

SAAF ASSOCIATION

JOHANNESBURG BRANCH

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SAAFA –JOHANNESBURG JULY 2012

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

It is just unbelievable how time flies, half a year is gone!

This year so far has brought many good things as well as hardship for many. One of our main tasks, apart from the camaraderie and fellowship, is to look after the well-being of our beneficiaries.

We, as your committee, are constantly trying to make ends meet.

Times are hard and our funds are dwindling, but with your help and support we must carry on and hopefully we will be able to sustain our needs.

Not is all bad news, with the help of Trust money, Air Forces Housing Memorial upgraded the staff housing at Astra House, by building decent accommodation for them plus a revamped laundry, and a new SAAFA office.

Our Race Day was a great success netting R31 000, and with 90 people attending. I hope that next year we will have 100 guests. We are still looking for sponsors for our Golf Day which will be held on 4th September.

My special thanks to our Secretary, Carol, who has the knack of squeezing donations out of all and sundry.

We all have a duty to keep the Johannesburg Branch vibrant and alive. In this endeavour I am prepared to give my all.

To your good health,
Groete,

Hennie

Editor's Note:

This is new Chairman Hennie van der Walt's first Chairman's Chatter, and we wish him a happy term as our Chairman.

We also wish Trevor Slade a happy term as our Vice-Chairman and together, leading our Committee, we hope they will lead SAAFA Johannesburg to new heights of achievement and acceptance.



SAAFA JHB LUNCH 20TH APRIL

David Haggie, nephew of David J.S. Haggie (Lt. SAAF) spoke on the visit he made to Sofia, Bulgaria in June 2011 to commemorate the crew of Liberators EU 104 Yankee, and EU 970 Foxtrot which went down over the oil storage tanks at Giurgiu, the Romanian port on the Danube. The visit was inspired by the Ambassador to Bulgaria, a friend of David's, who had visited the war graves cemeteries officially on a Remembrance Day Parade.

Audrey Portman had given the Ambassador this information : *'There were 10 planes of 31 Squadron who bombed the Port of Giurgiu, South of Bucharest, Roumania. The port of Giurgiu was a storage place for oil. Three of the planes were shot down by German fighters. All the men except Mouton were on one plane, piloted by Haggie, together with an RAF Man called Brazier and an Australian Air Force man called Paton. Mouton was in one of the other planes which was shot down'.*

David has been to the Katyn Parade ever since his father died in 2002, representing the Haggie family, and by visiting his uncle's grave in Bulgaria commemorating the fallen airmen, has closed the circle on this story.



SAAFA Patron Basil Hersov handing David Haggie his gift after his speech at our lunch



IN MEMORIAM

**Gertie Jones passed away on 5th August
She had celebrated her 90th Birthday on
30th June 2012**



Gertie Jones who was a nurse during WWII on her 90th Birthday holding the roses given her by her son Desmond. Gertie moved from Pioneer House to the SA Veteran Nurses Home, Garo House, n Northcliff, some months ago. She was virtually confined to her bed and wheelchair until her death

Gertie's birthday was on 30th June. She served as a nurse at the outset of WW2 where she met her future husband Reg, who reached the rank of lieutenant during his stint with 24 squadron.

After the conflict ended, the family (siblings, Desmond, Prudence and Ian) moved to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland where both Gertie and Reg were active in the MOTH movement, Gertie reaching the rank of Lady Billie at a conference in then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the late 1950's. A fourth sibling, Diane, was born in Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia), before the family located to Gatooma in the south, where both parents became keen gardeners, winning several awards and trophies in competitions, finally returning to South Africa in the mid 1960's.

Besides maintaining a small garden of remembrance while resident at Astra House in Kensington, Gertie also worked on charity drives, most notably the Johannesburg Children's Home and on the auxiliary committee for the elderly at St. James's Presbyterian church in Bedfordview.

She thanked all family and friends for their kind wishes and thoughts on her birthday, as well as the staff at the SA Nurses Veteran Fund, Frail Care Centre, where she spent her last days.

