated the crash area with reverence and respect, and no-one ventured anywhere near the gravesite.

On Saturday 12 April 2009, a small search party led by former RLI Lieutenant Rick van Malsen discovered the crash site of Puma 164 and the graves of the seventeen brave men who died there. These men were finally laid to rest by their comrades-in-arms, with a short service, and the placing of a memorial cross on the larger of the two graves.

The Roll of Honour of the fallen men was read out, whilst the haunting sounds of The Last Post rang out over the silent African bush.



Roll of Honour Operation Uric

"With thanksgiving, let us remember those who sacrificed their lives so that we may live on in peace. And in appreciation, we now dedicate this cross to their memory. Help us to keep them in our thoughts, and to never forget what they gave for us."

Bob Manser, Originator of the crash site searches in Mozambique.

05 September 1979 - Aldeia de Barragem

LEADING AIRCRAFTSMAN ALEXANDER WESSON (RhAF)

06 September 1979 – Mapai

CAPTAIN PAUL VELLEMAN (SAAF)
LIEUTENANT NIGEL OSBORNE (SAAF)
SERGEANT DICK RETIEF (SAAF)
CAPTAIN JOHANNES MATHEUS DU PLOOY (1 RLI)
CAPTAIN CHARLES DAVID SMALL (RhEng)
2ND LIEUTENANT BRUCE FRASER BURNS (RhEng)
SERGEANT MICHAEL ALAN JONES (RhEng)
CORPORAL LEROY DUBERLY (RhEng)
LANCE CORPORAL PETER FOX (RhEng)
CORPORAL GORDON HUGH FRY (1 RLI)
TROOPER JACOBUS ALWYN BRIEL (1 RLI)
TROOPER AIDEN JAMES COLMAN (1 RLI)
TROOPER JEREMY MARK CROW (1 RLI)
TROOPER BRIAN LOUIS ENSLIN (1 RLI)
TROOPER STEVEN ERIC KING (1 RLI)
TROOPER COLIN GRAHAM NEASHAM (1 RLI)
TROOPER DAVID REX PROSSER (1 RLI)

"They shall not grow old
As we who are left, grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."



Story of Lt C.H. Nethersole's Lockheed PV-1 Ventura Mk V (#6426) disaster

(Extracts from a concise historic overview "The SAAF Memorial at Musanda (Rietvlei) by Dr W. Bernhardt)



Lt C.H. Nethersole Memorial

A flight of 4 Ventura aircraft left Ndola on the last leg of their delivery flight at 0600 in the morning of 9 October 1943. The final leg was planned to be a non-stop flight, ending at



PV-1 Ventura

Germiston Air Station. The 4 aircraft flew in formation and were under instruction in terms of their intended flight plan not to fly over either Pretoria (which they had to pass to the east) or the Modderfontein dynamite factory. The reason for this flight plan was that if the aircraft did fly over Pretoria, they risked finding themselves directly in line with the take-off/landing routes of AFB Zwartkop and/or AFB Waterkloof, which could result in a mid-air collision. Modderfontein on the other hand had to be bypassed as it was supplying war stores to the Union forces and was thus what would today be called a national key point. Moreover, in the case of an emergency, the last place that you want an aircraft to crash into is a dynamite factory.

According to the formation's leader, the group of 4 Venturas took off from Ndola with full wing tanks and cabin tanks. The largest part of the formation's journey from Ndola was uneventful. Approximately 2 hours from Germiston, the group leader contacted Lt Nethersole to double check on the latter's fuel status. The reason for this was the fact that Lt Nethersole's plane had earlier during

the journey sprung a fuel leak, which had to be repaired twice, the last time at Ndola during the overnight stop.

At that point however, both airplanes still had approximately the same amount of fuel left, i.e. 350 gallons, which was considered sufficient to complete the flight. There was thus apparently no reason to be unduly concerned about the earlier fuel leak on Lt Nethersole's plane. This situation was however bound to change for the worse within the next few minutes.

The first signs of trouble for Lockheed PV-1 Ventura Mk V (#6426) appeared at around 1015 when the delivery group was about 40 miles north-west of Pretoria, at a height of approximately 7500 – 7800 feet, when Lt Nethersole reported to the group leader that #6426 was experiencing difficulty to maintain height, as its left (port) engine has cut-out. However, there still seemed to be no reason for undue concern, for when the group leader asked whether Nethersole was still 'airtight', the latter answered in the affirmative.

