

Notes and Queries

Long-lost Letter from Natal

Editorial tribute, greatly merited, has already been paid in this issue to Shelagh Spencer. Her departure from the editorial boardroom is a significant loss to this journal, but — thankfully — she remains a valued contributor to Notes and Queries. It is through her that the following letter has found its way into *Natalia*. She writes:

Readers may remember Mrs Elizabeth Richardson who was the Library's Lending Librarian in the late 1970s. She and her family had come to Natal when her husband was transferred by his firm to their South African subsidiary, Scottish Cables in Pietermaritzburg. After a few years in Natal the Richardsons returned to England and are now living at Hightown, north of Liverpool. About four years ago, Mrs Richardson had the task of clearing out the home of an old cousin, Miss Ann Phillips, in the village of Cliffe, near Selby in Yorkshire, after the latter's death. In the process of sorting out, the following letter from Thomas Palframan was found under the paper lining of a drawer. The house, Holly Tree House, was built by Mrs Richardson's great-grandfather Phillips. It had always been in the Phillips family, ownership passing to Mrs Richardson's great-uncle and then to his daughter Ann. From the tone of the letter, it would seem that Palframan was a relative of the addressee, but as yet a relationship between the Phillipses and the Palframans has not been established. Mrs Richardson was certainly not aware of any Natal connections in her family.

The 'Dear Louisa' salutation is quite co-incidental. This Louisa is not the sister of Ellen McLeod of Byrne, whose letters were published under the title *Dear Louisa*.

Pietermaritzburg
Sepr 1868

My Dear Louisa,

Many thanks for your interesting letter, and was glad to hear that you are all well, but sorry to hear your family bereavement, a trial indeed it would be to you all, but sorrowing, not as those without hope, but in sure & certain hope of A glorious resurrection, one removed from the family on earth to join the Family above, to be for ever with the Lord, we may say with Baalam, let us die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his, but let us ever try to live and enjoy the life of the righteous, when we remember that those whom we loved that have passed away to the realms of light & glory will if permitted be our guardian angels to shield us from evil, or like

the angel before Baalam's ass, stand in the way when we are needlessly pursuing the wrong path, O let us try to follow those that have gone before, I trust you have caught the falling mantle of the Dear Departed Boy, and ever increasing in that indescribable Joy and peace which passeth all human understanding, we may enjoy peace and spiritual plenty in the wilderness as well as on the banks of the Jordan, because we may by faith ever behold the promised land, may the Lord help us, you as me. If I think of paying old England a visit, when I do I shall if spared certainly pay you a visit but when I cannot say, 2 or 3 years last have been certainly a dark page in the history of Natal, many whom we thought was rich, have been reduced to the bare necessities of life through wreckless speculations and bankruptcy of others but we are coming round a little as extensive Coal fields have been discovered & copper also, and indeed Gold Fields that are likely to turn out very extensive, they are 6 or 8 Hundred miles from us so I shall not be going to the diggings yet, you ask how far we are apart. Brother Wm about 6 miles & John 18 miles and sister 14 miles we live in the City and in the midst of 9 churches & chapels I think within 400 yards and about 200 yards from Legislative Council Chamber, we have got our chapel finished inside, and erected a new vestry & orchestra with the proceeds of our Bazaar which was nearly £700, but we still want lamps for the Chapel and a new School room which would cost about £400 — more, as we have over 200 Sunday scholars we have also commenced open air services in a distant part of the City we are very much in need of an independent gent & lady as city missionaries as our ministers have so little time for visiting, some Times they ride about 60 miles to preach 3 times which takes at least 3 days to perform the journey, my stock of news is pretty near done. Br Wm has been lame about 4 months, the gig horses were running away and he jumped out to catch them and fractured the small bone of the foot, but glad to say is nearly better — I had nearly forgot to thank you all for the things you so kindly provided for our bazaar but we have not yet received them, the [?] friend that was to bring them sickened & died, and so we hope to receive them the first opportunity, but I must close with love to you all Brother & sister, Father & Mother and family

from yours

sincerely

Thos Palframan

[P.S.] Please give my kind regards to all enquiring friends, I think I shall send a paper. Ask Thomas to write, I suppose he will soon be a foreman. We have had very heavy rain over 60 hours and never cease, but you will see the papers.

T.P.

Thomas Palframan (born c. 1830, West Haddlesey, Yorkshire), came to Natal in April 1858 with his brother John (born c. 1829). The evidence points to their being the brothers of William Palframan (c. 1824-1905), who had emigrated to the Colony in 1851. When this letter was written Thomas was living on Erf 19 Church Street in Pietermaritzburg and was working as a carpenter. William was said to be living six miles away — this was possibly

at Slang Spruit outside the city, where he certainly was by 1872. John, according to the letter, was 18 miles away — this was near the Lion's river. The sister mentioned is possibly Catherine Brunyate (c. 1840-1912), the wife of John Brunyate. Catherine was born at Snaith in Yorkshire, not far from Selby and Cliffe. The Brunyates had come to Natal in 1862.

In 1868 Thomas had married Mary Lambden. This union was without issue. By 1889 Thomas and Mary were living at Lydenburg in the Transvaal. The date of his death has not been established but Mary died in Lydenburg in 1895.

Investigating the Palframans has proved confusing, especially as two more came to Natal in these early years, viz. William (born c. 1836), and Michael (born c.1839), both from Selby. Their cousin William, already in the Colony, had stood surety for the repayment of their fares.



