
October 2023



The Sentinel

Newsletter of the Rhodesian Services Association

Ashes and Dust

Turn back the years.
Pick through the bones
We left behind.
Examine our few remains
In vain.
The search is useless.
For the raw, rich stuff of life
Has long since fled us.

Resurrect our rusty rifles
From the ever-hungry earth
Carefully place the faded rags
Left of that which clothed us
In warm museum halls.

Guard well the curling, yellowed photograph
You found.
Gaze down upon our faces
Frozen
In a tattered message
Addressed to those
Who are still to come.

Arque, analyse, theorise
On the force that drove our people.

We were only human.
We bled, loved, laughed and cried
And we laid
The foundation stone
Of the years you live in.

Chas Lotter – *Echoes of an African War*, 1999
Reproduced with permission.

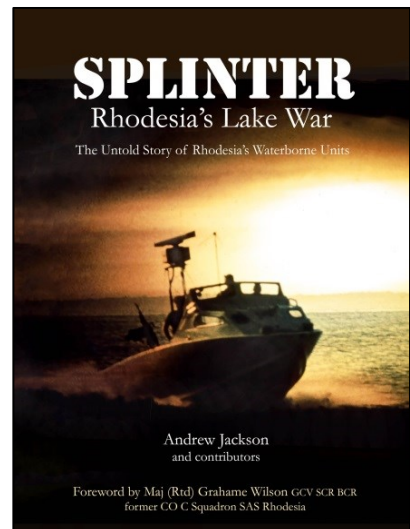
FROM OUR INBOX:

New book announcement –

SPLINTER: Rhodesia's Lake War, by Andrew Jackson and contributors

This book aims to fill a gap in the record of the 1970s Rhodesian Bush War, by documenting the history and operations of the waterborne units of the Rhodesian Corps of Engineers and the British South Africa Police.

From the early days of the war, both these units patrolled the strategically important Zambezi River and Lake Kariba – the world's largest man-made lake by volume. But it was the establishment in 1977 of Operation Splinter, a separate operational area covering the lake and the immediate upstream portion of the Zambezi, along with the upgrade of the Engineers Boat Troop to Squadron status, that allowed the first fully coordinated and ultimately successful defence of this section of the northern border.



SPLINTER describes how the Boat Squadron expanded from a purely defensive to an offensive role, and the part it played in support of certain external operations of the Rhodesian SAS.

206p.

Publication date: October 2023

Availability to be advised shortly.

The Bush War - some thoughts from Glen Ashmead:

Did we stop to think of the outcome?

The consequence of war on the innocent.

Those that weren't involved, didn't want to be, but were.

Simple villagers - tribesmen and women. Just wanting to live like they had for years, as their fathers and grandfathers had before them: get up in the morning, sweep around the hut, put a few more dry sticks on the still-warm white ashes of last night's cooking fire, in preparation for the day ahead. A mouthful of leftover cold sadza, then balancing an empty bucket on doek-covered head, another in each hand, baby snug and still asleep, wrapped comfortably on mother's back, singing softly on the long walk to the river to fetch the daily ration of water, for cooking and cleaning. Him, rolling some cheap mix Boxer tobacco in old newspaper, that first puff, 'a stab to the heart'. Chibaya Moyo, I think it was referred to. Sitting on an old broken, thrown-away chair, warming up in the early morning sun and thinking what could be done to appease the ancestors, to bring this drought to an end and a better crop of mielies and pumpkin, and that sparse bush spinach Rape, as it was called. [Editor's note: the word is derived from rapa, the Latin word for turnip and the crop is now known as rapeseed]

Then they came and we came, with guns and landmines, beatings and threats, and that simple way of life was no more. Going against one side was unthinkable; going against the other was survival - of sorts. Or was it just a case of whoever/whichever side was present, was the side to be on? But then slowly the indoctrination won. Well, it did in some cases, some areas. Did they believe the lies? Maybe not lies at the time. Time would tell.

Surely, they, those simple rural folk, are no better off now, for all the sacrifices they went through. The food they couldn't spare. Women and girls raped, or often given freely for the cause, then left with illegitimate offspring. Was the family shamed by such actions or was it just accepted? Huts, villages destroyed, burnt to the ground, sometimes with the occupants still inside. Losing everything. The few possessions, that old broken thrown-away chair, grain their only food, pumpkins smashed, calabash shattered. Jail for some - even death.

We, many of us of the other side, will never know it all.

We also sacrificed, not in the same way, but in our white man's way.

We also are no better off, living where we do.

