



SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION

(CAPE TOWN BRANCH)
PBO 93000796

Cape Town Branch News July 2019

Welcome to our new members

We welcome the following new members: R Dixon, Mrs Mc Cowan, J Mc Cowan, C Kinnear, D van den Berg, C Kinnear, A Martin, A Nel, A Brits, F Schwarz, C Malan, W Wieggers and W Carter.

Who was Dedee de Jongh?

Andrée (Dedee) de Jongh created one of the most effective escape lines for allied airmen out of German occupied Europe during the Second World War before she was caught, interrogated by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp.

De Jongh was born in occupied Brussels in 1916, a year after the British Red Cross hospital matron Edith Cavell was shot by the Germans for helping some 200 First World War soldiers to escape from Belgium to the neutral Netherlands. The story deeply impressed the young Andrée. The younger daughter of schoolmaster Frédéric de Jongh, she was 24 and working as a commercial artist in Malmédy at the time of the Belgian surrender to the Germans. She threw up her job, moved to Brussels and became a nurse. Some of her patients were British servicemen, whom she helped to send letters home via the Red Cross.

On her own initiative, De Jongh began to make discreet enquiries among friends and contacts with a view to copying her heroine, Cavell. Circumstances for such activity were much harder in the Second World War than in the first: this time, the Netherlands had been overrun, while the whole of France was under direct or indirect Nazi control, divided between a German-occupied zone and a collaborationist Vichy.

The construction of what was called the Comet escape line was methodical from the outset. De Jongh arranged a series of safe houses in and around Brussels, where evading soldiers and aircrew could await escort out of the country along a complicated route. She found plenty of helpers, even though such activity was subject to the death penalty. Her first escape group comprised 11 men, who were sent via Paris and further Nazi occupied French territory (which included the whole of the Atlantic coast) to the Pyrenees, which they crossed on foot into neutral but pro-Nazi Spain.



This first escape ended badly. All members of the party were arrested by the Spanish authorities and only two ultimately managed to reach England. So De Jongh decided to lead the next group, two Belgian soldiers and a Scot, to Spain herself. They eventually reached the British consulate in Bilbao, a success that proved to be the breakthrough.

Now De Jongh was able to persuade British officials to provide financial and logistical backing, and the Comet line got the support of MI9, the intelligence branch set up to bring home stranded servicemen from occupied territory. The desk officer who oversaw support for Comet was the later Tory politician Airey Neave, who himself had escaped back to England from Colditz.

For a while, Comet flourished alongside another Belgian escape line, known as Pat, which managed to send some 600 men to Britain before it was betrayed and wound up in 1942. Comet carried on until the Allied armies freed Belgium in 1944, in spite of disaster in January 1943. De Jongh evaded mounting German suspicions, which had led to several betrayals and arrests among network members in Belgium, by moving her headquarters to Paris. On one occasion, Comet rescued a seven-man RAF bomber crew and got them all to Gibraltar in a week. Altogether the organisation was responsible for the safe return of some 800 men.

But on her 33rd run to Spain, while leading three RAF men at the beginning of 1944, de Jongh and her charges were arrested in France. She was interrogated by the Gestapo, to whom she told the unvarnished truth: the whole thing had been her idea from the start. The Germans did not believe her but spared her life and sent her to the notorious women's concentration camp at Ravens-brück. She managed to sidestep further interrogation by disappearing into the general prison population. Her father had also worked with Comet, but was betrayed, arrested and shot in June 1943.

After the war, De Jongh went to the [then Belgian] Congo to work as a nurse in a leper colony. Following Congolese independence, she undertook similar work in Ethiopia. For her wartime heroism, she was awarded the George Medal by the British, the Medal of Freedom by the Americans, an honorary commission in the Belgian army and was created a countess by the King of the Belgians.

Some 200 Comet line members died helping others to escape to freedom while Dedee survived and died in 2007 aged 90.



Chris Soule retires

A farewell tea was held on 26 June to say goodbye to long serving bookkeeper Chris Soule on her retirement. Chairman Ray Nessel thanked her for her contribution to the Branch and presented her with a gift.



Poppy Day 2019 – your help is needed

Street Collection

After last year's very successful collection it is going to take an extra special effort this year to exceed the R105000 collected. The more collectors that we have on the ground the greater the likelihood of success. Please volunteer a couple of hours of your time to shake a tin and do your bit for those veterans who have fallen on hard times – see the form at the end of this newsletter.



Golf Day

On 18 October a golf day in aid of the Poppy Day Collection is being held at Parow Golf Club. This event is being coordinated by Stephen Els and your support is needed in one or more of the following categories:

- As a player
- As a sponsor – this will give you advertising rights for your business on the day
- To sell raffle tickets prior to the day
- To donate prizes for the auction and the various winners on the day

Please contact Stephen on Stephen@capeag.co.za or 0721403103

Regalia

We currently have a variety of Legion regalia in stock so look the part and deck yourself out in the appropriate gear:

Legion Golf Shirts	- Navy	L and XL	R140
	- Green	M,L and 2XL	R220
Ties	- Green with Legion crest		R180
	- Poppy		R180
Blazer Pocket Badge			R120
Beret Badge			R180
Legion Crest Lapel Badge			R55
Red Poppy Lapel Badge			R40
Purple Poppy Lapel Badge			R40
Lanyards			R20
Pens			R20



The following items are available on order:

Cravat	- Green with Legion Crest	R150
Cravat	- Poppy	R100
Legion Veteran Badge		R350
Hollow Poppy Wreath		R475
Poppy Wreath with Centre		R450

If you are interested, please contact Geraldine Williamson on 021 6899771

Branch Social

It's been a while since the last branch get together so make a note of our next social on Thursday 29 August at 1700 for 1730 at Rosedale. The function will include the induction of new members, snacks will be served, and a cash bar will be available.

The cost per head is R40.00 payable at the door. RSVP to david.sal@mweb.co.za by Friday 23 August.

Hope to see you there.



Your support is needed to make the Poppy Day Collection 2019 a success. Money raised is used for the welfare of veterans. Please complete the form below and email this page back to salegion@mweb.co.za. alternatively, it can be faxed to 021 685 6254 or simply posted to SA Legion, PO Box 368, Rondebosch, 7701.

I am prepared to be a collector / convenor on Saturday 9 November 2019.

Time: From to

Preferred Area/Shopping Centre:

Note: We have permission to collect from 07h00 to 15h00

Name:

Address:

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Telephone Number/s:

Email Address:

DONATION

I shall not be able to convene or collect but am happy to provide a donation of:

R.....

- ° a cheque is enclosed herewith
- ° I have made an EFT (Electronic Fund Transfer) / deposited the above amount direct

**To: SA Legion,
Standard Bank
Rondebosch Branch 025009
Account 070149291 (Please use your name and 'Poppy' as reference)**