

RHODESIAN LIGHT INFANTRY – REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

AFRICA

54th MEMORIAL SERVICE - 31 JANUARY 2015

On Saturday 31st January 2015 members of the RLI RA Africa, other Regiments and Services, family and friends gathered at the Dickie Fritz MOTH Shellhole in Edenvale, Johannesburg to celebrate the 54th Birthday of the Battalion but more importantly to honour those who fell whilst in service with 1RLI. The event took the form of a parade and service followed by a braai and general fellowship and was organised by the 'Afrika Korps' under the leadership of Charlie "Rommel" Norris.

Toast to the Battalion

The formalities began under WO2 Brian Lewis who formed the RLI contingent into a circle to hear the creed read out by Dave "Bongwe" Russell (1Cdo) and to drink a toast to the Battalion.



Brian Lewis and the Colour Party consisting of Alan Strachan and Chris Ras



Members of the RLI RA preparing to toast the Battalion



Dave "Bongwe" Russell reading the Creed before toasting the Battalion.

The Creed

What manner of Men are those who have faces of boys and hearts like lions that still wear the Rhodesian Light Infantry Green Beret.

They are firstly all men that were toughened and robust through hard physical training and endurance. As a result they proved themselves time and time again in battle through their offensive eagerness and physical well-being. They deployed from the air and in doing so conquered fear.

Their duty lay in the van of battle. They are proud of this honor and never failed in any task. They had the highest standards in all things whether it is skill in battle or smartness in performing their peacetime duties. They have shown themselves to be as tenacious in defense as they were courageous in the attack. They are in fact, men apart every one a warrior.

Of all the factors which make for success in battle, the spirit of the warrior is the most decisive. That spirit will be found in completeness in the men who wear the RLI Green Beret.

Men of the RLI -The Battalion."

March to the Garden of Remembrance

Once the Creed and the Toast to the Battalion had been completed the men formed up to begin the March to the Garden of Remembrance. A new Tradition was introduced to commemorate all future Regimental Parades. Members of the RLI who had been awarded honours for bravery recipients would be honoured by leading the RLI Contingent on Parade. On this occasion 'The Medal Party' was as follows: Front Rank: Lt. Simon Carpenter BCR Support Commando...Middle Rank: Sgt Charlie Warren BCR 3 Cdo. Rear Rank WO2 D J Fraser MFC 3 Cdo. They were positioned directly behind the Colour Party.



The Squad formed up ready to March to the Garden of Remembrance



The parade led by the Witwatersrand Rifles Association Pipe Band under the command of Pipe Major Andy Sawyer

When the Squad reached the Garden of Remembrance the command to “March on the Colour” was given by the Parade Commander, our Patron Lieutenant Colonel Ian Bate. Following “Parade Stand at Ease” the CEO of the RLI RA Bill Wiggill gave his Opening Address followed by the thanking of all those that had helped put the day together.



CEO Bill Wiggill delivering his Opening Address. To his right is Alan Strachan and standing behind is Craig Van Niekerk. Craig travelled from Zimbabwe especially for the event and was responsible for the flag duties during the sounding of the Last Post and Reveille.



The Colour Party flanking Lt Col Ian Bate. The RLI Crest at the base of the rostrum was one of the originals from the Battalion Barracks. Brian Lewis very kindly restored it and it is now the property of the RLI RA Africa and will form part of our equipment for Memorial Services going forward.



A very smart Chris Ras formed part of the “Colour Party” and it was hard to believe it was 35 years since he had been part of the Laying Up of the Colours Ceremony in October 1980.

Patrons Address

Following the CEO’s welcome Lieutenant Colonel Ian Bate as Patron of the RLI RA was invited to give his address. Reproduced below is the address.

ADDRESS BY PATRON OF THE RLI RA LT COL IAN BATE

“CEO Bill Wiggill, Chairman Charlie Norris and committee of the ‘Afrika Korps’, members of SAS/Selous Scouts/Rhodesian Air Force/BSAP, family and friends of the RLI and especially to you the men of the RLI proudly on parade today, welcome and thank for being with us on our 54 birthday.

In typical RLI manner I have been asked to keep my address short so as not to interfere with the call of the bar.

On our birthday we honour our brave soldiers who did not come home. Sadly as you will hear later when the roll is read, the majority occurred during my watch. The reasons are many but a few I mention are:

The terrorist strength and supply of equipment increased dramatically

Major concentrations and build up were happening in Mozambique and Zambia.

They had become better organised and were receiving training and support from Eastern Bloc countries.

Our own strength was decreasing due to families leaving Rhodesia.

These factors largely contributed to what was then known as the Corporals War changing.

The RLI HQ were taken out of static JOC duties and placed directly under command of Comops together with the SAS and Selous Scouts, forming Special Forces. Major operations were conducted externally with Battalion Tactical HQ and at least two commandos. In addition numerous quick raids were carried to disrupt build up and capture equipment. Internally Ron Reid Daly and I advised Comops that we needed to concentrate our air and intelligence effort. This resulted in what was known as the Jumbo Fire Force. Operations under command RLI together with a concentrated Selous Scout effort and attachment of available TA units and BSAP would surround an area identified by intelligence as being extremely hot. Operations were successfully carried out in the Mount Darwin , Fort Victoria areas with the most successful being what we, in RLI, called the battle for Salisbury. Based at the Enterprise Country Club, 1 Commando produced record kills and captures.

During internal and external raids our own casualties increased, and many feats of valour by our brave RLI soldiers go unrecorded and unrecognised. Given time perhaps many more bravery medals would have been awarded. We know what we did and I pay tribute to the bravery against tremendous odds that we faced.

