



CAPE SAAACA

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SEPTEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

AUGUST TALK

Notes on the talks at the end of the newsletter.



UPCOMING SEPTEMBER TALKS:

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, the 27th of September, at 19:00 at the CTH Officers Mess inside the Cape Castle. (Parking inside the grounds behind the Castle off Strand Street)

We will not be having a fixed speaker this time, and all are invited to bring artefacts they wish to share with fellow members.

Members are reminded that strict safety protocol on the handling of any firearm will apply; ALL MOVING PARTS MUST BE REMOVED and displayed separately, unless prior cleared with the Chairman. NO live ammunition will be handled.



OUTSTANDING RE-LICENSING APPLICATIONS DUE 31ST MARCH 2007

We remind those who have not yet reacted to the previous urgent notice regarding above to do so immediately to ensure that they do not fall foul of the FCA and the dead line that expired past March for which we issued deferment letters to allow them to submit final Categorisation Applications.

This pertains to EVERYONE whose birthdays fall within the months April/May/June.

Should you in any way doubt if you fall within this category, urgently get in contact with the Chairman to assist you towards that end.

This is clearly very important and we request those not to procrastinate further as we will not be able to help them after that date.



SAPS CFR 31st OF MARCH 2008 RE-LICENSES APPLICATIONS:

Relevant to those born in the months July/August/Sept.

Please prepare and submit your Collection Field of Interest and Organogram as soon as possible to allow us enough time to process it so that you may be issued the required certified documentation required to be considered as Private Collectors by the CFR SAPS.

If they have not already done so, members are requested to start working on their collections' Fields of Interest that first has to be considered and duly approved by the CAPE SAAACA membership committee before they can apply to have any firearms relicenced. The Membership Committee meets once a month and new applications on average takes about three months to evaluate and properly work through to ensure the integrity of the information supplied. As such it will be wise to submit it before the end of December as no guarantees can be given on any applications submitted from January, given the deadline of end March 2008 for this cycle. Contact your Chairman should you need any help to get it done.

Late submissions place huge demands on the membership Committee with great costs and effort to all involved.



SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS:

To allow proper control, it may only be submitted via registered mail or direct submission at our Offices. A dated receipt will be issued against which the application status may be monitored.



2008 AGM

Members are reminded to diarise Saturday the 3rd of November 2007 for our next AGM at the CTH Officers Mess inside the Cape Castle.



We still receive calls from members who clearly has a totally misunderstanding as to what the Firearm Collectors' status are under the new Act and what process are required to reach that status and for clarity purposes I will give a brief explanation.

Under the previous Act “bona fide” collectors had to apply to the SAPS to be declared collectors persé, and as such had to motivate each firearm to be considered as a collector’s piece in great detail.

Under the current Act certain duties were delegated under a mandate to accredited bodies, who now has to fulfil that duty previously carried out by the CFR SAPS.

In essence that means that before you submit anything to the SAPS, you first have to submit your motivated application along prescribed guidelines to the Membership Committee of CAPE SAAACA. (Refer Categorisation Application for Private Collectors available on request)

After due consideration they will be issued with the following;

- a. An annual membership card reflecting his various legal credentials.
- b. A certified letter to accompany the dated and stamped approved Field of Interest which are returned to the member.
- c. A laminated membership certificate.

Copies of the first two documents plus your Proficiency/Competency Certificates must accompany the SAPS 271 & Annexure A application to the CFR SAPS.

It is no longer required to include anything else. In fact, on the Annexure A where it requires a motivation for each firearm, you simply refer to the Field of Interest organogram item number for the specific firearm under consideration, and attach a certified copy of said Organogram. We have agreed with the Western Cape CFR SAPS on an exact wording and will assist members with the correct wording for their SAPS applications to ensure consistency and easier processing on their side.

Anybody still with some doubt on this matter, are to contact the Chairman.



POSSIBLE WWII SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP SECRETARIAT:

In deference to other collecting bodies that accommodate various interest groups informally, CAPE SAAACA structures such interests within organised secretariats to facilitate organised events to promote that interest field. As such we already have the following special interest group secretariats;

1. Southern Africa Militaria Collectors Association. (General non firearm militaria matters)
2. Southern Africa Historian Association. (Historical research and archive matters)
3. Cape SAAACA Western Shooters Association (Wild West enthusiasts)
4. Fort Knokke Militia. (VOC era enthusiasts)

We were approached by individual members to organise an interest group specifically for those **enthusiasts on WWII matters**. Any interested parties are invited to contact the Chairman.



