



# Contact! Contact!

June 2013

A monthly publication for the

## Rhodesian Services Association Incorporated

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Greetings,

A big thanks to all of you who made donations and/or became financial members. Your support is heart-warming.

I am pleased to tell you that our project to produce the definitive history of the Rhodesia Regiment, the project that has run my life since 2007, is close to completion. Publication will not mean the end of the work because then we have to sell the books, but I am relieved that all the material is in safe hands and is having the final polish done now.....and I can stop being lured into last minute changes chasing scraps of information. When I consider the countless hours that have gone into this book; the 400 people who have made submissions and assisted with it; and given that this project was initiated in order to respect all those who wore the Maltese Cross of the Rhodesia Regiment over its eighty year history; I feel a huge responsibility to make as perfect a job as possible. Surely this has been the biggest Rhodesian project of its type ever?

Other exciting news is that our **Contact! Contact!** team is to be joined by fifteen year old Cameron McNeil. Cameron lives in the USA. He has a very keen interest in Rhodesian history. Cameron's Dad, Andrew, served in the BSAP and has certainly raised his son as a Rhodesian. On account of attending to his school work, Cameron will be doing bi-monthly articles for us. I am sure you will all enjoy Cameron's work. You can get a bit of a feel for the kind of person Cameron is and see some of his work on his website <http://thetruthaboutrhodesia.weebly.com/> I hope that you will support and encourage this young man because it is people like him who keep the Flame burning.

### Rhodesian Services Association Purpose & Web Links

The Rhodesian Services Association Incorporated is an Incorporated Society as well as a Registered Charity under the New Zealand Charities Act 2005. The purpose of the Association is to provide benefit and education to the community. For detail and disclosure please refer to the opening page of our website [www.rhodesianservices.org](http://www.rhodesianservices.org)

We also have a Facebook group which you are welcome to join. We have loaded up a lot of photographs from various events, as well as others from our museum displays. We have found that Facebook is another platform assisting our purpose of preserving Rhodesian history. If you want to find us, search for Rhodesian Services Association on Facebook.

Please use these links on our website [www.rhodesianservices.org](http://www.rhodesianservices.org) for the following resources:

Guest Book <http://www.rhodesianservices.org/guest-book.htm>

Guest Map <http://www.rhodesianservices.org/guest-map.htm>

Events <http://www.rhodesianservices.org/events.htm>

Please remember to let us know if you are changing your email address.

## Obituaries

The Rhodesian Services Association holds a large Rhodesian flag for use at funerals. Please contact me at [hbomford@clear.net.nz](mailto:hbomford@clear.net.nz) to arrange delivery if required.



Gus Mason writes on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013:

*"It is with deep regret that I have to announce that after a long and brave struggle, our friend and colleague **Roy Capener** finally succumbed to the rigours of emphysema and answered the sunset call over the weekend.*

*Our condolences go out to Kathy, Shane and the rest of the family.*

*Roy was a member of the MT Troop at 1RLI, having joined No.1 Training Unit at Brady Barracks in Bulawayo, and his regimental number 2169 tells a story in itself."*

Keith Wawn writes:

**"Edward Dutton** succumbed to a stroke on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May, in Sydney. He had an initial stroke on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. He was 57 years old."



## Dateline Rhodesia 1890 – 1980 by Gerry van Tonder



### June

**Newsflash Headlines** +++ On 3 June 1896, General Sir Frederick Carrington arrives in Bulawayo to lead the final fight against amaNdebele rebels in the Matopos +++ On 16 June 1896, telegrams from Salisbury reach Bulawayo stating that whites had been murdered in three different parts of Matabeleland +++ On 5 June 1915, elements of 'B' Coy 2RR in German East Africa engage the enemy at M'Buyimi Ridge +++ On 14 June 1939, the BSAP establishes a station at Chirundu, shortly after the official opening of the bridge over the Zambezi River +++ On 6 June 1944, No 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron of the RAF, attack German positions near Bayeaux +++ On 13 June 1966, violence breaks out in Salisbury's Highfield and Harare Townships +++ On 26 June 1973, an Umtali magistrate jails two national service objectors to six months each +++ On 7 June 1978, a gang of ZIPRA terrorists brutally murder two British women mission teachers at the Salvation Army Usher Institute near Figtree +++

### **In Brief**

On 22 June 1890, Colonel Lord Methuen, as instructed by the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, Sir Henry Loch, arrived at the Pioneer Column's temporary camp on the Macloutsie River to conduct an inspection of the force before their departure for Matabeleland. Responding to Methuen's request, Captain Burnett formed a defensive laager of ox-wagons, simulating an imaginary attack by amaNdebele impis. Satisfied that the expedition was adequately kitted out with equipment and stores, Methuen gave the nod, and three days later the column trekked into the disputed area between the Macloutsie and Shashi Rivers, in anticipation of the final push into Matabeleland.



**A typical Pioneer laager**  
(*The Graphic*, London, 28 October 1893, thanks Alan Doyle)

On 4 June 1958 Batonka tribesmen under Headman Sianzembwe, staged the first display of resistance to Government's intention to move this ancient tribe away from the rising waters of Lake Kariba. Following an abortive attempt by the local District Commissioner to arrest the ringleaders, over the weeks that followed the police closely monitored the movements of gangs of agitators marching about with spears and knobkerries. With all plans to relocate the tribespeople at an impasse, in early September the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, Sir Arthur Benson, personally visited the area, accompanied by elements of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment. At a second attempt at addressing the Batonka, at a meeting attended by only a handful of unarmed men, the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, in a gesture borne out of frustration, threatened to use force to ensure compliance. On 10 September, over a hundred armed policemen arrived at Chisamu's kraal, where they were confronted by several hundred Batonka armed with spears. As the situation deteriorated rapidly, spears, stones, axes and knobkerries were met with a determined police response as, according to a Commission of Enquiry, 194 tear-gas shells, 230 rounds of 12-bore shotgun cartridges, 54 rounds of .303 ammunition and 53 rounds of 9mm ammunition were expended. Thirty four Batonka sustained gunshot and bludgeon injuries and eight were killed.



**A Batonka Village on the Zambezi River**  
(Photo Frank Clements)

At 2030 hours on the night of 23 June 1978, a group of eight to ten ZANLA terrorists arrived at the Elim Pentecostal Mission fifteen kilometres south of Umtali, and forced the resident white missionary families on to a sports field some four hundred metres from the main school. Here eight adults and four young children, one only three weeks old, were brutally beaten, axed and stabbed to death. All but one of the five women had been raped. A sixth woman, badly beaten and left for dead, managed to escape into the night but, after having been found later by Security Forces, died in a Salisbury Hospital.



### **What's in a name**

Situated some 58 kilometres from Gwelo on the railway line to Ft Victoria, is a remote siding called **Iron Mine Hill**, named for the ancient iron workings on an overlooking kopje. The kopje gained historical prominence in Rhodesia, being the rendezvous point on 16 October 1893 for the Victoria and Salisbury columns, prior to the force marching on GuBulawayo. Captain Campbell from Salisbury became the first BSACo casualty of the war, after being badly wounded in a skirmish with amaNdebele the previous day. In spite of Dr Jameson's efforts to save Campbell's life by amputating his leg, Campbell died. He is buried in a graveyard at an old Pioneer outspan, where many early travellers had also succumbed to malaria. Until the railway arrived, the outspan site served as a halt for the Zeederberg coach service.



