



rettelsweN is the banner name for issues of the Club's Newsletter that contain no Club news and are produced simply to entertain members. All members are invited to submit short articles for possible inclusion in an issue of rettelsweN. These need be of no particular consequence, and need not be written by the member. Alternatively, write a rettel to the Editor! Just send the text as an email, with the pictures as attachments, to the Editor at dhm@tinmar.co.za.

Lily Marlene and Daar kom die Alibama

Tales of two wartime tunes

by JP van Niekerk

[Note by Editor: On 14 December 2020 JP presented this story to the Christmas lunch meeting of the Club, during which he also delighted those present by performing both Lily Marlene and Daar kom die Alibama on his miniature harmonica. I am grateful for his offering this article, which is based upon the notes and associated PowerPoint presentation for his talk.]

Lily Marlene

One day in 1915, during World War I, the 22-year-old Hans Leip (1893 – 1983), a Guards Corps conscript in the German army, was keeping watch in front of the Berlin Barracks. Leip was to go to battle the next day and for his comfort, was kissed goodbye by two lovely young women. The first was a kitchen worker named Lili and the second, named Marleen, was a nurse's aid from the military hospital. He grew infatuated with both women and wrote a poem about his two loves melting into one - Lili Marleen. Leip became a novelist, poet, playwright and artist who opposed the Nazi regime. He published a longer version of the poem in 1937.

Leip put the poem to music and so did another musician, but neither attempt was successful. However in 1938 Norbert Schulze (1911-2002) composed the definitive music for the poem. He was a musician who composed, inter alia, film music and Nazi propaganda songs, including one about bombing London, as a member of the staff of the Minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich, Joseph Goebbels. Schulze later ordered that all his royalties from 1933 to 1945 should go to the German Red Cross.

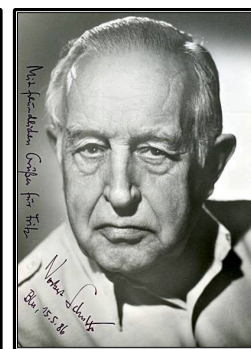


Lale Andersen

The song was first recorded in 1939 by Lale Andersen (1905-1972), a German singer and songwriter, under the title *Das Mädchen unter der Laterne* (The girl under the lantern). Nazi officials did not approve of the song and Joseph Goebbels prohibited it from being played on the radio. Goebbels also prohibited Andersen from performing in public because of her singing of the song and her friendship with Jewish artists, but she was so popular that nine months later she was permitted to perform again, subject to conditions.



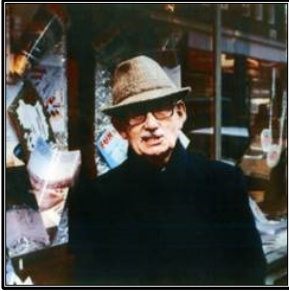
Hans Leip



Norbert Schulze

Goebbels ordered her to make a new military version of the song. Today we can hear and see both these versions on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2CnH1SZ8OQ>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDfre5mYonA>).

Lili Marleen became a hit with German soldiers at the front when the Belgrade radio station of the German armed forces in occupied Yugoslavia began broadcasting it in 1941. These broadcasts were received all over Europe and the Mediterranean, and the song soon became tremendously popular also with the Allied troops in North Africa and elsewhere.



The English songwriter, Tommie Connor (1904-1993), pictured to the left, first wrote English lyrics for the song, with the title *Lily of the lamplight*. Tommie had several hit songs to his name including the ever popular *I saw Mommy kissing Santa Claus*.



Anne Shelton (1923-1994), pictured to the right, was the first singer in the UK to record this English version of the song. Incidentally, she was the only English singer who sang with Glen Miller and should have been on the plane with him when he disappeared.



Vera Lynn (1917-2020), pictured to the left, is also strongly associated with the song, singing it to the troops and on radio, and, indeed, singing it throughout her distinguished career. Dame Vera died earlier this year, aged 103 years!

