

**SWISS CLUB NATAL**



**SOUTH AFRICA**

SWISS CLUB NATAL  
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BULLETIN NOVEMBER 1984

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## EDITORS CORNER.

Family shoot 3rd March in dull good shooting weather; not a bad turnout about 40 equal in sexes, & our usual happy kids. Thanks again to Karl Germann for organising the teams & for purchasing the prizes ; once again every-one seemed to get a prize ( just like bowls). Good range control as usual from R&B, & I am very pleased to write that his leg is much better.

A light rain ended the day, but when most of the folk had finished their braai.

Several new faces & some new members, welcome to Reiner Hertrompf & Marc Fessler & family, I am sure you will have some happy times with our club. Another good day together. The balloons on the targets was quite an idea & good fun.

Some club news, George & Mila Dawson are soon off to Italy for several months.; haven't seen them for ages, so it seems it will be a long time before I see them again. "Good Trip".

I missed Pam & Ernie Ender on the 3rd, I heard that Ernie is having trouble with his eyes. Lets hope all will be well soon.

In April the Frei's will be spending a few days in Stellenbosch with Pat & Lydia, & that should be a party!! The Slevin's will be able to get first hand news of our club,

Heidi Kaufmann had a good matriculation & is studying chemistry at University, "Well Done" Heidi!

I was on leave for the shoot 7th April & Fritz was in Stellenbosch with Pat & Lydia, so I have no news of the day. I will also miss the shoot 5th May as I am playing bowls in the Natal Tournament.

Hope to be back with my friends of "The Hammarsdale Regulars" for shooting on 2nd June.

It seems ages since we had a bowling day, due, I think to the bowling greens at Mandalay being dug up for new grass, etc., Expect we will be back at Mandalay when the new green is back in action.

Pat & Lydia were in Durban for about a week early in June. I think they saw several Mitglieder in Durban & Maritzburg during their stay. We spent a happy evening with them at Fritz's home.

Car trouble prevented me from shooting once again on 2nd June. Fritz was in Maritzburg with Pat & Lydia, so I missed a lift. Better luck for July 7th.

Fritz is with the Swiss Male Choir on their tour of U.S.A. & Switzerland, so we will get a first hand report on his return

Had a lovely surprise 29th June, a visit from Trudy Fuchs on holiday here, (but left Ernst behind). In 1981 spent 4 wonderful days with Trudy & Ernst in Schaffhausen. Trudy spent the night with us, after spending the afternoon in the kitchen of our bowling club, where she was a real star, helping with a competition that day. Trudy is making a point of seeing as many old friends as possible, made during the 12 years she & Ernst lived in Pietermaritzburg, during which time they both did so much for our club.

I managed my second shoot this year 7th July, good turn out about 18 for inter - town competition, 3 stalwarts missing, Fritz, away with the choir, Terry Wilson at a seminar in Johannesburg, & I missed Röbi. perhaps he was at the "Durban July"!?

A perfect day to try out the recently serviced Sturmgewehrs, but the shooting was much the same, the good shots are still good, the average still average. Just another happy day at Hammarsdale range

1st August dinner held at Willi's new Switzerland restaurant adjoining the "Pick & Shovel". Every-one pleased to see the return of Swiss decor & the flags of all Cantons. As usual good food & service from Willi. Only about 30 present including a table of half a dozen new faces, who I hope will join us in future social events. (The next I think will be our 8th bowls day). Lovely to have all the Family Zimmermann with us, & Mrs. Zimmermann senior looking so well in company with her sister on holiday from Switzerland;

Fritz in a short speech told us of the hospitality of the U.S.A. west coast Swiss Clubs during his tour with the choir.

I missed several faces, Germanns, Thomas, Stevens & Markus. Sorry to write that Koebi Bächler is not too fit & has a battle to get about with his hip trouble.

I am told that 16 P.M.S. Mitglieder had a wow of a 1st August party, (not such a sleepy hollow!!)