Editors Note: The above story was provided by Gertie's son Desmond.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ANOTHER 91 YEAR OLD - HUGH (HAPPY) MULHOLLAND CELEBRATED HIS 91ST BIRTHDAY IN MAY



Hugh Mulholland (known to SAAFA as "Happy")

"Happy" joined SAAF in 1940. He trained at Roberts Heights as an Air Gunner and Wireless Operator. In 1941 he joined 16 Squadron as an air gunner. The squadron was based in Abyssinia. In 1942 Hugh trained as a Navigator, remaining with 16 Squadron which was then patrolling the South African coast between East London and Port Elizabeth. Following the Navigator's course he qualified as a Bomb Aimer and after a while of further patrols along the South African coast, joined 25 Squadron. They were then sent up North to Italy where he participated as a Bomb Aimer and Navigator. He was discharged at the end of the war.

When Hugh retired he and his wife Billie, moved to Hermanus. They lived there very happily for almost 24 years. About 3 or so years ago they moved back to Johannesburg to be near their family. Sadly Billie, his wife of 65 years, had a stroke and died in August 2010. Hugh still enjoys browsing through his flying log book.

He is still in touch with his great friend from the squadron, Dave Baker.

Four years ago, as a result of diabetes, Hugh had his left leg amputated above the knee. As a result he is confined to a wheelchair.

He has 10 great grandchildren, 8 of whom live in Johannesburg, so are able to visit him regularly. He spends many hours watching TV – from sport to CNN or Sky News.



REMEMBER!

Please let us have your wartime stories and service records to keep on file. It is so distressing when we look for obituary reports and can find NO details for our members who have died.

DON'T WAIT TILL ITS TOO LATE! GET THOSE STORIES AND DETAILS TO OUR OFFICE

SAAFA CONGRESS HELD IN MAY 2012 AT AFB YSTERPLAATS IN CAPE TOWN

This year's Congress which was held in Cape Town was attended by far fewer people than usual because of financial constraints and expensive air fares. Ysterplaat was unable to provide accommodation due to lack of facilities and water problems, but Lappies Labuschagne of Weskus, who co-hosted the Congress with Cape Town Branch, organised accommodation at the luxurious Aquarius Suites in Blaauwberg.

The only drawback was the travelling, especially at peak times when the traffic was heavy, to and from the Base. The transport, however, was of such a high calibre and they put themselves out for the delegates so well that it really was of little consequence.

The ladies outings were enjoyed by all who attended them, the Memorial service, although in a rather different format, was moving and the Banquet entertaining, with good food.

The visit to the old Shackleton at the Ysterplaat museum, for Chris Teal to start up its engines for the first time since its restoration was a memorable event.

Overall it was a very enjoyable and fruitful Congress and the assistance given by Ysterplaat was tremendous. Cape Town and Weskus are to be congratulated on a great effort.

CONGRESS AWARDS

Several awards were granted to Johannesburg Branch, notably a SAAFA Order (Silver) to Tom Borrill and Presidential Medals to founder WAAFS, Rosemary Barratt, Pat Austin Gwyn Slade and Heather Erasmus, a Bar to the Presidential Medal to Carol van Rensburg and SAAFA Order (Bronze) to Di Johnston, Dee Palmer and Jean Urry for their WAAF efforts.



Planting of the cross for those of Johannesburg Branch called to Higher Service since last year



The old Shackleton before engines were fired up



Tom Borrill receiving his SAAFA Order (Silver) from the National President, Neville Greyling



Ladies of the Branches gathering for their outing



The Editor at the Congress Banquet with our SAAFA Patron, Col. Ron Haywood who has now left our Branch and lives in Cape Town

SAAFA CONGRESS 2012 (Continued)



Rosemary Barratt receiving her Presidential Merit Award from the National President



Rob Milne



Jollity on the bus that transported the delegates to the Banquet on Saturday night



We welcomed John and Richard Durrant to lunch

AWARDS HANDED OUT AT MAY LUNCH :

SAAFA JHB LUNCH 25TH MAY

We had no speaker at our end May lunch but following on from the Congress, the Chairman presented awards to the people who had not been at Congress, namely, Pat Austin, Gwyn Slade, Jean Urry, Di Johnston, Dee Palmer (and then at the June lunch, to Heather Erasmus).

Although not the official speaker, Rob Milne gave us a short preview of his archaeological findings in the Eastern Transvaal. He is pictured in the next column. More about Rob in the feature on the July lunch when he talks on the Boer War.

Editors Note: Part of Rob's talk will be featured in this edition and the fascinating story of the "Ghost of Bergendal" will be in the November newsletter.