In Rhodesia's early years, various surveys were carried out, including by the BSACo, to find a suitable site to bridge the Zambezi River, thereby connecting the two territories that shared this common border. A possible rail link between Sinoia and Kafue was considered, with a view to growing irrigated cotton in the Zambezi Valley and in so doing, allow for the establishment of new settlements. A direct route north to Zumbo and Feira, and from there to the sea, was investigated, but the whole area was found to be too remote and endemic with tropical diseases. Eventually, at a spot where the Zambezi is only 370 metres wide, a bridge was constructed spanning the river, giving birth to the settlement of **Chirundu**, named after a small range of hills in the locality. In 1939, the 415 metre long, single-span bridge was completed, and named the Otto Beit Bridge, after the man who had bequeathed a considerable sum of money to the Cape-Cairo Railway Trust. Ultimately, however, the railway line stopped just north of Sinoia.

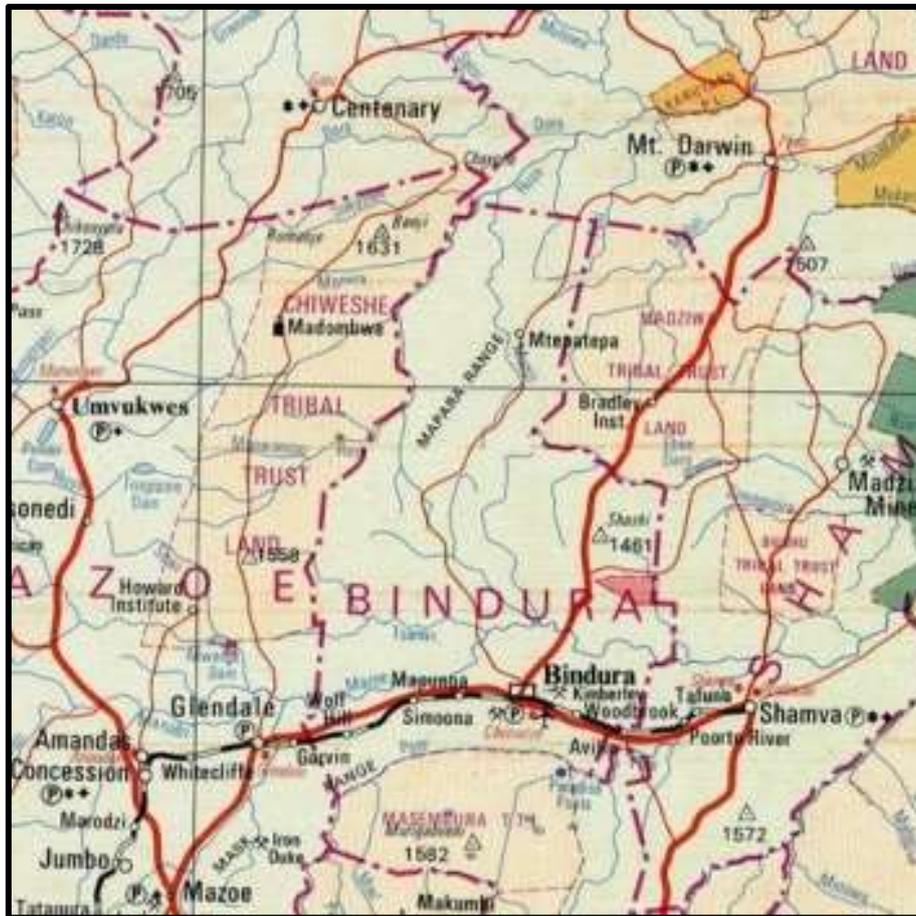


### **Operation Overload**

*"The Government has a duty to protect the lives and property of the people and at the moment we are failing to do this. For that reason, and not as a punishment, I require you to move into the protected areas I am building."*  
(District Commissioner, Chiweshe, quoted in the *Rhodesia Herald*, 25 July 1974)

In the 1950s, the conflict in Malaya saw the introduction by the British of the Briggs Plan, which sought to deny the Chinese guerrillas access to the peasant population by moving the latter into Protective Villages (PVs). Local people were moved into secure villages guarded by armed personnel, who were also responsible for checking the PV inhabitants in and out at dusk and dawn. The objective, generally successfully achieved, was to deny the insurgents access to food, shelter and information.

On 18 May 1973, the Rhodesian Government introduced further new emergency legislation which allowed for the compulsory collectivisation or consolidation of the populace of certain TTLs, especially where it was felt that subversion had reached uncontrollable levels. By the end of that year, some 8000 tribespeople had been moved away from their traditional homes near the border with Mozambique into government facilities in Gutsa in the Zambezi Valley. In April the following year, two hundred peasants from Madziwa TTL in Mashonaland were punished for assisting terrorists by being translocated to the opposite end of the country near Beit Bridge.



**Map of Chiweshe TTL showing its position in the middle of Commercial Farming areas**  
(Map thanks Nick Baalbergen)

It fell almost exclusively upon Internal Affairs and its agencies to implement, administer and defend the PV programme. The then Minister of Internal Affairs, Jack Mussett, in a parliamentary debate, would justify the programme as an 'operational imperative,' designed to isolate local tribespeople from terrorist influence, whilst also cutting off the latter's access to food and supplies. However, he did concede that the exercise would result in major social upheaval and a 'traumatic experience' for those affected. In the winter of 1974, the PV programme commenced in the hotbed of Chiweshe TTL, under the name Operation Overload.

The Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land lies within the Mazoe district, with its boundaries forming a long, narrow roughly rectangular outline, measuring approximately 70 kilometres south to north and about 20 kilometres east to west. Just outside the southern boundary lies the town of Concession and the offices of the District Commissioner, and to the west the town of Umvukwes. To the east is Bindura, while to the north-east and north-west lie the towns of Mount Darwin and Centenary. Chiweshe was surrounded on three sides by some of the most productive commercial agricultural land in the country. At its southern point Chiweshe was no more than 60 kilometres from Salisbury, and therefore formed a natural corridor from the north-eastern border districts into the capital. A ZANLA group had established itself in the area and, using particularly brutal coercive tactics, had gained a foothold. On-going brutalisation and killings of key community members as "examples," ensured the co-operation of the population, while the subversion of susceptible elements of the population established a support base. Surrounding commercial farms were being subjected to attack, and the landmining of roads was a rapidly escalating danger.