Shoot 4th August about 18 of us, usual faces, Terry & Karl Ernst back again., everyone pleased to see Fritz Kühn, who shot very well. Before the shoot, for following day's celebrations we had to prepare the ground

Hammersdale 5th August, good turn out for 1st August celebrations , good weather yet again. Thanks to Fritz Köhn who gave me a break from the nail hitting, I was able to have a chat with most people. Lovely to see Caroline Köhn, a few years since she was last with us for 1st Aug. I am sure everyone had a good day. Thanks to all the helpers.

For 5 years now I have appealed to members to contribute articles, stories etc., to this your, bulletin. So a big thank-you to Terry Wilson who has joined the ranks of the few who have answered my appeal with a most informative article, which will be of particular interest to the "Hammersdale regulars" & anyone interested in shooting. Also thanks to my little wife for an extra load of typing.

Shoot 2nd September, about 16 of us had a very pleasant day with lots of laughter, helped by George Dawson who came along with Rene, everyone was glad to have George & his humour back on the range after his long holiday in Italy.

Kurt Nick arrived with a young Swiss chap, Peter Egloff, I am sure he had a good time with us & we hope to see him again. We missed Röbi, very unusual for our shooting master to miss two shoots in a row. "Apres Shoot", harmony with our Commando friends.

30 years ago 6 stalwart Swiss decided to start a Swiss Club in Natal; so a thought for our foundation members, & congratulations to our Club. I think I have been a member for 20 odd years & say thanks for the past & all the best for the future.

GUGGY

Die Seite von...

Robert Müller



e/o

CONSULATE GENERAL OF SWITZERLAND  
JOHANNESBURG

In diesem Monat möchte ich Ihnen anstelle der schon traditionellen Rubrik "Wussten Sie, dass..." einige Informationen über unseren diplomatischen und konsularischen Dienst geben.

Wie wir oft feststellen, bestehen gerade in diesem Bereich bei unseren Landsleuten Unsicherheiten, Wissenslücken oder sogar falsche Meinungen, wie z.B. diejenige, dass Diplomatenkinder mit einem Whiskyglas in der Hand zur Welt kommen! Das Whisky- oder auch Tomatenjus-Glas nimmt zwar - dies ist unbestritten - einen gewissen Platz in der Karriere eines jeden Diplomaten ein, doch, wie ich später erklären werde, ist es eher als "Arbeitsinstrument" denn als Vergnügungsartikel zu betrachten... Nun aber, Spass beiseite:

In unserem Aussendienst kennen wir drei verschiedene Karrieren:

- die diplomatische und konsularische Laufbahn
- die Kanzleikarriere und
- den Sekretariatsdienst

Diplomat werden kann nur, wer über einen Hochschulabschluss verfügt (Doktorat oder Lizentiat). Die Beamten des Kanzleidienstes hingegen haben in der Regel eine kaufmännische Ausbildung abgeschlossen.

Die Bewerber für beide Karrieren haben recht anspruchsvolle Eintrittsprüfungen zu bestehen, und nur eine bestimmte Anzahl (beim Kanzleidienst etwa 30 von mehreren hundert Bewerbern) werden zur Absolvierung einer zweijährigen Ausbildungszeit zugelassen, welche sich zum Teil an der Zentrale in Bern, zum Teil im Ausland vollzieht. Nach erfolgreichem Ueberwinden der letzten Hürde, der Abschlussprüfung, erfolgt die Wahl zum Beamten und der Einstieg in die entsprechende Laufbahn. Mit dem für den Bundesbetrieb eigenen Beförderungsverfahren (Minimum von Dienstjahren, die zurückgelegt werden müssen, sowie gute Qualifikationen) beginnt dann der Aufstieg, welcher bei den Diplomaten beim Rang eines Botschafters, und bei der Kanzlei-

karriere beim Konsul oder gar Generalkonsul enden kann (die Beförderung des Kanzleibeamten zum Vizekonsul bedeutet auch gleichzeitig den Uebertritt vom Kanzlei- zum konsularischen Dienst). Ich schreibe kann, denn nicht allen ist es möglich, dieses Ziel zu erreichen (die Beförderungspyramide wird gegen oben immer enger), d.h. es sind bedeutend weniger Botschaften, Generalkonsulate und Konsulate vorhanden als Personen, die nach diesen Chefpositionen streben.

