



Johannesburg Regiment goes back to its roots

Sunday 13 April was a very important day in the lives of all gunners, past and present. The venue was the Gunners' Memorial in Potchefstroom, and the occasion was the 62nd Gunners' Memorial Service. It was an equally important day for the Johannesburg Regimental Association as it presented them with the opportunity to return to their roots for a while.

A fact that is not widely known is that Johannesburg Regiment started out as an Artillery Regiment. 8 Veldregiment, S.A.A was established on 1 July 1952 as per GN No. 2071 of 12 September 1952, but on 19 December 1952 the establishment date was corrected per GN 2945 to 1 July 1951. They were housed in Headquarters at Aucklandpark, where the present day SABC buildings are.

Although established as a Field Regiment, the members of the Regiment have always claimed to be the first Afrikaans speaking Medium Regiment. The very first HQ staff were:

Honorary Colonel :

Capt FW Stegmann	27 June 1956	1 March 1960
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Commanding Officers :

Cmdt JSK Brink	1 July 1951	27 May 1956
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Cmdt M van S Boswell, MC.	28 May 1956	30 September 1959
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Cmdt AJ Pretorius, JCD.	1 October 1959	29 February 1960
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The Unit was disbanded with effect 28 February 1960, and all personnel transferred to a newly formed Infantry Regiment namely Johannesburg Regiment. 28 days after being re- mustered, these ex gunners were deployed during Operation Duiker.

It was with this in mind that the Regimental Association gratefully accepted an invitation to attend the memorial service. It was also decided that we will honour our heritage by laying a wreath.

From a guest point of view it was a memorable day. The invitation was clear, Military Police lined the road, signage was visible on the route and our reception was excellent. It was clear that the day was planned and executed in true military fashion. I am convinced that it was attended by a record number of participants and guests, which is always a clear indication of how hard the committee worked.



Although the Warrant Officer Defence Reserves, SCWO Jan Viljoen attended in his official capacity, it was also a pleasure to have him there as an ex RSM of Johannesburg Regiment, and current member of the Association.

The writer took the opportunity to be photographed in front of a GV6 artillery piece. When asked why, as he surely has seen and worked with them in his career, he responded: “ *Yes, I have often worked with them in the past, but normally I was on the dangerous side. This is the safest I have ever felt in the presence of Artillery.*” Talk about a lead balloon!



Lt. Col (Rtd) Harry van Staden in front of a GV6 gun

The whole parade was a pleasure to watch and participate in. It was well organised and professionally executed. It was a dignified, solemn ceremony, and Lt Gen (Rtd) Du Preez delivered an excellent address that placed the whole ceremony and the reason for it in perspective. There was a lighter moment directly after the parade when we noticed the Swedish Military Attaché posing for a picture in front of the memorial. Courtesy of a son that has been living and working in Sweden for the past 7 years I was able to walk up to him, greet him and introduce myself to him in passable Svenska. I am sure that he expected anything but being addressed in his native tongue at a parade in Potchefstroom! After he recovered from shock, he agreed to a picture.



*Lt. Col. (Ret.) Harry van Staden and new Friend of the Association,
Col. Lt. Leiff Carlsson*

As an Association we have already made a decision to participate in this parade for as long as we receive invitations to it. It gives us the opportunity to meet new friends, reminisce with old ones and pay homage to the Gunners that we owe our own Regiment to. It was a pleasure and an honour to be a part of it, and we are very grateful that we had the opportunity.

When one has been an Infanteer for your whole life, you tend to forget that it is not only the soldiers in the front lines who have sacrificed their lives in defence of our country, and the names on the memorial were a sobering reminder of that fact. Johannesburg Regimental Association cannot call ourselves Ex- Gunners rightfully, but we will always take this opportunity to go back to our roots.

And Gunners, for your sacrifice, we will always be thankful, and we will never forget it.

Submitted by Harry van Staden Lt. Col (Rtd)