



SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION

(CAPE TOWN BRANCH)
PBO 93000796

Cape Town Branch News April 2019

Welcome to our new members

We welcome the following new members and look forward to their participation in the activities of the branch : G Andrews, G o' Kelly, P Vincent, H Shagom, L Steenkamp, J van Rooyen, T Venn, E Wittert, J Marcus, J Tuck, D Kenny, A Ledger, C Yeates, C Slater, D Steyn, P Hall, P Alderton, J Moir, M de Wet

Poppy Day

A very enjoyable and well attended thank you function was held at Rosedale on 28 March. Certificates were presented by our chairman Ray Nasset who made special mention of the various MOTH Shellholes collected.

We look forward to the continued support of who assisted in 2018 with this year's collection.



who
all

Ray Nasset presents certificates to Colin Calmeyer on behalf of the Royal Oak Pub and Restaurant (L) and to Hannah Latham (R) our youngest collector

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The City has granted permission for our collection on 9 November this year and planning will start shortly. A Poppy Day Golf Day is also planned for Friday 18 October so get those clubs out and practice your putting.

Membership fees

A reminder that the annual membership fee of R140 is now due and can be deposited into the Legion's bank account which is:

Standard Bank Rondebosch – branch code 025009
Account SA Legion, account number 070149291.
Please use your name as reference.

At the same time why not join the Rosedale Service Centre. The R60 membership fee entitles you meals at Rosedale at a reduced rate, where else can you get a three course Sunday lunch for R44.00, and to participate in the many social events that the Service Centre arranges.

Application forms are available on our website www.salegion.co.za or can be emailed or posted to you.

Why Agnes Martin was awarded the MBE

My aunt died aged 85 years. In 1944 she was the first of two women in South Africa to be honoured at a medal parade where she received the award from NJ De Wet representing King George VI.

My sister, in clearing out her cottage, fortunately removed a paper drawer lining to discover an old brown OHMS envelope containing some newspaper cuttings, a photograph and, neatly folded in half, the MBE certificate (now safely framed). Also in the drawer was a box containing her MBE medal. Had my sister not removed the lining the history of the award would never have been with us today.

Perusing numerous papers in the file from her Commanding Officers in Pretoria, it became evident that Agnes volunteered in 1940 for the Signals Corps of the Women's Auxiliary Armed Service as a 2nd Lt. She was transferred to Cape Town where she was promoted to Lieutenant and then Captain, and then served as Personal Aide to the Chief of Staff in SA Government responsible for sending and receiving secret coded messages to and from London. In 1942 she received orders



to report for special duties in London, and on arrival reported to the London Metropolitan Police.

Then started twenty four years of research into why Capt Agnes Martin had been awarded MBE's and why the secrecy? The South African War records office advised me to contact the British office and they in turn advised me to contact the South African office which drew a blank.

Gagga, as she was known in the family, had kept Winston Churchill's instructions not to discuss her wartime experiences for 50 years and they sure knew how to obey instructions in those days! No one in the family had any idea and, sadly, most had already passed on. So there was no help from that angle.

A chance overnight stay in Barrydale and discussion with the owner, whose Rhodesian mother had also received an MBE, but with full citation, led to a fellow resident, Commander Mike Waugh RN retired, a noted naval historian, who put him onto the Bletchley Park Road as he believed that the instruction to report to the "London Metropolitan Police" was a code that on arrival would be taken to Bletchley, probably for special Morse code experience.

One Saturday, fiddling on "Google" (which had not been available when I started) I happened upon a website "Royal Archives in the Round Tower in Windsor Castle". Surely if Queen Mary, then the Grand Master of the Order, and King George VI had both signed the original certificate, there must be some record of why they had been so recognised? I then immediately sent a letter asking for help in his quest. Imagine my absolute delight when on 11 November, Armistice Day, 2014 I received a letter advising that Capt Martin had this citation on their award to her. It read:

"This Officer organised and developed the Defence Union teleprinter communications. She has been in the service since the commencement of war. Her devotion to duty, outstanding efficiency, and her readiness to give assistance to all is beyond praise. It is strongly recommended that her services be recognised".

Research started once again and all his previous work in making enquiries at Bletchley Park was not wasted as a large part of the telecommunications network set up by these ladies and a staff of 73 000 involved the communications for the preparations for the Normandy invasion, and all of this was directly linked to Bletchley Park.

Now I had the answer, she had not actually been in Bletchley Park, but had been stationed in Dollis Hill, a Post Office building in London, and had been responsible



for setting up and providing initially the telegraph requirements of then Air Ministry and Admiralty, and later the Defence Teleprinter network. Its size was colossal and it extended to firstly equal the existing civil Telecommunication System Network in the United Kingdom. By 1944 it had trebled in size.

And so it was that a little old lady who died in Pietermaritzburg in 1995 played such a vital role during WW2 and her family knew so little of her accomplishments. That said, in those days if you took an oath you kept it - and thus many wives of the day never knew for years after the end of that conflict what their husbands actually did!

Article by Ken Munro in the March 2019 newsletter of the Eastern Cape Branch of the SA Military History Society.

Murphy's military laws

- When in doubt, empty your magazine of all bullets.
- Combat will occur on the ground between two adjoining maps where a small area is missing/ unclear.
- The most dangerous thing in the world is a Lieutenant with a map and a compass.
- The complexity of a weapon is inversely proportional to the IQ of the weapon's operator.
- If enough data is collected, a board of inquiry can prove anything.
- Success occurs when no one is looking, failure occurs when the General is watching.
- The Quartermaster has only two boot sizes, too large and too small.
- If you have a personality conflict with your superior, he has the personality, you have the conflict.
- If you enter the Commanding Officer's (CO) office with an idea, most likely, you will leave his office with the CO's idea

Time from Africa

This 44 page soft cover book by Joan Abrahams (Tannie Mossie) of Bloemfontein outlines the story behind each of the 18 friezes in the bronze panel in the Delville Wood Memorial, France as well as the South African Military Museum, Johannesburg.

The book is available for R20, R10 of which Joan will donate to the Legion, from David Holmes at david.sal@mweb.co.za. Postage can be arranged if you can't collect.



SEEKING JEWISH WORLD WAR II VETERANS AND ARTEFACTS

The Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, in collaboration with the South African Jewish Museum, is looking for Jewish men and women who saw active service during WWII, or their relatives, who would be willing to share their stories for possible inclusion in an exhibition on the

South African Jewish community's contribution to the war effort. We are also looking for WWII artefacts
Examples of items to be considered:

- Photographs**
- Documentation and letters**
- Uniforms and Medals**
- Other relevant artefacts**



Please contact Dmitri Abrahams on (021)462 5553 or archives@holocaust.org.za



SAJM
South African Jewish Museum



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