An dieser Stelle ist vielleicht einmal der Unterschied zwischen einer Botschaft und einem Konsulat festzuhalten. Eine diplomatische Mission (Botschaft) ist die Verbindungsstelle zwischen unserer Regierung (Bundesrat) und derjenigen des Gastlandes. Der Botschafter und seine diplomatischen Mitarbeiter informieren unsere Regierung regelmässig über die Politik des Gastlandes, die Wirtschaft, den Handel und die Kultur. Sie bringen auch, falls erforderlich, den Standpunkt unserer Regierung zu gewissen Problemen der Regierung des Gastlandes vor. Das Sammeln von Informationen ist also ein wichtiger Bestandteil der Aufgaben unserer Diplomaten, und hierzu sind - der Kreis zum Whiskyglas schliesst sich - unter anderem auch die Cocktailparties und Diners geeignet. Gespräche mit Kollegen, Wirtschaftsfachleuten oder auch Künstlern des Gastlandes bringen oft wertvolle Hinweise und "Back-ground-information". Es sind Mosaiksteine, die es zusammzusetzen gilt, damit sich ein abgerundetes Bild über ein spezifisches Gebiet ergibt, über welches "Bern" informiert werden möchte.

Die konsularischen Auslandsvertretungen hingegen sind in erster Linie für die Betreuung der im Gastland lebenden Landsleute da. Daneben fällt ihnen die Aufgabe zu, Handelsbeziehungen von Schweizerfirmen auf dem Platze herzustellen, also unserer Exportwirtschaft zu dienen. Nicht zu vergessen im Zeitalter des Massentourismus ist auch die Hilfe an in Not geratene Reisende (Passverluste, Spitalaufenthalte, Verhaftungen, Heim-schaffungen etc.).

In der Regel ist in einer Botschaft auch eine konsularische Abteilung integriert, welcher die Betreuung der Landsleute obliegt. Nicht so in Südafrika, wie Sie wissen, wo unsere Botschaft in Pretoria ausschliesslich diplomatische Funktionen

erfüllt, der ganze konsularische Bereich aber in Johannesburg durch dieses Generalkonsulat und in Kapstadt durch das dortige Konsulat bearbeitet wird. Dass unser Botschafter wie alle seine Kollegen während sechs Monaten im Jahr in Kapstadt weilt, ist eine weitere Sonderheit, die weltweit einzigartig ist.

Im nächsten Bulletin werde ich diesen Bericht über die Organisation unseres Aussendienstes fortsetzen und Ihnen zu erklären versuchen, warum die Beamte der Botschaften und Konsulate in regelmässigen Abständen versetzt werden.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen



N.B.

Es wird Sie bestimmt interessieren zu wissen, wieviele Schweizer am 1. Januar 1984 in Johannesburg und Kapstadt immatrikuliert waren (die Zählung erfolgt nur alle 3 Jahre):

	<u>Nur-</u> <u>Schweizer</u>	<u>Doppel-</u> <u>bürger</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>_____</u>
<u>Johannesburg</u>			
Transvaal, Natal, OFS und alle Homeländer ausser Transkei und Ciskei	2'823	3'048	5'871
Lesotho	64	19	83
Swaziland	23	16	39
<u>Kapstadt</u>			
Kapprovinz inkl. Homländer Transkei und Ciskei	1'033	1'176	2'209
Namibia/SWA	97	90	187
	<u>4'040</u>	<u>4'349</u>	<u>8'389</u>



## SWISS INFANTRY RIFLES.

### PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE.

The introduction of the breech - loading Dreyse rifle by the Prussians in 1841 marked the commencement of an arms race which soon swept the whole of Europe & was to eventually alter the course of history. It became apparent that there was little future for nations who were unable to keep abreast in the field of weapons technology. This fact made a considerable impression on those responsible for defending the traditional neutrality of Switzerland.

