



THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION

NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH BRANCH

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Branch News

Much has happened during the months since the last Newsletter. The AGM came and went, a number of parades came and went but the most current situation is the wanton destruction of the various War Memorials, not just in South Africa but in other parts of the world too, nothing appears to be sacred any more – how long before somebody tries to vandalise the great Menin Gate Memorial. The President of the Gift of the Givers said, in a recent interview, that “Memorial must be preserved irrespective of how much they are disliked, because it is from these memorials that we can learn” wise words.



Desecration of the Walmer Cenotaph



Unfortunately, some nefarious persons decided

to steal the bronze plaques with the names of the fallen and the bronze Springbok head from the Cenotaph, causing damage in the process. See attached pictures for the before and after of their visit.

During April, the Port Elizabeth Branch has undertaken to facilitate/organise the repairs to the Walmer War Memorial, which is used every year to hold the Civic Remembrance Parade in respect of the fallen in all Wars. We have liaised with the department of fine art at NMMU with regard the Springbok head and with local stonemasons for the replacement of the plaques. All will be manufactured in a material that is not so attractive to “affirmative shoppers”!

On our part we are busy liaising with other Military Veteran organisations to raise the necessary finance and at the time of writing are waiting on a reply from the Metro with regards some financial assistance.



Then these villains started to dismantle the Main Cenotaph in Rink street. As a result a group of architects removed all the remaining bronze plaques and placed them in storage.

During the recent SA Navy visit to Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), members of the ships’ companies had to go to the Mendi Memorial in New Brighton to clean the memorial and surrounds so the Chief of the Navy (who hails from Motherwell in New Brighton) could lay a wreath at the Mendi Memorial.

If these people cannot even look after their own

memorials how can we expect them to look after the Older Memorial?



Drugs and Vagrants



The Prince Alfred's Guard Comrades' Association secretary and SA Legion Port Elizabeth chair, Terry Pattison, holds up a syringe used by vagrants to feed their drug habits at the War Memorial in Walmer.

Vagrants are complicit in the vandalism of the War Memorial in Eighth Avenue, Walmer, and adding to its woes is the drug paraphernalia flooding the empty tomb honouring the dead from World War 1.

Pattison recently found himself ankle-deep in syringes at the site. He said squatters used discarded needles to shoot up nyaope (street drugs). Nyaope, or whoonga, is a popular cheap drug made by mixing low-grade heroin, antiretroviral drugs and other bulking agents.

"I can't prove it, but I'm confident the vagrants know who's [stealing] because they're there all the time. They're complicit, if not committing the crime themselves," Pattison said. He said the presence of vagrants was of enormous concern.

"Often, they stash bits of plastic, old blankets and other stuff around the War Memorial desecrating it."

The memorial had all its metal pieces stolen, including a venerated springbok head, in March. Pattison said it was problematic getting rid of vagrants to preserve what little sanctity was left. "We can't seem to keep them out," he said.

"Initially, I tried to get an electrician to put the vagrants off by floodlighting the place at night. But the electrical points were vandalised till there was nothing left, not even switches. Vandals destroyed everything, including the street lights."

In June, during the SA Navy's wreath-laying ceremony at the Mendi Memorial in New Brighton, mayor Gary van Niekerk spoke out strongly against the destruction of memorial sites. He said the city planned to erect fences, put up 600

cameras and beef up patrols to secure them.

Pattison said while he found it difficult to chase away the homeless, it might not be a challenge for someone in a position of authority like a Metro or SA Police Service officer.

Noel Smith, past chair and an executive member of Aloe White Ensign Moth Shellhole, a branch of the Moths that organises and hosts the annual remembrance parade in November, said cenotaphs were sacred. "It's totally unacceptable that vagrants use sites as dwelling places. We've asked them countless times to move, but they refuse. Nobody is prepared to physically man the site [all times of the day]" *(The Herald 7th August 2023)*



Some Interesting Statements from SANDF

Chief of the Navy: My fellow shipmates, the ship that is the South African Navy must change course, and change course drastically. I can issue orders and instructions from the bridge that is Navy Headquarters but if you as my crew do not heed these instructions, our combined fate will be uncertain and doomed to failure.

My vision for the SA Navy is to return it to greatness. I want our ships to be out at sea, where we are fulfilling our Constitutional mandate to protect our oceans. However, I cannot do this alone. I need your assistance and all of you must contribute. *[Navy News Vol XLII 2023]*

Chief of the Air Force: In an address recently he said that he required the OC's of SAAF bases and the WO's to ensure that the Bases were well maintained, repaired, clean and that the personnel wore their uniform in accordance with the Regulations. Further he would hold the OC's and WO's personally accountable for any breach of this requirement.

Is there some new thinking appearing in the SANDF?



Till next timeThe Editor

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