Gwyn Slade receiving her Presidential Merit Award from the Chairman

CONGRESS AWARDS HANDED OUT AT MAY LUNCH (Continued)



Pat Austin (Widow of the late Fred, one of the Warsaw Flights Survivors) after receiving her Presidential Merit Award



Di Johnston after the Chairman had asked past Vice-President Don Johnston to hand her her SAAFA Order (Bronze)



Maureen Andrew after receiving her Presidential Merit Award



A very happy and proud Jean Urry with the Chairman after he had presented her with her SAAFA Order (Bronze)

Yet another Congress award, which was handed out at the SAAFA JHB June Lunch



Dee Palmer after receiving her SAAFA Order (Bronze)



Heather Erasmus after receiving her Presidential Merit award from the Chairman

SAAFA JHB JUNE LUNCH



Speaker Tony Smit, the “Vampire” pilot who gave us a very interesting talk and was introduced by Bruce Harrison and thanked by Karl Jensen

****ASTRA HOUSE ****

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2-Bed, 1-Bed and bachelor cottages/flats
become available from time to time.

Even if you are not looking for a flat right now
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accommodation.

REMEMBER – The flats are not only for retired
people, younger people may also apply.

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SAAFA JHB RACE DAY 19TH MAY

Our annual Race Day dawned on 19th May
this year and it was a beautiful Autumn day, clear
and blue and mild. We had a most wonderful
turnout of 90 people – the most ever! The room
was perfect with its view over the winning post
and because we had so many tables, the Course
organisers gave us the Beau Art room across the
passage for our buffet, which meant guests
moved in and out freely and used the balcony to
watch the 9 races. We realised R31 000 in much
needed funds. We thank all who joined us,

paying the price of R250 each, and hope that
everyone enjoyed the day.

Of course, without sponsors, who paid
R7000 to sponsor a race, this day would simply
not happen and we wish to give heartfelt thanks
to those who sponsored us yet again this year:

Lindbergh Trust (3 races)
Global Aviation Consultants (Rethea Mitchell)
Global Capital (Larry Nestadt)
Nashua (Ian Lellyett)
Basil Hersov (21 Squadron)

We were also very pleased to have full tables of
guests who attended from the sponsors, even
members from 21 Squadron. We are organising
NPO Certificates for the sponsors for their
donations.

Next year's Race Day has been booked for
Saturday 15th June, so as to miss all the Air
Shows that seem to take place in May. Hopefully
the weather will still be kind to us and we look
forward to an even greater attendance. Our
thanks to Phumelela and Isizwe for their great
hosting of the day and the superb catering.



Chairman Hennie van der Walt, his wife June and
cousin, Giel Venter who sponsored 6 Race Day
visitors



Nashua's guests seated at their table

SAAFA RACE DAY (Continued)



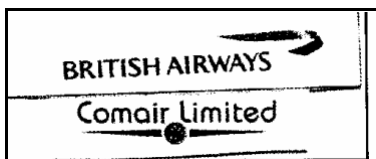
Tom Borrill (past Chairman) and Hennie van der Walt with Maj Gen Tsoko Khumalo, who is a JHB Branch Member and who represented the Chief of the Air Force at the Race Day. The General is becoming quite a regular at our monthly lunches as well



Stalwart Alan Wellman and his table of 17

BRITISH AIRWAYS/COMAIR NEW RAFFLE

Once again BA/Comair have kindly donated us two return tickets to Cape Town, which we started raffling at the Race Day. The price of the raffle is R25 a ticket. We enclose the raffle forms in this newsletter. Simply fill them in and return them to Carol at the SAAFA Office, and transfer/ deposit the money into our Banking Account. (Details on the form)



MONICA THEUNISSEN TURNS 95!



Monica Theunissen who turned 95 on 23rd July. She lives in Frail Care at Randjeslaagte. With the rank of Major, she was CO of the WAAFS in Cairo and was there during the Battle of Alamein, WWII

Monica was visited by Di Johnston, Maureen Andrew, Dee Palmer and Carol van Rensburg who took her good wishes from SAAFA and the WAAFS. They had tea with her, and her daughter and son-in-law and enjoyed some of her many fascinating war stories.