With the defeats of Schleswig- Holstein & Austria at the hands of Otto Von Bismark & his Dreyse bearing legions to spur them on, the Swiss Military Authorities set about to design & produce a weapon that could be counted upon to outshoot the dreaded Prussian " Needle - Rifle"

Bearing in mind that their very existence could depend upon the success of their project, the rifle- minded Swiss adopted the revolutionary step of combining all three of the latest firearm developments into the design of their proposed rifle: the bolt action, the self-contained metallic cartridge & the tube magazine beneath the barrel.

By the time France, itself, had fallen to the Prussian War Machine in 1871, the 1866 Swiss Vetterli rifle designed by Frederick Vetterli of Sig had already been in production for four years. This fact may well have dissuaded Bismark from any exercise designed to facilitate the "Stachelschweins" entry into the Prussian zone of influence

As Hitler probably also reflected some seventy years later, preparedness is an excellent method of guaranteeing neutrality!

The Vetterli (Plate 1) weighed 4.43 KG, carried twelve 10.4 mm cartridges in the tubular magazine and drove its 20.3 gram lead bullet at a muzzle velocity of 412 metres per second. Maximum range was in the region of 3000 metres. The basic design of this rifle owed a certain amount to the American Henry. However with a bolt action replacing the lever & improvements to the loading system & magazine, the Swiss produced a far stronger & superior weapon which could easily be operated by a soldier in the prone position

The Vetterli remained in production for the next twenty years & , before being superceded in 1889, was paid the supreme compliment by the Italians who adopted a slightly modified version of the design as their Vetterli - Vitali of 1871

The successor to the Vetterli, the Schmidt - Rubin, was the result of developments in both the field of ballistics & rifle design by Major Rubin of the Laboratory at Thun & Colonel Schmidt, one of the most noted of arms reseachers & designers of all time.

Major Rubin was amongst the first to appreciate the military potential of the small bore, high velocity bullet. In 1883 he submitted a 7.5 mm cartridge for consideration by the Swiss Government whose bullet incorporated his revolutionary invention of encasing the lead core in a copper jacket to better grip the rifling at high velocity. He later modified the design to take advantage of the discovery of smokeless powder in 1886.

The Schmidt - Rubin Rifle ( Plate 2) as adopted by the Swiss Army in 1889 , incorporates the straight - pull bolt system. Here a special revolving cam disengages the locking lugs of the action & then retracts the bolt without rotation to eject when its handle is pulled to the rear. The weight of this arm was 4.45 KG. & it was provided with a detachable box magazine which contained twelve 7.5 mm. cartridges whose jacketed bullets weighed 12.3 gms. & achieved a muzzle velocity of 625 metres per second. These specifications represented a considerable advance over the Vetterli with its black powder charge & solid lead bullet.

Over the next forty-two years the Schmid-Rubin underwent numerous improvements & modifications, Probably the most significant of these was the introduction in 1911 of a rifle & carbine (plates 3 & 4) in which the action was reduced in length & also strengthened to handle a new version of the 7.5 mm. cartridge. This new cartridge incorporated a boat - tailed bullet of 11.3 gms. that almost doubled the effective range of contemporary military rifles. Needless to say the boat-tail design was immediately copied by most other nations, including Germany & America.

The operating pressure of the new cartridge was considerably higher than earlier versions & the muzzle velocity was raised to 812 metres per second. The magazine capacity of the new rifle & carbine was reduced to six & many of the earlier Schmidt- Rubin rifles were modified to handle the new high velocity round which is essentially the same as that used today in the Sig assault rifle or "Sturmgewehr": it is of interest to note that all reference books emphasise the danger of firing the modern cartridge in early rifles that have not been modified!!

The final version of the Schmidt - Rubin, a carbine, was introduced in 1931 known as the K.31 ( Plate 5 ), this weapon is by far the best of the range & remained the standard Swiss Infantry weapon until the adoption of an automatic rifle in 1957. The principal difference between this carbine & the 1911 model is the shortened bolt which permitted its designers to lengthen the barrel by over six centimetres, thus increasing velocity, & also to place the magazine immediately in front of the trigger guard.

The K 31, with dioptre sight, retains its favoured position amongst the older & more discerning target shooting enthusiasts. In certain respects it is surprising that this design was never adopted by any other nation; This is, however, perhaps understandable when one considers the relative lateness of the K 31's introduction & the precision required in manufacture. The disastrous performance of the somewhat similiar Canadian Ross Rifle in the muddy trenches of the Great War may have also had a bearing on the matter.