The group leader nevertheless informed Germiston Air Station about the problem and asked the pilot of another aircraft in the formation whether he could see Lt Nethersole's airplane. The reply came that Lt Nethersole was still flying below the formation. The group leader thereupon asked Lt Nethersole what the cause of the 'trouble' was, as the former thought that Lt

Nethersole has perhaps caused the problem by allowing the fuel tank that fed the left-side engine to run dry. To this Lt Nethersole replied that he had no fuel pressure at all and indicated that his booster fuel pump has also stopped functioning (the booster pump is an auxiliary pump in an aircraft's fuel system, used to provide fuel at the required pressure to the carburetor; to purge the fuel lines of any vapors; to prime the cylinders for start-up and to supply fuel if the engine driven pump were to fail).

Lt Nethersole nevertheless confirmed to the group leader that he could - at that point - still maintain his height - i.e. that he was managing to fly the plane with only the right-side engine. Possibly thinking that the crisis has been averted, the group leader thereupon 'throttled back', but nonetheless instructed another member of the formation to keep an eye on Lt Nethersole's airplane. Lt Nethersole, in return, replied that he would attempt to maintain his height and make for Germiston.

Soon thereafter Lt Nethersole however came back on the radio to the group leader and indicated that he could no longer maintain height, and asked permission to jettison his external fuel tanks.

The group leader agreed to Lt Nethersole's request, and also advised the latter that the closest aerodrome was at Wonderboom (where the Wonderboom airport is still located today) and that he (Nethersole) was 'to make for it' (during the war, Wonderboom Aerodrome was under military control, and used for training purposes by No 3 Air School).

Lt Nethersole in return acknowledged his group leaders' instruction to fly to Wonderboom. He also confirmed his height as being at 6300 feet. Shortly thereafter he followed-up with a message that he had pulled the switches to jettison his external fuel tanks, but that he was under the impression that they hadn't come off, possibly because he was still losing altitude.

At this point the group leader instructed his radio operator to contact Germiston to inform them that Lt Nethersole would be landing at

Wonderboom. Meanwhile, the group leader also heard Lt Nethersole talking to his (Nethersole's) radio operator, asking the latter for a heading, and then a map, indicating that he could see the road leading to the Premier Mine (Cullinan) from Pretoria in front of him (presumably they were trying to get a fix on their position in order to set a course for Wonderboom). The ferry leader overheard this discussion, as Lt Nethersole's radio was in the "on command" setting.

According to the group leader, his estimate was that Nethersole was at that point about 10 miles away from Wonderboom. His testimony indicates that he informed Nethersole accordingly, instructing him specifically to turn right, and that he (Nethersole) would then see Wonderboom in front of him at a distance of approximately 10 miles.

It is not known whether Lt Nethersole actually made this turn towards Wonderboom, as by now the other members of the formation had lost sight of his airplane. Lt Nethersole however now sent a message that he could no longer maintain his height, would probably not reach Wonderboom, and was thus going to attempt a forced landing in the field. The location of the crash site indicate that even if Lt Nethersole were at this point perhaps flying in the direction of Wonderboom (i.e. west), he must again have again turned south bypassing Pretoria (which would now have been located on his right hand-side).

The Group leader acknowledged Nethersole's decision to attempt a forced landing and passed the information on to Germiston. After that, the group leader was not able to make any further radio contact with Lt Nethersole, and he consequently instructed a member of the formation to initiate a search for Lt Nethersole's airplane. The rest of the formation meanwhile continued on to Germiston, and as they were landing, they received a message - possibly from the pilot of the plane that was sent out to look for him - that Lt Nethersole's aircraft had crashed.

The crash of Lt Nethersole's Ventura was seen first-hand by at least two eyewitnesses.

Both testified later that they saw the airplane 'flip onto its back' at a height of about 30 feet (i.e. The Ventura presumably went into a left-handed roll but was not able to complete the roll due to a lack of altitude), where after it crashed into the ground and burst into flames. The accident Report later stated that the extent of damage was estimated at around 99% - there was more or less nothing left of the aircraft after the fire.

All three crew members of Lockheed PV-1 Ventura Mk V (#6426) were buried in the New Military Cemetery in what is today Thaba Tshwane, then Voortrekkerhoogte, where their well-kept graves can still be seen and visited to this day. Although the details of their funerals are presently not known it seems only logical, that they would have received military funerals.