AUGUST TALK

The main topic at the meeting of the 30th of August was the PowerPoint presentation and display of Japanese Samurai armour and weaponry by André Olivier. André's talk and presentation focused basically on two aspects: Japanese swords and armour – their evolution and development against the background and context of the main periods of Japanese history. Understanding Japanese arms and armour requires an understanding of the personalities, the culture, religious context, mythology, politics, periods of conflict and demands of the battles itself.

SWORDS: The notion of the Samurai and his sword are inseparable concepts. The Japanese sword is 'the soul of the Samurai', and the possession of two swords, the long *katana* and the shorter *wakizashi*, was both the samurai's badge and his pride. Such pride was justified in two ways: the technological achievement of sword making, and the equally superb achievement of sword fighting. Swords are designed either as cutting weapons or thrusting weapons. Among swords primarily intended as cutting weapons the Japanese sword stands supreme. This was due to: (a) the curvature of its blade, which allowed the very hard and very sharp cutting edge to neutralize an opponent with a slicing action, and (b) being a two-handed weapon, the *katana* was both sword and shield, providing a unique example of a sword used defensively as well as offensively. The defensive use of the samurai sword depended upon the immense strength and resilience of the sword's body and its broad back. This enabled the samurai to deflect a blow aimed at him by knocking the attacking sword to one side with the flat of the blade and then following up with a stroke of his own. Contemporary swords from other cultures would have broken if such a practice had been tried - a superiority in Japanese design that was first illustrated during the Mongol invasions.

The subtle combination of the strength and suppleness required for the sword's defensive role and the hardness needed for its cutting power was a technical and metallurgical achievement that is quite astonishing, given the lack of knowledge on the part of the sword smiths, of the underlying chemistry and physics of the process. Scientific knowledge, however, was hidden in the long years of experience and practical experimentation that produced the process outlined below. The Japanese sword was of composite construction, and consisted of a selectively hardened cutting edge embedded within a softer and springier body to give resilience. The sword smiths mixed iron ore with crushed charcoal, heated by the burning of charcoal. The smelting operation lasted for four days, at the end of which the furnaces were broken up and the metal extracted. The lump of crude iron so produced, called *tama hagane*, would be heated and flattened under a hammer, to produce a number of flattened platelets. A pile of these plates, coated with a flux made from clay and powdered whetstone in a thin slurry, would be forged out into a heavier piece of steel as a sword bar of about 12 cm by 14 cm and about 2 cm thick. The tool steel for the sword edge and outer zone was called *uagane*. The *shingane* (soft iron core) was produced in a similar manner, except that it was exposed more often and longer to the air at a high temperature, so that it would lose almost all of its carbon. When a pile of platelets had been forged to a single solid plate, it was deeply grooved, folded over and again hot forged so that the surfaces welded tightly together. Such folding and reforging was repeated, with the traces of the original pieces becoming thinner and thinner. Two bars, one of *uagane*, the other of *shingane*, were forged in this way. It is thought that at times the composite bar was refolded sometimes longitudinally and sometimes crosswise, perhaps alternately. Some great sword smiths used four bars of steel, each welded and doubled five times to make 2 to the power of twenty laminations. The

maximum ever recorded was 30 folds.

