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Sights, Sounds, Memories

South African Soldier Experiences
of the Second World War

Ian van der Waag
Editor

Appendix

A SELECT GUIDE TO PUBLISHED SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIER NARRATIVES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Ian van der Waag

It is the task of the historian to tell credible stories that matter. War veterans can be a powerful force in the telling of the military part of that story; their voices form an important part of the materials at the disposal of historians, whose onerous task it is of finding, selecting and filtering the evidence presented by government organs, journalists and veterans, of asking questions, interrogating meanings, of reappraising the positions taken by others, and of constructing a story that will hopefully nudge our understanding closer towards the truth of an ever-elusive past.¹ While South Africa's participation in the Second World War has certainly provided fertile ground for historians, and will continue to do so as the centennial edges closer, the voices of the veterans of this war have been remarkably quiet. There are relatively few published soldier narratives and those secreted away, in special collections and archival repositories, have been largely neglected as historical sources. Their stories are nonetheless an important part of the history of South Africa's Second World War.

Fifty-three personal narratives – written by “ordinary” soldiers and service personnel – were identified. All of the narrators were South African, although some – like Sir Laurens van der Post – served in British uniform. While the numbers are low, the statistics are interesting. Twenty-one are prisoner-of-war (POW) narratives, or contain chapters on the author's POW experience. For ease of reference, these accounts are indicated below with an asterisk (*). Three are narratives written by women, one a war correspondent and two were hostesses with the South African Auxiliary Service (SAWAS). These are indicated with a double asterisk (**). Although all fifty-three narratives were published in English, ten of the narrators were Afrikaans-speaking. Twenty-one of the narratives were written by officers, a further two by chaplains, and four by war correspondents and SAWAS hostesses, who were treated as officers, while twenty-six were written by other ranks. This provides a relatively close rank split, although the officers are overrepresented. There was a bit of a flurry after the war, as the personal narratives and similar texts, regimental and unit history included, appeared in quick succession.

What is striking, however, is the changing venues of publication. The first accounts appeared during the war, sometimes in Cairo, and the role played by publishing houses such as Uni-Volkspers in the 1940s and Howard Timmins of Cape Town, over the longer term, can be noted. However, as Figure 1 indicates, there has been a strong trend away from the more established publishing houses. Increasingly, authors were supported by regimental associations, who acted in several instances as publishers, or resorted to what has been termed vanity or self-publication. Two narratives produced after 2004, namely Ford (2012) and Sadler (2014), were produced by 30 Degrees South, a company that advertised itself as ‘one of the top self-publishers in the world’. This trend has no doubt been influenced by a variety of factors, including a steady shrinkage in South Africa's book-reading public, the smaller markets for this literature,

particularly after the Border War as a topic steadily gained ground, and latterly, of course, by the coming of the digital age.

FIGURE 1: The changing avenues for the publication of South African Second World War personal narratives.

Many of these narratives are now rare collectors' items. Written mostly for family and former comrades-in-arms, they were not intended for sale to a wider readership. Many had low print runs, sometimes no more than one or two hundred. And, once carelessness, poor storage, bookworm and termite have taken their toll, the surviving titles become even more rare. That there is often little correlation between scarcity (the collectors' value) and the deeper historiographical contribution of some of these works is therefore true. What follows is a select list.

1. Anderson, John, *Escape in the Apennines* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 1992).

John Anderson was born in Windhoek and joined the SAAF shortly after the outbreak of war in September 1939. After a period of air training, he and others seeking guaranteed, active participation in the war, were seconded to the RAF. In this narrative Anderson touches on his life under training and in the transit camps in the Union, and later in Egypt and Italy, as well as the short breaks enjoyed visiting some of the tourist spots in these countries. Attached to the 145th Squadron RAF (nicknamed the 'Quarter-to-Two's'), he flew with the Desert Air Force in North Africa and, later from Italy, over the northern region of the Central Mediterranean theatre. Shot down twice over enemy-held territory, Anderson managed to escape on both occasions. This is essentially the story of those escapes. It was written to record his gratitude to the Italian people who hid him and gave him succour during his escape and evasion of capture across Italy. After an abortive move to turn the manuscript into a film, the manuscript lay dormant until Anderson was pressed by his family to have it published, which he did in 1992.

2. Anon. *Memories of the Middle East, June 1941 to April 1943* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, n.d.).

This is the 122-page, spirited account of an anonymous Carbineer, who clearly loved music. His narrative commences with a prelude set in the Top Hat Cabaret in Alexandria, ‘a meeting place for fun-seeking soldiers’.² But his story starts in Durban harbour, aboard the *Dilwara*, and ends, perhaps aptly, with a funeral. The narrator is clearly educated, he has an engaging style and a polished turn of phrase. Yet he is also a soldier and tells his story in a clear fashion. He does not shy away from taboo subjects, including most notably the proclivities of soldiers with a few days of leisure on their hands. The narrator’s frankness may have induced the need for anonymity. The only shortcoming of this racy narrative is its brevity.

3. Axelson, Eric, *A Year in Italy; An Observer with the South African 6th Armoured Division 1944-1945* (Port Elizabeth: E.H. Walton, 2001).

Eric Axelson (1913–1998), a university-based historian, volunteered in 1940. He served first as an information officer, as part of the Army Education Section of Leo Marquard, and then from February 1944 as the Historical Recording Officer of the 6th SA Armour Division. He and his small staff worked assiduously to gather historical material (paper, visual, interview) and built a first narrative of the history of the division. Axelson kept a daily log of the activities of his Recording Section, which took the form of a diary. It contained his own daily jottings supplemented with the casual remarks of his driver/clerk and photographer. This log, together with extracts from twenty-two letters (pages 229–243), received chiefly from Capt JAI Agar-Hamilton, of the Union War Histories Section at GHQ, make up the contents of this book. Agar-Hamilton, writing to Axelson in 1944, described the log as ‘all first-rate stuff.’ His only regret was ‘that for the present ... its circulation must be limited by security considerations’.³ These of course no longer apply and the book makes available a truly valuable source, which in 1944 was thought to be ‘the only authentic account of the Division which reach[ed] GHQ’.⁴

4. Baker, Douglas M, *War, Wine and Valour: Five Years Fighting the Nazis* (Essendon: private, 2005).

Douglas Baker (1922–2011) was the son of British immigrants to South Africa. He was sixteen when he volunteered for service in 1939. He enlisted with the Natal Mounted Rifles and served with them in East Africa, North Africa and Italy. His brother Desmond served in the Royal Navy. Douglas was wounded three times: twice in North Africa and then, more seriously, in Italy when his Sherman was hit by German shellfire near Orvieto. Here he confronted his own mortality and the event at Orvieto, a powerful inner experience, drove him to study medicine after the war. His memoir is a fresh and brutally honest view of the everyday life of the

ordinary Springbok soldier. He talks of morale, the sexual and other escapades of his mates ('... men being men, and soldiers being what they are...'), and of the conduct of officers ('At its best alcohol smothers out and makes acceptable the inequalities of rank and authority').⁵ His, he argues, is 'the true account' and 'as factual as the ongoing war diaries of the author's personal experiences which thread the work through its six long years'. Baker presents his story as a study in the psychology of men in battle.

