

## Notes and Queries

### *The Cover Illustration of Natalia 14.*

The picture on the cover of *Natalia 14*, acknowledged in that issue as being taken from a photograph in the possession of the Durban Local History Museum and described as being a view of the Durban bayside in 1900, led to an interesting correspondence between the Editor and Mr G.W. McDonald of Kenilworth in the Cape. The original painting, of which our illustration is a photograph, was purchased by Mr McDonald some forty years ago, and, once he had recovered from the surprise (and understandable mild chagrin) of finding his picture reproduced without proper acknowledgement, he provided us with much interesting information about the painting and its artist, together with permission to quote from an article by himself which was published in *Antiques in South Africa* (number 8) in 1981.

The painting was in fact done in about 1910 by one John Roland Brown. It is a water colour, and an extraordinarily accurate rendering of the bay from a vantage point in Albert Park at the Congella end of the Victoria Embankment. The trees that dominate the foreground are, Mr McDonald points out, those that hid Commandant Pretorius' men from Captain Smith's advancing troops on the night of the battle of Congella in May 1842. Beyond them is the boathouse of the Durban Rowing Club with the adjacent bathing jetty, then the waters of the bay dotted with sailing boats whose rigging is faithfully portrayed. The jetty, with the woodstrip screen that hid Durban's gentlemen from the eyes of the townsfolk as they changed into swimming attire, and the boathouse are now gone, but the Rowing Club survives, with an 111-year history.

John Roland Brown was a South African artist, born in Port Elizabeth in 1850, whose life was somewhat out of the ordinary.

He was deaf and dumb, . . . and orphaned at the age of 5, when he and his brother were placed in the Dutch Reformed Orphanage in Long Street, Cape Town. Not knowing what to do with the two children, the Principal gave them some old issues of the *Illustrated London News*, with pencil and paper and left them to copy the pictures to while away their solitary hours. John soon developed an extraordinary talent and was later sent, in 1864, to the Roeland School of Art and Evening Classes in Cape Town which had been founded in that year by Mr Foster. There he was trained for about 3 years under T.M. Lindsay who had come to the Cape as Principal of the school.

When he was 17 years of age Brown was sent as a student to the Liverpool School of Art where he gained great distinction, winning a Queen's Scholarship and the National prize as well as other awards and silver medals. Later he became art master at the school — a post he

held for some 30 years, during which time he exhibited regularly at the leading art galleries. He was acknowledged as one of the finest artists in the north of England and was trusted with many commissions for portraits of well-known personalities.

When in England, Brown married, but having lost his wife, he with his only son, returned to South Africa in 1902 and shortly afterwards retired to live in Grahamstown. He spent his remaining 21 years in various parts of the country, painting mainly for pleasure and holding exhibitions in Durban, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and elsewhere. After having devoted his entire life to art, he died in Grahamstown in 1923, aged 73 years.

Mr McDonald expressed some mystification as to how an excellent photograph of his painting came to be in the Local History Museum in Durban, and would welcome an explanation of this.



### *A History of South African Bhojpuri*

As observed in the editorial, this issue of *Natalia*, in marking the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured Indian labourers in Natal, attempts to make good past omissions by giving extensive coverage to aspects of the Indian experience in this region. One interesting element in that experience, which has hitherto not received serious academic study, has been the evolution of distinct South African varieties of the Indian languages. Because of this neglect, many persistent misconceptions exist as to their names, their structure, and their status as languages.

Dr Rajend Mesthrie of the University of Durban-Westville has recently undertaken a major study of the language generally known as Hindi but properly termed Bhojpuri. Among Indian languages in South Africa, Bhojpuri has the second largest number of speakers. Tracing the Indian origins of the people revealed a complex socio-linguistic picture: Their indentured forebears came from a very wide area of North India which spanned several languages. The most widely used of these was Bhojpuri, and, through a comparison of the essential grammatical structures of the Bhojpuri of India with trends in the South African usage, Dr Mesthrie has determined that a distinct South African language variety has evolved here. It is a blend of features from dialects of Bhojpuri and, to a lesser extent, from Awadhi, Standard Hindi, Maithili and Magahi, but does not accord perfectly with any language or dialect of North India. Such a language, drawing upon different but related sources over a short period of time, is known as a *koinē*, and Dr Mesthrie prefers to term this *koinē* South African Bhojpuri rather than Hindi. Hindi, the official title, leads to unfavourable and unfair comparisons between the South African variety and the standard official language of much of North India. Moreover, Dr Mesthrie has identified and described three distinct dialects of South African Bhojpuri: a coastal variety, a Northern Natal variety, and an intermediate variety spoken in and around Pietermaritzburg.

