

## **The Garden of Remembrance**

Bays Hill Pretoria

Over recent years both the South African Air Force and South African Air Force Association as joint custodians of the Air Force Memorial site have received a number of requests to strew the ashes of loved ones who at one time were members of or closely linked to the South African Air Force.

In 1995 the SAAF Association, celebrating its 50th anniversary, approached the SAAF, celebrating its 75th anniversary, with a request to consider the concepts of a SAAF Roll of Honour Memorial Wall and a Garden of Remembrance. However, the project lay dormant for a number of years until the then Chief of the Air Force, Lt Gen Roelf Beukes and the then National President of the SAAF Association, Derrick Page again raised the issue and progress was made.



On 6 May 2001, Lieutenant General Roelf Beukes unveiled the Memorial Wall and on 5 May 2002, Chief of the South African National Defence Force, General Siphiwe Nyanda unveiled the Memorial to the Unknown Airman. In mid- 2003 the Air Force Board and SAAF Association National Congress approved the proposed plan for the Garden of Remembrance and detailed plans, drawings, consultations, authorities and funding were completed in November 2003.

The Garden of Remembrance will not only serve the purpose of storing the ashes of members or their loved ones, but also in remembrance of loved ones without necessarily storing the ashes.

The Garden of Remembrance has been sited on the Southern slope of Bays Hill. This affords a peaceful view overlooking Swartkop, which is accepted as the first unit and the beginning of the South African Air Force. One cannot but note the symbolism of the site.

Work commenced on site in February 2004 under site management of Colonel Frik Botha of the Directorate Base Support Systems, Air Command and his support staff and AFB Waterkloof support staff under the command of Colonel Trevor Dawes.

During the following weeks, despite un-seasonal heavy rains, phase 1 of the Garden of Remembrance progressed and the commemoration plaque was unveiled on 7 May 2004 during Congress 2004.

A significant milestone was reached on 10 September 2005 when the first niche was occupied.

Memorial niches are available at R2500 each to serving and former serving SAAF members.

## **Criteria for Use**

To qualify for use of a niche in the Air Force Memorial Garden of Remembrance, a user must have served as a bone-fides member of the South African Air Force or is a member of the South African Air Force Association, excluding an honorary or associate member.

The spouse(s) or partner(s) of a user may also use an adjoining niche.

Niches can only be used for the storage of the cremated mortal remains or remain empty and be engraved in memory of a loved one. Niches are not for the storage of personal items or for use as a time capsule as it is not in keeping with the Garden of Remembrance.

Engraving of the granite face cover is included. A contracted single engraver is used for standardisation and aesthetic appeal. An application form for engraving is available from the SAAF Association National Headquarters, Swartkop.

The storage period is unlimited. This implies a long-term maintenance plan, in fact 'for eternity'.

A title certificate with an allocated niche number is issued to the Applicant. This certificate is for safekeeping amongst the last will and testament documents.

## **Voortrekker Monument**

In addition to the SAAF/SAAFA Garden of Remembrance, members are also invited to consider the S.A. Defence Force's [Garden of Remembrance](#) at the [Voortrekker Monument](#).

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
What do I get if I buy a niche?	A 250mm x 170mm x 170mm niche for the storage of a box of the cremated mortal remains of one person, with a black/grey granite face cover which can be engraved to specifications. The niche is for use over an unlimited period.
Can I buy a niche even if I have no ashes to store therein?	Niches can be kept for an unlimited period before being used to store the ashes. Niches are often purchased just to use empty in memory of a loved one.
Who places the ashes?	The Custodians only provide the facility - that is the allocated niche and the granite face cover. It is the function of the client/next of kin to place the ashes. Arrangements must be made with the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Swartkop to remove the granite face cover and to reseal the cover after the ashes have been placed.
What of the engraving work?	Engraving is to be done prior to the placing of the

	ashes in the niche. An Engraving Form, obtainable from the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Swartkop, is completed and accepted. The granite face cover is removed and taken with the engraving form to the contracted engraver for engraving.
Who pays for the engraving?	Payment for the initial engraving costs is included in the purchase costs.
Is there free access to the Garden of Remembrance?	The Air Force Memorial site, where the Garden of Remembrance is, is open from 08:00 to 16:00 Monday to Sunday except Good Friday and Christmas Day. Entrance is free.
Can I select a specific niche?	If the specific niche has not yet been sold, it can be allocated to a client. Records of the niches sold/allocated are available to view at the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Swartkop.
What confirmation do I receive that I have purchased a niche?	A title certificate with an allocated niche number is issued to the client.
Can I exchange a niche?	A niche can be exchanged provided that the criteria/conditions laid down by the Custodians are met and before the niche is in use.
Can I change a niche position?	Position can be changed provided the niche is not in use. Requests for changes are to be administratively handled by the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Swartkop.
Must I use the niche immediately after purchase?	Niches can be kept for an unlimited period before being used to store the ashes.
Can I place personal items and mementos in the niche?	The niche can only be used for the storage of ashes or remain empty.
Can I purchase more than one niche and group them together?	If adjoining niches are available.
Can I visit the Garden of Remembrance before a decision is made?	The Air Force Memorial site, where the Garden of Remembrance is, is open from 08:00 to 16:00 Monday to Sunday except Good Friday and Christmas Day. Entrance is free.
Can I use the Air Force Memorial Chapel for a memorial service?	The Air Force Memorial Chapel can be used. This must be co-ordinated through the SAAF Association National Headquarters at Swartkop.
What is the cost of a niche?	A once off payment of R2 500 including initial engraving cost is required. No further payments are expected. Donations are welcome.