5. ★★ Bean, Lucy, *Strangers in Our Midst* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1970).

Lucy Bean was a cardinal figure behind the founding and running of the South African Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS), which brought together under one umbrella many of the women's volunteer organisations established shortly before the outbreak of war. She was a confidante of cabinet ministers and friend of Mrs Smuts. SAWAS branches (commands) were opened around the country to render services and gifts. They were unpaid, civilian staff, although in uniform, and reported for liaison purposes to the Director of Recruiting, later Brigadier GCG Werdmuller. From February 1942 Bean was the provincial commandant of Command 13 in Cape Town. She spent a year, from September 1944 to August 1945, in Italy in charge of a small party of SAWAS delegated to undertake welfare work in the UDE. Bean's book has two parts: the first fifteen chapters relate to SAWAS Command 13; the second, a further twenty chapters, details the 'SAWAS Mission to Italy'. The second part must be read with Miss Sampie de Wet's *Shifty in Italy* (see No. 19), which is more penetrating and more frank. The history of the SAWAS, detailing their work in hospitality, welfare and entertainment, is told by Hewitt.⁶

6. Bernstein, B.L., *The Tide Turned at Alamein; Impressions of the Desert War with the South African Division and the Eighth Army, June, 1941 – January, 1943* (Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1944).

This is another of the stock standard, war-time accounts written by the ordinary Springbok soldier. Bernstein's story starts on 10 June 1941, with the departure of the Second Division for Egypt. Written as 'a tribute to the men of the Eighth Army and the Springbok Divisions', the publisher punted it in the following terms: 'It is a book of tremendous general interest and certainly should be on the shelf of every home which sent a husband or son to the Desert.'⁷ It is written in a bland, "the cat sat on the mat" fashion, but very rich in terms of detail.

7. Birkby, Carel, *Springbok Victory* (Johannesburg: Libertas, 1941); and *It's A Long Way To Addis* (London: Frederick Muller, 1942).

Carel Birkby's *Springbok Victory* is the first of the published personal accounts of this war. He was the South African Press Association's first war correspondent with the South African forces in East Africa. He states in his author's note that *Springbok Victory* was neither 'a complete objective history of the war in East Africa [nor] a purely personal account of the experiences of one war correspondent'. What Birkby produced has in fact elements of both. As journalists so often do, Birkby wrote the first rough draft of the history of this campaign. Yet he tells the story of the larger campaign through his lens as war correspondent, often writing in the first person. He produced his manuscript for near simultaneous publication in London, as *It's A Long Way To Addis*. The British print, which appeared in 1942, has two additional chapters. The South African edition includes the full text of the address Smuts read to the troops before their departure for 'the North' in July 1940. It is also dedicated to Gerry ('Scoop') Turnbull, a movie-cameraman and the first South African war correspondent to die in the war; he died in a plane crash on the day Birkby started to write the manuscript that would become this book.

8. Blamey, AE 'Chooks', *A Company Commander Remembers: From El Yibo to El Alamein* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Witness, 1963).

Arthur Blamey was a member of a well-known Natal family that had seen service in several wars. His father had written his own personal account of his service with the Natal Mounted Rifles.⁸ *A Company Commander Remembers* is an autobiographical account of the younger Blamey, a major in the same regiment. It provides penetrating detail on C Company of the NMR, from mobilisation in June 1940 through to the end of the war in Africa in 1943. His brothers fought in the same outfit, while their cousin, Cardell Blamey, served under 'Chooks' as second lieutenant.⁹ This is a detailed, close-to-the-ground account, rich in colour and texture, it is replete with details on his company's movements, on the human and physical environment. It is arguably the best South African personal account of the first half of the war.

9. ★ Brokensha, David, *Brokie's Way: Love and Work in Three Continents* (Fish Hoek: Amani, 2007).

Some personal narratives are full autobiographies in the sense that they narrate a continuous life. David Brokensha, in *Brokie's Way*, which spans a strapping 566 pages, covers the full span of his life from boyhood and his war experiences, through his post-war student life, and onto his career as a social anthropologist on three continents. His wartime experiences make up two chapters and form

slightly more than 10 percent of the full book. Following in the footsteps of their older brother, Paul and David Brokensha volunteered in 1940 and were posted to the Signal Company of the 2nd Division. They underwent training as dispatch riders in Potchefstroom and were sent to North Africa. They were captured at Tobruk. The POW chapter is particularly interesting.

10. Brokensha, David, *Guy's Story; Recollections of Guy Brokensha's boyhood in Durban, and his career in the Fleet Air Arm during World War II* (Fish Hoek: Amani Press, 2016).

Guy Brokensha (1918-1942), born in Durban, joined the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in 1937. This is an account of his life told through his letters and the reminiscences of his younger brother David Brokensha (see No. 9). Guy disappeared in August 1942, while serving on the *Ark Royal*. The book is presented as a tribute to a lost brother.

11. Brown, James Ambrose, *One Man's War: A Soldier's Diary* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1980).

Brown was a commercial artist before the war. The diary he kept in North Africa was his testing-ground as a writer. Its success – parts of it were published during the war in *The Star* (Johannesburg) and the *Saturday Evening Post* (Washington) – confirmed for him his decision to become a writer after the war. This book, which takes the form of a diary, is Brown's account of his wartime experiences. It is based on the diary he kept, in his haversack and pockets, during the war and covers the twelve-month period from the battle at Sidi Rezegh through to November 1942. Brown contributed several volumes to the Purnell series 'South African Forces World War II' and his diary was republished in 1991 as part of the Ashanti 'South Africans at War' series.¹⁰

12. Butler, Guy, *Bursting World: An Autobiography, 1936-45* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Phillip, 1983).

Guy Butler (1918-2001), later professor and head of the Department of English (1952-1980) at Rhodes University, served as an information officer during the war. *Bursting World*, the second volume of his autobiographical trilogy,¹¹ covers his four years at Rhodes University, his engagement with the arts, High-Church Anglicanism and alcohol, and his marriage in 1940 to Jean Satchwell. Jean was well connected: Col AF Murray, the officer commanding First City Regiment in Grahamstown, was her uncle, while Leo Marquard, the head of the Army Education Section, was her mother's cousin. Butler was caught up in the intellectual turmoil in Grahamstown as the world edged towards war in 1939. His emphasis throughout is on the people he met, on Jean whom he married, on his fellow students in Grahamstown, including Tony Delius, and on the military

officers he met during the war. Butler served in Egypt and then Italy. His role as an information officer brought him into contact with interesting people, including Marquard, Delius, Eric Axelson, Uys Krige and other intellectuals. Notwithstanding, he complains of not having had a good war. While his story is one of expanding horizons – both geographical and mental – for this young man from Cradock, the war was a rude intrusion. He returned to Rhodes University after the war.

13. ★ Chutter, James B., *Captivity Captive* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954).