Those simple villagers, tribesmen and women still sweep around the hut and take long walks to fetch water, maybe, just maybe, now content that the rains did come one year and the ancestors must have been happy then. There are some mielies and pumpkin and an abundance of the good rape.

We look back and wish we were there. Sometimes.

WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

Sergeant John Tsirindanis

1916 – 2001

One of our members, Alex Nott, is a Curator at the Australian Armour and Artillery Museum in Cairns. On a recent visit to the Milos War Museum in Plaka, Greece, Alex noticed this photo on display. The accompanying placard reads:



The German military cemetery in Gennaios Koutsoudakis' field at Langada, Adamas. We can see the sword at its peak, just before it was removed. Posing in front are the Rhodesian army sergeant John Tsirintanis [sic], a resident of Rhodesia, originally from Adamas, who passed through Milos in the first days after liberation, along with the teacher Nina Koutsoudakis, the granddaughter of Gennaios and owner of the space. To the left and right are crosses and graves.

<https://www.miloswarmuseum.gr/>

We were intrigued to find out more about John Tsirindanis and how he came to be in Greece at the end of the Second World War. Thanks to Facebook and another of our members, Pierre Jean Joubert, we were able to make contact with John's daughter, Zoe Tsirindanis Taylor. Zoe and her husband, John Taylor, provided us with this account of a remarkable man:

John Tsirindanis

Army No: RH/6852927

The story of how Sergeant John Tsirindanis, of the 2nd Battalion Rhodesia Regiment, ended up in Milos at the end of the German Occupation is an interesting one.

John Tsirindanis was born in Johannesburg on 4 April 1916; his family was from Crete and Milos, in the Cyclades island group in the Aegean Sea, Greece. He grew up on Milos and later in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. He was head boy of what was then known as Bulawayo Technical College (becoming Gifford High School in later years), and had a varied sporting career, captaining the school water polo team and also representing Matabeleland and Southern Rhodesia in boxing.

A fluent native Greek speaker, John, like so many of his era, was passionate in the belief of the British Empire, and determined to serve. He joined the 2nd Battalion, Rhodesia Regiment as a territorial between 1937 to 1939 and, when Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, he enlisted for overseas service the following day.

Many may not know that the Rhodesian government was not keen on our soldiers serving in large formations, following the horrendous military losses of the First World War, and therefore had made provision with the British government for Southern Rhodesian soldiers to be sent to war in typically squadron or company and platoon-sized groups, as part of existing British regiments and units.

After a brief period of intensive training, John joined the contingent of 690 Rhodesians who sailed for Egypt aboard the SS Karanja from Durban, arriving at Port Tewfik on 30 April 1940. Italy entered the war shortly afterwards, on 10 June 1940, and the Western Desert Campaign commenced.

John was a section commander by this time and was in the first of 4 Rhodesian platoons that were sent to the 1st Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps (1 KRRC), the 60th Rifles of Sharpe fame, for those who enjoy the Sharpe novels. The platoons were eventually to become a company under Captain J. de L. Thompson and became one of the finest in the Battalion, fighting with 1 KRRC throughout the war; reserves were constantly sent from Southern Rhodesia to keep it up to strength.



Rhodesian troops at Citadel Barracks, Cairo in early May 1940. John is standing at the back on the far right.

The 1st Battalion was part of the 7th Armoured Division and they were to make their name in a series of hard-fought encounters, initially against the Italians and latterly, Rommel's Afrika Korps.

In the North African Italian campaign, John's platoon was badly mauled at Derna, Libya, losing 17 men, killed or captured. 1 KRRC and the Rhodesian platoons were in the forefront of the fighting that continued with the defeat and surrender of much of the Italian Army in Libya. At that stage, the Afrika Korps arrived to prop up the remainder of the Italian Army and the long series of fighting withdrawals occurred, back across Libya, until the withdrawals stopped at the pre-prepared defensive lines outside Alexandria, called El Alamein.

During Operation CRUSADER, in 1941, the Battalion fought at the Battle of Sidi Rezegh (just south of Tobruk), fighting a notable action as a rifle battalion against 2 German armoured regiments. The very one-sided battle resulted in only 3 officers and 50 other ranks making it back to the British lines, after the battalion was effectively wiped out. John Tsirindanis was one of those survivors. It was during this campaign that he was Mentioned in Despatches:

War Office, 8th July, 1941. The KING has been graciously pleased to approve that the following be Mentioned for distinguished services in the Middle East during the period December, 1940, to February, 1941: — K.R.R.C. Tsirindanis, No. 6852927 Rfmn. (actg. Corpl.) J. (Supplement to The London Gazette, 08/07/1941 p3887)

John was made up to Platoon Sergeant and joined the remnants of the Battalion in Cairo to reconstitute the 1st Battalion KRRC from reinforcements. He took part in other key battles, as Rommel continued his drive through Libya into Egypt. At the battles at Gazala, John was wounded, when he and his platoon commander went over a German mine in a jeep. His platoon commander died in his arms, and this was to affect him for the rest of his life.