It is finally worth noting that although the Schmidt - Rubin range of rifles did not originate in a Sig design, this company remained very much in the picture by the manufacture of various parts during the many years the series was in use.

Developments in Europe during the Second World War made it obvious to the pragmatic Swiss that the long-serving Schmidt - Rubin rifles was rapidly reaching the end of its military life & would have to be replaced by a self-loading weapon. Tactical considerations, however, dictated the retention of the highly effective 7.5 mm cartridge developed in 1911.

Under the guidance of its capable designer, Robert Amshler, Sig soon eclipsed several designs developed by the Federal Arsenal with a rifle initially known as the AM.55 & later developed into the SG .510 range of weapons. This rifle used a roller-delayed blow-back action & was to some extent based upon the model 1945 Sturmgewehr which had been developed by Germany shortly before the end of the Second World War.

Adopted by the Swiss Army as the Sturmgewehr 1957 (STG 57) (Plate 6), the SG 510 was a radical change from its well-loved bolt-action predecessor, the K 31, with the only common factor being the cartridge used.

Notable features included integral gas rings on the barrel for launching energia grenades, movable bi-pod, 24 - round magazine, straight - line rubber stock, hinged peepsights & selective fire capacity with a cyclic rate of 600 rounds per minute. An important & distinctive feature of this rifle is the fluted chamber where upon ignition the cartridge case floats on a film of gas to reduce the friction between the case & the chamber wall. This arrangement prevents elongation & possible rupture of the cartridge case when its neck expands & grips the chamber while the gas pressure simultaneously forces back the cartridge base & breech block to initiate the ejection & reloading cycle.

At a weight of almost 6 Kilograms the STG 57 has earned more than its fair share of criticism from those who have been obliged to carry its bulk over Switzerland's often rugged terrain. Such a view neither takes cognisance of a 10% improvement in the shooting of conscripts since the days of K 31 nor the utility of the Sturmgewehr's design against the Swiss strategic requirements of the mid 1950'S when it was designed.

Here with a relatively limited manpower it was expected to fight largely from fixed positions under harsh climatic conditions. In this rifle SIG provided the means for a well trained soldier to simultaneously fill the roles of rifleman, light machine gunner (selective fire capacity, adjustable bipod & straight - line stock) & bombardier (Grenade rings & rubber butt). The night - sights & arctic trigger also permit the operation of the STG 57 in poor light & by a soldier wearing heavy gloves to keep out the cold.

It is of significance that the STG 57 in its SG 510 - 4 commercial version chambered for the 7.62 mm nato round has been widely exported to South America where it is the standard military weapon for both the Chilean & Bolivian Armies.

In keeping with modern trends in warfare where the individual infantryman is highly mobile & seldom expected to engage the enemy at more than a few hundred metres the Swiss Army is shortly to re - equip with a new Sturmgewehr to replace the STG 57. This rifle the SG 541 (Plate 7) has been recently developed by SIG from their extremely successful SG 540 design which is currently manufactured under licence by the French company Maunrhin. No fewer than eighteen countries including France, Paraguay, Bolivia & Swaziland are using this rifle.

Adopted by the Swiss in a 5.6 mm calibre the SG 541 Sturmgewehr is currently in limited production & marks the second instance in a generation where SIG has had its design accepted in preference to that of the Federal Arms Factory whose contender, the M.P.C. 41. underwent parallel military trials.

This new Sturmgewehr (perhaps to be known as the S.T.G. 82) is a more conventional weapon in terms of contemporary trends than was the STG 57 at the time of its introduction nearly thirty years ago. SIG have produced a weapon that compares very favourably with any assault rifle manufactured elsewhere.

The modern requirement for a light high velocity low-recoil with which a soldier can maintain an accurate & sustained fire-power has been fully met.

The design of the SG 541 is based upon the reliable & comfortable gas - operated action with rotating bolt similar to that used in the Soviet AK 47 & South African R 4 as opposed to the blow-back system of the existing STG 57. As compared to the old Sturmgewehr both the weight & length of the new rifle have been substantially reduced by 2.15 KG & 10 CMS respectively.