Dr Mesthrie's study of South African Bhojpuri reveals the influence of other locally-used Indian languages (chiefly Urdu and Tamil) as well as

Zulu, Fanagalo, and, most of all, English. These include minor phonetic influences, some syntactic changes, and a great many lexical borrowings for new concepts and items (though many borrowings merely replaced existing usages). From English came such words as *mōtar*, *rūm*, and *tīchar* (car, room and teacher); from Zulu/Fanagalo, *bagāsha* (a visit) and *basōp kar* (to look after); from Tamil, the names of snacks like *vedde* and *dose*. Semantic shifts also distinguish South African Bhojpuri from its Indian ancestors; for example, the word *daliddar* has shifted in meaning from “poor” to “greedy” and the word *chandāl*, which in India still refers to a particular (out)caste group, has in largely casteless Natal become a term of abuse or contempt without caste connotations. Dr Mesthrie has also used his study of vocabulary changes to show how the language has made the transition from a predominantly rural North Indian setting to an increasingly urbanised South African one.

The study examines the changing functions of Bhojpuri over the last 125 years in South Africa, its restriction to domestic contexts, its status as a minority language, and the attitudes of its own speakers towards it. The language is declining, and the effects of this obsolescence on the structure of the language as used by its ‘semi-speakers’ (young speakers whose command of the language lacks complete fluency and deviates from the grammatical norms of older speakers) is also studied. Among the reasons for its current obsolescence, Dr Mesthrie cites the multiplicity of vernacular Indian languages in South Africa, the lack of prestige of Bhojpuri (a ‘plantation’ language misconstrued as a ‘broken’ form of speech, strongly denigrated by priests and others educated in standard Hindi), its low socio-economic value in the last fifty years, and the neglect of the vernaculars in the Indian schools (where it has until very recently been relegated to part-time classes in some areas, functioning under less than optimal conditions).

Dr Mesthrie’s study includes samples of the Bhojpuri and Awadhi of India of the late nineteenth century, interviews with a range of Bhojpuri speakers (including some born in India at the time of the emigrations), and a small selection of proverbs, riddles, folk verses and tales extant in South Africa.



### *St Saviour’s, Randjesfontein*

This church at Halfway House in the Transvaal has been built from material salvaged from St Saviour’s Cathedral in Pietermaritzburg. Charles Lloys Ellis and Keith Parker, the developers of the rural housing estate Randjesfontein at Halfway House, purchased portion of the Cathedral for one rand and spent about R500 000 in re-erecting it.

Originally built in a matter of months in 1868 as a result of the Supreme Court decision whereby Bishop Colenso was to retain all Anglican Church property, St Saviour’s Cathedral in Commercial Road at first consisted of a simple nave with side-aisles and a yellowwood porch on the street frontage. In 1876 the Cathedral was enlarged with a new entrance and two transepts at the Commercial Road end. The porch was then moved to the north-west side. In 1881 a Chapter Room and Library were added to that side, while in 1898 the edifice was further enlarged with a new sanctuary, two more transepts and St Michael’s Chapel. When the Cathedral was demolished in

1981 the major portion went to Randjesfontein, while the remainder, viz. the 1876 addition was taken by the Natal Parks Board for the construction of a small church at the Midmar Historical Village.

Mr Lloys Ellis commissioned the well-known Durban architect Robert Brusse to prepare plans for the new church. By a clever re-arrangement of the sanctuary, transepts and St Michael's Chapel, a church seating 200 worshippers has been created. St Michael's Chapel has become the new baptistry and the yellowwood porch has been replaced in its 1868 siting at the main entrance.

The new church has been tastefully situated among a grove of old conifers, and adjacent to the cemetery of the Erasmus family, the original owners of the farm *Randjesfontein*, giving the impression of an old established edifice.

To the south is a cloistered garden which will in the future link the church with a proposed hall and crèche, to be built of material from the original nave of the cathedral. This building will be similar to the original 1868 St Saviour's.