James Chutter was the senior chaplain with the South African 2nd Infantry Division and was captured at Tobruk in June 1942. Held in North Africa and then flown to Italy, Chutter was interned at Bari and then Chieti (PG 21). He gives personal, often amusing, vignettes, of life in these camps, of Italian guards that arrogated respect and privilege, of the suffering of fellow prisoners. Following the Italian Armistice, he was moved to Germany, where he was transferred between camps (Moosburg, Marish Trubau, Brunswick) before eventual liberation in May 1945. Personal narratives by chaplains are rare and Chutter's religious beliefs are, as may be expected, an underlying leitmotif throughout the story he tells. Chutter, with other Torchmen from Natal, established the Union Federal Party after the war.

14. Clothier, Norman, *War Time Diary, 1943-1945* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, 1989).

Norman Clothier served as an NCO in the Royal Natal Carbineers. His story commences on 10 September 1943, as the regiment readied for departure, and ends with his being wounded and then evacuated. His wounding and then saving by the regimental medical officer (Capt Reznick) is mentioned in a poem by Major Hertzog Biermann:

Another RNC outpost was down below Salvaro
Where the ground slopes gently down to the banks of the River Reno
That was where Norman Clothier, the SA Legion's head,
Was succoured by 'Koffie' Reznick when he was all but dead.¹²

As things transpired, Clothier had accidentally received a burst of shot from the patrol leader. He gives a vivid account of the whole medical evacuation process. He returned to Italy in 1969 and visited the Casa Creda area, where the incident had happened. There he decided to rewrite his narrative and produce a fuller account. He produced 310 pages. He engaged with his surroundings, questioned what he saw and experienced, and commented on all he did. He comments also

on the process of diary keeping: on the difficulties of making meaningful, daily comments; on how, as a sergeant, he felt 'out of the true life-stream of the unit' and no longer able to keep anything but a prosaic record. Notwithstanding, he produced a lively account, often critical of the officers, and one that provides an almost unique window onto the RNC in Italy. But then he was a writer. He produced an anthology of poetry, titled *Libyan Winter*, relating to his war in the Desert,¹³ and many years later a book on the SA Native Labour Contingent and the sinking of the SS *Mendi*.¹⁴

15. Colenbrander, Arnold, *Coley's Odyssey* (Eshowe: AB Colenbrander, 1994).

Coley's Odyssey is a full life portrait. In it Arnold Colenbrander's wartime experiences form an interesting and exciting break in the otherwise rather regular career of a government official. He was born on 27 June 1912 in Utrecht and raised in Northern Natal on the Anglo-Boer War stories of the local farmers, many of whom were his father's former comrades. In 1932, following in the footsteps of his uncles – three of whom had been magistrates – he entered the civil service as a clerk in the Magistrate's office at Hlabisa and underwent Active Citizen Force training with the Umvoti Mounted Rifles at Eshowe. He was assistant magistrate and native commissioner at Nqutu before the war. He volunteered in early 1940 and served in North Africa and Italy. His account, typical of the soldier's narrative, is told in plain language and engaging style. His book, a composition of dozens of vignettes, was written at different times, some parts – such as his account of his part in the battle at Celleno – were written almost forty years after the events.¹⁵

16. ★ Cooper, F.W., *The Police Brigade: 6 S.A. Infantry Brigade, 1939-45* (Cape Town: Constantia, 1972).

Brigadier FW (Frederick) Cooper commanded of the 6th South African Infantry Brigade. He had been a policeman before the war, as many of his men had been too, and hence the title of his account. *The Police Brigade* lies in the grey borderland between personal narrative and formation history. Cooper presents his narrative as history. His book not only carries the name of his former command, but Cooper writes as the former commander, and Pierre van Ryneveld, the wartime Chief of the General Staff, was invited to write the Foreword. Moreover, the book has a number of appendices, including cartoons of many of the officers, the honours and awards earned by members of the brigade, and a list of all of the officers of the units that formed the brigade. It smacks strongly of the regimental history genre. Yet it is written in easy style; Cooper is the protagonist and much of the account is written in the first person. Cooper himself notes his two roles – of recording *the history* of the Police Brigade and of telling his *own* personal story.¹⁶

17. ★ Crompton, Cyril and Peter Johnson, *Luck's Favours: Two South African Second World War Memoirs* (Fish Hoek: Echoing Green Press, 2010).

This interesting book is comprised of the personal narratives of two soldiers. The narratives were prepared by relatives and published together privately. Cyril Crompton ('For the Adventure of It') was a Natalian who served with the 1st South African Anti-Aircraft Regiment and was captured at Sidi Rezegh, while Peter Johnson ('On the Run in Wartime Italy') was a signaller attached to the Royal Durban Light Infantry and was captured at Tobruk. Both are essentially POW narratives, although Crompton first provides a broad sweep of the run-up years to the war.

18. ★ De Villiers, Paul, *Memoirs – The Second World War: Just a Small Part!* (n.p.: P de Villiers, 2006).

Paul de Villiers was a 'Bishop's Boy'; he matriculated in 1939, enlisted from UCT in May 1940, and served with the Headquarters of the 4th SA Brigade. He was captured at Tobruk. He was held in North Africa until November 1942, when he was moved to Italy. After spending time in various camps at Bari, Tuteurano and Fara Sabina, he successfully escaped and evaded recapture, and spend the Christmas of 1944 at home in South Africa. He returned to Italy in early 1945 and saw the end of the war near Lake Como. The war was a spiritual experience for De Villiers who joined the ministry afterwards.

19. ★★ De Wet, Sampie, *Shifty in Italy* (n.p.: Modern Printers, 1945).

Sampie de Wet was one of the SA Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS) hostesses. These women served in uniform, were treated as officers, but were not part of the UDE. Some worked near the frontline, others, like De Wet, at the clubs and canteens in the rear areas. *Shifty in Italy* is one of the true surprises of these war stories. If 'Chooks' Blamey, *A Company Commander Remembers*, is arguably the best South African personal narrative of the first half of the war, then De Wet has probably produced one of the best for the campaign in Italy. As she notes in her introduction, 'The truth has many faces and many facets. I have tried to give a truthful account of what I saw and experienced. I do not pretend to have done more than travel one line drawn through one small corner of a gigantic event'.¹⁷ De Wet certainly delivered on this. Her account is written plainly and clearly, she does not shy away from the darker side of military campaigning, and she travelled a good deal more than this quote suggests. She made the most of her war. She relished going to Italy, she met people from all walks of life, she travelled incessantly, and she had access to men of high rank. She also travelled to the advanced headquarters of some South African regiments, such as the Pretoria Regiment, and to various casualty clearing stations. The South African clubs,

like the Roma and 'Red Tabs', where the SAWAS worked, were also the dens for war artists (like Terence McCaw), entertainers (like Captain Frank Rogal of the South African Entertainment Unit), and a variety of war correspondents and photographers (including Constance Stuart). Going to Italy as a 'semi-civilian' and in the last year of the war, when others were tired and perhaps jaded, probably enabled her to 'see things which others had stopped seeing'.¹⁸ And herein lies the true value of this account.

