



**13 October 2014**

## **Department of Military Veterans, UCT to rededicate memorial to *SS Mendi***

**Ceremony at 11h00, Sunday, 19 October 2014 in UCT Lower Campus,  
Cecil Road, Rosebank, to remember 616 South Africans who perished in WWI  
sea tragedy**

The Department of Military Veterans and the University of Cape Town will co-host a rededication and memorial service in honour of the 616 South African men who gave their lives during the First World War on the *SS Mendi*. The ceremony will begin at 11h00 on Sunday, 19 October 2014 in UCT Lower Campus, Cecil Road Extension, in Rosebank, Cape Town.

The Fifth Battalion of South African Native Labour Contingent spent their last night in South Africa billeted where UCT's Lower Campus now stands (previously the old Rosebank Show Grounds). They sailed from Cape Town to assist the British in World War One. On the morning of 21 February 1917, just south of the Isle of Wight, they were aboard the 4,000-ton steamship *SS Mendi* when it was rammed and almost cut in half by an 11,000-ton liner, the *SS Darro*. The *SS Mendi* sank in 20 minutes.

A total of 647 people died that morning, of whom 616 were South Africans. Among those who passed away were three Pondoland chiefs: Henry Bokleni, Dokoda Richard Ndamase and Mxonywa Bangani; and the Reverend Isaac Wauchope Dyobha, who was accompanying the troops as chaplain.

This rededication of the *SS Mendi* Memorial coincides with the centenary year of the beginning of World War One. This ceremony is the precursor to a memorial service to take place in 2017, marking the centenary of the sinking of the *SS Mendi*. **The Department of Military Veterans is seeking surviving relatives of the men who died on the *SS Mendi* in order to include them in the service that will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragedy.**

The Memorial to the *SS Mendi* was installed in 2006 at the southeast corner Cecil Road Extension, where the ceremony will take place. This year UCT sponsored an upgrade of the memorial, including a roll of honour and interpretive material. The rededication is required in order to proceed with normal annual services in honour of the men who passed away on the vessel.

To be accredited for this event as a member of the media, please email [pat.lucas@uct.ac.za](mailto:pat.lucas@uct.ac.za) or phone 021 650 5428 or 076 292 8047.

**ENDS**

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