Marlene Dietrich (1901-1992), pictured to the right, was a German/American actress and singer. In the 1920s she acted on the stage in Berlin and also in silent films. Her performances brought her international fame and a contract with Paramount Pictures, and she became one of the highest-paid actresses of the era. In 1939 Dietrich became a US citizen and was a high-profile, frontline entertainer throughout World War II. She is perhaps the singer most strongly associated with the song, now known as *Lili Marlene*, and sang it throughout her career.



Like our own *Sarie Marais*, *Lili Marlene* is a wartime song of love, longing, and loss. It is one of the most recognised songs of the 20th century. Translated into 48 languages and sung by many artists, it was immortalised especially by the four great women singers mentioned above: Lale Andersen, Anne Shelton, Vera Lynn and Marlene Dietrich. Incidentally, one US wartime version is by two soldiers in a foxhole – one with a harmonica.

Daar kom die Alibama

The traditional folk song *Daar Kom Die Alibama* is, possibly, South Africa's equivalent of Australia's *Waltzing Matilda*. In popular culture the well-loved song is strongly associated with the legendary Confederate warship *CSS Alabama*, which visited the Cape in 1863. The story of the *CSS Alabama* is one of the most remarkable tales of a ship, its adventures and misadventures, its enduring legacies, and of its captain.

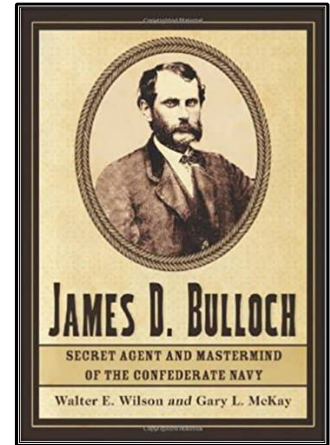
The tale is set in the American Civil War that was fought from 1861 to 1865 between the northern states (the Union) and the southern states (the Confederacy). An important cause of the Civil War

was the South's wish to secede (to do a Brexit), mainly because of the abolition of slavery that the South opposed.

Some 620 000 Americans died in this war – far more than the numbers of American deaths in any other war in which the US has been involved, including World War I (116 516 deaths) and World War II (405 399 deaths).

With its financial and shipping superiority the Union blocked Confederate harbours and so prevented exports, notably of cotton and sugar, from the American South to England and Europe.

During the American Civil War a southern gentleman named James Dunwoody Bulloch was the Confederacy's chief foreign agent in Great Britain. Great Britain was neutral though it favoured the South because of the importance of its cotton exports to the British textile industry. Bulloch was based in Liverpool and through blockade-busting commercial shipping activities acquired many ships - blockade runners and commerce raiders, which provided the Confederacy with its only source of hard currency.



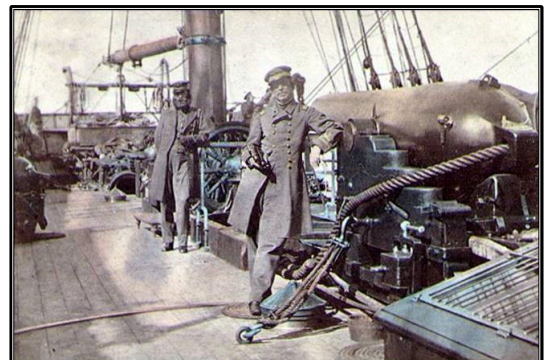
CSS Alabama

One such ship was the Confederate States Ship (CSS) *Alabama*. She was designed as a 'screw sloop-of-war' – powered by both steam and sail. Bulloch commissioned her to be built in 1862 at the cost of USD250 000 in the shipyard of John Laird, Sons, & Co at Birkenhead, on the river Mersey opposite Liverpool. Officials of the US (the Union) were aware that the ship's design was that of a raider and, through diplomatic channels, attempted to persuade the British to block her departure. However, named *Enrica*, unarmed and posing as a merchantman departing for sea trials with a temporary crew of British merchant seamen, she slipped out of harbour on 28 July 1862 and set course for the Azores.