John (2nd left) with members of his platoon in the Western Desert in late 1940

In October 1942, he was discharged from 1 KRRC and repatriated to Southern Rhodesia. Reinforcements were desperately needed and John was to rejoin 2 RR in Bulawayo, as a recruit trainer. We know that he was in the Rhodesian Army boxing team in 1943, but otherwise little is known of his time during this period. However, it is surmised that his background and his native fluency in Greek had come to the attention of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and that John underwent some form of training with this unit in Palestine in early 1944.

On 17 April, 1944, John Tsirindanis volunteered for active service a second time, enlisting in the General Service Corps in Cairo, as a Private. He was temporarily transferred to the King's Royal Rifle Corps as a Rifleman. A day later, he was posted from KRRC to HQ Force 133, ME62, which was SOE's headquarters for the Middle East, as a paid Acting Sergeant.

Further investigation has uncovered more of the detail of his story in the SOE archives held in the UK, which were recently opened for researchers.

In April/May 1944, the Allied Forces were fighting in Italy and preparing for the D-Day invasion, which was to be in France in June. Large numbers of German forces were stationed in Greece, in part due to the disinformation operation – Operation MINCEMEAT – which had given the Germans the false intelligence that the Allied landings in Sicily were in fact going to be in Greece. The Allies were keen to ensure that these German troops remained tied up in Greece and the SOE operation, NOAH'S ARK, was put in place to encourage partisan attacks on transportation routes and to tie up the German garrisons.

The SOE was also tasked with preventing the Germans from removing their garrisons from the various Greek islands and joining their comrades on the mainland and in Italy. A series of SOE missions was deployed across the Greek Islands to support this endeavour. Their key role was to spot enemy shipping and air movements from their island hideouts and to engage in sabotage of German shipping. They were also expected to act as the British Military liaison with the local partisans and to recruit Greek fishing boats (caiques) and other vessels, over to the Allied side, therefore denying access to them by the German garrisons.

One of these missions (authorized by Churchill on 17 April 1944) was the MAINSAIL Mission, a two-man team to operate in the Southern Aegean on the Greek islands of Sifnos, Serifos, Kimolos, and Milos. Milos at the time had a large German garrison, including an airfield, radar station, and port. It had been turned into a large German stronghold, because of its strategic location and large natural harbour.

John (codename PUNCH) and his colleague, 2Lt Orestes Felouzakis (codename JUDY), of the Greek Army, deployed from Famagusta, Cyprus, and were delivered to their operational area by a caique: a journey of a few weeks, as they had to travel by night and hide the boat by day.

John took charge of the mission in Sifnos, using the nom de guerre, Captain John Thompson, which was the name of his Rhodesian Company Commander in 1 KRRC. He did this for two reasons: to prevent his surname Tsirindanis from becoming widely known and potentially communicated to the German garrison (his sister was living on Milos at the time, with her family), and also to prevent the Greek partisans from finding out the mission commander was in fact 2Lt Felouzakis. The partisans on the islands were communist and hated the Greek Army officer class, who were widely regarded as being Royalist supporters and consequently, many were killed by the partisans.

Their mission was very successful. The German garrison on Milos was unable to leave and was one of the last German-held locations to surrender. John personally led a 3-man team recruited from Sifnos, to hijack and subsequently sink a 60-ton German cargo vessel, after first having offloaded most of the supplies, to be hidden on the island. He also led a number of sabotage missions to disable vessels, when they docked in Serifos or Sifnos. They prevented over 25 vessels from being used and also assisted a number of caiques, in their escape from Greek waters, to safety in Turkish waters or to Egypt.

John's local knowledge of the Islands was also used by British raiding parties from the Special Boat Service (SBS) and the Greek Sacred Squadron. He was the pilot on the largest raiding vessel (Armadillo), for a raid by the Sacred Squadron and a mixed SAS/SBS team, conducted on October 26, 1944. This raid included naval support from the British cruiser, HMS Aurora, and two destroyer escorts, plus air bombardment from the Royal Australian Airforce, based in Libya, and carrier-based Grumman Hellcat fighter bombers. The operation lasted 4 days but, despite the destruction of the airfield and radars, the range of the 15cm German naval battery near the port of Adamas, together with its ability to survive constant bombing and naval bombardment, prevented the Royal Navy from completing the reoccupation of Milos. The Allies and the raiding teams withdrew, along with John and 2Lt Felouzakis. At this stage, Milos was the last German outpost in the Aegean and the island did not surrender until after the German capitulation on the Greek mainland.

