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

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August 2026

A summary of the last meeting

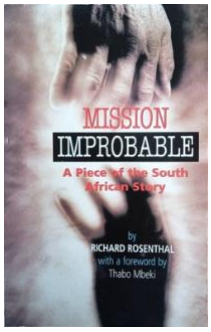
In the absence of our chairman, Carl Burger our treasurer, Ronnie Glass opened the meeting and welcomed all present. After going through the correspondence and notices he handed over to our speaker Richard Rosenthal.

Richards talk.

At the age of 87, Richard Rosenthal has now retired from legal practice, after a career which spanned more than 65 years. Having originally practiced as a commercial and trust partner in the firms, CDH and ENS, he subsequently established an independent legal practice dedicated to the provision of affordable legal services to non-profit, human rights, and civil society organisations, including The Legal Resources Centre and the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation. He served for 15 years as a member of the Council of the University of Cape Town, and was the recipient of the Vice Chancellor's medal upon his retirement in 2008.
He has consulted to various Ministries and Government Departments, including SARS; and has assisted in the drafting of new legislation, and in formulating policy documents and White Papers, including the Ninth Interim Report of the Katz Commission on Fiscal legislation (1999). He was responsible for the drafting of the Independent Code of Governance for Non-Profit Organisations in South Africa. As Convener to the Technical Committee on Electoral Legislation, he participated during 1993 in the Multiparty Negotiation Process which culminated in South Africa's transition to democracy.
He has authored and contributed to a number of books and other publications, including the South African section of the International Guide to Nonprofit Law (Lester M. Salamon, 1997).
In his talk to the Society, he dealt with the subject of his book "Mission Improbable: A Piece of the South African Story" (David Philip Publishers, 1998) which describes the personal initiative he undertook, with the backing of the Swiss Government, during the years 1987 to 1990, involving an independent secret personal initiative, which sought to open the way for the commencement of substantive negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) then in exile, and the apartheid government of P.W. Botha.
In his Foreword to Mission Improbable, President Thabo Mbeki said:

"In the end, the tale that Richard Rosenthal tells speaks of the inspiring fact that we have heroes and heroines in our midst who, even now, will rise and make their own efforts to ensure that our country evolves into a society of happiness, peace and prosperity for all.
Thank God that Richard Rosenthal dared to try and that he lived to tell the story, so that each one of us may also know that to care is to dare!"





A few photographs taken at the meeting.



A full House



Ronnie Welcomes Everyone





Richard Rosenthal





Richard Addresses the Society





Questions from the Society



Richard and Ronnie Answering Questions



Ronnie Thanking Richard

On behalf of the Committee and the Society we would like to extend our sincere thanks to Richard for his enthralling talk.

Our next meeting

17th September 2026

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

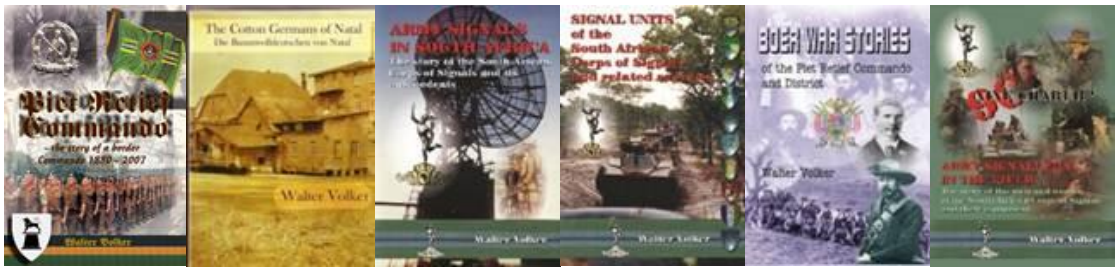
Our speaker will be Walter Volker who will talk about a history of Military Intelligence - LIFTING THE VEIL ON THE SECRET WORLD OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE – "THE OWLS AND THE SHADOW WAR"