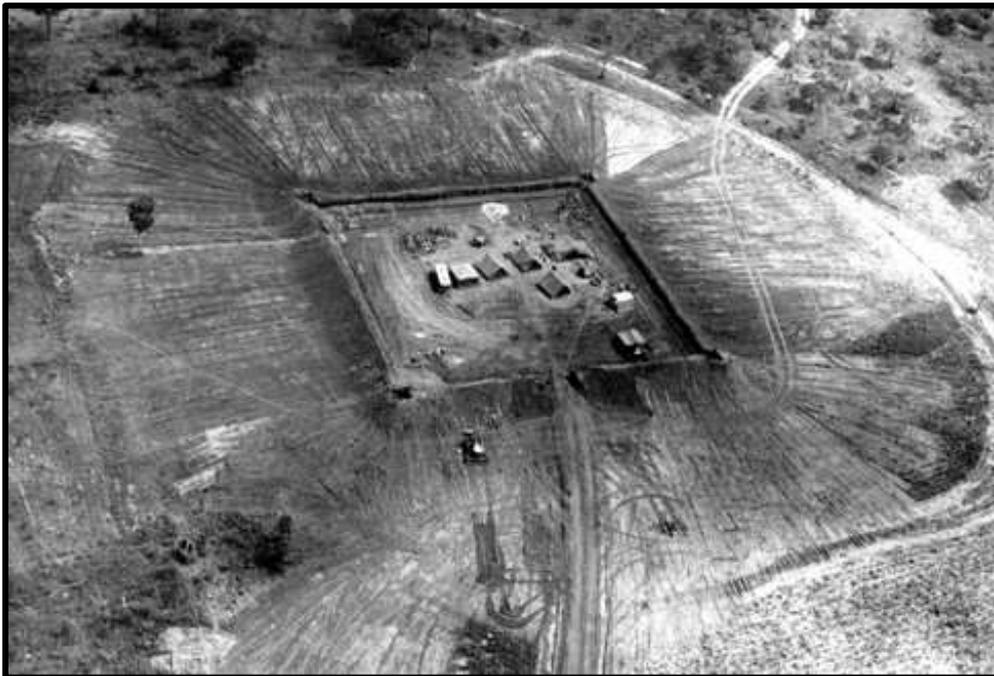
For some time, District Commissioner Bill Johnston had engaged with the community of Chiweshe, attempting to loosen the insurgents grip on the people. Standard meetings were held with tribal leaders and community meetings warning of the consequences of continued insurgent support. Selective punitive measures were employed. Eventually the population was advised that their relocation to Protective Villages was being considered. There was no improvement in the security situation, and the need to regain control over this strategically important corridor quickly and decisively had become both a political and military imperative.



**Intake 1 Internal Affairs National Servicemen passing out at Chikurubi**  
(Gerry van Tonder collection)

Johnston returned from a briefing at Centenary and advised his staff that the re-location was to be carried out to an extremely tight time schedule, his team of fifteen becoming five hundred strong by early June, when the teams for the twenty-one Protected Villages were brought into Chiweshe. Included were National Servicemen, like Nick Baalbergen, who had commenced their basic training at Llewelin Barracks as Intake 137 before being moved to Internal Affairs, where they underwent further training and preparation at Chikurubi and Mt Darwin. The majority of this group was, after a briefing, deployed directly to the raw sites of the proposed Protected Villages.

Initially, Primary Development Officers (PDOs) and Field Assistants (FAs) would be required to carry out the construction of the keeps and related infrastructure. DAs (District Assistants) would have to be seconded to man the keeps of each PV, remembering that the concept of the DSAs (District Security Assistants) had not yet been formalised – regular civilian DAs were brought in for the task. Fencing contractors would have to be brought in for the perimeter fencing, and equipment for the supply of water and related infrastructure would have to be procured. On the ground, sites for each of the twenty-one proposed PVs had to be located and the population advised of the "timetable" for their relocation. Sufficient transport had to be made available to carry out the relocation. All of this preparation was to be completed within a matter of six weeks.



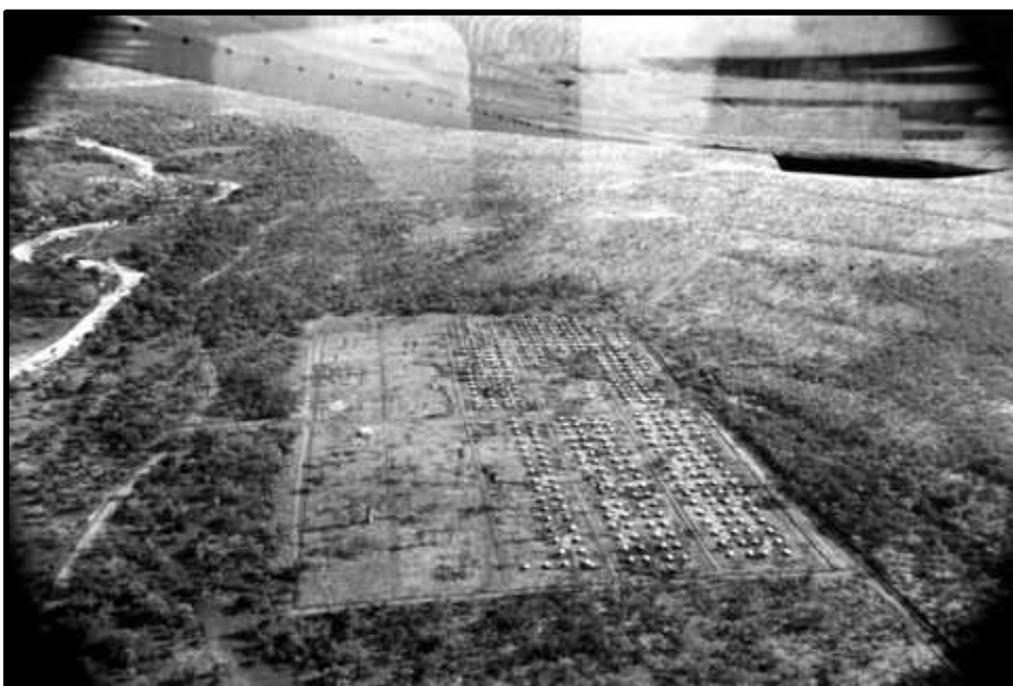
**Graphic image of a Bulldozer forming the earthen walls of a keep (Ft Misery, Nembire, Mt Darwin)**  
(Gerry van Tonder collection)

The Protected Villages, spread over the length of Chiweshe, were numbered from "1" in the north, to "21" in the south west, with a centrally located administrative base at Chombira. The basis of deployment was one National Serviceman per PV, together with a contingent of DAs seconded from Districts throughout the country. At selected PV sites, two National Servicemen were deployed.

In addition to this core component, one Army National Serviceman was posted to each PV as required. A significant contingent of the South African Police (SAP) had been secured and was deployed specifically in support of the initial stages of the Operation, with small detachments of Quebec Company, SAP, posted strategically to PVs throughout Chiweshe.

This collection of widely divergent individuals brought together under unusual circumstances, had to quickly learn to work together as an integrated, cohesive team. Initially, accommodation was rudimentary; the Intaf personnel under a number of canvas sheets, SAP in their own tents. Water was initially brought in by tractor drawn "tanker" trailer, pumped from the river about seven hundred metres away. Food was in the form of "Rat Packs", supplemented by fresh produce purchased locally.

Despite the clear limitations placed on the activities of the SAP in the overall operation, some members nevertheless regularly volunteered to accompany Intaf on patrols. Baalbergen's contingent of DAs at PV21, 'Nyachuru', soon got into the routine in this unfamiliar environment. There was no existing rank structure in the squad, so after working with them for six weeks, he promoted a particularly promising DA, Thomas, with eleven years of Intaf service, to Corporal – he received an unexpected letter of thanks from him.