I also pay tribute to those magnificent men in their flying machines who were so much part of our joint success. We honour our close bonds with SAS and Selous Scouts, many of whom came from our ranks. The BSAP played a vital role in providing back up and intelligence. Will you ever forget the fierce battles at Coq de 'Or. In fact Rob Bristow who is here today recalls being punched in the jaw by a RLI Troopie, but says he got his own back.

Today we honour our fallen, we remember them with pride. We also salute the memory of those who have been called to serve in 2RLI our second battalion in the sky. May God bless them all and those who served?

The Saints will keep marching on. "



Lt Col Ian Bate (Patron) addressing the Parade

Opening Prayer and Sermon



Padre, Reverend Lt. Col Bill Dodgen delivering the opening prayer and Sermon

The Rhodesian Light Infantry Roll of Honour

Following on from the Sermon the Chairman of the Africa Region, Charlie Norris read the Roll of Honour to the strains of the Penhalonga Piper, in remembrance of those who had fallen whilst serving with the RLI



Charlie Norris (Chairman) reading the Roll of Honour

The Last Post

After the reading of the Roll of Honour the parade was brought to attention for the playing of the Last Post by Legioneer Reese Davies, during which the parade saluted. A minutes silence then ensued followed by the playing of Reveille.



The Last Post

Wreath Laying

As the last notes of Reveille drifted away on the highveld wind the sombre ceremony of laying the wreaths commenced. The wreath on behalf of the RLI was laid by Len Beechey and he was followed by representatives from the BSAP, the Airforce, SAS and Selous Scouts. Members of the parade then broke ranks to place crosses on behalf of the fallen from the various commandos. Members of the public were also invited to lay wreaths or place crosses on behalf of their loved ones. It was particularly touching to see one dear old lady, complete with zimmer frame, being helped to the cenotaph by Carol Doughty to lay a private wreath. It was also very touching to see the daughter of the recently departed Trevor Schoulz lay a wreath on his behalf.



Major Graeme Wilson GCV SCR BCR laying a wreath on behalf of the SAS. Graeme did the RLI RA the great honour of attending and for wearing his medals.



WO2 Willie van der Reit for the Selous Scouts Association



Simon Carpenter BCR saluting the fallen



Charlie Warren BCR paying his respects



Michelle Schoultz and Lorraine Davidovics placing crosses in memory of Trevor Schoultz

As the original men of the RLI grow older and fewer it is up to their descendents to carry forward the memory of this great Regiment. Thus it was very pleasing to see so many children of The Saints present at the Service. It was particularly rewarding to see Gary and Debbie Huxham's boys who are all associate members of the RLI RA present and dressed smartly in their black blazers and Association ties. Well done those men.



The Huxham Boys

Following the laying of wreaths and the paying of last respects Lt Col Bate handed the parade back to WO2 Brian Lewis who called the Parade to attention and led by the band and the Colour Party we marched off to When the Saints Go Marching in. After a few moments the parade led by Brian Lewis broke into singing "The Saints" with the squad providing backing vocals.



The Parade marching off singing the Saints. The bodies may have changed but the body language has not.

Brian Lewis dismissed the Parade after toasting the colours and then the photo opportunities were taken before the men on parade got dressed into more casual clothing for the after party.



Simon Carpenter, Mick Jeffery and Luis Figureido, comrades in arms and ex Lord Malvern schoolmates.



Dave "Bongwe" Russel, Rob Marsh(Treasurer) and Brian Lewis scan the crowd for any potential subs defaulters. Given that the members are getting older and that there is no social welfare in South Africa, there is a greater call on the Association to help members in need out. The payment of subs plays a large part in providing funds for welfare.

The Africa Branch 54th Birthday Parade and Memorial Service held at Dickie Moth Shellhole and organised by the 'Afrika Korps' was a great success. There were 73 men on Parade and the drill and general turnout was the envy of the other Associations present. Dickie Fritz is rapidly becoming the spiritual home of the RLI in South Africa and it was very pleasing to see the number of ouens who have embraced the need for the Parade and have spent hard earned cash getting the correct kit. This is evidence of this spirit and comradeship that is ever growing in this part of the world. All souls numbered over 120.

The committee would like to thank our 'official' photographers, Troy Lewis, Mads, Adrian and the ever present Bandy Emeric for the work that they put in to record the event.

Rob Marsh

FESTIVITIES

The parade was followed by a spit braai South African style and thanks must go to James Wessels and Feinschmecker Quality Meats for the most generous donation of two sheep for the event. This was supported by Keith Blanchard supplying the charcoal and spits.

WELFARE

Again CQ Len Beechey was hard at his stall selling RLI memrobilia and the profits from these sales go to Association Welfare. Len's hard work brought in R18 000.00. Although there was no entrance fee charged and the meal was free to members the proverbial 'hat' was taken around and another R 8 500.00 received in Donations from generous members. Regrettably there were a few 'defaulters' who did not attend the Memorial Service or donate that were seen filling their plates with the 'free meal' Thanks must go to Craig Bone for the magnificent painting of fire force ouens and to Russell Fulton for his excellent rendition of the 'King' Lt. Col David Parker. Stalwart Graham Roy again produced and donated outstanding first digital prints, full size and on artists canvas of these and the princely sum of R 8 500,00 was collected from the auction of these two paintings for RLI Welfare



Jimmy Gallagher's daughter and her man were seen manning the spits and carving up two sheep as punters came for lunch. Even when the rain started they were not deterred. Thank you for your hard work in this. Again the makings, salads and sweets were provided by the honorary crow and outstanding caterer, Lynette Theron a superstar in her support.

All present most definitely enjoyed the camaraderie and festivities of the day and we all look forward to next year's 55th (The big one) Reunion with men and crows from around the globe gathering

A Gallery is being created in the members section of the RLIRA website of the Africa so login and check on a regular basis to see more pictures of the African events