One of the first SAAF officials on the scene – who was dispatched from Waterkloof - reported later that upon arrival he had found Lt Nethersole's body outside of the aircraft, where the latter was presumably thrown during the crash, with multiple severe injuries. He was already dead and was identified based on documents found in his pocket. The same official also reported that he could also see two other bodies in the burning aircraft, both of which were charred beyond recognition. Lt Nethersole's Group Leader after landing at Germiston, also immediately proceeded to the crash site, and managed to confirm Nethersole's identity. He also managed to identify Lt Rogan, the radio operator, on the grounds of his position on the left of the aircraft – where the radio operator would normally be stationed during a flight.



The lives and deaths of these three men should constantly remind those that came after them that national security is not upheld and protected primarily by famous, high-ranking persons, but rather by ordinary men and women, willing to do their part, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, to ensure their country's safety



The SAAF received some 135 PV-1s, which were used to protect shipping around the Cape of Good Hope and to bomb Italian shipping in the Mediterranean. In December 1942 four SAAF Venturas dropped supplies to survivors of the *Dunedin Star* shipwreck on South-West Africa's Skeleton Coast. Venturas served in the South African Air Force until 1960.

Ventura B-34 Lexington / B-37 PV-1 Ventura / PV-2 Harpoon



Role	Patrol bomber
National origin	United States
Manufacturer	Lockheed
First flight	31 July 1941
Primary users	United States Navy; United States Army Air Forces Royal Air Force
Developed from	Lockheed Model 18 Lodestar



SAAF's role in the Rescuing of the Dunedin Star survivors

**CALL BACK
THE PAST**



MV *Dunedin Star* was a UK refrigerated cargo liner. It was built by Cammell Laird and Co in 1935–36 as one of Blue Star Line's *Imperial Star*-class ships, designed to ship frozen meat from Australia and New Zealand to the United Kingdom. It served in the Second World War and is distinguished for its role in Operation Halberd to relieve the siege of Malta in September 1941.

Dunedin Star was lost at the end of November 1942 when it ran aground in the South Atlantic on the Skeleton Coast of South West Africa. A complex sea, air, and land operation overcame many setbacks and rescued all of its passengers, crew, and gunners. An aircraft, a tug, and two of the tug's crew were lost in rescue attempts. It took a month for the last of *Dunedin Star*'s crew to reach Cape Town, and more than two months for the last of the rescuers to return.

Skeleton Coast

In early November of 1942, the *Dunedin Star* sailed from Liverpool bound for the Middle East with a consignment of military supplies for the 8th Army, Cape Town was to be her first port of call. She carried 21 passengers and 85 crew, which included women and children and her master was Captain R B Lee. Unescorted and to avoid submarine attack she sailed close to the West African coast.

Three weeks into her voyage, at 10.30 pm on the 29 November 1942, her hull was mysteriously holed by a submerged object, the *Dunedin Star* being in danger of sinking was beached on Namibia's infamous



become the most traumatic rescues of WWII

by an overland rescue party, ships, and Ventura Bombers of the South African Air Force, all the passengers and crew were eventually rescued, the last of the survivors arriving in Cape Town on 28 December 1942.

Ventura's contribution

At 1400 hrs on 3 December, a South African Air Force Lockheed Ventura coastal patrol aircraft was sent from Cape Town to drop supplies on the beach for the survivors. At about 1620 hrs the pilot, Captain Immins Naude, found the beach. His crew dropped the supplies, but most were destroyed on impact. Naude landed on a nearby flat piece of land to rescue some of the remaining survivors on the beach. Unfortunately, the land was a salt pan disguised by desert sand. The next day it was discovered that the Ventura's undercarriage had sunk through the crusted surface of the salt, damaging the aircraft, and leaving it stuck in the sand.

Three other SAAF Venturas flew supply missions to drop water, food, and other emergency supplies. They often flew several flights a day to the survivors on the beach. At times they also dropped supplies to Captain Smith's land convoy on the way

from Windhoek to the beach. On 8 December Captain Smith's land convoy reached Rocky Point and Sir Charles Elliot's survivors and took them to a makeshift landing strip. There Lt Col PS Joubert landed a Ventura and picked up the tug's surviving crew.

On 17 January 1943, Captain Naude left Windhoek leading an overland convoy to recover the Ventura. After on-site repairs and a four-day digging effort, he finally got



**SAAF Lockheed Ventura Bomber
Captain Immins Naude**

the plane airborne on 29 January. However, after only 43 minutes' flying time the aircraft developed engine trouble and ditched in the sea about 200 yards offshore near Rocky Point. Naude and his two fellow aircrew members survived the crash and managed to swim ashore. Their returning land convoy rescued them on 1 February.