20. Dimpleby, KG, *Hostilities Only* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1944).

Dimpleby took the precaution of stating that 'the description of the various events in this book and the opinions expressed are in no way official. They reflect merely my personal experiences and impressions.' Dimpleby was a journalist seconded by his newspaper, *The Cape Argus*, to the government's Bureau of Information. Although the Bureau was classified as an essential war department, Dimpleby was 'dissatisfied and restless', other men being in uniform and visibly contributing directly to the war effort. Wanting to do the same, and to 'see something of the world', he enlisted in the Royal Navy after a period of training at the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Base at Port Elizabeth. He, with some one hundred other South Africans, served on the HMS *Cornwall*, escorting 'more than a dozen convoys over long distances, apart from doing other jobs, and sailed more than 100 000 miles'.¹⁹ After a brief spell in hospital, Dimpleby, then part of the newly-constituted South African Naval Forces, served consecutively as Regulating Officer in Simon's Town, Assistant Naval Press Officer in Durban, and Examination Officer at Saldanha Bay.

21. Dingle, D, *And the Doctor Recovered* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1959).

A search in February 2020 for Captain (Dr) D. Dingle's personnel file at the Department of Defence Archives proved futile, confirming perhaps that the author of this short (165-page) memoir used a pseudonym. More research might reveal his identity. But there are some valuable pointers. He volunteered in 1940, underwent the abbreviated officers course for medical personnel at Zonderwater, where he notes his 'individuality was now forfeit' together with his 'right to criticize superior officers', and, leaving Zonderwater 'with no regrets', was posted to the Artillery School.²⁰ *And the Doctor Recovered* is this volunteer doctor's witty autobiographical sketch tracing his life from internship to near retirement. Of the twenty-four chapters, eight deal with Dingle's wartime experiences in three theatres of war. He went as the 'Butch' – short for 'Butcher', the affectionate nickname for a doctor posted to an artillery regiment – to East Africa, the Western Desert and then Italy. This book might best be described as a candid account told in a tongue-in-cheek fashion.

22. Douglas, WS, *Regimental History: A Short History of the Cape Town Highlanders, Sept 1939 – Feb 1943* (Cairo: E.R. Schindler, 1944)

Major Sholto Douglas candidly explains the origins of this short ‘regimental history’ in his preface. He tells us, it ‘began on mobilisation as an Adjutant’s personal diary’, to which, with the passage of time, ‘material accumulated and eventually the author found himself in possession of a mass of historical records. Realising how soon such material can be scattered and lost and how difficult it would be for historians who follow to correlate the scraps that remain, an authentic history was begun’.²¹ He invokes Hynes’s notion of authenticity. Yet, sadly, for want of space, and time – because the CTH were moving to Italy for the next campaign – Douglas’s narrative is brief and actually devoid ‘of the telling of all the little human stories and adventures that make up the lighter side of a soldier’s life’.²² He also calls his narrative a history, and specifically a regimental history. However, he often speaks in the first person. The reader would have to wait for a fuller history to be written.²³

23. ★ Du Preez, Laurie, *Inside the Cage* (Cape Town: Struik, 1973).

Laurie du Preez was a member of Cooper’s 6th South African (Police) Brigade. His narrative opens in June 1942, in the port town of Tobruk, where he was captured. The book is his account of being a POW in North Africa and Italy. It is written in detail and covers the POW experience from capture, through life in various camps, to the various escape attempts. He was eventually successful and his story ends with his breakfasting with the Swiss *grenzwacht*. Du Preez knew Len van Onselen (see No. 52); they had been station colleagues in the SA police, they had served in the same platoon in the Desert, and they shared accommodation in several POW cages. They mention each other in their narratives.²⁴ Most of the men of the Police Brigade found themselves at Campo 57 in Italy, but, from there, they were separated for different reasons. Many of them escaped successfully and, evading their pursuers, either reached Switzerland (as Du Preez and some 50 other policemen did) or the Allied lines in southern Italy. Du Preez presents his experience in granular detail, touching also on the relationships between the prisoners, between the prisoners and their guards, and between the prisoners and the local Italian civilians who crossed their paths either on working fatigues or while evading capture. This ranks with Wolhuter (see No. 53) as one of the better South African POW accounts.

24. ★ Flederman, Alan, *And Direction was Given* (Cape Town: Pretext, 2000).

This is another short, 95-page account. Alan Flederman was educated at Kingswood College in Grahamstown. He captained the University of Cape Town boxing team, from where, as a young law student, he volunteered for war service.

He was commissioned into the 1st South African Division Ammunition Company and was captured at Gazala. This is a typical POW narrative. Imprisoned in Campo 47, Flederman's narrative starts with the hatching and then execution of an escape plan, the vicissitudes of evasion, his linking up with a band of Italian partisans, and his eventual arrival, with a Kiwi friend, in neutral Switzerland. Flederman dedicated his book to 'the tens of thousands of magnificent Italian peasants', who, despite the dangers, 'gave shelter, food and assistance' to countless Allied prisoners of war. Whilst in Switzerland, Flederman wrote an account of escape and evasion. This he supplemented with additional material as well as with 'what thoughts went through my mind'. The result is a reasonably detailed, personal account of his experiences. He returned to Italy in 1972.

25. Ford, Keith, *From Addis to the Aosta Valley: A South African in the North African and Italian Campaigns, 1940–1945* (Pinetown: 30 Degrees South, 2012).

Keith Ford was born in 1921 and was raised in Bethlehem in the Orange Free State. He volunteered in 1940 and trained as a gunner. His war service took him to East Africa and North Africa and then, after a short spell back in the Union, to Egypt and Italy with the 6th Division. *From Addis to the Aosta Valley*, Ford tells us, 'is the story of an ordinary soldier'. He based his memoir on his own diaries, which gives this book its extraordinary detail. His quick turn of phrase and his inclination to share personal information gives this book its immediacy and credibility. This (like No. 2) is in many ways the true voice of Hynes's ordinary soldier. He tells an unvarnished, sometimes crude, story and gives a bottom-up view in raw form.

26. ★ Graaff, Sir De Villiers, *Div Looks Back: The memoirs of Sir De Villiers Graaff* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1994).

This is a full-length, self-portrait of Sir De Villiers Graaff (1913–1999) from his birth through to the dawn of a new South Africa. He was born into the political elite, and his family was close to the Botha and Smuts families, yet when the war broke out, he volunteered as an ordinary Springbok, at first refusing a commission. He left South Africa aboard the *Mauretania* in June 1941 and, as the adjutant of Die Middellandse Regiment, experienced the frontier battles around Sollum and the Halfaya Pass. He was captured when Tobruk fell in June 1942. The four chapters on the war are rich in detail, despite the loss of his notebooks.²⁵ Interesting too were the attempts made to recruit him for the British Free Corps.

27. Hain, Walter, *Apennine War Diary; An Artist's Sketch Book, 1944–1945* (Epsom, Surrey: Bretwalda Books, 2015).

Hain served as a signaller with C Company, Royal Natal Carbineers. He kept a diary and a sketchbook, which he filled during the war years with sketches of what he saw, of the terrain he encountered, and of the men around him. The last

include fellow Carbineers, other South Africans, and German POWs. The story recounted in this little book (it is but 128 pages long) is based on that diary and includes a large number of the sketches as well as some photographs. The original diary is included at the back of the book, but the real value lies in the sketches. The booklet needed a good editor.

28. ★ Hammond, HR, *For You the War is Over: The story of H.R. (Aussie) Hammond*, as told to Joan Chambers (Cape Town: HAUM, 1967).