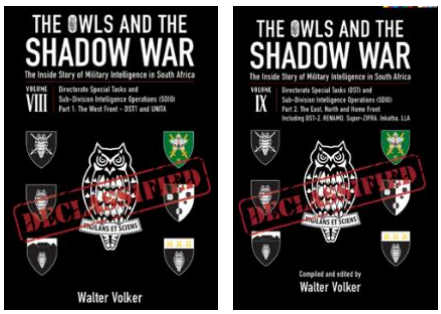
For the first time the veil will be lifted somewhat on the Top Secret world of Military Intelligence in the form of a comprehensive history covering all aspects of this important Staff Division of the SADF, stretching from the early 1960s to the 1990s. The series is entitled "The Owls and the Shadow War" as the Owl has been adopted as the official symbol – depicting vigilance, wisdom, alertness, and the ability to swoop on its prey silently and under cover of darkness. Members of the division are generally known as "Uiltjies" (Afrikaans for little owls).
The history will consist of a thirteen-volume series. Volume VIII and IX have now been published, with the rest to follow at regular intervals.



Walter has enjoyed an extensive career in banking and payment systems of over 35 years - including eighteen years at Absa/ Barclays and twelve years at PASA (Payments Association of South Africa). Walter and his wife live in Cape Town and he has already published seven books - ranging from genealogy, military history to payments. These include:

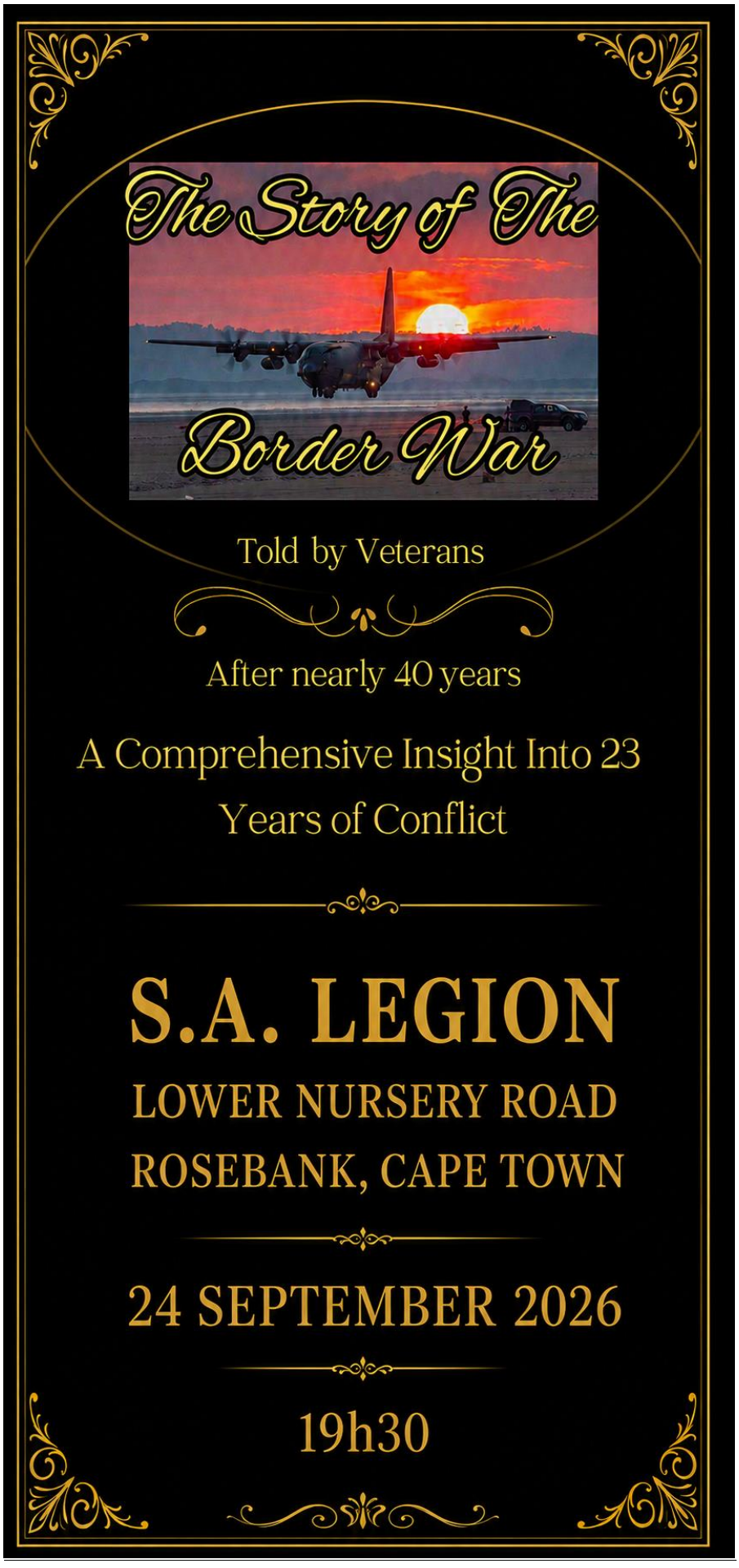
- *THE COTTON GERMANS OF NATAL. From Bramsche to New Germany: the Story of the Bergtheil Colonists and their Descendants 1848 – 2006 (published 2007).*
- *ARMY SIGNALS IN SOUTH AFRICA. The Story of the South African Corps of Signals and its antecedents (2010)*
- *SIGNAL UNITS OF THE SOUTH AFRICA CORPS OF SIGNALS AND RELATED SIGNAL SERVICES (2010)*
- *9C – Nine Charlie! ARMY SIGNALLERS IN THE FIELD. The Story of the Men and Women of the South African Corps of Signals, and their Equipment (2010)*
- *PIET RETIEF COMMANDO. The Story of a Border Commando 1880 – 2007 (2012)*
- *BOER WAR STORIES OF THE PIET RETIEF COMMANDO AND DISTRICT (2012)*
- *ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO PAYMENTS (2013 and 2025)*





