

**ANNUAL GUNNERS' MEMORIAL SERVICE: 23 APRIL 2017**  
(Part 2)

Gratitude, pride, honour, cohesion, respect, are only a few of the emotions felt by members while entering the National Gunners' Memorial Site in Potchefstroom to honour fallen Gunner Comrades as well as servicemen and women who paid with their lives in service of our country.

The 65<sup>th</sup> National Gunners' Memorial Service was held by the Gunners' Association of South Africa on Sunday 23 April 2017 at 11:00 to honour and remember all gunners who passed on in the service of our country from the start of World War 1.

The chief functionary at the 65<sup>th</sup> annual memorial service was Major General R.C. Andersen, Chief of Defence Reserves. The Gunners' Memorial was unveiled on 10 May 1952 by Lt Gen "Matie" de Wet du Toit to honour 870 gunners who passed on in operations in the two World Wars.

On 19 April 1998 at the 47<sup>th</sup> Memorial Service, the Memorial was rededicated to honour all the gunners who passed on in service from World War 1.

During the memorial service, two gun salvos were fired by the Ceremonial Gun Troop of Transvaal Horse Artillery and the South African Army Artillery Formation with 88mm GV1 ceremonial guns.

Wreaths were laid by various dignitaries including the Executive Mayor of Tlokwe City Council, Mr Khumalo; Next of kin of the late Gunner K.A. Rantjanyana; the Defence Attaché of Japan, Lt Col K. Ebina as well as a representative of the Defence Attaché of United States of America, Lt Col M.H. Adorjan.

Representatives of the Reserve Force Council, Chief of South African Army, Chief of South African Air Force, Chief of South African Navy as well as the Surgeon General also took part in the wreath laying ceremony while sacred music was played by the Army Band Kroonstad as well as a piper from Cape Field Artillery Drums and Pipes. The other wreath layers were members from various organisations, federations, associations as well as all the Regular Force and Reserve Force units from the South African Army Artillery Formation and the South African Army Air Defence Artillery Formation.

Lieutenant General (Ret) Phillip du Preez, National President of the Gunners' Association, addressed the members present and said: "Like Joshua of the Old Testament did, we put stone upon stone to create this memorial and like Joshua we should tell our children and grandchildren about it and why we erected it. We should bring our young people here and tell them about the sacrifices these men and woman made so that we could have tomorrow".

Today we honour the memory of all the gunners whose names are inscribed on the wall of remembrance. He also honoured Gnr Katleho Rantjanyana who sadly passed on, on 19 March 2017 at the age of 32 in an operation protecting our country's border.

Lieutenant General (Ret) Phillip du Preez also paid special tribute to our compatriots who were abroad on the troopship SS Mendi on 21 February 1917.

"The 824 South Africans on board volunteered to join the Allied Forces on the Western Front. The SS Mendi was accidentally rammed amid ships in dense misty conditions by another allied ship when crossing the English Channel. 616 succumbed in the icy waters. Only 208 survived, albeit with tremendous hardships.

The SS Mendi Disaster was one of South Africa's worst tragedies of the First World War, second perhaps only to the Battle of Delville Wood where more South African Troops died or were wounded or injured. We commemorated its centenary last year. But surely no South African disaster of that war or any subsequent conflict could claim to have killed so many men so suddenly or so senselessly than could the sinking of SS Mendi".

In closing, Lieutenant General (Ret) Phillip du Preez said that by coming here this morning, we are saying that we have not forgotten and that we will not forget the supreme sacrifice of those who gave their all for peace, we, their descendants, are enjoying.

True to the Code of Conduct for Artillery Soldiers, the Gunners showed professional comradeship and once again maintained and upheld Artillery Traditions.

**"TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE MEMORY OF ALL GUNNERS WHO LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR SOUTH AFRICA".**



Lt Gen (Ret) P du Preez Addressing Members at Memorial Service.



Maj Gen R.C. Andersen Paying Respect to Fallen Gunners.



Memorial Stone at the Gunners' Memorial Site in Potchefstroom

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