**Aerial view of the sprawling PV at Hoya, Centenary District**  
(Gerry van Tonder collection)

Nyachuru PV was located a couple of kilometres east of the Howard Institute, a large Salvation Army complex which included a well-equipped hospital. The Salvation Army presence in Chiweshe dated from 1923. The proximity of this complex proved to be a mixed blessing; the benefit of a medical facility close to the village was obvious. But the Howard Institute was also home to several staff members who were consistent, vocal and scathing critics of Government policy and the detrimental effects the implementation of the policies would have on the lives of the inhabitants of the area.

Dr Watt, in particular, had regularly confronted Government through the press since 1970. There were regular "confrontations" between Dr Watt and Intaf spokesmen up to the late 1970s, as evidenced by several articles appearing in *The Sunday Mail* and the *Rhodesia Herald* newspapers in March 1977. Nyachuru PV became the natural focus of attention for members of staff of the Howard Institute, especially during and immediately after the local community was moved into the village. The PV bore the brunt of the initial "bad press" simply because it was the most accessible from both the Howard Institute and from Salisbury. An article in the *Rhodesia Herald* of 31 July 1974, quoting Dr Pat Hill, was particularly scathing about the initial stages of the relocation into Nyachuru, pointing out the shortcomings of the operation. In truth, conditions were no different anywhere else in Chiweshe. The urgency of the

prevailing situation dictated the haste with which the relocation was required to be carried out, resulting in the installation of basic services lagging behind the actual move into the villages.

A dusk to dawn curfew, an essential element in regaining control, had been imposed in Chiweshe, a fact known to all who lived and worked in the area. The area excluded from the curfew was the land that would be enclosed by the proposed Protected Village perimeter fence. Before the fence was constructed night-time movements were restricted to the keep, so that the necessary defensive security measures could be introduced. It allowed elements of the Security Forces to operate freely in pursuit of the ZANLA group that had infiltrated the area.



**Public Address Control Room at a PV in Chiweshe**  
(Gerry van Tonder collection)

Nick Baalbergen relates an incident which shows how dangerous personal interpretation of curfew regulations were: *"From the direction of the river, about 700 metres away from the keep, we heard the unmistakable sounds of a "contact" in progress - automatic rifle fire, mainly single shot! We all mobilised to our defensive positions along the keep walls. The SAP brought out their machine gun. It soon became apparent that the only rifle fire was that of FNs, there was no distinctive crack of AK47 fire.*

*We stayed in our defensive positions, and within a minute or two we heard the high pitched, laboured whine of a vehicle engine at very high revs. A cloud of dust was rapidly making its way towards the keep entrance. Seconds later, the five-man fencing crew pulled into the keep in Eddy de Kock's (the fencing contractor) one-tonner, driven by a wide-eyed, ashen-faced driver.*

*One member of the crew was beside the driver in the cab, the other three were huddled in the open load-box behind the cab. All were clearly shaken, some were wet and one was totally wet and without a stitch of clothing, other than an improvised empty cement bag from the truck. The crew had completed their days work on the fence. They decided to go down to the river for a wash, a couple of hundred metres from where they had been working, rather than return to the keep for a wash. They piled into the truck and drove down the cattle track to the river, where they started to wash at the river's edge.*

*At the river they had wandered into an RAR unit that was setting up an ambush position at the crossing point. The RAR unit opened fire, as it was past curfew time. The crew ran to the truck and got back to the keep in record time. One member of the crew was already in the river, minus his clothes, when the firing started. Thinking that discretion was the better part of valour, he abandoned his clothes at the water's edge and sprinted for the truck, vaulting into the back as it was pulling out. Only after the adrenalin had stopped pumping, did this guy realise that he had also broken his big toe in his rapid retreat.*

*Fortunately, this was the only injury, although a bullet hole in the driver's side door is testament to how close they came to a more serious outcome. The incident was regularly recounted for some time afterwards, to the embarrassment of the fencing crew and a mixture of amusement and ridicule, unique to Shona culture, from the*

assembled audience. One positive outcome from this incident was that I never had to mention my "standing orders" on the curfew again!!"

A few weeks into the operation, a consignment of American Jeep one-and-a-half ton trucks was distributed to the keeps. The origin of these vehicles is unknown, clearly a "one-off" as this unprotected type of vehicle was not seen elsewhere. The Jeep at Nyachuru was a "Gunstan Orange" colour, popular at the time.

Towards the end of July staff at the keeps moved from their canvas shelters into the newly completed buildings inside the keep. These comprised a number of wooden buildings under asbestos roofing; accommodation, communications, admin, and store. The keep infrastructure was taking shape, water tanks were installed, kitchen, shower and toilet facilities had been completed. Septic tank soak pits had been built and closed up for use. Sandbagged bunkers were in place near the building entrances, and the keep wall walkways had been built, mainly by the DA contingent. Work was now starting on the village infrastructure.



**An aerial view of an established keep in Sipolilo District**  
(Photo thanks Lewis Walter)

On 25 July 1974 "Operation Overload" was announced by Army Headquarters, with the next three weeks a constant shuttle of trucks moving from kraal to kraal, loading everything that was to be moved into the now fenced village. Weeks before, all the communities in Chiweshe had been visited by the DC's staff, advising them that the relocation to PVs was imminent and that preparations should be made to build houses within the PVs. They should also consider where in the village they wanted to live and next to whom. The items moved into the PV were therefore entirely in the hands of the individual members of the community. Daily patrols were made into the evacuated areas, to ensure that everybody had been relocated. Animals were initially housed near their original villages, as during the day, the community would be free to return to their lands. Provision was gradually made to bring livestock closer to the PV. The installation of piped water into the village lagged behind the relocation of the people into the village, simply because of both logistical and time constraints. Water was drawn from the river in the interim. In addition to daily patrols into the evacuated areas, Intaf now had to control the entry/exit points into the PV, and do random night patrols within the fenced area of the village. They also had to run their own "keep" guard schedule every night; resources were stretched over this three week period.

On the 15th August, three weeks after the official start of "Operation Overload", it was officially completed, although the establishment of village infrastructure was far from complete. The PDOs and FAs would still be in Chiweshe for some time. Within a week of the official completion of the operation, the detachments of SAP, who had been there for the last six weeks, were withdrawn from Chiweshe, having completed their mandated short term support duties.

The quoted cost estimates of the Chiweshe population move into the 21 PVs, varied from R\$45 000 to in excess of R\$60 000, depending on the source. A *Rhodesia Herald* article of 31 July 1974 quoted a very precise figure of R\$46 960. This figure was also quoted in a published thesis which included a section on "Operation Overload". A number of articles published on the Chiweshe Protected Villages quoted population densities of between 3000 and 5000 per village. This is at variance with the total population figure. Both DC Bill Johnston and ADC Alex Deere were awarded the Member of the Legion of Merit (MLM) for their work on "Operation Overload".

Author's Note: My very sincere thanks to Nick Baalbergen for his very detailed notes on Operation Overload, a milestone event in the history of Rhodesia and its fight against terrorism. The debate over the success or failure of this collectivisation strategy, which was eventually implemented throughout most of the Op Hurricane area but not in Op Tangent, continues.

### Know the Medal

A circular 36mm cupronickel medal, bearing the effigy of Cecil John Rhodes on the obverse, and the words "For Service" encircled by flame lilies on the reverse. Entitlement was as for the service on operations undertaken for the purpose of combating terrorism or enemy incursions into Rhodesia, and was awarded to black Internal Affairs district staff. They were not entitled to the Rhodesia General Service Medal.