This is a classic POW narrative. Told by HR ‘Aussie’ Hammond, it starts with his capture at Sidi Rezegh and ends with his ‘going home’ at the end of the war. Hammond was born in Rhodesia, to South African parents, and went with them to Australia at a young age. He volunteered in 1940 and served as a signaller with the 1st Brigade. He was captured at Sidi Rezegh. This is a close, detailed account of his years as a prisoner of war. He was held first in North Africa. He was aboard the *Santiago* when it was torpedoed while conveying POWs to Italy. After spending some time in Greece in a castle, he was held in Italy and Germany, until the place was overrun by US troops.

29. Hartshorn, EP, *Avenge Tobruk* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Purnell, 1960).

Eric Ponsonby (‘Scrubbs’) Hartshorn is one of those larger-than-life, colourful characters, full of bluster. This book carries his thumbprint. Hartshorn was a veteran volunteer soldier. He served with the Manchesters in Egypt and at Gallipoli, where he was commissioned, and later in Palestine and India. He seemed to collect wounds and decorations as he went. He immigrated to South Africa in 1926, joined the Transvaal Scottish, and, at the outbreak of war in 1939, volunteered to serve with them. He ended the war as a brigadier. Hartshorn gives us a closer view of the command of the British Commonwealth armies in East Africa and North Africa, providing often close appreciations of men like Klopper and Poole. He tackles the thorny question of Tobruk and the subsequent court of inquiry with vigour and sought to ‘correct’ the official narrative. He ended the war as a ‘staff wallah’ in Italy and the United Kingdom. Yet, unfortunately, he says very little about the roles he played in both wars or of the interrogation of returning allied prisoners of war.

30. ★ Heydenrych, Carey, *Heck! What a life! A story about an ordinary fellow and his extraordinary wartime experiences* (Cape Town: private, 1995).

This is the story of a South African pilot. Trained in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, Heydenrych joined the 608 Squadron, of RAF Coastal Command, at Wick in Northern Scotland. He was shot down off the Norwegian coast on 15 May 1942 and captured. Wounded, he was treated at a POW Lazaret in Germany, from where he escaped. Recaptured he was sent

to Stalag Luft III at Sagan, the scene of the Great Escape and of the Wooden Horse escape. His account is vivid, and with a fast pace, and tells of his two forced marches across Germany in the last months of the war.

31. Hobbs, Glynn B, *Recollections of Italy: The memoir of a trooper in Prince Alfred's Guard* (n.p.: private, 1996).

These are the recollections of a trooper with the Prince Alfred's Guard of his experiences in the Italian campaign. Hobbs, pressed by his wife, put pen to paper late in life.²⁶ His memoir, written for the interest of his family, is a collection of vignettes, or scenes of memory. He kept no diary and his family seemingly kept no correspondence, and so his record is based wholly on his memory. Some fifty-two years had lapsed between the end of the war and his writing this booklet. His recollection of events had inevitably faded and whole months in his account are practically blank. He notes, however, that 'perhaps nothing of special interest was happening'. This booklet then contains his vivid memories and striking experiences, making his memoir not a 'continuous record of events but rather a collection of, hopefully, interesting stories' arranged roughly in chronological sequence.²⁷

32. Hobbs, Glynn B, *From Sicily to the Alps: Personal Accounts and Recollections of World War II* (Claremont: Mallard, 1999).

This is an anthology of wartime recollections and extracts from personal accounts put together by a veteran. Hobbs (see No. 31) enlisted with the 1st Transvaal Scottish but was later transferred to the Prince Alfred's Guard. The anthology, which again has a strong focus on Italy, is presented in six parts: the prisoners of war; the invasion of Italy; summer 1944 – Cassino to Castiglione; winter 1944/45 and the Gothic Line; spring 1945 – Apennines to the Alps; and Italy revisited. Several of the vignettes are drawn from rare sources, including some foreign accounts, some soldiers' magazines (such as *The Tourri* of the Cape Town Highlanders), as well as unpublished private diaries. And therein lies its value.

33. Hurley, Jerry, *The War Diary of Jerry Hurley, September 1940 – October 1942* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, n.d.).

Jerry Hurley (1919–1996) was born in Cape Town to Irish parents. Denis, his older brother, was a Catholic priest and became bishop (1946) and then archbishop (1951) of Durban. Jerry volunteered at the start of the war and served with C Company of the Royal Natal Carbineers. He produced two ego documents: a diary and an autobiography. The diary was written on loose sheets. Braving censorship, he sent these home to Pietermaritzburg at regular intervals. He typed them up after the war and, in 1968, added explanatory notes that are italicised and bracketed in the print version. He did this, he explains, as 'so much was left out'

either through tiredness or ‘sheer laziness’. His account starts in Gilgal, Kenya, on 12 September 1940 and runs through to 21 October 1942. His autobiography, titled simply *Memories: 1919-1945*, was published in 1988.

34. Kaplan, Cyril J, *In Three Wars: A Personal and Orthopaedic Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2008).

Cyril Kaplan (1917–2012) was born in Durban and studied medicine at the University of Cape Town. He volunteered in 1939 and joined the Cape Garrison Artillery. Upon graduation with an MBChB, he transferred to the South African Medial Corps (SAMC). He was posted to Egypt, where his exposure to war-related injuries stimulated an interest in orthopaedics. He continued his studies after the war – in Edinburgh, Liverpool and London – and served in the Israeli Army Medical Service during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1973. *In Three Wars* is his account of his experiences as a war surgeon. It is a skilful narrative, combining personal anecdote with historical background, and fortified with keen commentary on medical successes and failures under battle conditions.

35. ★ Krige, Uys, *The Way Out: Italian Intermezzo* (Cape Town and Port Elizabeth: Unie-Volkspers, 1946).

This is an early POW narrative and possibly the most iconic. Krige was a well-known poet and writer. He was related to Mrs Smuts, served in North Africa as a war correspondent, and was captured at Sidi Rezegh. He was held captive in North Africa and then Italy, before escaping from Campo Prigionieri di Guerra No. 78. Published by Unie-Volkspers in 1946, *The Way Out* enjoyed a long life, and went through several editions, more than any of its counterparts. This was a true adventure story told by the public-figure-turned-hero. But, not only devoured by young readers, *The Way Out* also provided a narrative for the community of ex-prisoners of war, many of whom had experienced similar ordeals and adventures, and whose families hungered for insights into what their relatives had faced at a time when they had all had to deal with such great uncertainty.²⁸ The book has been praised as ‘one of the finest books this war has produced’.²⁹

36. Lewis, Neville, *Studio Encounters: Some Reminiscences of a Portrait Painter, with a preliminary sketch by Antony R. Delius* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1963).

This book is a self-portrait of one of South Africa’s leading portraitists. The preliminary sketch was written by Tony Delius (born 1916), whom Lewis met in late 1940, shortly after both went into uniform. Delius describes Lewis as ‘a kind of verbal forager’, who could ‘talk, wheedle, or simply jolly the bemused inhabitants of Defence Headquarters into giving him practically anything he wanted’. He had a ‘genius for talking strong men into doing unaccustomed things’. He left for East

Africa and then the Western Desert and Italy, from where he sent back ‘portraits of the brave, the famous, the typical, and the rare.’