Editors Note: *We hope to feature some of these stories in our next edition.*

120 CLUB WINNERS

April - 1st Jack Featherstone, 2nd Alf Wilford, 3rd Sheppard
May - 1st WAAFS, 2nd Wally van der Meulen, 3rd Neille Maisels, **Attendance** Maren Booyesen
June - 1st Leon du Plessis, 2nd 'Lin Barratt, 3rd WAAFS, **Attendance** Basil Hersov
July - 1st WAAFS, 2nd Jean-Michel Girard, 3rd George Karrapolous, **Attendance** Maren Booyesen
PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT US IN 2012!

YOU ARE VERY WELCOME TO TAKE MORE THAN ONE NUMBER!! WE HOPE YOU WILL!! Remember the **120** is for the PRICE IN RANDS FOR THE YEAR, **not** the number of members! It's a fun way to raise much needed funds and we thank you for your generosity.

Thank you again to SO many of you who donate your prizes to SAAFA each month!!

SAAFA JOHANNESBURG LUNCHES at Old Edwardians

Last Friday of each month

Lunch Price for 2012 - R90

ALL WELCOME!

Lunches for the rest of the year:

31st August, 26th September

Xmas Lunch 30th November (Price to be advised, but we hope to keep it as low as possible)

Phone Carol if you want to book (011 616 7406)

REMEMBER OUR NEW FEE STRUCTURE

We thank those members who responded to our Chairman's letter sent with our March Newsletter asking for assistance with our Benevolence payments. **(See Chairman's follow-up and thank you letter inserted)**

Life Membership fee: R100
Annual Membership fee R50 per year
Associate Membership fee R50 per year

Memorial fees R50 per year
(ALL MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO PAY THESE FEES YEARLY)

WAAF REPORT

By Di Johnston

Secretary Carol has been very, very active organising shows at Monte Casino complex. The WAAFS earn a portion of each ticket – on an average R20 – which helps our fund raising enormously – very painless! We have to encourage more of the Johannesburg SAAFA members to attend these shows. Phantom of the Opera was a huge success and Cabaret has raised R1080 for our 'coffers' (126 people attended – the most ever!).

We elected to buy 5 tickets for the 120 Club in response to Hennie's 'begging' letter and were delighted to draw 1st prize in the draw at the May lunch (and then 3^d prize at the June lunch), and, rather embarrassingly, the 1st prize again at the July lunch!

We decided to donate our winnings to a food hamper for Des and Lee Grace as they have not been well and will soon be moving to a Frail Care.

From our funds the WAAFS were able to give each of our beneficiaries R200.00 at Easter time. Each 'gal' visited her beneficiary or senior with an Easter egg or chocolate – well received!

Until we have a long and important agenda the 'gals' find meeting after a SAAFA lunch on the last Friday of the month a better proposition as no weekend travelling is involved – a good scheme to get us all to the lunches!!

The response to my invitation to SAAFA JHB Members to attend a talk by Selwyn 'Scully' Levin on the 12th June at Bryanston Country Club was most gratifying. We had 20 members from Air Force guys and wives attending. He will hopefully be addressing our SAAFA lunch in January.

Last but not least was the most unexpected and for me a very proud moment when the original WAAFS received SAAFA medals and awards at the Congress this year. A testament that our work does not go unnoticed and is appreciated. The 'gals' were, for a change, speechless !!



Founder members of the WAAFS who received Congress awards this year.

The 'gals' have decided to do Christmas in July for our beneficiaries who are still able to cook for themselves – we will deliver hampers of 'comfort food' some time after the July SAAFA lunch.

Carol has already booked for a show in December – Dirty Dancing – at the Teatro, Monte Casino. Once again we are very grateful to her as this will bring in funds for our seniors and beneficiaries at Christmas time.

We will be approaching members at the October lunch for groceries (or cash donations) for our Hampers to be delivered to Beneficiaries and Seniors early in December – they are always very well received and appreciated.

DIRTY DANCING!

**Don't be put off by the name!!
Its based on the film in which Patrick Swayze played a dance teacher at an American Holiday Camp (a Butlin type place) and it is a very sweet story with great dancing. It was also a West End hit in London a while ago.**

This is the WAAFS next theatre outing for which Carol has booked 100 tickets and it will be on

**SUNDAY 2ND DECEMBER,
at THE PIETER TORIEN TEATRO
at Montecasino at 18H00..**

We have obtained a special price of R180 for the tickets (usual price R350)!