The muzzle - velocity of the SG 541 has been increased by approximately 200 metres per second & its light-weight cartridges are carried in 20 or 30 round magazines made from transparent plastic which thus permit an immediate visual check on the number of shots remaining.

The length of the new Sturmgewehr may be reduced to 77,7cms for use as a machine pistol by tank crews by folding the butt forward along the action. A reduced length "headquarters weapon" of 82..3 cms folding to 60 cms has also been produced for specialised use. As in the case with the older Sturmgewehr a folding bipod is provided & accuracy at 300 metres is reputed to be similar to that of the STG 57.

Grenades may also be fired from the new Sturmgewehr - but without the necessity of using a special blank ballistite cartridge. Since a normal round is used in the launching, it is no longer necessary to change magazines when using grenades. The present fatal possibility of firing a live round into a grenade will thus not be a matter of concern - an important consideration in the stress of battle conditions. The trigger -guard is designed to swivel around when grenades are fired or when the rifleman is wearing heavy gloves.

As in the case of the STG 57, the new Sturmgewehr may

also be adapted to a fully automatic role by reversing the traditional white plate at the side of the action. In this mode it can produce a cyclic rate of fire up to 850 rounds per minute. Unlike the present weapon, however, the SG 541 is fitted with a special 3 - shot setting which permits short bursts of controlled fully automatic fire.

The combined dioptre & alignment sight is mounted on the breech housing & is adjustable for traverse & elevation. Luminous spots are provided for aiming at night. Both daylight & night sights are adjusted simultaneously, & when firing at night is anticipated a swing-up luminous foresight is activated. Telescopic & infra - red sights can be fitted if required.

SIG has produced another masterpiece which any soldier can be proud to bear in the defence of his country.

Such has been the account of the Swiss Infantry Rifle from the Vetterli of 1866 until the introduction of the weapon that will in all probability be carried by the Swiss soldier until well into the 21st century.

Historically also this period has marked the continuation of an ideal which has ever been worth guarding with the best means available - Swiss neutrality, in this too there has been success; from the era of Von Bismark to that of Adolf Hitler & on further to yet another where a small nation can foresee the danger of getting caught between the armies of East & West.

The rifles have served their purpose & will continue to do so.

TERRY WILSON

## THE FIRST DESERT CAMPAIGN.. (PART 7)

Of all our many desert camps of the last 10 months, the camp on "the wire" was by far the worst. Here the desert was dead flat, & as hard as a Mother - In - Law's heart, so barren not even camel scrub would grow. Everywhere rocks the size of a bread loaf, & beneath each rock a scorpion or two, mostly the brown variety, with quite a lot of the far more poisonous black type. Several men were stung & suffered some swelling & discomfort, but there were no fatalities (it was a joke at the time that the "Desert Rats" were so hardy that it was the scorpions that died.)

With so many repair jobs waiting, breakfast was taken at first light & the men worked on to nightfall, even after dark one would now & again hear the clink of a spanner against metal; all welding was done at mid-day to lessen the chances of enemy air-craft picking up the flashes of acetylene torches. Since our first attack there had really been little enemy air activity, this was to change a few weeks ahead when we captured the city of Benghazi & the Luftwaffe came on the scene operating from aerodromes in Western Libya.

At least the "WireCamp" brought back memories of 1937 when I had been invited by the 11th Hussars to join armoured car patrol along this same border wire. We were in two Rolls Royce cars heading south about 5 metres on our side of the wire when we overtook an Italian Patrol of 3 armoured cars, of course on their side of the wire. As we drew level the Italians standing in their turrets all gave the Fascist Salute & shouting "IL DUCE, IL DUCE, IL DUCE". The Hussars replied with a famous but rude two finger gesture & shouting "Bootneck, Bootneck, Bootneck". This went on for several miles till with our speedier Rolls we shot ahead of the Italians. I never did find out from the Hussars the meaning of "Bootneck".