The Randjesfontein St Saviour's was dedicated on 11 May this year, and a group of Cathedral of the Holy Nativity members travelled to the Transvaal for the event. Among them was Dean Lloyd Wellington, the Dean of St Saviour's at the time of the amalgamation in 1976 of that Parish with the Parish of St Peter to form the congregation of the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity and his successor, Dean John Forbes of the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity.

It is now an interdenominational church, available to all congregations which subscribe to the Apostles' Creed.



### *The Natal Society of Arts*

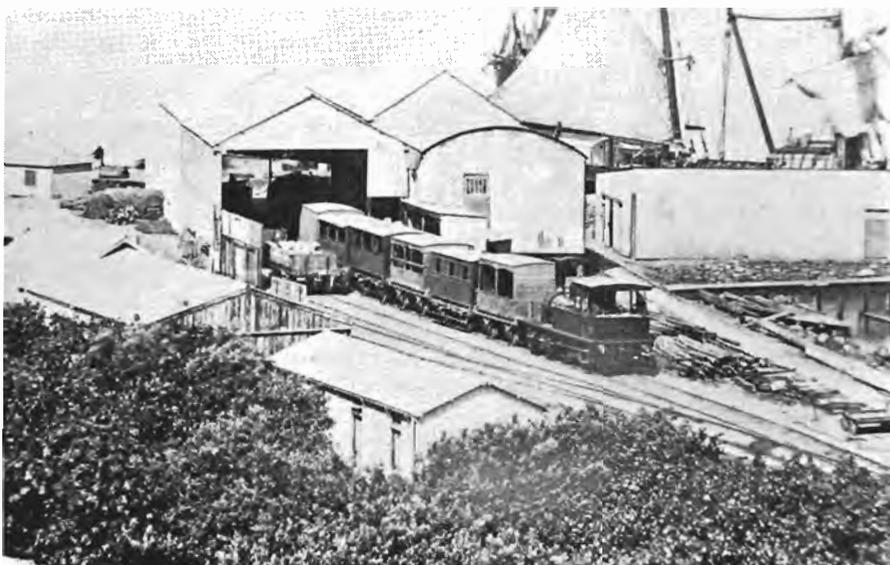
1985 is the eightieth year since the founding of the Natal Society of Artists which in 1964 changed its name to the present Natal Society of Arts. Instituted in 1905 by Cathcart William Methven (who is better known, perhaps, for his engineering work) and the architect William Paton, the N.S.A. has made a significant contribution to the fostering of the arts in both Natal and the country at large. Amongst the most active of its council members was Clement Sénèque, whose works were the subject of a retrospective exhibition which was noted in these pages last year. The N.S.A. Gallery, now located in Durban's Overport City complex, has mounted a number of important exhibitions (receiving an Art Critics' Award in 1978), and in recent years the Society has extended its sponsorship and assistance to artists and art teachers in KwaZulu.



### *Commemorating 125 Years of Railways in South Africa*

The following Note has been supplied by Mr Bruno Martin.

The 125th anniversary of the opening of South Africa's first locomotive-powered railway was commemorated in Durban on 22 June 1985. To mark the occasion, the Natal Branch of the Railway