37. McNally, Terence J, *Camera in My Kitbag, 1934–1945* (Cape Town: Mills Litho, 1988).

Terence McNally finished his schooling at SACS in 1932 and joined his father as an apprentice photographer. This book traces his soldiering through the Scots Guards, which he joined in 1934. He returned to South Africa shortly before the outbreak of war and ‘found’ himself photographing The Dukes leaving Cape Town for ‘the North’. He joined up. The photographs in this book were taken by McNally while serving in the Scots Guards, then with the Duke of Edinburgh’s Own Rifles, and finally with the Army Film and Photo Unit in Italy. As a lieutenant-photographer, McNally was immediately transferred from Cairo to Bari, as the operations in Italy commenced. He was issued with a 2¼ inch square Rolleiflex. This book provides a fascinating look, through the camera lens, at Springbok troops in Kenya, Italian Somaliland, Abyssinia and through to Egypt, Madagascar and Italy.

38. ★ Morphey, Jeff, *Five Frontiers to Freedom* (Cape Town: Vineyard, 1999).

Jeff Morphey (1918–1993) grew up on the family farm in the Dargle Valley, in Natal. Published posthumously, this book is a typical escape narrative. Captured in Libya when his “Tommy” was shot down by an F109 on 4 June 1942, Morphey spent the ensuing months in enemy hands. He is billed in the book – which is written as his ‘frank and uninhibited story’ – as ‘the only man living to have escaped from an Italian POW camp in World War II while Italy was still at war.’ Others had made the attempt, but had died as a result: language and geography seemingly combined to make a secure “cage” until the fall of Mussolini. Sir De Villiers Graaff (see No. 26), who wrote the foreword, extolled the virtues of courage, daring, good planning, and ingenuity, which were the essential components in any escape attempt. As the title indicates, Morphey crossed five international frontiers on his way to freedom: through Italy to Switzerland; then into German-occupied France, where he worked briefly with the Resistance; and then across the Pyrenees and into Spain. He returned to England on a flight out of Gibraltar on 17 January 1944. It is a fascinating story. Newman Robinson assisted with its publication.

39. ★ Robinson, Newman, *Missing, Believed Prisoner* (Durban: Robinson and Co., 1944).

Newman Robinson was born and raised in Natal. He attended Michaelhouse and then joined the staff at *The Natal Mercury*. He volunteered in 1940 and joined the SAMC. As a lance corporal, he served as a medical orderly with 10th South African Field Ambulance and was captured at Sidi Rezegh on 23 November 1941. He

survived the torpedoing of the ship taking him from Benghazi to Italy. The same story is told by Hammond in *For You the War is Over* (see No. 28). After a short time in Greece, Robinson was held at Prigionieri Campo 85 (Tuturano) and 65 (Gravina Altamura). As medical personnel were to be returned to their own lines, he was repatriated via Smyrna in April 1943. *In the Bag*, Robinson's book produced with Peter Ogilvie, uses material from this book (No. 40).

40. ★ Robinson, Newman, and Peter Ogilvie, *In the Bag* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1975).

This large format book was produced by two men captured at Sidi Rezegh: Newman Robinson (see No. 39) and Peter Ogilvie. The unique element here is Ogilvie's drawings. Raised in the Eastern Cape and educated at Pretoria Boys' High School, Ogilvie volunteered in 1940 and joined the South African Artillery. He rose through the ranks rapidly and was a sergeant-major, with an anti-tank regiment, when he was captured. A graphic artist, Ogilvie kept an illustrated diary during his imprisonment. This may have been the booklet handed out to captives by The War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA. Consisting of 112 mostly blank pages, they were issued by the YMCA through the International Red Cross to British Commonwealth POWs, who filled these mini-scrapbooks with jottings, photographs taken in camp, and photographs of sweethearts and loved ones. Ogilvie drew, providing us with this wonderful window onto POW life. The images are accompanied by text written by Robinson and derived from his *Missing, Believed Prisoner* (1944).

41. ★ Rose-Innes, Harry, *The Po Valley Break* (Sandton:Valiant, 1976).

Rose-Innes was born in Port Elizabeth in 1919, went to St John's College in Johannesburg and St Andrew's College in Grahamstown, and enlisted with the 2nd Anti-Aircraft Regiment in 1940. He served in East Africa and then North Africa, where he was captured at Tobruk. Transferred by sea to Italy, he was imprisoned at Prigionieri Campo 60 (Lucca), where his story in *The Po Valley Break* begins. He and two companions, USAF Captain Frank Huff and Corporal Taffy Thomas of the Transvaal Scottish, escaped and evaded capture for a month before they were recaptured near Florence. His second escape attempt took place from a train in the Po River Valley, but he was soon captured by the local carabinieri and sent to a camp outside Munich. He returned to Lucca in 1972.

42. ★ Rosmarin, Ike, *Inside Story* (Cape Town:WJ Flesch & Partners, 1990).

Sergeant Ike Rosmarin was born in 1915 to Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He grew up on a farm in the Standerton District of the Eastern Transvaal, in Smuts's constituency, and the Rosmarin family seemingly knew the prime minister personally. Ike, then 25, volunteered early in 1940 and was deployed

to North Africa, where he worked as a quartermaster, securing food, petrol and ammunition. He was captured at Tobruk. In Italy he joined a group of ‘racketeers’, ‘who made the most of POW camp opportunities’.³⁰ *Inside Story* is a ‘thin’ account, but then perhaps, as he notes, they were his ‘lost years’.³¹ He complains about his lot throughout (in a way other POWs don’t) and apports blame, upon the South African officers at Tobruk for the confusion (page 11), upon the Italian camp guards, upon the people at home for the high life Italian POWs enjoyed in South Africa (page 33), and upon ‘the authorities’ for neglecting to prepare South African soldiers for the possibilities arising from their capture (page 35). Part of this, no doubt, relates to his ‘guilt complex’, of surrendering without a fight, of disappointing his country and his family. He ends with a short statement on the futility of war, of man’s ‘lust for money and power’, and praise for the International Red Cross.³²

43. Ryan, Allan, *Thru Times and Places* (Johannesburg: Creaprint, 1977).

Thru Times and Places, with its nondescript title and unassuming cover – and how often isn’t this the case, is another of the surprises. The book is in two parts. Part One comprises five chapters and presents ‘the Global Scene’, the big picture of the wider war; while Part Two, of a further eighteen chapters, focuses on Major Allan Ryan’s personal story. Classified as a “key man” at the outbreak of war, he was accepted for service in the British Army and sent to the Middle East. Having passed through ‘the “Sandhurst” of the Middle East’, at Acre, he was commissioned and posted to General Headquarters in Cairo. Before the war was over, he had also served in Jerusalem, with the PAI Force (in Persia and Iraq), and enjoyed a sojourn in the Lebanon and Cyprus. Ryan had collected snippets, cuttings, and photographs all along the way, and maintained a wartime scrapbook. This material formed part of the basis for his narrative, which is dedicated to Major John Penman of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who died in the war.

