



The Western Cape Military History Society
Die Wes-Kaapse Krygshistoriese Vereniging
Umbutho weMbali yoMkhosi weNtshona Koloni

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July 2026

A summary of the last meeting

Our chairman, Carl Burger opened the meeting and welcomed all. A special mention was made about our speaker for the evening, Rear Admiral (Jnr Grade) Theo Honiball. After going through the correspondence and notices he handed over to Theo

Our Speaker: Rear Admiral (JNR Grade) Theo Honiball

Here is a summary of his talk.

SA NAVY DAPHNE CLASS SUBMARINES DURING THE ANGOLAN WAR

The 58 metre Daphne Class submarines had a captain and 50 crew, and enough fuel and food for 30 days at sea. Imagine 2 young chefs having to produce 3 meals per day, that is 4500 meals for 30 days. The chefs were not older than 21. Neville Welthagen, who attended my talk was, confirmed that he was 17 years old when chef in the first SA Navy submarine.

Accommodation in the submarine used a hot-bunk system based on a 3-watch routine with one watch always on duty, meaning that sleeping bunks were necessary for only 2 watches off duty. Each crew member had his own sleeping bag which he stowed when on duty.

They had a shower cubicle for emergency use only, and water was limited to about 9 litres per man per day, of which a portion was used for cooking and cleaning. Personal hygiene had its limitations! There were 2 toilets for 51 men, and constipation was a potential result of very little movement in a crowded submarine.

Embarking Special Forces (SF) had its challenges. Wooden boards and sponge mattresses were placed on the 8 torpedo launching systems in the forward mess. Not quite 5-star rating. The passage from Simon's Town to the operational area would normally take 10 days, leaving 10 days for ops and then 10 days to return. During the first 10 days SF were unable to maintain a high level of fitness. And not to forget - boredom. Not really a healthy situation.

The stowage space for and deployment of SF equipment– kayaks, inflatable boats, outboard motors and weapons/explosives was limited. Should there be any wounded after an op, a 10 day return voyage was not a good idea. So sometimes other SA Navy ships would be part of an operation and also be on standby to evacuate wounded by helicopter to the nearest airport (Walvis Bay) on the West coast. A doctor was usually embarked in the submarine for ops.

For a submarine to be able to remain safely submerged during operations, it needed a water depth of 20 metres. This was not a problem on West coast ops, but it was a problem on the East coast of Mozambique and Tanzania where the water was too shallow for certain SF ops, as the submarine could not get close enough to the shore. The result was the Strike Craft (missile boats) operating from Durban mostly conducted ops on the East coast. Strike craft and submarines at times did combined-SF ops. During to Angolan war, submarines conducted 23 operations in total, and Strike Craft did 33 operations, of which 10 were combined ops with submarines. The talk also covered submarine emergencies such as a fire in the diesel generator compartment, and flooding in the control centre. Submarines did daily emergency drills to ensure effective action by the crew.

There is a Daphne Class museum submarine open daily (except Mondays) in Simonstown, which is well worth a guided visit.

A few photographs taken at the meeting.



The Admiral with Mac Bisset



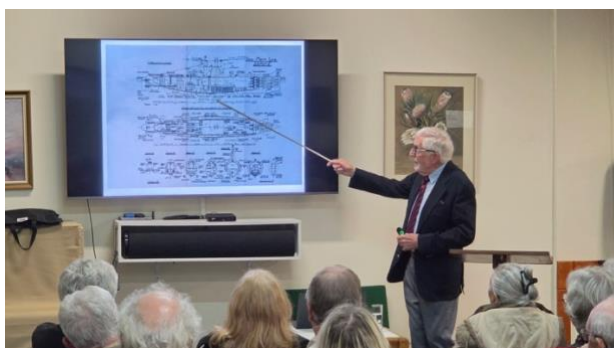
Carl Burger welcoming all



Ronnie telling us about next month's meeting



Carl introduces our speaker for the evening



The Admiral pointing out the facts



A full house



The Admiral with fellow submariners



Carl extending thanks to the Admiral

On behalf of the Committee and the Society we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Admiral.

Our next meeting

20th August 2026

Notification is given of the August Meeting to be held at the SA Legion, Rosedale Complex, Lower Nursery Road, Rosebank at 19h30.

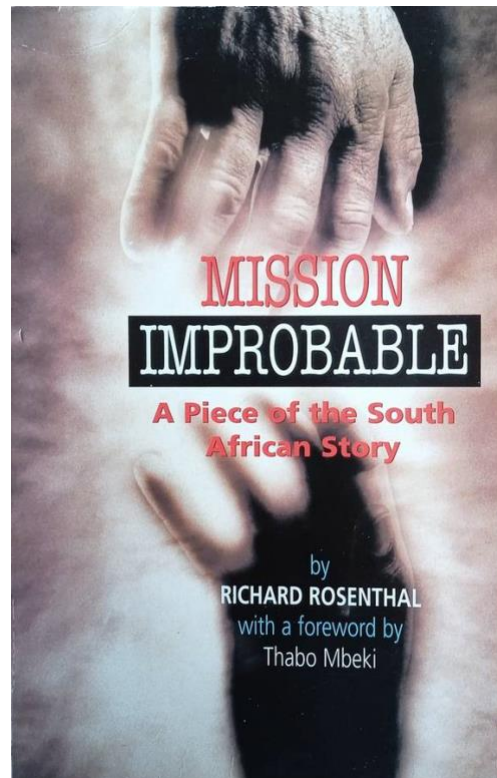
Our speaker for the evening is Richard Rosenthal

Richard Rosenthal is a long-standing Cape Town legal practitioner, author, and former University of Cape Town (UCT) Council member. He operates as an attorney based in the Gardens in Cape Town, with decades of experience handling diverse legal matters, including being noted for high-profile legal representations and civic involvement in the city.

He has Served as a dedicated member of the University of Cape Town Council starting from July 1993, contributing over 15 years to institutional governance and receiving the Vice-Chancellor's Medal in 2008.

He has Authored publications documenting unique historical and personal accounts tied to South African contexts, his book *Mission Improbable* is the fascinating story of how he engaged in secret negotiations in the late 1980s. His goal was to mediate between the South African government under State President PW Botha and the exiled African National Congress (ANC). His efforts involved two years of "secret diplomacy," attempting to bridge the gap between the two parties during a tumultuous time in South Africa's history. The book provides a unique perspective on the behind-the-scenes efforts to bring about change and peace in the country.

We are looking forward to hearing his story.



Notice Board

If you have any events that you would like us to add to this page please feel free to email me on woodworkgavin@gmail.com with the details.



Parades

El Alamein	18 Oct 2026	Cape Town Gardens
Remembrance Day	11 November 2026	Royal Cape Yacht Club
Remembrance Parade	1 November 2026	Battledress MOTH Shellhole
Remembrance Day	6 November 2026	Red Cross Children's Hospital
Remembrance Day	8 November	Cape Town Cenotaph

Upcoming Meetings

20 August 2026	Richard Rosenthal	Mission Impossible. The SA pre 1994 negotiations
17 September 2026.	Walter Volker	The secret world of military intelligence
15 October 2026	Gerrie van der Merwe.	A pilot involved in the border war from both sides
19 November 2026	Michael Schaaf.	Following up with the H Bomb

Important Information

Our meetings starts promptly at 19h30 at the Rosedale Complex, Rosebank
Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month, February - November
A donation of R10.00 is requested, this is payable on arrival, this assists to cover the
cost of the hire of the Rosedale facilities.
Membership costs R80.00 a year.
Tea/coffee and biscuits are served after the meeting.

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