It is, without doubt, the Ventura Bombers of the South African Air Force were vital in saving many lives of the survivors of the wrecked Dunedin Star. The skills deployed

by the pilots can never be overstated when making drops and landing their aircraft at makeshift runways at Rocky Point to pick up survivors who were then transported to Walvis Bay.

The rescue operation did have its lighter moments however, it was reported - Just as the plane was about to leave on another supply run, a report was received, through Cape Town, from a ship some distance to the west of the wrecked liner announcing the presence of a submarine. The Ventura, as the only bomber available, was ordered to make a reconnaissance immediately. There was no time to unload the supplies and replace them with bombs. Capt. Uys took off, knowing that if he located the submarine on the surface and she chose to fight it out, he could drop only tins of water, condensed milk, biscuits, and bully beef on her. No doubt the submarine commander, so far from home, would have been glad of those extra supplies.

SAAF Lockheed Ventura Commanders

- SAAF Lockheed Ventura Bomber (1)
Captain Immins Naude
- SAAF Lockheed Ventura Bomber (2)
Major J N Robbs DFC
- SAAF Lockheed Ventura Bomber (3)
Lt Col. P S Joubert DSO, AFC
- SAAF Lockheed Ventura Bomber (4)
Captain Matthys Uys AFC

(Extracts from www.melbournestar.co.uk and Wikipedia)



The wreck in 1998





Memorial Services 2021/22

Date	Time	Service	Venue	Town
MARCH 2021				
7	10h00	SS Mendi Memorial Service	Gamothakga	Pretoria
APRIL 2021				
3	10h00	Koevoet Veterans Memorial Service	Voortrekker Monument	Pretoria
4	10h00	RAFA Memorial Service	Bays Hill	Pretoria
18	TBN	Gunners Ass Memorial Service		Potchefstroom
MAY 2021				
16	10h00	SA Air Force Memorial Service	Bays Hill	Pretoria
23	10h00	Heritage Foundation Wreath Laying	Voortrekker Monument	Pretoria
23	15h00	Smuts Memorial Service	Smuts House	Irene
JUNE 2021				
6	11h00	SAPPERS Memorial Service	Sappers Rust	
JULY 2021				
11	10h00	Delville Wood Memorial Service	Burgers Park	Pretoria
11	10h00	Delville Wood Memorial Service	Soweto	Johannesburg
25	10h00	Korean War Veterans Ass Service	Bays Hill	Pretoria
AUGUST 2021				
15	11h00	Border Boys Parade	Eloffsdal	Pretoria
21	TBN	61 Mech Memorial Service	Ditsong	Johannesburg
21	10h00	SAP COIN Memorial Service	Doornpoort	Pretoria
SEPTEMBER 2021				
5	11H00	WARSAW Flight Commemoration Service		Johannesburg
12	10h30	RLI RAFA Battle of Britain Service	Bedfordview	Johannesburg
12	09h00	International Day of Peace Service	NGK Raslow	Pretoria
OCTOBER 2021				
10	10H00	Alphine 44 Memorial Service	Bays Hill	Pretoria
24	11h00	Battle of El Alamein Pretoria District MOTH	Coal Box MK2	Pretoria
NOVEMBER 2021				
7	09H30	Italian Prisoners of War Memorial Service	Italian Cemetery	Zonderwater
11	17h30	Cornwall Hill Service	Cornwall Hill	Pretoria
14	11h00	Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service	Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery	Johannesburg
DECEMBER 2020				
5	09h00	SAMHS Veterans Ass Memorial Service	1 Mil	Pretoria



The
Editor's
Desk



February is unique. Because it usually has 28 days, once every 6 years, it's the only month to have 4 full 7-day weeks. In the years that aren't leap years (otherwise known as common years), February and March start on the same day of the week.

Why this trivia? This editor has an empty in-tray gathering dust.

Will we ever have a complete branch news section? Will we ever know what is happening at our branches? Has Big Foot been spotted? All questions with no answers.

Maybe I will spend my time writing a dissertation and doing some qualitative and quantitative research into one of these topics, surely it will be easier than gathering, informative news that connects us through this organization we all belong to.

The idea of the newsletter is to inform members of the history and why we have specific parades every month. We have to know our history so that we do not make the same mistakes in the future and importantly to celebrate who we are and where we came from. I have been busy with the newsletter for nearly a year, and only have two issues left after this one, before I hand it over to someone. Here's to hoping.

BRB, Googling DIY projects for empty in-trays.



Thank You

Des;
Philip;
Marianne;
Christel;
Johann



• Account Name:	The South African Air Force Association
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