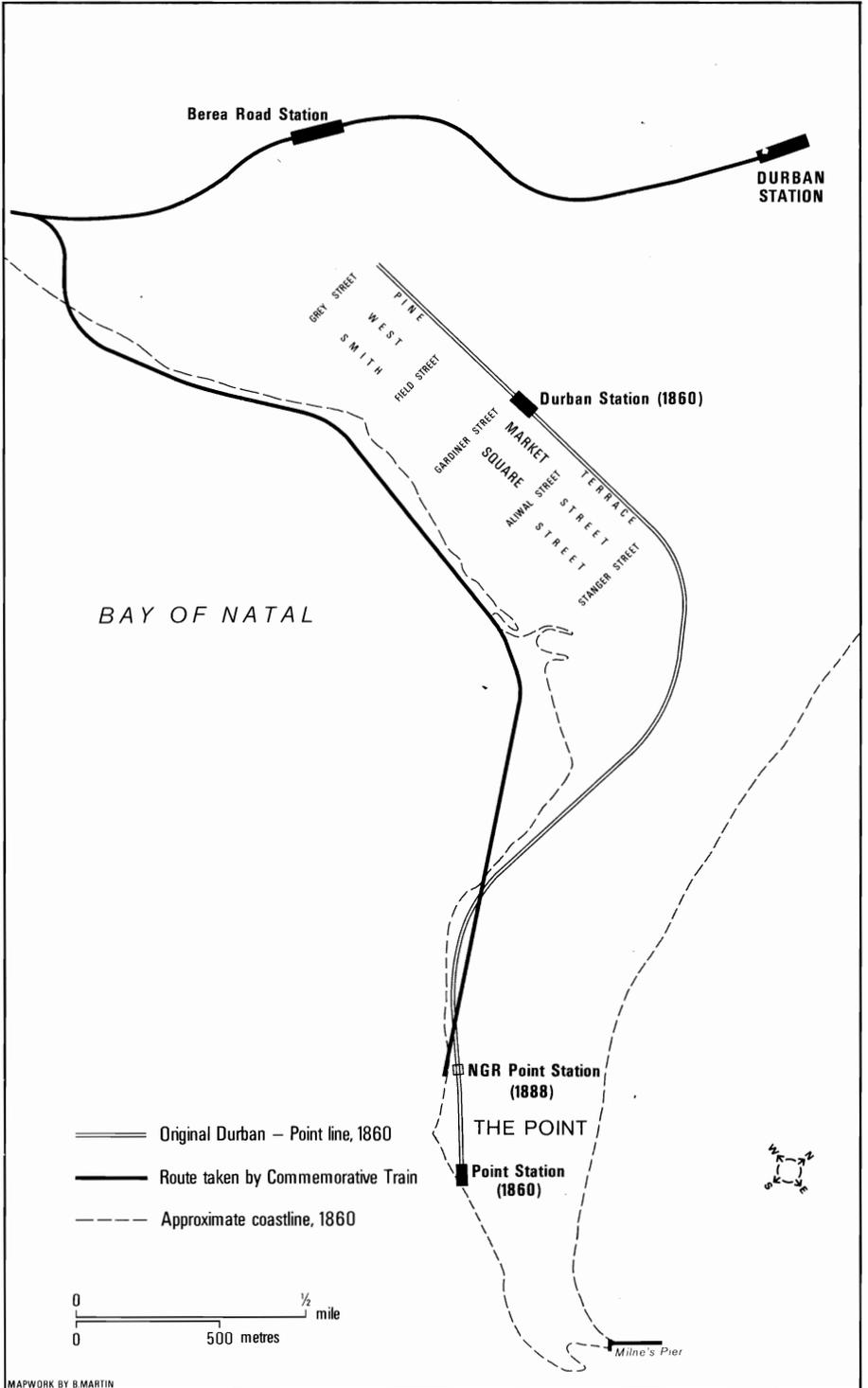
Point Station, c. 1876. Natal Railway Company's locomotive *Perserverance* with a motley rake of carriages.

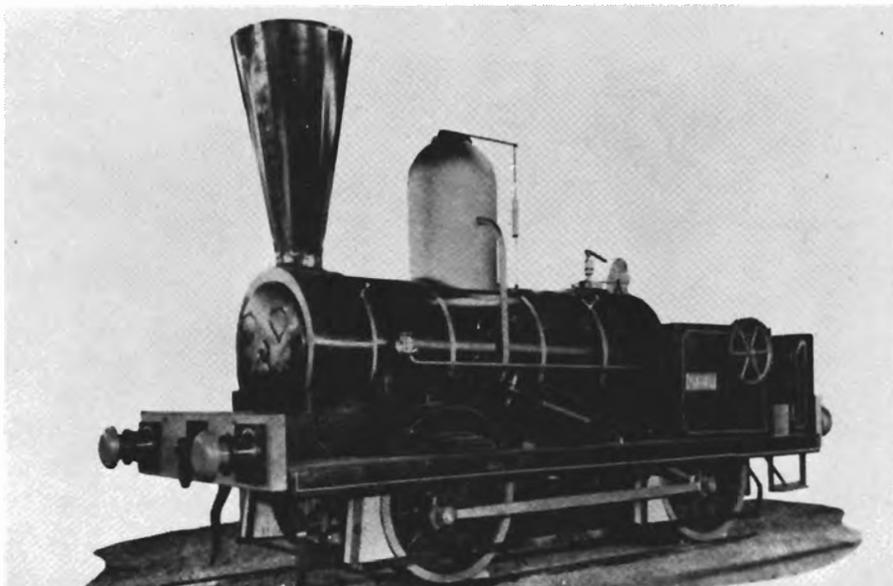
(Photograph: Local History Museum, Durban)

Society of Southern Africa operated a special train from the new Durban station to the Point. Vintage carriage stock and a former Natal Government Railways main line engine, resplendent in Brunswick green livery, were used for the train composition.