**The District Service Medal**  
(Gerry van Tonder collection)

### Above and Beyond

Commander of the Army, Lt General ALC Maclean OLM, DCD, issuing General Orders Serial 9 of 30 June 1980, listed the granting of the award of Grand Cross of Valour to "T/Maj GA Wilson, SCR, BCR, (780793)". With this, the highest Rhodesian award, Grahame Wilson became Rhodesia's most highly decorated soldier and the only recipient of the three top military medals for gallantry; the Grand Cross of Valour, the Silver Cross of Rhodesia (13 April 1979) and The Bronze Cross of Rhodesia (7 October 1977).

Having joined the SAS in July 1975, both as Commander of B Squadron and from February 1978 as Second-in-Command of the SAS, Grahame personally led numerous reconnaissance missions and assaults on enemy bases and targets deep into both Mozambique and Zambia. In spite of the very dangerous nature of these operations, often conducted against far superior enemy strengths, Grahame and his men achieved extremely meaningful and far-reaching results.

His various citations speak volumes of a gallant and dedicated Rhodesian soldier, an example to so many:

*"The bravery, leadership and resourcefulness shown by this officer have been an inspiration to the officers and men who have served with him."*

*"His leadership is of the highest order in command of both small and large numbers of troops in a wide variety of circumstances. Wilson's bravery, conduct, example and leadership were outstanding and a major contributing factor to the success of the operation. Through Wilson's service in the SAS his dedication, thorough planning and loyalty have contributed greatly to the success the Regiment has achieved."*

*"His leadership and performance on operations has been of the highest order. Throughout Wilson's service in the SAS his extreme devotion to duty, performance on operations and general conduct have contributed greatly to the success this unit has achieved."*



**The Grand Cross of Valour**  
(Gerry van Tonder collection)

## A Snapshot In Time



Vaughan Smith's take on last month's Snapshot photo which was of a mortar pit at a Security Force Auxiliaries base in the Chinamora TTL, Goromonzi, 3 November 1979.

*"You idiot, Pvt. Smythe, you've dug this pit in the OC's parking spot. Get it filled in and moved five metres!"*



(Photo thanks Piet Henning)

The author is sure that the creative members of our readership are going to come up with some interesting captions for this Snapshot, seemingly a situation of the blind leading the blind! All responses and suggested captions to me please on [g.van-tonder@sky.com](mailto:g.van-tonder@sky.com)

### Who's Who

As the South African War of 1899-1902 gained momentum, Lt Colonel 'Jack' Spreckley of 'E' Squadron, the Rhodesia Regiment, joined Lt Colonel Herbert Plumer's force for the relief of Mafeking. Later, whilst on patrol on 20 August 1900, his party was surrounded by a group of Transvaal Republicans who, being dressed in khaki, were first taken for friends. When the mistake was discovered and Lieutenant Colonel Spreckley and his party were called upon to surrender, he reputedly replied "Never give in to them, lads" and was immediately killed. By his death, Rhodesia lost one of its best known and most popular men. He saw much service during that war and in the early days of Matabeleland. On 7 May 1897, Spreckley was appointed a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George for his invaluable services in the Matabele Rebellion.

## But who was **Colonel John Anthony Spreckley CMG**?

Spreckley was born in 1865 at Fulbeck, near Lincoln in England. Educated in Derby, he left for South Africa in 1881, where he worked for four years on an ostrich farm in Grahamstown, before the lure of gold took him to the Witwatersrand. In 1885 he joined the Bechuanaland Border Police (BBP), but after only a year, joined his companions Frank Johnson, Maurice Heany, Henry Borrow and Ted Burnett, to seek a concession from Lobengula to prospect for gold in that part of the world. The amaNdebele king begrudgingly granted them permission, but the party found little of value in the streams and rivers along the Mazoe River. Upon arriving back in GuBulawayo, the young adventurers were forced to pay a fine of £100 in gold sovereigns to Lobengula, for alleged misconduct in the interior.



**Colonel John Anthony Spreckley, CMG**  
(Photo *Rhodesiana* 20/69)

Spreckley, however, remained unsettled, briefly staying in Kimberley before moving to Johannesburg for a couple of years. A bad case of fever saw him on the move again, this time down to Durban and then by sea to Cape Town, where he wanted to recuperate in the milder climate. Here he met up with his prospecting companions and, upon hearing that an expedition was being planned into Mashonaland, he joined the Pioneer Corps as Paymaster-Sergeant. Signing up on 30 May 1890, Spreckley was reunited with his old friends, now all serving as commissioned officers under the leadership of Major Frank Johnson. With the Column in training at Camp Cecil on the banks of the Limpopo River in Bechuanaland, Spreckley was assigned to 'A' Troop under the command of Maurice Heany, before later being transferred to 'B' Troop, where he was appointed Market Master to the Pioneer Column.

After the founding of Ft Salisbury and the disbandment of the Column, Spreckley, together with so many of his companions, struck out into the veld in search of El Dorado. By June of 1892, he had become the Mining Commissioner for the Lomagundi District, basing himself at a site where the settlement of Sinoia would develop. Towards the end of that year, Spreckley travelled back to Britain with Henry Borrow, where he met his future wife in the form of Borrow's sister, Beatrice. He returned to Salisbury in June 1893, to be given command of 'C' Troop of the Salisbury Horse which, together with 'A' Troop under Heany and 'B' Troop under Borrow, would form part of the Salisbury Column, under the command of Major Patrick Forbes, that would march on to GuBulawayo to subdue the amaNdebele.

Joining up with Major Allan Wilson's Victoria Column at Iron Mine Hill on 2 October of that year, the first engagement with Lobengula's impis took place on the Shangani River on 25 October, followed a few days later by the Battle of Bembesi. On 4 November, the force entered a deserted, burning GuBulawayo, the king having fled north in his wagon. A pursuit column was organised under Forbes' command, which included ninety men of the Salisbury column with officers Spreckley and Heany. The rest of the expedition was made up of just over two hundred men of the Victoria Column. As the column progressed, rations started running low and dissatisfaction amongst many of the troops grew, culminating in Forbes holding a meeting with some of the men and subsequently sending back all the Salisbury men, including Spreckley, except for twenty two under Borrow, a fateful decision as it turned out for Spreckley's close friend. Spreckley and Johnson went on to erect a pulpit memorial in the Anglican Cathedral, Salisbury, carrying the inscription, "*To the Glory of God and in memory of Henry John Borrow. Killed at Shangani December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1893. Erected by his friends FJ and JS.*" Spreckley led sixty seven men of the Salisbury Horse back to Ft Salisbury, their numbers significantly reduced through the war and many others electing to stay in Matabeleland.

Spreckley was later appointed magistrate of Ft Victoria, and ten months thereafter returned to Bulawayo where he became General Manager of Sir John Willoughby's gold mining company. It was here, on 31 August 1895, that Spreckley married Beatrice Mary Borrow and decided to settle down. Political events in the sub-continent would, however, almost embroil Spreckley in the debacle that was the Jameson Raid. Willoughby joined the raiding party, handing over his command of the Rhodesia Horse to Spreckley, together with various letters which were only to be opened if 'certain' events were to take place. Spreckley would receive telegraphed instructions that the Rhodesia Horse must not under any circumstances move to assist Jameson. This telegraph and other letters left in Spreckley's care almost implicated him in Jameson's impetuous adventure.