The presentation on the 17th September will provide the audience with a general overview of the secret world of military intelligence of the SADF, including its origins, role, organisation and key figures. It will then zoom in on the specific aspects of "intelligence operations" and "special tasks", which will include their role in supporting rebel movements like UNITA, Renamo, Super-ZIPRA, the Lesotho Liberation Army, Inkatha, and so on.

Something Extra



Leon de Bruin
National Service & Part Time Soldier
Military & Civil Society Summary

National Service

Military Background (Infantry)

National Service - January 1981 & 1982
Basic Training – 3 South African Infantry Battalion
Junior Leaders Course – School of Infantry (Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant)
Participated in Operation Protea in August 1981

Operational Deployment 5 SAI in Ladysmith (1982)

Platoon training – 5 South African Infantry Battalion
Combat Infantry Platoon Commander – base at Elundu, 54 Battalion
Search & destroy operations
Counter-insurgency & counter-terrorism
Follow-up & communication operations
Base protection

Citizen Force

Internal Deployments (1983–1993)

Annual frontline deployments (approx. 60 days/year)
Border protection & suppression of terrorism
Counter-insurgency & cordon/search operations
Containment of civil unrest & protection of infrastructure
Negotiation management & peacekeeping between rival factions

Leadership Appointments (Regiment Northern Natal – Newcastle

(1983–1986) Platoon Commander (2nd Lt/Lt) – Madadeni, Ndumo Border, Pelindaba Border, Pongola Border,
(1987) Student Officer (Lt) – attended Danie Theron Combat School
(1988) Platoon Commander (Lt) - Pinetown Townships - (Kwandengezi, Fredville, etc)
(1989) Company 2IC (Captain) - Pietermaritzburg Townships (Mpumalanga)
(1990) Company 2IC (Captain) - Pongola Border
(1991) Advanced Training Wing – South African Army Infantry School
(1992) Member (Captain) – Oribi Commando
(1993) Company Commander (Major) – Durban Townships: Inanda / KwaMashu

