

CAPE SAAACA



**SOUTHERN AFRICA MILITARIA
COLLECTORS' ASSOCIATION**

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SAMCA NEWSLETTER NO 1, JANUARY 2006

The November meeting kicked off inauspiciously with only 29 people attending, which is partially attributable to the fact that the invitations went out at the last minute due to logistical problems, as well as The Dukes having their annual parade at the Castle on the same evening.

The meeting was formally opened by the Chairperson of the Cape Chapter of the South African Arms & Ammunition Collectors' Association (CAPE SAAACA), Stephan Fourie. Stephan welcomed everyone and outlined the role and function of SAMCA as a platform to promote the preservation of military artifacts as well as the hobby of collecting militaria. SAMCA declares itself to be a non-political, non-racial and non-profit forum where the interests of its members will be the guiding force in the determination and execution of the association's activities. SAMCA is a division of the Cape Chapter of (CAPE SAAACA), membership of which therefore makes provision for reciprocal rights and participation. SAMCA also intends promoting the liaison and interaction with other collectors' societies or interest groups, outside the field of militaria, with a view to organise and present an fair/exhibition for collectors in the Western Cape on an annual basis.



The speaker for the evening was Andy Shoredits, well-known locally and nationally in the fields of militaria collecting/military history. The subject of the evening was an illustrated talk on the history of the German Iron Cross, since its inception in 1813, up to the last formal changes to the 1939 class awards, in 1957.

In the history of military decorations few have had the enormous impact of Germany's Iron Cross. Originally a purely Prussian award, it was instituted at the time when most of Europe was under French domination and it came to symbolise Prussia's determination for freedom. Assimilated into just about every aspect of German culture, the Iron Cross became more than just a military award. Today a collector can find the Iron Cross motive emblazoned on virtually any type of artefact, including pottery, jewelry, banners, etc. and incorporated into the national flag itself. Even today the armed forces of the (partially) reunited Germany use the Iron Cross motive as a national emblem on military vehicles and aircraft.

In 1807 Prussia was defeated by Napoleon's troops and became a French vassal state. The Prussians, however, chafed under the French yoke and plotted insurrection

whilst awaiting the right moment to regain their freedom. In 1812 the Prussians were forced to send almost half of their army to serve in Napoleon's army in the Russian campaign. Following Napoleon's defeat in 1812 at the hands of the Russians, the Prussians sensed that the time had arrived for Prussia to free itself of the Napoleonic yoke of oppression. The fight for Prussia's freedom also led to the creation of one of the most famous military decorations the world has ever known, the Iron Cross, the establishment of which was promulgated on the 20th of March, 1813. It was always intended to be a temporary award, awarded only during times of war, and would theoretically replace other state awards such as the order of the Red Eagle and the Pour le Merite during this period. However, these latter awards continued to be awarded up to the time of the First World War.

The design of the Iron Cross of 1813 had its origins in the black cross worn by the Teutonic Knights of the German Order since the 12th century. The Knights of the German Order wore a black cross on a white cloak, and also wore a black iron cross on a gold chain around their neck. The process of designing and producing the Iron Cross was closely followed by its instigator, Friedrich Wilhelm III. The Iron Cross was designed by Carl Friedrich Schinkel, noted architect of many of Berlin's magnificent buildings. His beautifully simplistic, yet striking, design of a simple iron cross shape framed in silver, was accepted and placed into production immediately.

Historically the awarding of the Iron Cross can be classified into four distinct periods, viz: **1813** (the Prussian War of Liberation – 1813-1814); **1870** (the Franco-Prussian War - 1870-1871); **1914** (the First World War – 1914-1918) and **1939** (the Second World War – 1939-1945). The first Iron Crosses were plagued by production and quality difficulties – shortages in suitable metal led to even cloth versions being manufactured. The Iron Cross of 1813 was instituted in three grades: the **Grand Cross** to be awarded to Senior Commanders whose leadership was a prime fact in successful defence or offensive action; the **Iron Cross, second class**, and the **Iron Cross, first class** to recognise individual gallantry or merit in action. The obverse face of the Iron Cross was blank while the reverse featured a sprig of oak leaves in the centre, with the date of "1817" in the lower arm, and the royal cypher "FW" and a crown in the upper arm. Due to the habit of wearing the award with the obverse facing outward, it was legalised in 1838 and it became mandatory to be worn as such.