Appropriately, the proceedings for the commemorative trip commenced in front of the preserved locomotive, *Natal*, which is set on a plinth in Durban's new station complex. To this engine, albeit a reconstruction of the original,<sup>1</sup> belongs the distinction of having been the first in South Africa to raise steam and be taken into service. Following the opening ceremony, dignitaries and invited guests, about 250 in all, boarded the special train on Platform 16 and departed at 10h45 to the skirl of the Caledonian Pipe Band. Since the track has long been lifted from the route initially taken to the Point, the train first proceeded to Maydon Wharf and then took to the line skirting the Victoria Embankment. It was only once the harbour area was reached that the last part of the journey corresponded closely with the alignment of the railway built in 1860. On arrival, the passengers were welcomed by the music of the Railway Police Band, after which the main proceedings were held in front of the old NGR Point Station Building. The general public was then given the opportunity of riding the commemorative steam train and three further runs were made from the Point to Maydon Wharf during the course of the afternoon.

According to a contemporary account,<sup>2</sup> it was sometime between 3 and 4 in the afternoon of 23 June 1860, that the shrill of a locomotive whistle was heard for the first time in Durban. Some six weeks earlier, the crates containing the components of the locomotive had been





The reconstructed engine *Natal*. Built by Robert Legg, City of London Engine Works, 1860. The first train in South Africa was hauled by this engine on 23 June, 1860.

(Photograph: S.A. Transport Services)



Former Natal Government Railways engine no. 88, built by Dübs & Co., Glasgow, Scotland, 1892. This engine provided the motive power for the 125 years Commemorative Train on 22 June, 1985

(Photograph: B. Martin)

offloaded from the brig *Cadiz*, and brought in open goods wagons to a makeshift structure draped in tarpaulins in Pine Terrace. Here Henry Jacobs, who was not only the Chief Engineer, but also the fitter and driver, assisted by Alexander Davidson, formerly a marine engineer, assembled the 'iron horse'. The bodywork of the 12 ton engine was painted green while the four wheels and connecting rods were a copper colour. Prominent features were the huge dome cover of polished brass and the American design chimney which incorporated a wire mesh to trap the sparks emanating from the firebox. Burnished copper plates on either side of the cab displayed the name of the engine: *Natal*. With a number of officials on the footplate, driver Jacobs turned on the steam and *Natal* made her inaugural journey to the Point. About half an hour later, she returned with five trucks in tow loaded with 40 tons of sugar mill machinery and some passengers.

The official opening ceremony took place on Tuesday, 26 June 1860, amid lavish celebrations. A notice in the *Natal Mercury* stated that the inaugural train would leave Market Square Station at 11 a.m. conveying His Excellency (Major Williamson) and officials, after which the train would continue to run throughout the day for the return fare of one shilling for second class. At the Point Station, a *dejeuner* would be served to which the public was invited at a cost of 10s 6d per person. To conclude the celebrations a ball would be held in the Masonic Hall under the patronage of the Directorate of the Natal Railway Company, from whom tickets could be obtained.

The inaugural train carried about 60 passengers, half of whom were seated in the one and only carriage, while the others were accommodated in one of the open trucks that had undergone a makeshift conversion. Planks had been nailed across from side to side to provide seating and an awning protected the passengers from the sun. By the end of the first day, the train service had conveyed some 800 passengers.

Although historically the two mile long stretch of 4 ft 8½ in. gauge track connecting the harbour with the town centre of Durban was the first in South Africa on which a steam locomotive operated, the honour of having possessed the first railway engine belongs to Cape Town. This engine, together with its driver, one William Dabbs, was landed in September 1859, but did not undertake its inaugural journey until February 1861.

#### NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> The *Natal* was made redundant following the change over to a narrower gauge in 1878 and sold to a farmer in Port St Johns, who put her to work as a stationary engine to drive a sawmill. The farm labourers, however, refused to work on the estate that harboured a 'devil's machine' and the locomotive was subsequently buried. It was not until 1943 that the chassis and wheels were recovered and brought back to Durban where the engine was reconstructed in the railways workshops and put on display in 1946.
- <sup>2</sup> Russell, G. *The history of old Durban and the reminiscences of an immigrant of 1850*.



*The Naming of Port St Johns*

The following letter has been received from Mr A.R. Willcox of Winterton:

During research for my recently published small work *Shipwreck & Survival on the South-East Coast of Africa* I became interested in the origin of the name Port St Johns. It has been generally believed that the place was so named because the wreck of the Sao Joao took place there, or nearby. This is repeated in the article 'The Great Galleon Sao Joao: remains from a mid-sixteenth century wreck on the Natal South Coast,' by Tim Maggs just published in *Annals of Natal Museum*, Vol 26 (1) 1984, in spite of the fact that it is established that the wreck of that ship did not occur there, but some 110 km to the North-East.

Another theory of the naming is mentioned in the article on Port St Johns in the *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*. This is that a priest on a Portuguese ship anchored at the river mouth thought he saw in the mountain now called Mount Sullivan the outline of the face of St John. It is not explained how he knew what St John looked like!

Not being satisfied with either of the explanations and knowing that Portuguese and Spanish navigators commonly named geographical features after the saint on whose 'day' the bay, or cape, or whatever, was first seen — for example Sao Bras and St Christopher's Bay — I decided to check the first sighting of the river mouth against the data. The sighting was by Da Gama and his company and they were entitled to give it a name. As to the date, according to Eric Axelson Da Gama was about 25 miles south of Port St Johns on December 25th 1498, when he gave the name Natal to the land he saw. Some time on the 28th the mariners caught fish at a point identified as Durban Bluff. About the morning of the 27th they must have been off the river mouth, and December 27th is the Feast Day of St John the Apostle.

It seems to me overwhelmingly probable that Da Gama and his pilot attached the name to the river mouth or the headland (perhaps as Ponta or Puta Sao Joao, both words mean point) and it was placed on a chart subsequently lost with so many of the early records, but that the name was passed on to later mariners. Variants of the name appear on maps from 1691, such as Rio da S.Ioao, Rio de Sao Joao, etc., and the full name Port St Johns only when the town was established in the 1880s.

*Conservation and Development in Pietermaritzburg: The Way Ahead!*

Mr R.F. Haswell reports that the City Council at its meeting held on 30 July, 1985, considered, and accepted in principle, a report entitled 'Conservation and development in Pietermaritzburg' which was prepared by Mr Brian Bassett, the Conservation Consultant.

A 1982 report by Mr Bassett launched the cataloguing of all buildings in the central area, and his latest report attempts 'to chart the way ahead in general terms and provide a framework within which environmental control could operate to the benefit of the citizens of Pietermaritzburg'. More fundamentally, however, Mr Bassett argues convincingly that the city is not quite ready to list and protect all of the structures which may be worthy of such action. We do not have the necessary staff, and we should avoid creating the impression that conservation would 'freeze' the CBD.

Accordingly, the report calls for greater recognition of the unity of the built and natural environment, and of conservation as an alternative form of development.

In particular, a coherent system of conservation-minded environmental planning, consisting of three main elements, is advocated:

- (i) an Environmental Services Division within the City Engineer's Department;
- (ii) a process of public participation;
- (iii) various conservation incentives.

Although the City Engineer's Department already contains the embryo of an Environmental Services Division, several additional specialists as well as a broadly trained and experienced Director are called for. (In the current economic climate additional staff is wishful thinking and Pietermaritzburg really needs to be adopted by a benefactor.)

In order to stimulate public participation in the creation of the environment they occupy daily, the report recommends the establishment of 'A Heritage Board' and 'A Heritage Centre'. The former would advise the local authority on how the public, as represented by their organizations, felt about sensitive projects, whereas the latter would be a place in which the city's heritage is interpreted for the public. (Clearly the Heritage Centre would be ideally housed in a prominent landmark, and surely there is room in the Old Supreme Court!)

