

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY HISTORY

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The South African National Museum of Military History came into being as a result of the Second World War (1939–1945). It was during this period that Captain (later Colonel) J. Agar-Hamilton, official historian of the Union Defence Force, suggested the establishment of a war museum. This was approved by Field Marshal J.C. Smuts who at that time was Minister of Defence and Commander-in-chief of the Union Defence Forces. The Museum was officially opened in its present premises by Smuts on 29 August 1947 and was known as the South African National War Museum until 29 November 1974.

The collections of the Museum have been built around a nucleus of objects obtained as a result of the Second World War. This War was truly a global conflict and most of the theatres of the War are portrayed by either objects or displays in the Museum.

Reminiscent of the early days of the Second World War is the Universal Carrier (Bren Carrier) (Picture 1) and the two pounder anti-tank gun (Picture 2). Both are of British origin and were also used during the 1940 campaign in France and the Low Countries. One of the symbols of the Battle of Britain (1940) is the British Hawker Hurricane Mark IIc (Picture 3). This type of aircraft was flown by Group Captain Sailor Malan DSO, DFC, a South African who participated in the Battle of Britain. Malan's group of medals (Picture 4) are on display and include the bar 'Battle of Britain' to his 1939–1945 Star. The Atlantic Campaign (1939–1945) is portrayed by a display of mines (Picture 5), depth charges and a torpedo.

A few scenes of the Home Front in South Africa can be seen through the eyes of Walter Battiss, a well known South African artist, who made

some pencil sketches (Picture 6) at Swartkop airbase near Pretoria. Among others the East African and Abyssinian Campaigns of 1940–1942 are represented by the Hawker Hartbees light bomber (Picture 7) and the Marmion-Herrington Mark I armoured car (Picture 8) both of which were manufactured in South Africa. Exhibited with many other interesting objects is the Mega Stone (Picture 9), captured during the Abyssinian Campaign. The Campaign in Madagascar (1942) (Picture 10) is portrayed by means of a photo exhibit and amongst the interesting items of the Desert campaign (1941–1942) is a display of the German 'Afrika Corps' (Picture 11) and a German 8.8 cm Flak 37 anti-aircraft gun (Picture 12).

Exhibits from the Italian campaign of 1944–1945 include a Sherman tank (Picture 13), which was used by the 6th SA Armoured Division in Italy. A reminder of the Eastern Front (1941–1945) where some of the most vicious fighting of the Second World War took place is the T-34-85 (Picture 14), the 'Krim' shield (Picture 15) and a replica of the sword (Picture 16) presented by HM King George VI of Great Britain to the city of Stalingrad in commemoration of its heroic defence during the Second World War.

The campaign in the Far East 1941–1945 is represented by Japanese military swords (Picture 17) such as the Tachi. After the Allied invasion of Europe (1944) the European theatre of war (1944–1945) is characterised by the Molch, a German one-man submarine (Picture 18) used against the Allied invasion, the Messerschmitt 262B 1 a/U1 (Picture 19) and the uniform tunic with ribbon bar (Picture 20) of Capt Swales who won the Victoria Cross.

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Picture 1



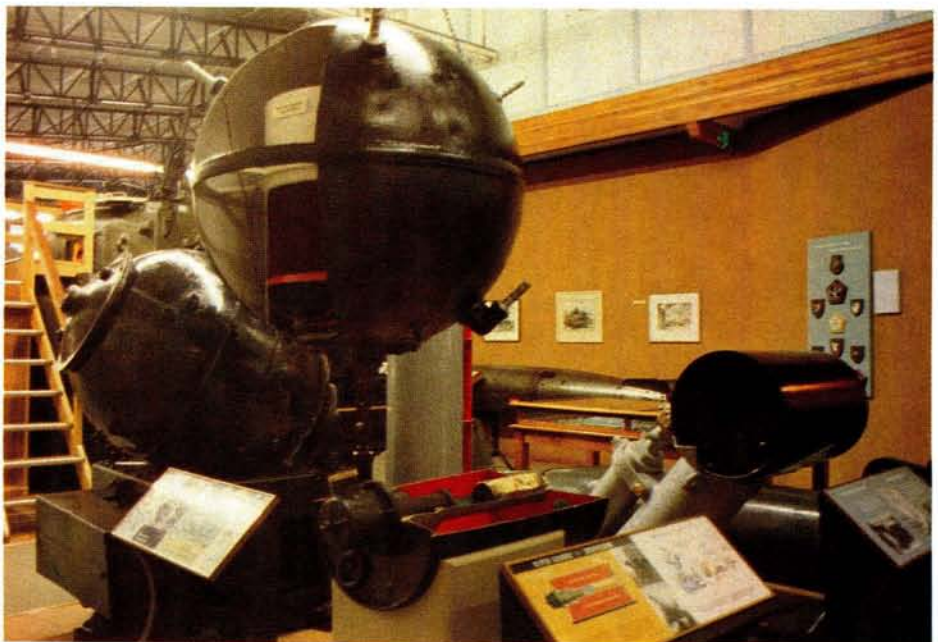
Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