So now the Italians were driven out of Egypt, & the advance into Italian Libya began, on 3rd & 4th Jan. 1941. The little town & mini harbour of Bardia fell to the 6th Australian Division. The Infantry supported with tanks, attacked with fixed bayonets & singing at the top of their voices "The Wizard Of Oz". It was probably the terrible singing of the Australians that put the fear of God into the Italians, for they surrendered with over 45,000 prisoners & the loss of over 460 guns.

With well over 100,000 Italian P.O.W.'S in Egypt, this was now a problem. All the extra mouths to feed, clothes & blankets to supply, P.O.W. camps to be built, our men

wasted as guards & in administration. So the British Government suggested to the Australian & S.African Governments that they take as many P.O.W.'S as possible to work on farms & roads to replace the men of these countries who had gone away to war. Some went to Australia, but the majority arrived in S. Africa where they did a good job on the land. As road builders they really left their mark in S. Africa, building many of the famous passes in the Cape. I have seen, about half way on the Hex River Pass a plaque commemorating the fact that the pass had been built by Italian P.O.W'S during the Second World War. There must have been a big P.O.W. camp at Pietermaritzburg, as the little Chapel built by the P.O.W.'S can still be seen near the N.3. highway on the left about a mile from P.M.B. approaching from Durban.

The P.O.W.'S were brought from Suez to Durban & Cape Town in our loaded ships of all sizes, the ships would return to Egypt with S.African Troops. supplies & equipment. One such ship was the "Nova Scotia" torpedoed just off Durban, over 400 Italians drowned & several S. African Soldiers including Frank Sutton, who won the 1928 Comrades Marathon. (A point of interest Magisteron Smith Comrades Winner 1931 was killed in the Second Desert Campaign, he was only 19 years old when he won the race, his record as the youngest winner still stands) Another good Comrades runner Night Scals drowned with his destroyer on a Russian convoy. The Germans also lost a famous sportsman, the boxer, Max Schmelling, who as a Fallschirmspringer was killed during the Battle for Crete.

I often wonder if Luigi Bonfante ever came to S.Africa, not I hope on the "Nova Scotia".!!

After the capture of Bardia, the next objective was the white town & excellent harbour, Tobruk, garrison of the Italian Army, Navy, & Regia Aeronautica, some 80 miles away. Our 7th Armoured Div., was to spearhead the attack, so the M.F.W., was to follow close behind. We were all pleased to leave behind us the "Wire Camp". Our 40 or 50 vehicles in line ahead crossed over the flattened border wire & made for the shell smashed ruins of the border fort Capuzzo; near the fort on the desert track the Italians had built a large statue, head & shoulders of Mussolini, but, Musso wasn't looking too good, bullets or shrapnel had removed one ear & most of his nose, & some wit had stuck on his head of all things a top hat!! ( which must have been of Italian origin).