At the outbreak of the Matabele Rebellion, Frederick Courteney Selous, fearing for the safety of his wife at their farm in Essexvale, placed her in the care of the Spreckleys. Spreckley himself was now an appointed Colonel in the Bulawayo Field Force and second-in-command to Colonel William Napier.

Spreckley and Bulawayo Mayor Scott, had been very instrumental in laagering Bulawayo and establishing "order out of chaos". During the insurrection, Spreckley saw action at Umgusa River where his force, together with elements of the Africander Corps and the Grey's Scouts, engaged and routed a thousand-strong impi of amaNdebele. He also led numerous patrols. In a little cameo of the time, Colonel Robert Baden-Powell in his dairies, writes of a "...cheery little dinner at the hotel, to which came Sir Richard Martin, Colonel and Mrs Spreckley, Captain and Mrs Selous, Captain and Mrs Colenbrander – all heroes and heroines of the rebellion. How Spreckley made us laugh, fooling around the piano as if he were just going to sing!"



**Fort Mangwe during the Matabele Rebellion of 1896**  
(Photo National Archives)

Spreckley returned to England on six months' leave from Willoughby's Consolidated, during which time he received his CMG decoration from the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII. Still not one to stay in one place for long, he headed back to Bulawayo for the official arrival of the railway line in the town. Here the citizens feted their hero of the Rebellion by presenting Spreckley with a cheque to buy a presentation plate. He used the money to commission from The Goldsmith and Silversmiths' Company, London, what can only be described as a magnificent 'trophy' depicting scenes on plaques of the Bulawayo laager, as well as of amaNdebele shields and arms; one such plaque was surmounted by an enraged lion wounded by an assegai. The pedestal carries finely modelled statuettes of a Trooper of the Bulawayo Field Force and an amaNdebele warrior armed with assegai, shield and knobkerrie.

In the early stages of the South African War, Lt Colonel Spreckley, now Officer Commanding 'A' Squadron, the Rhodesia Regiment, was part of Colonel Plumer's force based at Ft Tuli. Plumer's task was to defend the various drifts across the Limpopo, Macloutsie and Shashi Rivers from being used by Transvaal Republican forces to infiltrate Rhodesia. On 2 November 1899, four hundred men from the Zoutpansberg Commando circled around Spreckley's position at Rhodes Drift and headed into Rhodesia. The Transvaalers struck at Bryce's Store, overwhelming a convoy of wagons carrying supplies to Spreckley. Fearing for the safety of Ft Tuli, Plumer recalled all his squadrons, but Spreckley found himself in a very difficult situation, as the enemy started shelling his position, killing nearly all the animals. His retreat was cut off and his defences exposed in the rear. Typical of so many of the questionable tactics that would characterise the strategies of the Transvaal and Free State Republicans during the war, the commando did not close in on Spreckley, preferring rather to pin him down with fire from their Mauser rifles.

Spreckley and his men lay motionless until nightfall, when they silently crept away into the dark, around the enemy position and north back to Tuli. The next morning the Republicans again shelled the position now vacated by Spreckley and his squadron, but it was only at noon that they discovered that their adversary had gone. In another surprising decision, the Commando entrenched themselves at the store, instead of continuing with their momentum and carrying out an assault on a very vulnerable Ft Tuli. This was certainly Plumer's greatest concern.

The official British history of the South African War records the pursuit by British forces of 246 Free Staters, under the elusive General de Wet, east through the Magaliesberg Mountains away from the recent battle at Elands River. Various other Commandos were also present in this large area north of Pretoria, trying to consolidate their forces with de Wet. Baden-Powell and Colonel TE Hickman, with some eight hundred mounted men and half a battalion of the West Riding Regiment in ox-wagons, moved north of Hammanskraal on 19 August 1900, in pursuit of a Republican commando. Included in this force were 'A' and 'E' Squadrons of the Rhodesia Regiment under Lt Colonel Spreckley. As Maj General AH Paget's forces struck out on the northern road close to the railway line, Baden-Powell moved forward on the right across the Pienaar's River, with the Rhodesia Regiment covering his advance. Spreckley suddenly came upon a party of one hundred mounted Republicans of the Waterberg Commando, precipitating a fight which left Colonel Spreckley and four of his men dead; Sgt George Blurton, Cpl Robert Caffyn, and Cpl Alexander Downis, all of 'A' Squadron, and Tpr Francis Forster of 'E' Squadron.

*Rhodesia Regiment* 339 94 83

	Spreckley (C.M.G.)	J. A. Lt. Col.	'E'			Killed Mils Drift
	Stone (M.D.)	C. A. Capt.	Staff			Med. Officer (R.A.M.C.)
(305)	Shepstone	S. W. B.	lieut.	'D'	25/9/99	From D. Sgn. Pro. Lieut. 24/10/99
(304)	Shepstone	J. A.	"	'D'	25/9/99	Do. do. Res. 30/1/99
	Lwinburne	U. P.	"	'A'		
	Smitheman	F.	"	'D'		

An extract of the original Rhodesia Regiment nominal roll for the South African War, listing Spreckley at the top

Colonel Spreckley is buried in the Hammanskraal Cemetery north of Pretoria, near where he died.

Baden Powell's hard-hitting comment and tribute so aptly describe the pioneer, prospector, miner, businessman and the then part-time soldier that was Colonel John Anthony Spreckley;

*"Spreckley himself is an ass (this was not intended for publication, and if it should happen to meet the eye of the gentleman alluded to, I trust he will be magnanimous enough not sue me for libel – especially as I make this statement believing it to be true) in one respect namely, because he did not take up soldiering as his profession instead of gold and pioneering – successful though he has been in the other line. He has all the qualifications that go to make an officer above the ruck of them. Endowed with all the dash, pluck, and attractive force that make a man a born leader of men, he is also steeped in common sense, is careful in arrangement of details, and possesses a temperament that can sing "Wait till the clouds roll by" in crises where other men are tearing their hair out".*

Author's note: I would like to find out more about the 'trophy' that Spreckley had made. Does anyone know anything about it or know of its current whereabouts? Does anyone have a photograph? According to Hickman, writing in the late 1960s, the trophy still remained in the family, but he does not say if that was in Rhodesia or in the UK. I have also only just found out that not only did Spreckley attend school here in Derby where I live, but he also gave an interview to the *Derby Advertiser* on 25 September 1897, which would have been during his visit to the UK to receive his CMG. I shall endeavour to find out more.