There, just outside Portuguese territorial waters, she was transformed in the *CSS Alabama*, flying the stars-and-bars ensign of the Confederate Navy, under the command of Captain Raphael Semmes. She took on arms and ammunition, coal and stores. These were supplied from a British vessel, the *Agrippina*, which Bulloch had bought for the purpose of conveying these from Britain to the rendezvous in the Azores. Bulloch also chartered a second vessel, the *Bahama*, to convey a compliment of officers and men for the ship. The 26 officers were mainly Southerners, while the 85 crew members were mainly Liverpoolians enticed by high wages and the prospect prize money on the ransoming or sale of captured ships.

Over the next few months the *CSS Alabama* captured and burned many Union merchant vessels in the Caribbean, off Brazil and off the US East Coast. She also sank the Union warship *USS Hatteras* and then rescued her crew and landed them at Kingston, Jamaica. This was the only Confederate naval victory during the Civil War.

In 1863 the *CSS Alabama* sailed for Africa and the East, first stopping at Saldanha Bay to ensure there were no



Captain Raphael Semmes, Simonstown, 1863

enemy ships in Cape Town. Here a crew member, Simeon Cummings, who had gone duck shooting ashore, died by accidentally shooting himself. He was buried in the Pienaar family farm cemetery, and was the only Confederate combatant known to have died and been buried overseas. In 1994 his remains were exhumed and reburied in Tennessee, US.

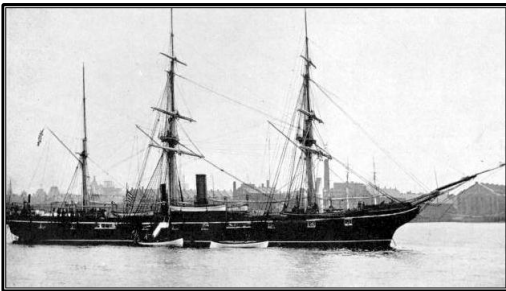
The *Alabama* arrived in Table Bay at 10:00 on 5 August 1863. Thousands of people had gathered on the shore and on the mountainside to witness her arrival. Just before entering the harbour she spotted a vessel off Green Point that was also making for the harbour. It turned out to be the Union barque *Sea Bride*. While both vessels were still outside territorial waters, the *Alabama* circled and captured the *Sea Bride*, causing great excitement. Captain Semmes put a prize crew on the *Sea Bride*, and ordered the officer-in-command to remain outside territorial waters.



Painting of CSS Alabama arriving in Table Bay

Semmes managed to sell the *Sea Bride* and her cargo to a Cape Town speculator, who later took delivery at Angra Pequena (now Lüderitz Bay), which was outside British jurisdiction. The prize money was distributed among the officers and crew. The *Sea Bride* soon came into the hands of a local trading firm and saw many years of further service as a coastal trading vessel.

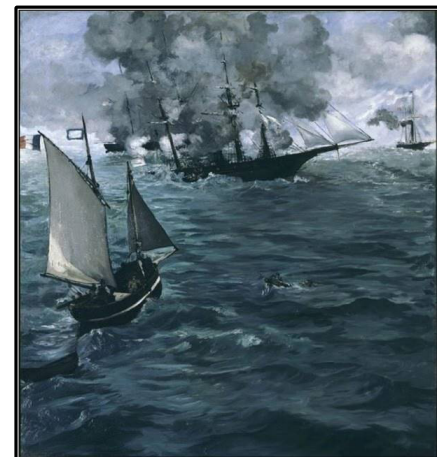
After four days in Cape Town harbour the *CSS Alabama* left for Simonstown for refitting and provisioning. Here she was again met enthusiastically by the Cape Town population. Thereafter the *CSS Alabama* crossed the Indian Ocean and wreaked more havoc on Union merchant vessels in the East. She was the most successful raider of all time, having captured and burned 65 Union vessels.