In 1870 the awarding of the Iron Cross was again instituted by proclamation of Kaiser Wilhelm I, emperor of Prussia. The award again was classified into three grades as with the 1813 award. In 1895, on the 25th anniversary of the Franco-Prussian War, a special award in the form of a cluster of oak leaves with the number "25" superimposed upon it, was instituted for award to recipients of the 1870 Cross. This was worn on the ribbon of the Iron Cross. Overall the quality of the 1870 award was superior to that of 1813.

The 1914 Iron Cross awards are broadly similar to that of 1870, with the difference of the "1870" date being replaced by "1914", that being the **Iron Cross, second class**, the **Iron Cross, first class** and the **Grand Cross**. In addition an "1870" bar was instituted for recipients of both the 1870 and 1914 awards. A special order, the **Star of the Grand Cross** was instituted which was only awarded once, to FM von Hindenburg. During the SWA Campaign the governor instituted a cloth badge in the form of an Iron Cross due to supply exigencies. It was known as the "**Hildegard**" **Cross**, named after the governor's wife, who organised the manufacture thereof, and is today extremely scarce.

The 1939 Iron Cross is the best known to collectors, being a more recent award and therefore more readily available, as well as being awarded in vastly greater numbers. The Iron Cross awards instituted by Third Reich can be viewed as having "glamour" status - not only was the colour of the ribbon changed to a more attractive red, black and white as compared to the 1813-1914 colours of black and white, but the range of awards was greatly expanded. In addition to the **Grand Cross**, the **Iron Cross, second class**, and the **Iron Cross, first class**, the following categories were also instituted: **Knight's Cross**

of the Iron Cross (1939); Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (1940); Swords and Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross (1941); Swords, Oak Leaves and Diamonds to the Knight's Cross (1941), and lastly, the Golden Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds to the Knight's Cross. Today still, Knight's Cross bearers are held in high regard – not only in Germany, but worldwide.

In 1957, the ban against certain Third Reich-era military awards were lifted: sanitised versions of the various grades (with the exception of the Grand Cross) of the Iron Cross – *sans* the Swastika – were again allowed to be worn by recipients.

Thank you, Andy, for a most informative and interesting talk.



MEMBERSHIP DUES: Full membership will be **R250,00 per annum (plus a once-off registration fee of R150,00)**, which will include a **monthly newsletter** and (hopefully, in due course) a quarterly publication with information on militaria-related events, as well as articles dealing with sundry subjects related to militaria collecting. To this end we are requesting all and sundry not to be closet-collectors, but to share their pride and joy, and knowledge, of their specialised fields of collecting by writing about it. Details and deadlines will be made known as we pick up speed during the course of the year. In future, annual membership dues will be payable at the end of August. Further details will be made known once the rules of the association have been finalised. A category of associate membership will also be instituted which will not include the additional benefits of a newsletter being sent out or receipt of the proposed quarterly militaria magazine. Entry membership for 2006 shall be extended until the March 2006 meeting. (Payment details can be obtained from Gene Hammond as treasurer, who can be contacted at ph: 072-4431416 and email: genleshammon@telkomsa.net). **Membership application forms are attached/will be made available at the January 26th meeting.**

Visitors will also be welcome to attend the activities of the association, in which instance SAMCA reserves the right to charge an entrance fee of R20,00 per person to help offset the operating costs.

VENUE: Meetings will take place on the **last Thursday evening of the month.** The venue of the meetings will be the Cape Town Highlanders' Lecture Hall / E.M. & N.C.O. Mess at the back of the Castle and will start punctually at 19:30. Safe parking will be available in the courtyard of the CTH and at the back of the Castle. Access is off Strand Street, travelling in the direction of the city centre. The entrance is at the back of the Cape of Good Hope Centre, underneath the Oswald Pirow Blvd. overpass. The entrance is guarded by military personnel who will allow access to the parking area upon identification of the visitor and stating his/her purpose of visit, as it is on military property (the CTH Courtyard is to the immediate left upon entering the gate).

