



The South African Military History Society

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Krygshistoriese Vereniging

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NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2018

The Chairman, Jan-Willem Hoorweg, opened the final meeting of the year by extending a special word of welcome to all visitors.

The exciting news is that the first Military History Journal to be published by the Society as opposed to the Museum, has been received from the printers. It is a 60-page bumper issue. Thanks were expressed to the editor, Susanne Blendulf, who was ably assisted by members Marjorie Dean and Robin Smith.

Notices being dealt with, the Jan-Willem proceeded by introducing our (only) speaker, retired **Royal Fleet Auxiliary Captain Jeremy Carew OBE**, who had addressed us in the past. Jeremy was born in Belfast in 1941 and seems to have been destined for the sea, his father being a navigator on an aircraft carrier, later released from the Navy to become a Suez Canal pilot. Having spent the first number of years of his life in Egypt, the family moved back to England in 1952. He received his pre-sea training on HMS *Worcester*, where he was ship mates with our curtain raiser speaker last month, Ian Thurston. Various postings to different ships followed, and he received his first command of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary *Tidespring* in 1989. His last command was that of RFA *Sir Geraint*. Jeremy is now semi-retired but remains a marine consultant in international ships and port security.

Jeremy's talk centred around the **support given by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary of the task force during the short Falklands War** that took place between Great Britain and Argentina. The vast scale of the operation was ably demonstrated by Jeremy in diagrams and photos of all the different Fleet Auxiliary ships involved in the campaign.

The Argentinians resented the so called "British Occupation" of the Falklands Islands and decided to invade the islands - called by them the Malvinas - in March 1982. Various units from the RFA were then ordered south with fuel, supplies and other naval stores. The British Task force 317.8 was formed in early April to intervene, after Argentinean forces landed in Port Stanley and forced the surrender of the vastly outnumbered British forces. Most of the RFA flotilla was now ordered to sea, as well as several nuclear submarines to patrol the South Atlantic.

The plan was to achieve proper loading at the half way station of the Azores before proceeding south. As executive officer of the RFA *Olmeda*, Jeremy was intimately involved in the operation to support the military action. When South Georgia was also occupied by the Argentineans, the action began in earnest, the Royal Marines being prominently involved in the recapturing of the island. In the meantime, the Argentinean Navy cruiser *Belgrano* was located and sunk by the nuclear submarine HMS *Conqueror*. Action and counter-action followed before Operation Sutton

(landing on the Falkland Islands) began on the 21st May.

This was followed by further action against the Argentine occupation force on South Thule (Operation Keyhole) before the pack ice closed and the Argentinean forces could dig in further. The RFA did not come through unscathed in the conflict. Several attacks were carried out by Mirage aircraft from the Argentinean air force, and a lone Hercules transport aircraft (!) dropped bombs on the *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram*, in which there were 50 casualties. By the middle of June all resistance on the islands came to an end, ending a short but violent encounter between two nations.

A long question and answer session followed Jeremy's talk, after which he was thanked for his excellent presentation.

Replacing the main lecture, a DVD entitled **The Story of the Spitfire** was then shown. This dealt with the history and the introduction of the iconic fighter plane the Supermarine Spitfire, which did so much to change the course of the war in favour of the Allies.

This plane could match the excellent Messerschmidt Bf 109 of the Luftwaffe, and played a major role in the Battle of Britain. The combination of the airframe together with the Rolls Royce Merlin engine and dual cannon/machine gun armament proved ideal and won the aircraft a place in history as a thoroughbred fighter.

Fighting in the front line the Spitfire (of which about 54 remain airworthy) saw production of around 24 different variants, and over 20 000 were eventually built. The Mark V remains the one of which most were built.

Jan-Willem then closed the evening with the hope that everyone would enjoy the coming Festive Season, and bidding everyone a wonderful year ahead. The meeting then broke up to enjoy refreshments.

Jan-Willem Hoorweg
Acting Scribe

Payments of subscriptions 2018 - Bank charges

Invoices have been sent out to all listed members. Please try to make electronic payments - the bank is now charging R50 to process a cash deposit and R45 to process a cheque.

If you HAVE to use those methods please therefore add the bank charge to the amount you are paying.

Cash paid at lecture meetings will not attract the extra amount, since it can be used to pay for other items e.g. stationery or postage.

Joan Marsh
Hon Treasurer

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

Johannesburg:

18 January 2018 (NOTE THIS IS THE THIRD THURSDAY IN JANUARY)

CR: Hamish Paterson “Pharsalus – Caesar vs Pompey, 48 BC”

ML: George Shaw “West Point and the American Civil War”

8 February 2018 (Back to the usual second Thursday)

CR: Jan-Willem Hoorweg “Water als Wapen”

ML: Johan Myburgh “Dresden 13 February 1945”

KZN in Durban:

Thursday 18 January 2018

DDH: Rob Suberg “The South African Police cap Badge”

ML: Peter Williams “ISIS. Only the beginning of the end”

Cape Town:

In recess until January 18th 2018

Please contact Johan van den Berg at warbooks@mweb.co.za or

SAMHSEC:

Monday 8th January 2018

CR: Franco Cilliers “South Africa’s Mobile Watch Units: A brief history”

ML: Ian Copley “The Spanish Armada”

CR= curtain raiser; ML= main lecture; DDH = Darrell D Hall Memorial Lecture