A 1861 photograph of USS Kearsage

In 1864 the *CSS Alabama* rounded the Cape and visited Cape Town briefly again en route to Cherbourg, France for urgent repairs. There she was blockaded by the Union screw sloop-of-war, *USS Kearsage*, commanded by Captain John Winslow. Unknown to Captain Fennes, *Kearsage* had a makeshift protective armouring of heavy chains lashed to her wooden hull to protect her boiler and engines. On Sunday 9 June 1864 the *Alabama* emerged from Cherbourg harbour to attack *Kearsage*. However her guns were ineffective. After only 17 minutes one of *Kearsage's* 11-inch guns holed *Alabama* below the waterline and Captain Fennes indicated his surrender as the *Alabama* began to sink. Thousands of people watched the battle from the shore. *Kearsage* herself rescued some 70 of *Alabama's* sailors, and the *Deerhound*, a British yacht that Captain Winslow had asked for assistance, rescued 30 more, including Captain Fennes and fourteen of his officers. However the *Deerhound* did not hand over the captives but set course for Southampton! This annoyed Captain Winslow intensely, but to his credit, he did not permit his gunnery officer to blow *Deerhound* out of the water! In this way Fennes and some officers escaped capture.

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Battle of the Kearsage and the Alabama by Édouard Manet

Fennes saw further action in the civil war and achieved high rank. After the war, the US held him prisoner and charged him with treason, but he was released in 1866. He then worked variously as a professor of philosophy and literature, a county judge and a newspaper editor, before returning to Mobile, Alabama and resuming his legal career. He was extremely popular and streets, buildings and a town were named after him. His statue in Mobile was removed on 5 June 2020.

After the Civil War had ended international arbitrators found that Britain had been guilty of violating its wartime neutrality and was sentenced to pay a fine of \$15.5m. Importantly, this post-war fining of Britain for neutrality violations was the foundation upon which the International Court of Justice could be built.

The traditional song *Daar Kom Die Alibama* is, possibly, South Africa's equivalent of Australia's *Waltzing Matilda*. The song is associated most strongly with the story of the *CSS Alabama*. However, Lawrence G Green in his book *On Wings of Fire*, published in 1967, attributes its origin to a sailing cutter, also named *Alabama*, that sailed regularly from the Berg River to Cape Town years before the arrival of the *CSS Alabama*. She often came laden with *dekriet*, the thatching material that grows in the Sandveld, and *matjiesgoed*. One type of Berg River reed formed part of the 'rietkooi' beds made especially for Malay brides. This would account for the otherwise strange inclusion of the refrain about "*die rietkooi is vir my gemaak om daarop te slaap*". Either way, in the song the ship's name is spelt with an i ... *Alibama*.

retteLs to the Editor

From Ian Scott, Member

With reference to *For the End of Time*, rettelsweN dd 30 Dec 2020.

Dear Duncan

A special thank you for the Messiaen article. I should know the Quartet but I don't. Now I'm inspired to settle down to listen to it carefully, and the fascinating background you've given us, together with M's own descriptions of the music, will add a key dimension.

From David Martin, brother of the editor and contributor to rettelsweN

With reference to rettelsweN dd 30 Dec 2020.

Hi Duncan,

Thanks very much for the last 'Messiaen devoted' issue; wonderful story! You introduced me to his music some months ago; I still have the link to the music you sent me; I must listen to it again! Roy Page-Shipp's rettel to the Editor also had merit, viz., it taught me how to spell d'accord ... admittedly some distance from my strictly phonetic decor in rettelsweN dd 16 Dec!

From Jocelyn Richie, Member

With reference to *For the End of Time*, rettelsweN dd 30 Dec 2020.

Thanks Duncan – that was fascinating. My father was a POW in Italy – in a very different camp from the one described in this rettelsweN.

Competitive individualism has channelled the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of narcissistic preoccupation with the self. Strategies of narcissistic survival now present themselves as emancipation from the repressive conditions of the past.

Written in 1979 by Christopher Lasch, American historian and writer