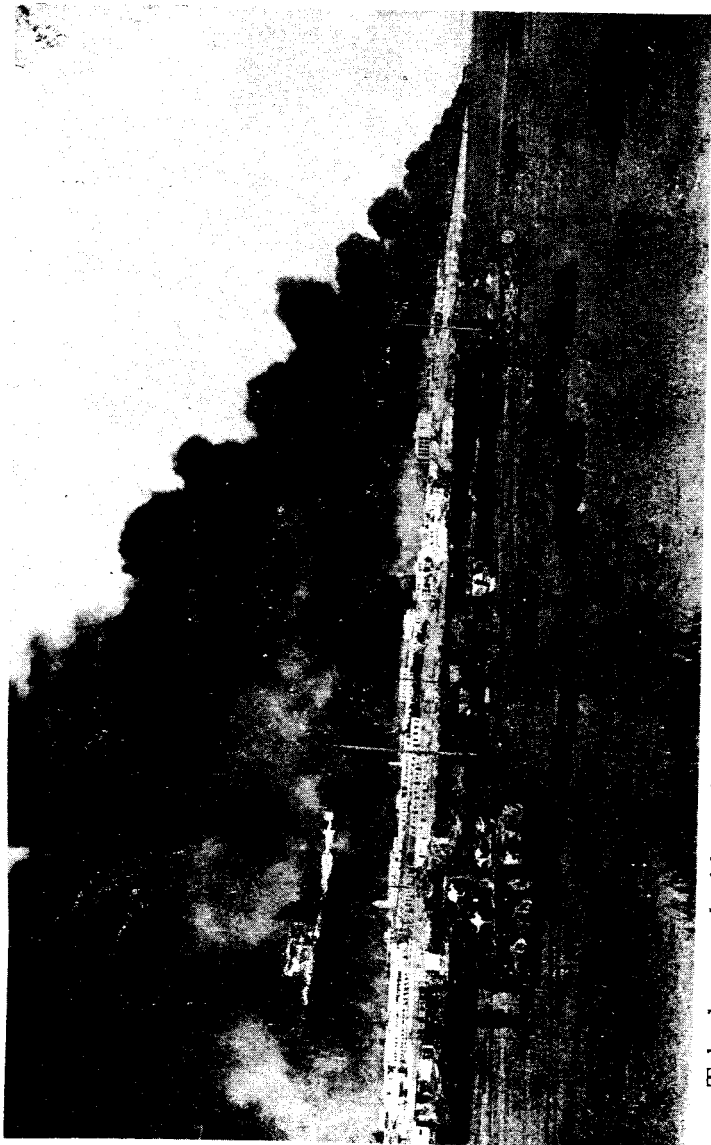
Our 7th A.D. & the Australian 6TH INF. DIV., had reached Tobruk by 8th Jan., but, the town well defended by the Italians, particularly by the artillery did not surrender till the 21st Jan.,

During the 2 weeks since leaving the "Wire Camp" & the fall of Tobruk, we must have had a different camp each night no time to "bivvy" so I curled up in my blankets under the lovely stars alongside Dilys.

Inspite of being so much on the move we were still able to carry out repairs to our Div. vehicles & armour. Somewhere between the fall of Bardia 4th Jan., & fall of Tobruk 21st Jan., I must have had my 24th birthday (13th Jan), forgotten & unnoticed, it wasn't till several weeks later, that, much to my surprise I received a birthday parcel from my English family & realised I was a year older. Looking back I reckon I had crammed quite a lot into my first 24 years of life, particularly from 18 years (when I arrived in Egypt) to my 24th birthday.

20th / 21st Jan., we camped south of Tobruk, within sound but out of range of the Italian guns. The. O.C. decided he wanted to watch the fall of Tobruk; once again I got the job of escorting his staff car with Dilys & four armed men in the back. We came up on the escarpment to the east of the town, but were driven off by too accurate fire from the Italian Artillery, so moved a couple of miles out of range. So I had my first look at Tobruk, the white buildings already battered by bombs & shells & the blue harbour with its few sunken ships (in a few months Churchill was to name Tobruk "the graveyard of ships.") The battle for the town was in full swing & I had an excellent view with my binoculars; Alongside the west wharf the crack Italian Navy cruiser "San Giorgio" was on fire & half sunken after attack by the R.A.F., a huge pall of black smoke from the ship making a frame for what was to be one of the best war photographs. So this was Tobruk that in a couple of months time in the 2nd Desert Campaign was to change my whole life, for, when surrounded & besieged by the Germans for 8 months, I was to have the toughest time of my life, nearly losing it on several occasions. Tobruk was to cost me my health, put me in hospital for 3 1/2 years with the loss of my left lung & 7 ribs, bring me to S. Africa & to marry a very kind S. African nurse. Tobruk was also to end my Army career, so, if it hadn't been for Tobruk I would never have heard of Swiss Club Natal & not be writing this article. Perhaps it was just as well

looking through my binoculars on 21st Jan. at my first sight of Tobruk that I had no idea what that little Desert town had in store for me in a few months time.



1. Tobruk covered with a pall of smoke from a burning oil dump as British tanks of the 7th Armoured ("Desert Rat") Division prepare to enter.

This is not a burning oil dump, but the half sunk & burning Italian Cruiser "San Giorgio" after being hit by Blenheim Bombers of the R.A.F.. As this picture was being taken I was with my O/C about 2 miles to the right, opposite the Cruiser & watching it burn.

GUGGY

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