44. Ryan, Ray, *Memories of Italy: World War II* (Cape Town: McKerrow Atkins, 1982).

A small Surveyors and Mobile Map printing unit was attached to the US 5th Army. Shortly before the fall of Cassino, this was transferred to the SAEC. Ray Ryan was a member of this section. His pictorial record, ‘a blend of the peaceful serenity of the Italian countryside with the stark realities of war’, was conceived in Italy during the war. Ryan was a graphic artist before the war. He specialised in photogravure and eventually made his way to Egypt, after remustering to Aerial Photography, and in early 1944 joined the Mobile Map Unit of the SAEC freshly landed in Salerno. Only large cameras for the reproduction of maps were available. He scrounged around for a more convenient camera and film, and with a truck for a darkroom, ‘endeavoured to put on film and paper what [he] saw of the country and its people, the art and architecture, quite often of places where the tourists

never go'. He assumed that the war was covered and recorded by the official war correspondents and photographers, and so he focused on the 'pictorial aspect of the country.' Notwithstanding, he took some shots showing the devastation of the war, which he included in this book to give his readers something of the atmosphere of war-torn Italy.³³

45. ★ Sadler, Mike, *The War Story of Soldier 124280* (Pinetown: 30 Degrees South, 2014).

Mike Sadler (1922–2002) was born in Lourenço Marques to South African missionary parents. He was educated at Kingswood in Grahamstown and, in 1939, when still 17 years of age, he volunteered for wartime service. He was posted to the Artillery as a signaller and saw action in North Africa. He was captured at Tobruk and, for the remaining years of the war, was interned in Italy and Austria. After the war, he studied at the University of Natal, taught at the Lovedale Mission in Alice, and worked as an administrator in Northern Rhodesia. He immigrated to the United Kingdom in 1977 and finished this book, which focuses on his wartime years, in 1999. This *War Story* is another good example of the POW narrative.

46. ★ Scott, Douglas, *My Luck Still Held* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1946).

Sergeant Douglas Scott had been a commercial traveller before the war. He came from Lyndhurst, Johannesburg.³⁴ His is an early POW narrative and a rather short one (143 pages), but one with colour and texture. Scott served with the 2nd Battalion, the Transvaal Scottish. His account is rich and made more so by the expansive use of his wartime letters to his father. He was captured at Sollum in early January 1942 and rescued a week later when the Halfaya Pass was taken by the 8th Army. Scott learned later that his entire section had been annihilated in the taking of the pass, his captivity having saved him. But his luck would not last. His unit was moved from the Gazala line to Tobruk and he was captured with the garrison on 20 June 1942. He and three mates escaped, but were captured again a few days later. Once in Italy, he encountered 'that wonderful organisation the Red Cross Society' for the first time.³⁵ He escaped three more times in Italy, the last being successful.

47. Scott Shaw, Charles, *Looking Back With Laughter: The saga of a South African student, soldier and skipilot in Korea* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1973).

Charles Scott Shaw was raised in Natal and schooled at Hilton College. He joined Toc H and, through this influence, felt a calling to the ministry. He studied first at the Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg and then, in 1936, proceeded to Edinburgh University, where the Second World War interrupted his theological studies. His war divides neatly into two phases. He joined the Church of Scotland's Huts and Mobile Canteens organisation and found himself 'all dressed

up in officer's uniform' on his way to France in March 1940. He was evacuated from France and spent the next two years in Britain. But, responding to a sense of national nostalgia, he returned to the Union in June 1942. The second half of the war sees him in South Africa, as a permanent force chaplain in Cape Town. This is a longitudinal study with a focus on Scott Shaw's service as a chaplain with 2 Squadron in Korea. Notwithstanding, this small book provides near unique insights into the life of a chaplain on the home front.

48. Solomon, Frank H, *And the Years Roll By* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1953).

This is the life story of one of South Africa's early pilots. Frank Solomon was born in 1889, grew up in Potchefstroom and Johannesburg, and, with his brother, Shirley, enlisted in 1914. They served in German South West Africa with the 8th Intelligence Unit, before leaving in 1915 for Britain to join the Royal Flying Corps. Involved in many schemes, Solomon became a Cape Town city councillor and, when war erupted in 1939, he, his wife and their two sons volunteered and joined the Union Defence Force. Solomon, then aging, served as an administrative officer at the Coastal Air Defence Headquarters in Cape Town, and then as the adjutant at Wingfield Air Station.

49. Stevens, Steve, *Beaufighter Over the Balkans; From the Balkans Air Force to the Berlin Airlift* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2006).

Steve Stevens joined the SAAF in 1939/40. Flying instructor. Then in 1942 posted to the RAF's Balkan Air Force. Flew Beaufighters against enemy shipping, tactical objectives, and in support of the partisans, in low-level surprise rocket attacks.

50. ★★ Stuart, Constance, *Jeep Trek* (London: Spotlight Magazine, 1946).

Constance Stuart (1914–2000) was born in Cornwall, England, and moved with her parents to South Africa. Having studied photography in London and Munich during the 1930s, and running her own studio in Pretoria, Lt Col EG Malherbe, the DMI, appointed her to cover the war 'up North' for *Libertas*, a South African magazine. She thus became South Africa's first female war correspondent. Sent initially to Egypt to take shots of South African troops and Egyptian locals, she wanted to see something of the war and of the South African part in it at close quarters. This took her to the front lines in North Africa and later Europe, where she was often the only woman in the area.³⁶ She stayed sometimes with nurses at a casualty clearing station or a field hospital, or with the public relations set that would hang around the Roma, the 'Red Tabs', and other UDF clubs and hostels, and which included Terence McCaw the war artist, Miss Casson of the South African Public Relations, and Captain Frank Rogal of the South African Entertainment Unit. Sampie de Wet (see No. 19) envied Stuart, whom she felt 'had been further forward and seen more of the war than any other South African

woman'.³⁷ Stuart's interest was predominantly in the ordinary soldier and what he was doing. Her fellow correspondents were impressed with her work and splashed her on the front page of *The Eight Army News* and the *Union Jack*. A photographic exhibition of her work travelled throughout South Africa in 1945, as a tribute to the 6th Division and the US 5th Army. *Jeep trek*, her war diary, which she illustrated profusely, appeared in 1946.³⁸

51. ★ Van der Post, Sir Laurens, *The Night of the New Moon* (London: Hogarth Press, 1970).

Laurens van der Post (1906–1996) was born in Philippolis in the then Orange River Colony. He worked first as a reporter, in South Africa and then Britain, where he established links with Leonard and Virginia Woolf and others associated with the Bloomsbury Group. He was in Britain when the war broke out. Commissioned, he served with the British Army in East Africa as an intelligence officer and then, after convalescing in Palestine, he was posted to the Dutch East Indies. After the surrender of Java, in April 1942, Van der Post was interned by the Japanese at Sukabumbi and then Bandung. He recounted his POW experiences in three fictional works. *A Bar of Shadow* (1954) is written in the first person and tells of the relationship between a British officer – John Lawrence – and one of the camp guards. *The Seed and the Sower* (1963), also written as a novel, had three parts: the first is the story told in *A Bar of Shadow*; the second is narrated in the third person from the diary of a Major Celliers, a South African officer serving with the ABDA; and the third is Lawrence's account of his brief liaison with a woman prior to his capture by the Japanese. These three interpolated stories are finished by another novel, *The Night of the New Moon* (1970), which was published by the Woolf's Hogarth Press. 'The Night of the New Moon' was the end of the day on which the first of the atom bombs was dropped.