To combine the laminated steel for the core and the quench-hardening tool steel for the exterior, a piece of *shingane* material is welded on to a plate of *uagane*, and then the two-layered material is either folded together with the soft steel inside, or a bar of soft tool steel is inserted into a forged U-shaped trough of tool steel, and then closed and forged together. This bar, elongated on the anvil and fairly well shaped towards the contour of the final blade, was then slowly cooled (for softness) and brought to nearly its final shape by a kind of hand scraper that was pushed along the blade rather than being pulled. When this process reached the stage where the only metal that needed to be removed would be what would come off when the finished blade was sharpened and polished, the most interesting process in the forging now took place. This was the heating and selective quench hardening. In other words, only part of the blade, the cutting edge, was hardened. To do this, the smith coated the whole blade in a stiff paste of clay and water. The insulating clay was removed from the edge of the blade only, to a distance of a few millimetres. The remaining clay was dried and the whole blade brought to the uniform hardening temperature. This was a difficult process, particularly for a long sword. It was then quickly immersed in a trough of water of specific temperature. If the clay was well distributed and did not crack off, hardening was accomplished only within the desired zone, and in a pattern on the metal surface determined by the manner in which the clay was removed. Some smiths would choose a particular design of wavy lines as their hallmark. The hardened blade was carefully examined, and if no cracks or faults were found, the long process of polishing would begin. The first removal of scale and metal was done by rubbing on a very coarse abrasive stone. At this point, the curvature of the blade could be adjusted by heating the back of the blade and pressing it against a copper block. Polishing continued with a succession of finer-grained stones until the final polishing was undertaken. This would produce brilliance in the characteristic wavy line known as the *yakiba*, where the hardened and unhardened steel areas met.

The hardened cutting edge could then be sharpened to produce a cutting surface that was without parallel anywhere in the world, and the whole blade was mounted in a handle to produce the weapon that is so familiar today. A *tsuba* (sword guard) protected the hands, while cord twisted round the handle gave a secure grip. When civilian dress was worn, both swords would be thrust through the belt, but as this was impractical when wearing armour, the katana was slung from a belt or a *koshiate* (sword carrier) in much the same way as the *tachi* (long sword) had been carried in civilian dress in the earlier period. The *wakizashi* was not worn with armour, but replaced by a *tanto* (dagger). Testing of swords was carried out to confirm that they had the correct balance and would cut effectively. The cutting test was sometimes carried out on live bodies in the form of condemned criminals, but far more common was to have the sword's power tested on corpses, or on bundles of rushes bound around a bamboo core. A corpse was sometimes hung up and cut through either sideways or downwards. Alternatively, corpses could be piled up on sand and cut through, and as many as seven are said to have been severed by one sword stroke from a superior blade. Although we may assume that outside the battlefield situation the Samurai sword left its scabbard on mercifully fewer occasions than Japanese movies would have us believe, the weapon was deadly in the hands of a master. To kill in one stroke from the samurai's belt was an ideal perfected by more than one expert in handling this most perfect of edged weapons.

ARMOUR: The exquisite, often flamboyant and yet extremely utilitarian Japanese armour provides a fascinating field of study for collectors and students of Japanese military history and technology. Distinctive and instantly recognizable, Japanese armour developed incrementally over more than 1 200 years (some of the earliest drawings showing recognisable armour dates from 801) for the defence against a range of arms. As the nature of warfare changed in Japan

types and styles of armour developed in response. The study of armour thus closely coincides with evolving Japanese battlefield reality and offensive weapons' development. Armour through the ages consisted of more or less typical sets of component parts. Each component part evolved in time to fit the defensive demands placed upon it while simultaneously the styles or types of each component also developed. While the basic components of typical Japanese suit of armour remained fairly constant, they combine in an endless variety of styles and forms. Japanese armour identification and classification is best studied in conjunction and in association with the Japanese historical periods. Japanese armour originally was developed as a defence against the bow and arrow utilised by the traditional horsemen warriors of Japan, the Bushi, later to be called Samurai. It never was intended as defence against the Japanese sword, and as such it was therefore not a successful defensive countermeasure against said weapon. What surprised the audience was the exquisite detail and workmanship of the armour, the light weight as well as the flexibility it afforded the wearer, as compared to the suits of armour utilised in the western world. Whereas the classic western style of armour was typified by its homogeneous construction of the cuirass obstructing movement, the Japanese armour in the early stage of evolution was characterised by its layered construction consisting of overlapping plates or scales, very much similar to contemporary Teflon or ceramic body armour. In the late phase of development, Japanese armour had a cuirass very similar to western armour, but developed largely independent of western influence. The Japanese armour was finished off with a durable layer of lacquer that was impervious to submersion in water for extended periods of time, as well as being insoluble by modern-day solvents!

A word of thanks again to André for introducing us to, and sharing with us, this highly specialized field of collecting, fleshing out the display with interesting facts and details, and equally so a great thanks to Johan van der Berg who drafted these notes on the talk.

Greetings,

Stephan Fourie

Chairman

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