Should you wish to book tickets, please phone Carol (at 011 616 7406) as soon as possible. We will not be able to get more than 100 tickets as it is selling very fast!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE OUTING – AND TO YOUR SUPPORT IN THIS 'PAINLESS' AND RATHER DELIGHTFULLY DECADENT WAY OF FUNDRAISING!!

LOOKING FOR :

**SQUADRON 31 AND SQUADRON 34 SAAF,
2 WING, 205 GROUP RAF WORLD WAR II
VETERANS**



We are a group of interested parties (sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, etc) of veterans of 31 and 34 Squadrons SAAF.

The Squadrons flew Liberators and played a major role in the Warsaw Airlift. We are trying to gather as much information on the members of the two squadrons, eg : name, rank, mustering and a photo of the member.

If you know of anyone who was in 31 and 34 Squadron in Egypt and Italy (Celone, Foggia), during 1944 and 1945, please let us know.

We are trying to compile a list of all the Squadron members.

Any information will be most welcome and please leave your contact details as well, so we can contact you.

Editor's note:

This article is submitted by:

Christel de Wit (daughter of the late Sq.31, Air Cpl Chris de Wit, Fitter Armourer Aircrafts)

Contact e-mail: mofo@iconnect.co.ke

or christelznz@gmail.com

OR Contact Carol on 011 616 7406 or e-mail and the information will be passed on.

FLASHBACK TO THE GRAND RAND AIR SHOW HELD ON 20TH MAY

Leon du Plessis, SAAFA JHB Treasurer, who also does broadcasting at Air Shows for Capital Sounds (Brian Emmenis), set up his little gazebo and Secretary, Carol spent the day at the Air Show selling regalia and trying to entice new members to join our Association (we obtained two!)



A spectacular fly-past at the Rand Air Show

IN MEMORIAM

We say farewell to Jack Speirs who passed away on 14th June after a long and painful illness.

Jack served in SAAF from 1942 to 1945.

He joined SAAFA on 10th September 1973 and regularly came to lunches with John Okell (who now comes to lunches in a wheelchair), and the late Derek Upfold (father of David Upfold, past Chairman of SAAFA Dubai). Jack stopped coming to lunches about two years ago when he could no longer walk properly.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE

A SAD PASSING TO HIGHER SERVICE



GLYN BAXTER 1955 - 2012

Glyn Baxter, wife and "co-pilot" of Greg, passed away suddenly on 1st July 2012 at the Mulbarton Hospital, Johannesburg South. She had had ongoing health problems after undergoing stomach surgery for a perforated ulcer four years ago. She will be remembered for her love of the aged, especially those afflicted with Alzheimers. She worked at the Ouertuis vir Bejaardes in Alberton as a nursing sister. Glyn was also a champion for all animals. Glyn and Greg were married for 35 years and have two children, Douglas Gregg, and Storm Anne.

OUR CONDOLENCES TO GREG AND FAMILY

FLY WITH THE ANGELS

IN MEMORIAM

BOB METTER

Our condolences to the family and friends of Bob Metter, who passed away in Australia towards the end of May.

Bob (Frank Robert) Metter served in the SAAF from 1942 to 1943. He joined SAAFA in 1946 as an Annual Member, transferring to Life Membership on 1st February 1957.

He had lived in Erlsternwick, Victoria, Australia for many years.

REST IN PEACE

**APPOINTMENT OF
NEW CHIEF OF THE AIR FORCE**

Congratulations to MAJ. GEN. FABIAN ZIMPANDE (ZAKES) MSIMANG as the new Chief of the South African Air Force from 1 October 2012.

We wish him all the best for the future.

We say good-bye to LT. GEN. CARLO GAGIANO and his lovely wife LEONE and will miss them.

B-17 IN 1943

*The Ron Hammon story
submitted by Gordon Dyne*



The damaged B-17

A mid-air collision on February 1, 1943, between a B-17 and a German fighter over the Tunis dock area, became the subject of one of the most famous photographs of World War II. An enemy fighter attacking a 97th Bomber Group formation went out of control, probably with a wounded pilot, then continued its crashing descent into the rear of the fuselage of a Fortress named All American, piloted by Lt. Kendrick R. Bragg, of the 414th Bomber Squadron. When it struck, the fighter broke apart, but left some pieces in the B-17.