52. ★ Van Onselen, Lennox, *A Rhapsody in Blue* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1960).

Rhapsody in Blue is a fascinating book. The first chapters present in very readable form the early history of the South African Police, viewed from the bottom up, before the author inserts himself into the story as the primary protagonist. This is another example of an organisational history that transforms into a personal account. Van Onselen switches to the first person for the narration of his war experiences. He 'volunteered' when his station commander called him in, handed him a pen and told him to 'sign here'.³⁹ Detailed first as a bodyguard for Smuts, he was posted in May 1940 to Cooper's 6th SA Infantry Brigade, which was being formed exclusively of policemen. He served in North Africa, where the 6th Brigade formed part of the 2nd Division, and was captured at Tobruk in June 1942. His description of Tobruk after capture and the nature of his internment and experience at the hands of the Italians in North Africa and then Italy is

particularly useful. He escaped and reached Switzerland. This should be read with Cooper (see No. 16) and Du Preez (see No. 23).

53. ★ Wolhuter, SG, *The Melancholy State: The Story of a South African Prisoner-of-War* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1984).

Schalk Georg Wolhuter was born in the Northern Cape, educated at SACS and worked at Barclays Bank in Graaff Reinet. He volunteered in 1939. He was the intelligence sergeant with Die Middellandse Regiment when captured at Tobruk in June 1942 and he spent the remainder of his war in captivity, first in North Africa (Derna, Benghazi), and then in Italy and Germany. His observations on POW life, and his captors, as well as of the other prisoners, particularly the Russians, are revealing. This ranks as one of the better POW narratives.

Endnotes

- 1 Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors; Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), p 234.
- 2 Anon. *Memories of the Middle East, June 1941 to April 1943* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, n.d.), p 1.
- 3 Eric Axelson, *A Year in Italy; An Observer with the South African 6th Armoured Division 1944-1945* (Port Elizabeth: E.H. Walton, 2001), p 234.
- 4 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 237.
- 5 Douglas M. Baker, *War, Wine and Valour; Five Years Fighting the Nazis* (private, Essendon, 2005), pp 402, 439.
- 6 Gwen Hewitt, *Womanhood at War; The Story of the SAWAS* (Hewitt, Johannesburg, 1947).
- 7 BL Bernstein, *The Tide Turned at Alamein; Impressions of the Desert War with the South African Division and the Eighth Army, June, 1941 – January, 1943* (Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1944), Author's Note and back cover.
- 8 AHG Blamey, *My Verulam Troop; Being a Short Account of the Verulam Troop of the Natal Mounted Rifles and of their Movements and Engagements when they were Seconded to the Durban Light Infantry in the Zulu Rebellion of 1906* (Port Shepstone, 1954).
- 9 Major AE Blamey, *A Company Commander Remembers; From El Yibo to El Alamein* (Natal Witness, Pietermaritzburg, 1963), pp 2-3, 23.
- 10 James Ambrose Brown, *Retreat to Victory; A Springbok's Diary in North Africa: Gazala to El Alamein, 1942* (Johannesburg: Ashanti, 1991).
- 11 The first volume is Guy Butler, *Karoo Morning; An Autobiography, 1918-1935* (David Philip, 1981), while the third volume is *A Local habitation; An Autobiography, 1945-90* (New Africa Books, 1991).
- 12 Major Hertzog Biermann, poem, "The Springbok Sixth Division", *Militaria*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1995), p 68.
- 13 Anon. [Norman Clothier], *Libyan Winter: Poems by a Corporal in the First Division* (Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1943).
- 14 Norman Clothier, *Black Valour: The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918 and the Sinking of the Mendi* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987).
- 15 Arnold Colenbrander, *Coley's Odyssey* (Eshowe: A.B. Colenbrander, 1994), pp 139 passim.
- 16 Brig F.W. Cooper, D.S.O., *The Police Brigade; 6 S.A. Infantry Brigade, 1939-45* (Constantia, Cape Times, 1972), p 106.
- 17 Sampie de Wet, *Shifty in Italy* (n.p.: Modern Printers, 1945), Introduction.
- 18 De Wet, *Shifty in Italy*, Introduction.
- 19 KG Dimpleby, *Hostilities Only* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1944), p 51.
- 20 Dr D Dingle, *And the Doctor Recovered* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1959), pp 17, 19.
- 21 Major WS Douglas, *Regimental History: A Short History of the Cape Town Highlanders, Sept 1939 – Feb 1943* (ER Schindler, Cairo, 1944), preface.
- 22 Douglas, *Regimental History*, preface.
- 23 This was later produced as Colonel Neil Orpen, *The Cape Town Highlanders, 1885-1970* (Cape & Transvaal Printers Ltd, Cape Town 1970), with a revised second edition as N.D Orpen, *The Cape Town Highlanders, 1885-1985* (San Printing Press, Cape Town, 1986). See also Major L.G. Murray, *First City / Cape Town Highlanders in the Italian Campaign, 1943-1945* (Cape Times, Cape Town, 1946).

- 24 See, for example, Laurie du Preez, *Inside the Cage* (Cape Town: Struik, 1973), pp 6 passim, 62 passim.
- 25 Sir De Villiers Graaff, *Div Looks Back; The memoirs of Sir De Villiers Graaff* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1994), p 97.
- 26 Glynn B Hobbs, *Recollections of Italy; The memoir of a trooper in Prince Alfred's Guard* (n.p.: private, 1996), p viii.
- 27 Hobbs, *Recollections of Italy*, p 3.
- 28 Telegram Intercroixrouge to British Red Cross London, 1 Apr 1943, and Telegram Intercroixrouge to Melbourne, 27 Sep 1943, G.17/Italie III, B G 17 01-2 Situations de PG en 1942-45, Archives du CICR, Genève.
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- 31 Rosmarin, *Inside Story*, p 102.
- 32 Rosmarin, *Inside Story*, pp 102-104.
- 33 Ray Ryan, *Memories of Italy World War II* (McKerrow Atkins, Cape Town, 1982), pp v-vi.
- 34 Douglas Scott, *My Luck Still Held* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1946), pp 9-10.
- 35 Scott, *My Luck Still Held*, p 27.
- 36 De Wet, *Shifty in Italy*, pp 126, 174-78. Cyril James, 'Girl at the Front', *Eighth Army News*, 20 Feb 1945.
- 37 De Wet, *Shifty in Italy*, pp 125-26.
- 38 Gavin Younge, 'The Ethical Challenges of Photography in a Black and White World', *Photography and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2019), pp 453-65. Peter Elliott, 'Photos as historical sources: Researching the 1930s/40s images of photographer, Constance Stuart Larabee', www.hgsa.co.za/peter-elliott-blogpost-larabee/ accessed 1 May 2020.
- 39 Lennox van Onselen, *A Rhapsody in Blue* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1960), p 120.