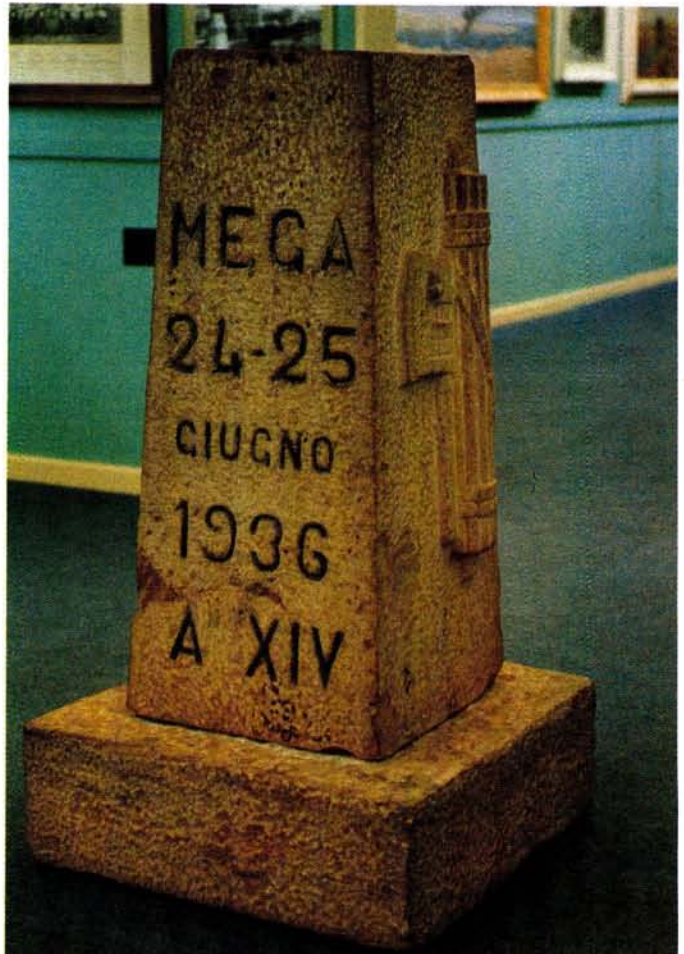
Picture 6

Picture 7

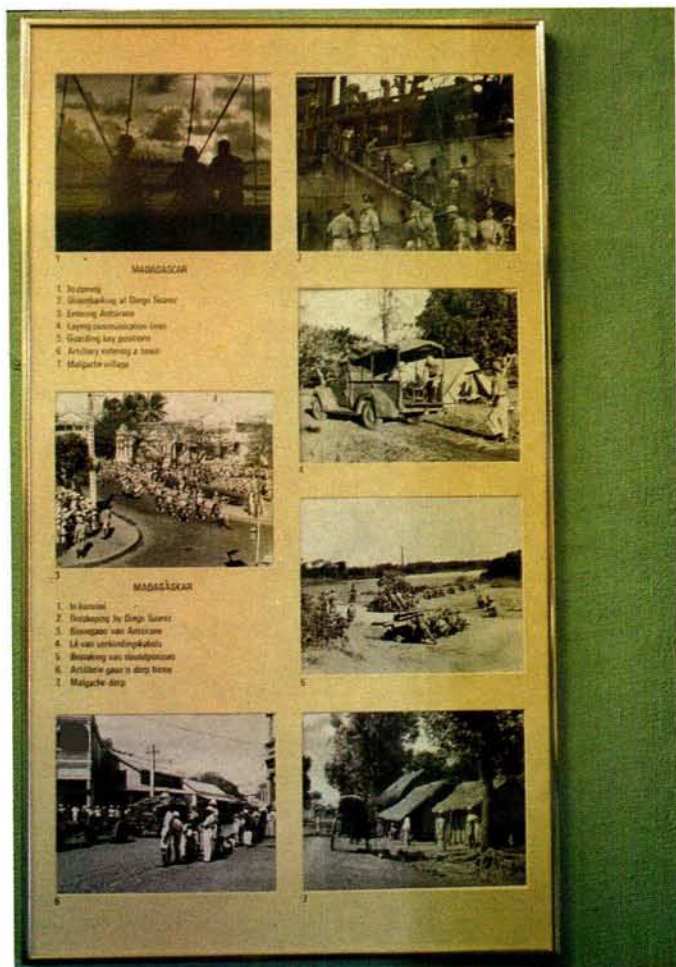




Picture 8



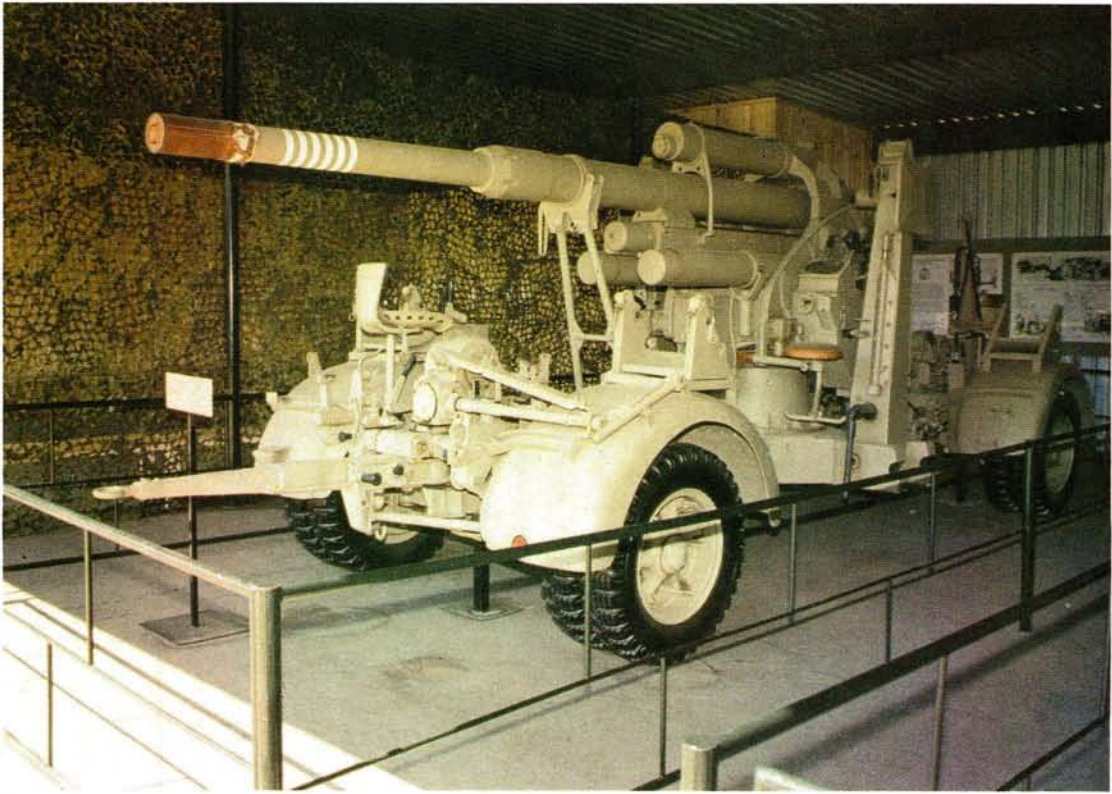
Picture 9



Picture 10



Picture 11