#### At the Going Down of the Sun

On 4 June 1979, in an external operation codenamed Op Chamber, elements of the Rhodesian Light Infantry assaulted a ZANLA/Frelimo base at Chivinge, situated on the Luia River in Mozambique's Tete Province. Very little appears to have been written about this seemingly obscure operation which had a forward admin base at Kotwa, but what is sadly known, is that the Battalion lost three troops from 1 Commando in the attack. We remember these men of the Big Red:



728892 Tpr Christopher Francis Lang

726446 L/Cpl Ewart Francois Nel

123360 Cpl Peter Oliver Rice



### **And they said...**

*"Why did I come to Africa? Well, they will tell you that I came out on account of my health, or from a love of adventure – and to some extent that may be true; but the real fact is that I could no longer stand the eternal cold mutton."* (Cecil John Rhodes)

### **Bibliography**

- *Avondale to Zimbabwe* by Roger C Smith, self-published
- *Colonel John Anthony Spreckley, CMG* by AS Hickman Rhodesiana Publication No. 20 of 1969
- *Kariba* by Frank Clements, Methuen and Co 1960
- *Special Air Service: The Men Speak* by Jonathan Pittaway, Dandy Agencies
- *Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia* by FC Selous, Elibron Classics Reprint 2007
- *The Matabele Campaign, 1896* by Colonel RSS Baden-Powell, Methuen & Co 1897

## **What's On In New Zealand**

### **AUCKLAND**

If you reside in the Auckland area we are currently undergoing some changes of planned socials and methods of sending communications out. Your patience while we make these changes is appreciated. Keep watching this spot.

### **TAURANGA**

The Garrison Club, which is run by the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Hauraki Group Regimental Association, is open every Friday from 16:00 hrs and welcomes visitors. Email [hbomford@clear.net.nz](mailto:hbomford@clear.net.nz) to get on the local mailing list to see what is going on around the area.

### **CQ Store**

Visit [www.rhodesianservices.org/The%20Shop.htm](http://www.rhodesianservices.org/The%20Shop.htm) to see what is in store for you.

Please give our CQ Store consideration when buying a present for friends or family. Profits from the sale of these items go towards the Museum Fund. All prices are in NZ\$ and do not include postage.

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[Clothing](#) - shirts, jackets, caps, beanies, aprons, and regimental ties.



[Berets & Badges](#) – most Rhodesian units available.



[Medals & Ribbons](#) – an extensive range available.



[Posters & Maps](#) – high quality reproductions.



[DVDs & Phone tones](#) – historical footage, unique cell phone tones.



[Other goods](#) - flags, bumper stickers, lighters, and more, as well as quality products direct from our contributing supporters.

**New item** – bullion wire RLI Blazer Badge NZ\$40 plus postage. Current stock is green backing but black will be available on order.



## Books for Africa

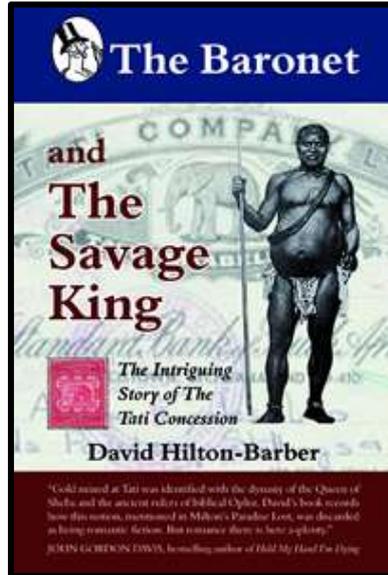
I again remind you that all the books and audio visual disks that I stock and sell are listed at [www.rhodesianservices.org/Books.htm](http://www.rhodesianservices.org/Books.htm). These sales are my own hobby and income from sales is directed to me and not the Rhodesian Services Association. However, the Association does benefit indirectly from these sales. A great selection of books, many with a Rhodesian connection, can be found on the link above. All prices are in NZ\$ and do not include postage.

### Arriving soon:

Please note that those who wanted Winds of Destruction, these are on the way to me and I will notify you when they arrive. I will also have hardback copies of Africa's Commandos delivered in the same shipment, so if you are wanting one, email me.

The following new titles will also be in the shipment:

**The Baronet and The Savage King** by David Hilton-Barber \$25 (s/b)



136 pages 145 b/w illustrations.

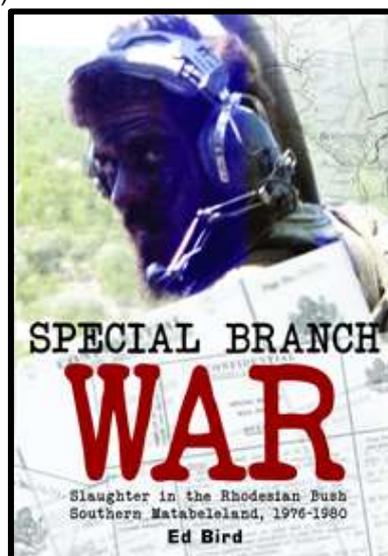
*"Gold mined at Tati was identified with the dynasty of the Queen of Sheba and the ancient rulers of biblical Ophir. David's book records how this notion, mentioned in Milton's Paradise Lost, was discarded as being romantic fiction. But romance there is here a-plenty."* —John Gordon Davis, best-selling author of Hold My Hand I'm Dying.

The concession to mine gold at Tati was granted to a British baronet, Sir John Swinburne, by Lobengula, last king of the Matabele. Although called by colonial imperialists a "savage king" and a "native despot", Lobengula was "exceedingly well-made (in height about 6 ft 10 inches), corpulent, with a commanding presence and, when in a good temper, having a kind heart and a full appreciation of humour".

The gold at Tati, which was discovered by the geologist Carl Mauch, was actually on the site of pre-historic diggings that had been mined there 400 years previously by the Makalanga people. Tati lay on the missionary road to the north, used by Livingstone and Moffat, and it was part of Cecil Rhodes's dream of a continuous tract of British imperialism from the Cape to Cairo. The annexation of Bechuanaland was a direct result of the conflicts between the tribes within the area and the threats from President Kruger and from Germany which had recently colonised Angra Pequena.

Gold from the early diggings here found its way to Great Zimbabwe, and the famous golden rhinoceros from Mapungubwe was probably fashioned from gold mined at Tati. This forgotten corner of the sub-continent encapsulates a chapter of our history involving five countries, powerful men, much subterfuge, a botched invasion, a rebellion, land annexation, prospectors, hunters, traders and adventurers. It is a story begging to be told.

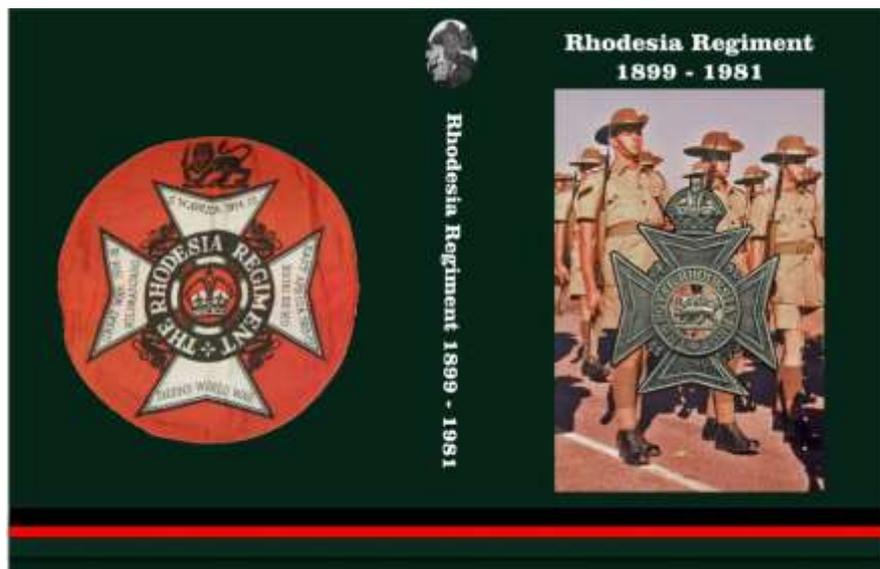
**Special Branch War** by Ed Bird \$50 (h/b)