The left horizontal stabilizer of the Fortress and left elevator were completely torn away. The two right engines were out and one on the left had a serious oil pump leak. The vertical fin and the rudder had been damaged, the fuselage had been cut almost completely through connected only at two small parts of the frame and the radios, electrical and oxygen systems were damaged. There was also a hole in the top that was over 16 feet long and 4 feet wide at its widest and the split in the fuselage went all the way to the top gunners turret.

Although the tail actually bounced and swayed in the wind and twisted when the plane turned and all the control cables were severed, except one single elevator cable still worked, and, miraculously, the aircraft still flew!

The tail gunner was trapped because there was no floor connecting the tail to the rest of the plane. **(continued on page 11)**

B-17 STORY (Continued)

The waist and tail gunners used parts of the German fighter and their own parachute harnesses in an attempt to keep the tail from ripping off and the two sides of the fuselage from splitting apart. While the crew was trying to keep the bomber from coming apart, the pilot continued on his bomb run and released his bombs over the target.

When the bomb bay doors were opened, the wind turbulence was so great that it blew one of the waist gunners into the broken tail section. It took several minutes and four crew members to pass him ropes from parachutes and haul him back into the forward part of the plane. When they tried to do the same for the tail gunner, the tail began flapping so hard that it began to break off. The weight of the gunner was adding some stability to the tail section, so he went back to his position.

The turn back toward England had to be very slow to keep the tail from twisting off. They actually covered almost 70 miles to make the turn home. The bomber was so badly damaged that it was losing altitude and speed and was soon alone in the sky. For a brief time, two more Me-109 German fighters attacked the All American. Despite the extensive damage, all of the machine gunners were able to respond to these attacks and soon drove off the fighters.

The two waist gunners stood up with their heads sticking out through the hole in the top of the fuselage to aim and fire their machine guns. The tail gunner had to shoot in short bursts because the recoil was actually causing the plane to turn.

Allied P-51 fighters intercepted the All American as it crossed over the Channel. They also radioed to the base describing that the empennage was waving like a fish tail and that the plane would not make it and to send boats out to rescue the crew when they bailed out. The fighters stayed with the Fortress taking hand signals from Lt. Bragg and relaying them to the base. Lt. Bragg signalled that 5 parachutes and the spare had been "used" so five of the crew could not bail out. He made the decision that if they could not bail out safely, then he would stay with the plane and land it.

Two and a half hours after being hit, the aircraft made its final turn to line up with the runway while it was still over 40 miles away. It descended into an emergency landing and a normal roll-out on its landing gear.

When the ambulance pulled alongside, it was waved off because not a single member of the crew had been injured. No one could believe that the aircraft could still fly in such a condition. The fortress sat placidly until the crew all exited through the door in the fuselage and the tail gunner had climbed down a ladder, at which time the entire rear section of the aircraft collapsed onto the ground.

The rugged old bird had done its job.

CONGRATULATIONS ON REACHING 90



Woolfie Tobiansky holding his "Air Force" cake, at his Birthday Party

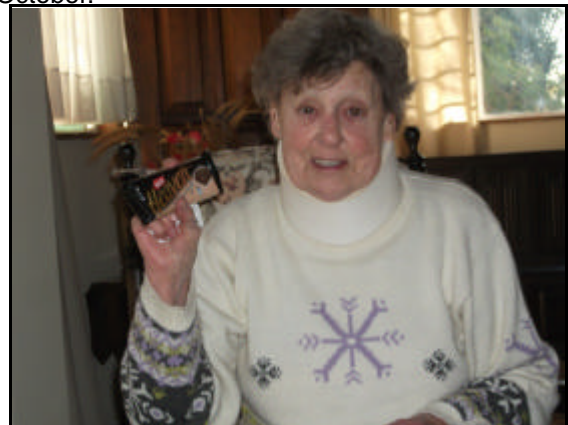
Woolfie had a lunch at the Club at Inyoni, in Edenvale where he lives. It was a very convivial and well-attended function and we wish him well. Woolfie has always supported SAAFA and assists us with monthly Benevolent donations.