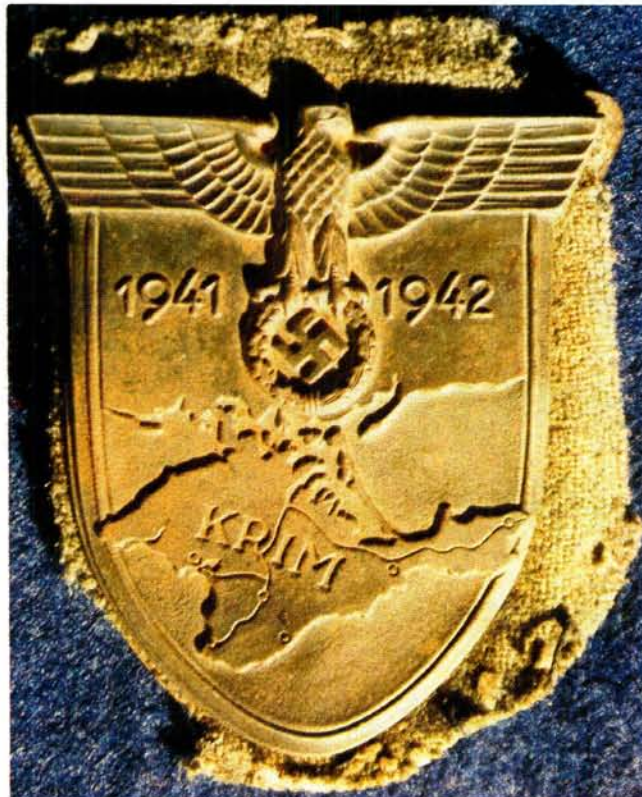
Picture 12

Picture 13





Picture 14



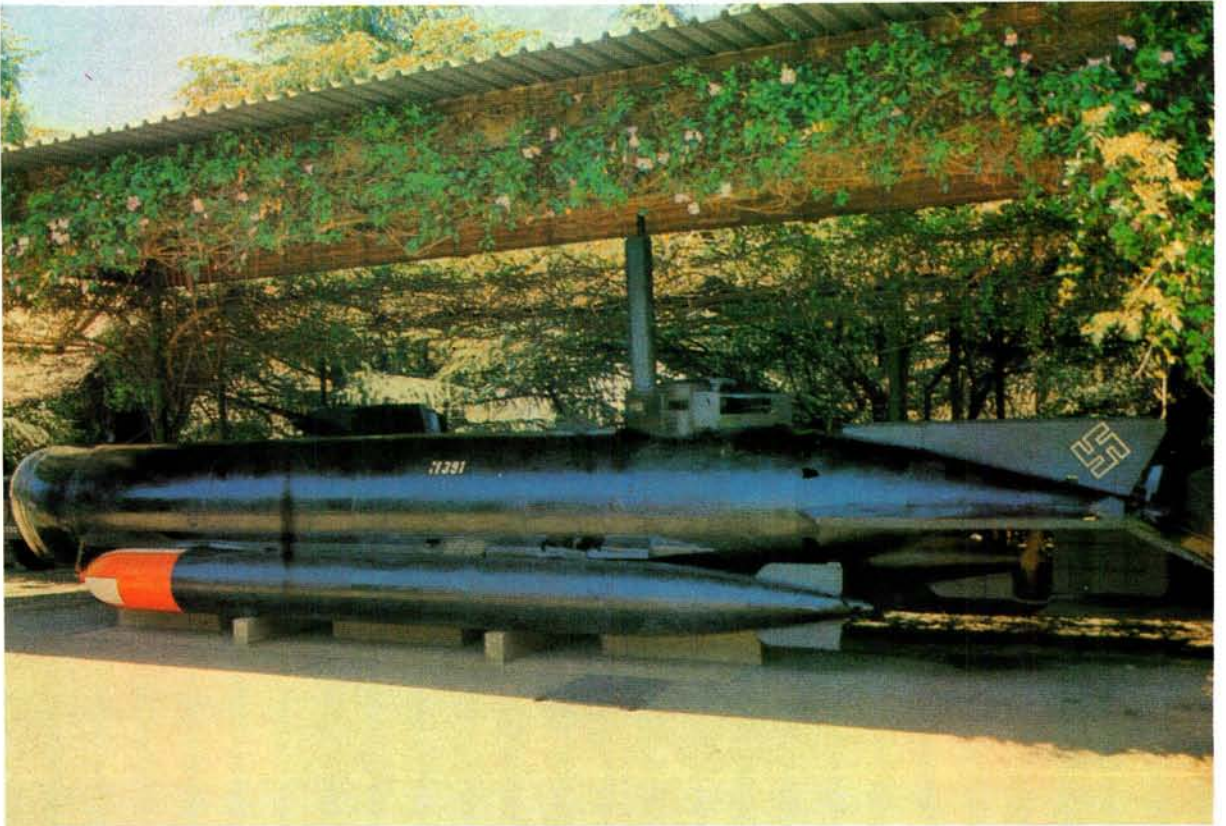
Picture 15



Picture 16

Picture 17





Picture 18

Picture 19





Picture 20

**Colour Photo's taken
by Mrs C. Eloff of the Museum.**

The South African National Museum of Military History is situated in Erlswold Way, Saxonwold, Johannesburg, and is open 7 days a week from 09h00 to 16h30. Enquiries to PO Box 52090, Saxonwold, 2132.