Operating undercover in civilian clothing was not without its risks. Hitler's Commando Order required all SOE operatives to be summarily executed after interrogation, a fate meted out to several SOE operatives from Force 133. This gives us some idea of the

constant threat and incredible stress these men were living under, isolated both geographically and from other military units.

Early in 1945, John was reassigned to No 1 Special Force in Italy and supported the Allies in their efforts to drive the Germans from Italy, and the SOE's mission to sustain the Italian partisan forces operating behind enemy lines. The war in Italy ended in May 1945, after Hitler's suicide and the unconditional German surrender.



John (centre back, wearing the Rhodesian slouch hat), with other members of the SOE No. 1 Special Force in Rome, after the German surrender in May 1945.

The photo of John on Milos dates from his time immediately after Victory in Europe; he remained on the island until his repatriation to Southern Rhodesia, in October 1945.

John Tsirindanis died in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in 2001.

[Editor's note: if you think you might know someone in the photos, please get in touch]

HONOURS AND AWARDS

Jennifer Hebe Boyd

Member of the Legion of Merit (MLM), awarded 27 April, 1979 (posthumous)

Nursing Sister Jennifer Hebe Boyd MLM died tragically while on duty, on Wednesday 27 September 1978. Jenny, or Jen to her family, was born in 1945 to Alan and Ada Boyd, and raised and educated in the Gippsland territory near Stratford, Victoria, in Australia. Her parents were sheep and cattle farmers, father Alan being the President of the Avon Shire Council in 1978. Jenny had a sister, Elizabeth, and three brothers, John, Alan, and Colin. After schooling, she trained as a nurse at the Mercy Hospital for Women and at

the (Royal) Women's Hospital, both in Melbourne. Qualifying as a specialist nurse Jenny worked in Alice Springs, Australia, and then travelled for some time in Europe.

She arrived in Rhodesia in 1971/1972 and, with her specialist qualifications as a community health nurse, accepted a post in 1974 from the Health Ministry, working in the rural areas of Mashonaland. The dangers of her visiting lonely outposts increased as the war went on and, despite misgivings, she accepted armed guards as a necessity and had bought a pistol for self-protection during her last visit to her family in February 1978. Jenny had only just got engaged to be married to an American lecturer based in Salisbury and, after their planned marriage on 28 November 1978, they were intent on emigrating to West Virginia in the USA. On 27 September, Jenny and four armed escorts were travelling in a mine-proofed Land Rover to an outlying clinic in the Mrewa TTL, when the vehicle hit a landmine. Escaping relatively unharmed from the blast, they were cut down in a hail of fire from a ZANLA gang, lying in ambush at the site. All died instantly. Sister Boyd was posthumously awarded the Order of the Legion of Merit (Civil) in May 1979, the award given to her parents at the Mercy Hospital in a brief but emotional ceremony. Her name was also placed in the Nurses' Bay of the Anglican Cathedral in Salisbury.



Jennifer Boyd's vocation was to care for all underprivileged Rhodesians, regardless of colour or creed.

Source: Steve Lunderstedt

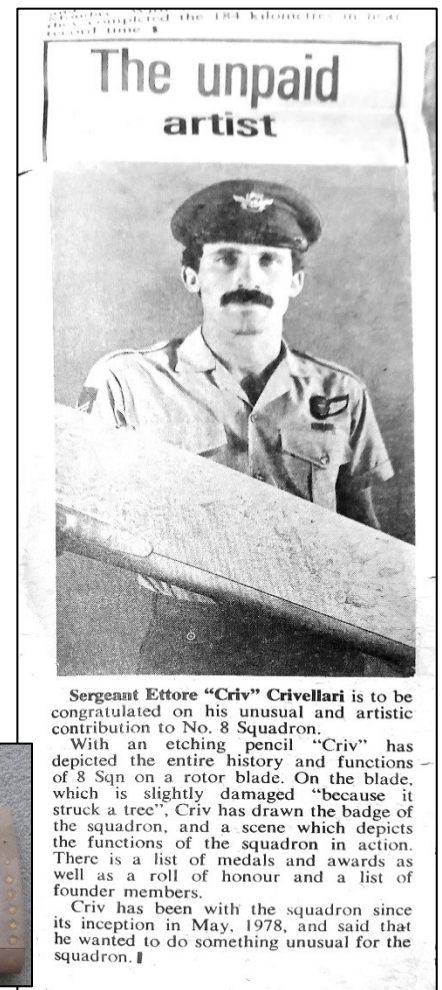
THE LION & TUSK MUSEUM

~ Hugh Bomford

Tail rotor from a Rhodesian 8 Squadron Bell 205 'Cheetah', on display in the museum