The report deals in some detail with the ways and means of encouraging conservation ranging from easements in the form of Town Planning and Building Bye-Law concessions to rates rebates granted to the owners of listed properties. To the question of whether our city can afford this the long term answer must definitely be 'Yes', for conservation will result in extensive urban renewal, an increase in property values and hence an increase in rates income to the city. Add in greater tourist revenue and conservation will certainly more than pay for itself.

'Conservation and development in Pietermaritzburg' is well worth reading and digesting. It makes it clear that the imminent publication of the Catalogue of Buildings in Central Pietermaritzburg is not the panacea for all our conservation ills. If we the citizens, and our City Council, are serious about conservation then we need to act with all due haste on the recommendations which have been accepted in principle. The time for talking about conservation is almost over: it is high time we began to practise the art of conservation-minded development.



### *National Monuments*

The most recent report of the National Monuments' Council, that for the year ended 31 March 1984, lists the following monuments newly proclaimed in Natal.

1. *The property with the so-called Colinton House thereon, at 68 Ridge Road, Durban:*

This residence was built in 1898 by the architect William Street-Wilson for Sir David Hunter, General Manager of the Natal Government Railways from 1879 to 1906.

2. *The Queen's Tavern, at 16 Stamford Hill Road, Durban:*  
The Queen's Tavern, which was built as a gentlemen's club in 1894, is one of Durban's few remaining links with the colonial past of Natal. It is also the oldest licensed premises in the city.
3. *The S.A. Railway Institute (N.G.R.) Building, on the corner of Murchison and Albert Streets, Ladysmith:*  
This double-storeyed Victorian sandstone building, the corner-stone of which was laid on 25 September 1903 by Joseph Baynes, was erected by the then Natal Government Railways as a recreation centre for railway staff.
4. *The Natal Botanical Gardens, Pietermaritzburg:*  
These botanical gardens, the original portion of which was established in 1870, consist of an exotic garden and an indigenous garden. The plane tree avenue of approximately 300 metres, which was planted in 1908, is a world-renowned sight and stretches mainly through the exotic section. The indigenous garden, which was started in 1970, contains natural Natal vegetation.
5. *The property with the double-storeyed Victorian house thereon, at 149 Pietermaritz Street, Pietermaritzburg:*  
This double-storeyed Victorian mansion, which dates from the eighteen-nineties, forms an integral part of the historic facade of Pietermaritz Street which is one of the oldest streets in Pietermaritzburg.
6. *The property with the so-called Kneisel's Castle thereon, at 24 Reynolds Street, Port Shepstone:*  
This late-nineteenth century residence with its distinctive German colonial features was erected by C.F. Kneisel, a settler from Mainz, Germany, shortly after his arrival in Natal in 1882.
7. *The building known as the Carnarvon Masonic Lodge, in Russell Street, Richmond:*  
This rectangular brick building with its Victorian embellishments was erected in 1883 to accommodate the local Freemason's Lodge. This Lodge was established in 1876 and named after the fourth Earl of Carnarvon.
8. *The site with the Elandslaagte Battlefield thereon, on the farm Braak Fontein 1046 in the County of Klip River:*  
The battle of Elandslaagte on 21 October 1899 was the second action of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). In this battle the Boers lost 60 men, while 140 were wounded and 200 were taken prisoner. British casualties numbered 50 dead and 205 wounded.
9. *The Victorian cast-iron Bandstand in the Gardens in front of the Town Hall at Kokstad:*  
This ornamental Victorian cast-iron bandstand dates from 1912. It was donated to the Town Council by the engineers who were responsible for Kokstad's water scheme.
10. *The property with the Museum Building thereon, at 104 Main Street, Kokstad:*  
This building with its Victorian and Edwardian characteristics dates from 1908. It was used as the Public Library until 1982.

11. *The Llandaff Chapel, together with 10 metres of surrounding land, on Lot 115 Van Reenen Town:*  
This red brick chapel was erected in 1925 by Joseph Maynard Mathew, at the time a magistrate in Natal, to house a memorial plaque in memory of his son Llandaff, who died during the Burnside colliery disaster.
12. *The so-called Bergtheil House with 20 metres of surrounding land, at 16 Queen's Avenue, Westville:*  
The Bergtheil House, the core of which dates from 1847, formed the nucleus of the Westville residential area. It was built by Jonas Bergtheil, industrialist and member of the Legislative Council from 1857 to 1866, as the centre for the administration of the well-known New Germany settlement.



