

THE

RESERVE FORCE VOLUNTEER

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SUMMER 2019



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THE UPDATED RESERVE FORCE SERVICE SYSTEM

PART-TIME VOLUNTEERS - MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL



Durban Remembers its Fallen

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Col Pat Acutt, SSO Res PO KZN, laying a wreath.

The past three months have seen a hive of activity being played out by the Defence Reserves Provincial Office KZN (Def Res PO KZN), the SA Legion Durban Branch and the eThekweni Council in preparation for the Centenary Armistice Remembrance Day (1918 to 2018) on Sunday 11th of November 2018.

1918 to 2018

The commemoration of the end of the First World War 100 years ago was celebrated around the world. Durban was no different. As a port city, thousands of soldiers embarked or disembarked from the harbour. Ships carrying Australians and New Zealanders broke their long journey by docking in Durban. Many needed medical attention and there are evocative photos of wounded men taken on outings from the DLI headquarters, which had been converted into a hospital, to Mitchell Park.

The Battle's O'er

In the early morning hours, as the sun rose, the first ceremony to mark the signing of the armistice at 05h00 on 11 November 1918, was held at the Cenotaph. South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Memorable Order of the Tin Hats (MOTHs) and SA Legion (SAL) along with the pipes and drums band of the Natal Mounted Rifles (NMR), Durban Regiment (DR) and 1 Medical Battalion were present.

The Group assembled at 05h30 and formed up. With the early morning sun rising over the City Hall, the ceremony concluded with the pipe and drum band playing "When the Battle's O'er", a traditional air played by pipers after a battle. It was in the Forest of Compiègne, 52 miles NE of Paris, that German soldiers signed the uncompromising instrument of surrender. Six hours later, at 11h00, hostilities ceased. On hearing that the war was over, one soldier exclaimed: "So it is really over! It was like the gift of another life." He would not be killed.



SS Mendi

Thereafter, at 07h00, a dignified lament was held at the Mendi Memorial Stone alongside the Maritime Museum. This simple stone was unveiled by President Zuma on 21 February 2017 to commemorate the sinking of the SS Mendi. This was South Africa's first maritime tragedy: 660 men died, comprising of 18 black volunteers from the South African Native Labour Corps, 33 crew, 2 white officers and 7 white NCOs. One of those NCOs was Colour Sergeant Charles Botha, a manager at the De Beers Diamond Mine in Kimberley. Representing their forbearer were his great grandson, Winston Owen and great granddaughter, Therese Owen who found the ceremony deeply moving. Botha's death left his 14 children without a father.



SS Mendi Memorial.



Durban Cenotaph.



Playing of the Last Post.





NFA signalling the 11th hour.

Armistice Centenary Service

The main service began at 10h30 at the cenotaph, now bathed in sunlight. With troops provided by SA Army Support Base KZN, SA Air Force Base Durban, SA Naval Base Durban and Area Military Health Unit KZN who were turned out smartly on parade. The event enjoyed a much larger turnout than in recent years. The desecration wrought upon the Cenotaph by scrap metal scavengers a year ago, was carefully concealed by nets of poppies made up by the SA Legion, symbolic of the fields of red poppies growing in Flanders during the horrors of the bloody trench assaults of the First World War. ⚙️

Flame of hope

As the day drew to a close, it was the turn of the military veterans to pay homage to those that 'gave their today for our tomorrow'. This year saw the Shadow March which included the lighting of the Flame of Hope at sunset.



Flame of Hope at sunset.



The combined bands of 1 Medical Battalion Group, Durban Regiment and Natal Mounted Rifles leading the Military Veterans to the Flame of Hope Ceremony.