The tail rotor in the photos below was engraved by Ettore 'Criv' Crivellari, of the Rhodesian Air Force, and presented to Squadron Leader Ted Lunt. It was later found in a house in South Africa, by a South African, who brought it to New Zealand. It was given to a Kiwi to place in a New Zealand aviation museum but, after doing some research, the Kiwi contacted us and subsequently donated this artefact to The Lion & Tusk Museum. He also became a Financial Member of our Association.

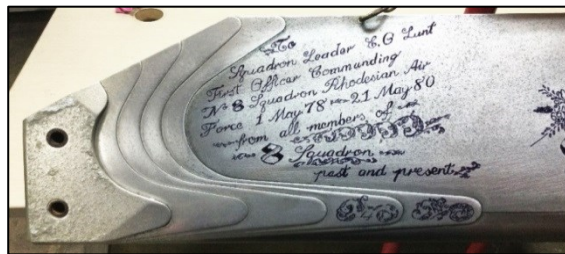
The engravings on the rotor blade, which are described in the short newspaper article, were painstakingly restored by Museum Curator, Tony Fraser; the photos show the progression of his work. As you can see, this work of art has been transformed.



The rotor as it arrived at the museum



Renovation in progress



The completed renovation



We know that the other rotor was also engraved by Criv – please contact us if you have any information on its whereabouts.

We would also very much like to know if Criv is still alive and, if possible, how to contact him.

THE CQ STORE

Please support our CQ Store. We have an ever-expanding range of quality goods in stock, including John Edmond Music products, for the New Zealand and Australian markets.

To view our website, go to our portal page at: <https://www.rhodesianservices.org/cq-store.htm>

To inquire or order and receive a quote, please email: thecqstore@rhodesianservices.org

All profits from sales go to supporting The Lion and Tusk Museum. Where possible we manufacture ourselves, or procure from New Zealand, Australia, the UK and USA.

This is a recent video taken in the store:

<https://youtu.be/BoUDqjb4x28>

Please subscribe to our YouTube channel, so that you are notified when we upload new videos.

When you buy from the Rhodesian Services Association CQ Store and you are supporting the preservation of Rhodesian history through The Lion and Tusk Museum.

Rhodesian Pets...



WE WERE A PET FRIENDLY NATION. NEARLY EVERY HOME OR FARM HAD DOGS OR CATS, MOSTLY OF THE HEINZ.57 VARIETY.



IN 1960, DURING OPERATION NOAH AT KARIBA, MANY PEOPLE FOSTERED WILD ANIMALS. THE CONDYS IN BORROWDALE HAD A BABY RHINO (RUPERT).

MY WIFE SUE'S FAMILY HAD A RESCUED VERVET MONKEY FROM OPERATION NOAH

WE HAD MANY EXOTIC PETS SUCH AS BUSH BABIES, CHAMELEON AND SNAKES



Bibby



I NEVER CARED FOR BIRDS IN CAGES BUT I KNEW SOME SMART PARROTS & BUDGIES

WHEN I WAS FIVE I WAS BITTEN ON THE BUM BY OUR NEIGHBORS BABOON. YES WE WERE TEASING IT!



DURING OUR ARMY DAYS THERE WAS ALWAYS AN ORPHANED BUSH PIG TO ENTERTAIN US.



Vic Mackenzie 2014 CO

This newsletter is compiled by Jackie Jackson for the Rhodesian Services Association, jackie@rhodesianservices.org

To view previous newsletters, go to our [Archives](#)

Views, language, and information expressed in *The Sentinel* may not reflect current understanding, they are provided in a historical context.

The Lion and Tusk Museum is a collection of historical, cultural, artistic, and scientific information displays, videos, photos, and writings. These depict Rhodesia and Rhodesians of all races, from the late 19th century until the country's transition to Zimbabwe in 1980. Neither the museum management, nor its team of volunteers, have political, racial, or gender-specific agendas, and they unreservedly condemn any scandal-mongering misconceptions to the contrary.



© 2023 The Rhodesian Services Association

Registered under the 2005 Charities Act in New Zealand number CC25203

Registered as an Incorporated Society in New Zealand number 2055431

Postal: PO Box 13003, Tauranga 3141, New Zealand

Physical: Unit 10, 14 Portside Drive, Mount Maunganui, New Zealand

Web: www.rhodesianservices.org and www.thelionandtusk.org