#### *The Pietermaritzburg Philharmonic Society*

Mr John Mitchell, recently appointed director of the Pietermaritzburg Philharmonic Society, has been researching the early history of musical performances in the capital. He writes:

There is no doubt that 1864 was the year in which music really began to flourish here. The year began with the first performance of the 'Messiah' in the cathedral on January 6. We know a surprisingly large amount about the nature of this performance, and a frustratingly small amount about the people responsible. The guiding hand was certainly that of Dean James Green who planned and managed the project.

The choir numbered between 30 and 40 voices — a great deal more authentic than our present day elephantine forces! The anonymous conductor seems to have been an extremely versatile musician since he not only conducted the choir with the bow of his violin, which he used to 'help out' those voice groups which required it, but also sang the bass solo in 'The trumpet shall sound'. The remainder of the accompaniment was carried by an unnamed lady at the harmonium who, seemingly, acquitted herself very well! The critic of the *Witness* noted that the ladies' voices overshadowed those of the men — plus ça change!, and that 'O Thou that tellest' was performed as a duet. For me the greatest curiosity of the evening was the discovery that the soprano soloist in 'Rejoice greatly' was a black lady who apparently made a great impression.

The Messiah was performed again on August 5. Apart from the oratorio Maritzburg in 1864 seems to have been musically very much on the ball. Davis and Sons of Longmarket Street imported large quantities of the latest sheet music including an arrangement for piano of Verdi's opera 'Un Ballo in Maschera' written only five years previously.

The regimental band in residence under the direction of Mr Moran played popular and regular programmes which included Rossini's overture 'Semiramide', only ten years old at the time, and selections from 'Il Trovatore' and 'La Traviata' which were both eleven years

old. The band was obviously a drawcard and took a regular spot at the St George's Theatre in collaboration with the new dramatic company which was running a season of the comedy 'Take that girl away'. Tickets, incidentally, were rather pricey at £1.10s and £1.15s — this, mind you, at a time when you could buy yourself an acre of land in Town Bush Valley for £6.10s!

Investigating the origins of the Philharmonic Society itself, he has discovered that it came into existence in 1881.

The Society opened its doors on 21 March. The meeting was held at the Masonic Hall and Charles Lascelles conducted a rehearsal of Mendelssohn's 'Hymn of Praise' for the opening session.

Lascelles was a magic name in the province at this time. It was he who gave Natal its first opera company at the Theatre Royal here in Maritzburg. He was obviously the darling of the public and the press, for very few editions of the *Witness* do not include some eulogy for his latest enterprise.

Apart from founding the Philharmonic his activities in March '81 included the direction of 'The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein', an organ recital in St Peter's Cathedral and a 'Grand Music Festival' at the Theatre Royal. The latter was sponsored by the Commander and Officers of the garrison with proceeds to the Widows and Orphans (presumably of the recently ended Transvaal war) Fund. The highlight of the programme was a performance of the 'Fantasia on Oberon' played by eight young ladies on four grand pianos. The concert concluded with the presentation to Lascelles of a ceremonial baton.

On 7 April 1881 the Theatre Royal was closed due to a legal dispute over the lease. The opera moved to the Dramatic Hall to complete its season before travelling to the Trafalgar Hall in Durban to begin a new season of the opera 'Faust'. The exercise must have been highly successful as the company stayed an extra week by public demand.

Obviously, during Lascelles' absence the Philharmonic lost some momentum because frantic announcements in the *Witness* implored members to attend extra rehearsals after his return on 6 May.

During May Pietermaritzburg saw 'Faust' for the first time together with Vincent Wallace's opera, 'Maritana'. These two works were composed respectively in 1859 and 1845 and it says much for Lascelles' enterprise that they came so quickly to Natal. He was even quicker off the mark with his next project. The 'Pirates of Penzance' was premiered in London in April 1880 and just fourteen months later it was presented here at the Theatre Royal. How supremely ironic it is that 104 years after Lascelles gave Pietermaritzburg three operas in almost as many months, NAPAC should withdraw operas from this city altogether.

Compiled by MORAY COMRIE