(Awarded **Letter of Commendation** & name entered into the **Orders of The Unit**)
Medals Awarded

Pro Patria Medal
Southern Africa Medal
General Service Medal
Unitas Medal
John Chard Medal

Book Contributions

Contributor to community safety concepts featured in book: - **Gemeenskap Veiligeheid** – **Roland de Vries**
Contributed to book **Diensplig – Anelia Heese**
Contributed to book **Border Bases – Barry Fowler**

Passion Hobbies

EXCO Member National Civil Society Group – The United South African Movement (TUSAM)
Fundraising – Pro Patria Museum (Pretoria

Notice Board

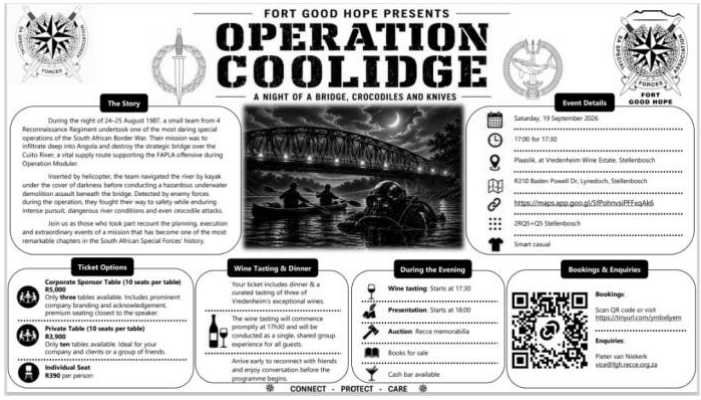
If you have any events that you would like us to add to this page please feel free to email me on woodworkgavin@gmail.com with the details.



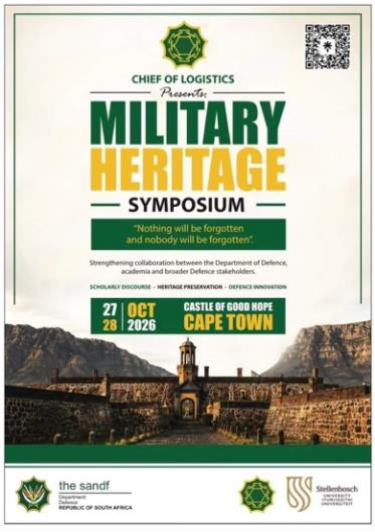






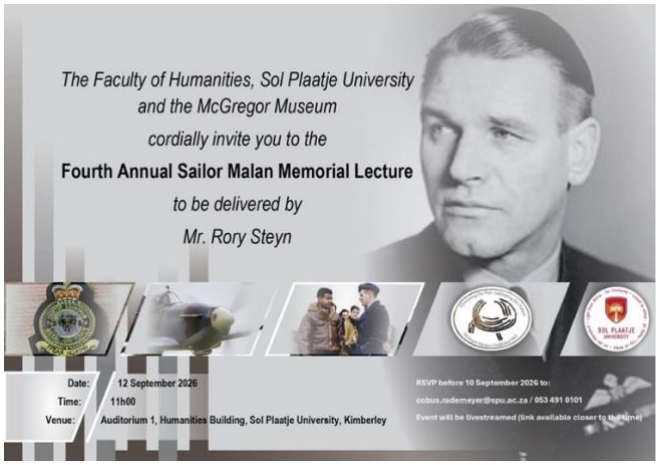














Parades

PUMA 164 Remembrance Parade	5 Sep 2026	Dawn Patrol MOTH Shellhole
El Alamein	18 Oct 2026	Cape Town Gardens
Veterans Dinner	29 Oct 2026.	Kelvin Grove
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

17 September 2026.	Walter Volker	The secret world of military intelligence
24 September 2026	Leon de Bruin	The Story of the Border War
15 October 2026	Rear Adm. Arne Söderlund	Iron Fist From The Sea
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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