Meetings will be structured around members/guest speakers lecturing on subjects of interest to militaria collectors or of a historical nature. The lecture will be preceded by business matters relating to the activities of the association and its members, to be concluded by the opportunity to exchange or display items of military interest at the end of the evening's activities.

FORTHCOMING TALKS: Members will be informed on a quarterly basis of forthcoming talks. The committee will also endeavour to make available a provisional list of speakers and subjects for the following year, at the beginning of each financial year.



The next meeting of SAMCA will be held on Thursday, 26 January, at 19:30 in the Cape Town Highlanders' lecture hall/E.M. & N.C.O.'s mess, behind the Castle. Directions will be provided on site. The guest speaker for the evening will be John Mahncke, on the subject of Tales & Legends of German Submarines in Southern African Coastal Waters during WWII. John is the Vice-chairman/Scribe of the SA

Military History Society (Cape Town Branch). A brief overview of the uniforms and insignia of U-boat crews will be provided by Andy Shoredits after John's talk.



FORTHCOMING TALKS:

- 23rd Feb: **Collecting German Steel Helmets**
An illustrated talk by Gene Hammond.
- 23rd Mar: ***Firsthand Reflections of the Battle at Bridge 14, Angola, and the events that led to it***
An illustrated talk by Stephan Fourie (Chairman of CAPE SAAACA).
- 27th Apr: ***The 7,62x39mm AK47 Family: An Overview & Personal Notes***
An illustrated talk by Johan van den Berg.



PROVISIONAL TALKS FOR 2006 (SUBJECT TO CHANGE & IN RANDOM ORDER):

- ***Samurai Swords*** – Gary Morris/André Olivier
- ***Firsthand Reflections of the Battle at Bridge 14, Angola, and the events that led to it*** – Stephan Fourie
- ***The 7,62x39mm AK47 Family: An Overview & Personal Notes*** – Johan v d Berg
- ***Schutztruppe Edged Weapons & Medals*** – Andy Shoredits
- ***Boxer Rebellion Medals*** – Andy Shoredits
- ***German Railway Guns - A Historical Perspective*** – Johan van den Berg
- ***The Tale of Two Skirmishes, 17th September, 1901 (Gen Louis Botha at Blood River Poort and Gen Jan Smuts at Elands River Poort)*** - Johan van den Berg
- ***German Political Daggers*** – Andy Shoredits
- ***German Fallschirmjäger in World War Two: A Historical Perspective*** – Johan van den Berg



IMPORTANT!: We need:

- **proposals for lectures** and more importantly;
- **speakers**, especially on firearm/ammunition-related subjects! We do not want the subjects to become too one-sided and limited to only a small number of speakers – inbreeding never was a good thing - please help us to diversify and make your association an interesting and exciting one,
- **articles for the planned journal**, and
- **to know about fellow collectors or enthusiasts whom we could invite – please let us have their names and contact details ASAP.**

WE ARE DEPENDING ON YOUR PARTICIPATION AND ASSISTANCE!

See you at the forthcoming meetings – do not forget to diarise it!



PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE:

Until such time as a representative committee is elected, a provisional executive committee will oversee the affairs of SAMCA. The interim members are:

- **Andy Shoredits** (Secretary – Ph: 083-656-5936 & email: felsnest@global.co.za)
- **Johan van den Berg** (Scribe – Ph: 082-579-0386 & email: warbooks@mweb.co.za)
- **Gene Hammond** (Treasurer – Ph: 072-443-1416 & email: genleshammon@telkomsa.net)
- **Stephan Fourie** (SAAACA/SAMCA Chairperson – email: stephan@sfa.co.za) (The SAAACA Chairman is (constitutionally) automatically Chairman of SAMCA & therefore not an interim appointment).

Best wishes

Johan van den Berg (Scribe – Ph: 082-579-0386 / email: warbooks@mweb.co.za)