Cover picture of Sgt Theo Nel BCR. 320 pages 100 colour & b/w images, maps

This searing account primarily covers Ed Bird's Special Branch (SB) service in the Beitbridge area of southern Matabeleland, 1976–1980, encompassing Operations Repulse and Tangent of the bitter Rhodesian 'Bush War'. Joining the British South Africa Police (BSAP) in 1964, Bird cut his teeth on Selous Scout 'pseudo' operations during Operation Hurricane in 1974–1976, so was well equipped to deal with the insidious escalation of the ZANLA and ZIPRA campaigns in the south of the country. A meticulous recorder, Bird implemented and maintained the Beitbridge SB incident log, and it is this diary of terror and death upon which Bird's account hangs, interspersed with detailed accounts of firefights, ambushes, landmine blasts, ZANLA executions, traitors and assassinations, SB 'dirty tricks' and 'turning' terrorists. Although first and foremost an intelligence gatherer, Bird thrived on combat and against all protocol inveigled his way onto Fire Force operations and as an airmobile MAG machine-gunner on converted Police Reserve Air Wing aircraft. Highly decorated for gallantry but overlooked for promotion, Bird's BSAP career fell victim to spurious political expediency.

## **'Rhodesia Regiment 1899 – 1981' by Peter Baxter, Hugh Bomford et al**



This project is on the path to publication around October 2013. The Rhodesian Services Association is the publisher of this book.

Keep watch on this newsletter as well as this web page <http://www.rhodesianservices.org/rhodesia-regiment.htm> for updates and pre-publication offers.

The illustration above is a draft of the cover. It has been compiled by Dudley Wall with a panel of eight others who have combined input for the design. The final cover will differ from this to the extent that the font will be changed and the photos will be better quality.

The design of the cover has been something that we have not taken lightly and has been a long process. It is intended to illustrate the following:

- The different eras that the Regiment went through with regard to uniforms and badges
- To show the Battle Honours - this is done using a photo of the last 1st Battalion Rhodesia Regiment flag
- The Regimental colours
- The WWII soldier on the spine illustrates the major part that the men of that era played in the development of the Regiment and of Rhodesia

**Our Supporters** — please also view our webpage <http://www.rhodesianservices.org/our-supporters.htm>

This section is for individuals and businesses who support this Association either by giving us something for auction at the RV in October; by donations from sales generated from our listings of their product or service; by offering discount to buyers who mention the Rhodesian Services Association when making a purchase; contributing material to our Museum and Archives.

Email me at [theeditor@rhodesianservices.org](mailto:theeditor@rhodesianservices.org) for details of how you get a mention here.

The Association is very grateful to all our contributors; please reciprocate this support by supporting them in turn. Please don't forget to mention where you saw their advert.

### **Roan Antelope Music Special Offer**

Dear Friends,

At last! After lots of search and research we have found a suitable venue for our 2013 Rhodie Show. Following our successful previous get-togethers, and by public demand, the ever so popular Rhodie Weekend will be held at Mbizi Caravan Lodge which is on the R516 (10km outside Bela Bela, Warmbaths) en route to Kunkuru.

**DIARISE AND BOOK THESE DATES NOW! 4 - 6 October 2013**

The reason for our move is because Mbizi offers a bigger range of accommodation and can sleep and host 400 people, where Kunkuru could only host a hundred. So please spread the word and bring all your friends and family. Mbizi has a variety of accommodation to suit everyone's pocket - tented chalets, luxury chalets with air-conditioning etc. as well as caravan facilities. This year the accommodation must be booked directly with Mbizi.

Please ensure that you book early to avoid disappointment. They work on a first come first served basis. To contact Mbizi:

Tel: 014 001 7007 (Jane)

Fax: 086 588 3491

Web: [www.mbizi.co.za](http://www.mbizi.co.za)

Email: [booking4@mbizi.co.za](mailto:booking4@mbizi.co.za)

GPS: S24°53.891' E028°12.951'

Please book and pay your accommodation direct to Mbizi. They need 50% deposit to confirm accommodation for you.

Please book the show and dinner with Annamarie at Kunkuru so we can organize catering and seating for the show. The price for the show and dinner is R225.00 per adult; children 5 - 10 years R75.00 each.

It is Father's Day on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. Father's Day was founded in Spokane, Washington at the YMCA in 1910 by Sonora Smart Dodd, who was born in Arkansas. The first celebration was in the Spokane YMCA on June 19, 1910 Her father, the Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart, was a single parent who raised his six children there. After hearing a sermon about Jarvis' Mother's Day in 1909, she told her pastor that fathers should have a similar holiday honouring them. Although she initially suggested June 5, her father's birthday, the pastors did not have enough time to prepare their sermons, and the celebration was deferred to the third Sunday of June.

So why not spoil Dad with our June special CD *That's what I call Country*.

On this CD are the sixteen most requested country songs that John is asked to sing at his concerts. On this album John salutes the world's great country artists like Don Williams, John Denver, Glen Campbell, Kenny Rogers, Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash and several others.

The songs are:

It Must Be Love, The Gambler, Help Me Make It through the Night, Gentle on My Mind, Ring of Fire, From A Jack To A King, Some Days Are Diamonds, Folsom Prison Blues, Heaven Is My Woman's Love, Rhinestone Cowboy, You're My Best Friend, Take Me Home Country Roads, Detroit City, Lucille, Amanda, Why Me Lord?

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### **Buckles and Tees [www.bucklesandtees.co.nz](http://www.bucklesandtees.co.nz)**

Mike Vivier has a number of Rhodesian related lines which include the 'Advice to Terrorists' image on t-shirts and aprons as well this stunning Rhodesia Regiment belt buckle which sells for NZ\$24.95 excluding postage. 100% New Zealand made.



Editor's Note:

There were over 500 of you, regular force, territorials and civilians at the "close of play" in 1980 so where are you now? None of you took off with our pay did you, and are living it up in the Bahamas?!!

That's all folks, so until next time – go well.

Cheers

Hugh



**Celebrate 'Rhodesia Day'\* on the 11<sup>th</sup> November each year**



\*The concept of 'Rhodesia Day' originates from Eddy Norris and family. During the 90 year life span of Rhodesia we experienced the best of times and the worst of times. I encourage everyone to use this day to remember the good times as well as remembering those who are no longer with us.

Rhodesian Services Association donations.

You can make a donation to the Rhodesian Services Association by clicking on our 'Collection Hat' below which is a typical slouch hat of the type used by the Rhodesian Army up until the 1960's. Click on the hat or this link:

[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=MLMB2B8Y2UY3G](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted_button_id=MLMB2B8Y2UY3G)

and if you are registered with PayPal the process will be immediate. If you are not a PayPal member you will be given instruction on how to make a credit card payment via PayPal. Thank you - every bit helps.



This newsletter is compiled by Hugh Bomford, Newsletter Editor of the Rhodesian Services Association. It contains many personal views and comments which may not always be the views of the Association or Committee.

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