INSERTS IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- 1. Letter from the Chairman – Thanks & Finances**
- 2. BA Raffle – please participate**
- 3. 120 Club – Tickets now R120 for TWO as it is the second half of the year. We are up to number 128**

TEA WITH MARY

Mary was born in England and was studying to be a nurse when World War II broke out. She married John Findlayson and was pregnant with their first child John when he was killed in action. Later she married Barney Collins and they came to live in South Africa. Mary was very active in the 1820 Settler Association and cared for many immigrants who came over from the U.K. She and had two daughters. Mary's children all live with her in her home and take care of her. She joined RAFA many years ago and was a very active work for them. She has been a SAAFA Member since the 1990's. She turns 88 in October.



Mary Collins at her home in Kensington where WAAF Maureen Andrew and the Editor visited her

PICNIC IN THE PARK
Family Musical Picnic at the Military Museum
SUNDAY 19TH AUGUST 2012

11h00 TO 15h00

Entrance Charge to Museum and Picnic :
R60 adults, R30 Pensioners and Children
WW2 Veterans FREE

Highlights: SA Air Force Military Band
Combined Tvl Scottish, SA Irish
And Wits Rifles Pipe Bands
Alwyn the Ventriloquist
John & Dan Musical duo
Veterans' Commemoration

Venue:

The Ditsong National Museum of Military History,
22 Erlswold Way (Cor Eastwold Way),
Saxonwold Johannesburg

SAAFA JOHANNESBURG LUNCH HELD ON
27TH JULY 2012

Rob Milne spoke about new information on the Boer War at our lunch which had a very disappointing turnout of only 47 – the lowest this year. July, of course, is usually a bad month as people are ill or away.



Rob Milne with his speaker's gift. He is pictured with Bruce Harrison (Centre), the Chairman of the RAF Officers Club, who thanked him for his speech and Chairman Hennie, who introduced him

SOME FRESH INSIGHTS INTO THE
ANGLO-BOER WAR 1899-1902
(from Rob's speech)

There were 3 balloon detachments attached to the Royal Engineers – a total of 20 observation balloons were brought to South Africa. They were made of rubberised sailcloth fabric and each filled with 11 000 cubic feet of hydrogen.

Graded for heights of 4 000 feet at Aldershot, they battled for height where they were deployed at the high South African altitudes. There were 8 balloons in Ladysmith during the siege that only achieved heights of 500 feet. By the fourth day of

the siege, two had been lost to enemy shellfire and one in a storm.

On 24th October 1899 (soon after war's commencement) two mysterious discs were observed moving in the night sky over the Transvaal, from Irene in the Pretoria area towards Springs. They were accompanied by "searchlights moving about the sky", and were reported to General Joubert as being possible British observation balloons. If the balloons had already arrived in South Africa, they were many hundreds of miles away and no explanation was ever forthcoming. Today this event would have been classified as a UFO sighting!

Captured British officers, including Winston Churchill and Captain Haldane, were held at the State Model School in Pretoria. Every afternoon a man walked his St Bernard dog past the Schol, tapping along the pavement with his cane. The prisoners quickly tumbled to the fact that he was tapping out the recent war news using Morse code. After Pretoria was captured by the British, a Mr Patterson received a commendation for his action by Lord Roberts as well as gifts from the British Officers who had been incarcerated. British by birth, Patterson had been a telegraphist employed by Transvaal Republic after taking the Oath of Allegiance. After the war, in 1911, he was appointed Postmaster of Pretoria. In 1917 an article appeared in "Die Volkstem" accusing him of helping Captain Haldane to escape from the School on 12 December 1899. Patterson then sued the newspaper for 1 000 pounds in a civil claim for damages. Against the background of breaking his Oath, he was only awarded one pound plus costs. The judge remarked that as long as his conduct was approved, Patterson was satisfied, but when blamed he resented it.

In 1914, twelve years after the war, a criminal libel case was brought against the minor politician, Jan Munnik by the Prime Minister Louis Botha. During an election meeting in Booyens, a working-class suburb of Johannesburg, Munnik had called Botha to account for 134 gold bars that went missing whilst Botha was Commandant General of the old Transvaal Republic and the Boers were retreating eastwards from Pretoria.

The judge found in favour of Botha and on 17th December 1915, the Appeal Court upheld the decision on the basis that a political candidate must "fight fair in an election". The issue of the missing "Kruger Millions" was in fact never given the attention it deserved in this trial. According to calculations there are still 1 202 gold bars unaccounted for, which are worth R6.6 billion today!

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