'b MYNN O'

The notion of fairness of mind has long been associated with the gentlemanly pursuit of cricket, and perhaps it was the notable prowess of Lt. Gov. Robert Keate with bat and ball that commended him as an arbitrator in the celebrated wrangle over the ownership of the Diamond Fields. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that Keate's cricketing achievements are not widely known: they fill out the documented shadow of the man and might add interest to the historical scholarship of contemporary schoolboys. Dr Peter Brain has supplied the following short extract from *The Cricketer's Week-End Book* by Eric Parker (published by Seeley Service of London), and while Notes and Queries delights in reviving awareness of Mr Keate's sporting ability, we do wish that the record was of his more successful outings to the crease (such outings being, of course, innings), of which there must surely have been a great number.

Robert William Keate was the nephew of the famous Eton headmaster, not son, as stated in Lillywhite's *Scores and Biographies*. He was son of Robert Keate, surgeon to William IV and to Queen Victoria, was in the Oxford XI, and in 1852 played for Gentlemen v. Players. Lillywhite says that he sometimes used the pseudonym 'Biffin'. In 1867 he was appointed Governor of Natal, and died of fever at Cape Coast Castle, aged 58, being then Governor in Chief of the West Coast Settlement. Mr Keate had the misfortune to be bowled by Alfred Mynn without scoring on three successive occasions. He was afterwards defeated in a single wicket match by Mr George Leopold Langdon. These events were commemorated by Aislabie in the following stanza, where 'b Mynn O' should be pronounced as a dactyl:

*b Mynn O—b Mynn O—b Mynn O—Keate
Tried with his bat jolly Langdon to beat!
In vain, for with Langdon can never compete—
b Mynn O—b Mynn O—b Mynn O—Keate!*

PHILIP NORMAN
Annals of the West Kent Cricket Club.

Notes from Dundee

Amongst the occupational hazards of residence in a sophisticated capital city is the acquisition of a mistakenly superior and insular perspective on the affairs of the outlying districts. Mrs Sheila Henderson provides a corrective view from Dundee:

Henderson Hall

The Administrator of Natal, the Hon. R.M. Cadman, opened Henderson Hall, the new industrial complex of the Talana Museum, on 1 May 1987 in the presence of many distinguished guests and visitors representing the major sponsors of the scheme. These included the Chamber of Mines and the Natal Mine Managers' Association, Anglo-Vaal and Consol Limited, Toncoror and Corobrik.

The striking hall is based on the design of the palatial coal-mine buildings erected during the 'golden age' of Dundee by randlords such as Albu and Cullinan. It houses evocative and unusual displays on coal-mining, glass manufacture and the building trade and also samples of local arts and crafts such as Rorke's Drift rugs and Tactile carpets. The brightness of the Consol Glass Trust Collection contrasts with the utility, often grimed and gloomy, of the mining and brick displays, and the professionalism of the industrial exhibits throws into high relief the simplicity of the Smith cottage where 'coalopolis' had its beginnings.

'Coalopolis' — New Plans for Talana Museum

The Natal Provincial Museum Service, under the directorship of Dr Erich Bigalke, is currently planning a display on the growth of Dundee which will be housed in the fourth exhibition room of Henderson Hall under the title of 'Coalopolis'. The display will complement 'The Magic of Glass', 'The Grit and Grind of Coal' and the 'Bulk of Brick' exhibitions opened recently, and will concentrate on the personalities and institutions which made Dundee the 'capital of the North' in its heyday. It is hoped that the exhibition will be opened to the public in May 1988.

A Threatened Heritage

Dundee's old Masonic Hall, known as 'Boswell's', is under threat of demolition. Built in 1896, the Masonic Hall is an integral part of a complex of historic buildings in the heart of old Dundee — the others being the old sandstone Presbyterian Church (1898), St James' Anglican Church (1896), the old courthouses (1894 and 1903), the gaol (1896) and the N.G. Kerk in Beaconsfield Street (1924) — which conservationists are anxious to preserve. Perhaps the strongest argument for preserving 'Boswell's' is that it is the only theatre pre-dating the Anglo-Boer War now surviving in Natal. During that war it was the scene of the trials for treason of the Biggarsberg boers known as the Natal Rebels, who paid a heavy price for their loyalty to the republican cause.

The Masonic Hall had a considerable history of both theatre and the cinema. Such celebrated theatrical personalities as Leonard Rayne, Marda Vanne, Andre Huguenet and Amelita Galli-Curci played there. Many notable political personalities also took its stage, and it was there

that, with the support of Ernest and Mabel Jansen, the modern National Party was born.

A recent study of Dundee's historic buildings by architecture students under the guidance of Professor Brian Kearney and Mr Rob Haswell has emphasised the value of buildings such as this, and the campaign for the preservation of 'Boswell's' has the support of the Natal Regional Committee of the National Monuments Council.

Impending Declarations in Dundee

Four historic homes, dating from the turn of the century, are in the process of declaration as national monuments. All four belonged to the 'merchant princes' of 'Coalopolis', and, thanks to their conservation-conscious owners, are remarkably unspoilt and true to their period.

Built for a leading grocer, 'Fiddeo House' at 95 McKenzie Street is a charming and unusual gabled house. Still owned by a descendant of the family, it has remained unaltered down to the smallest details. 'Coniston' in Harvey Street was the home of Mr Talbot, the town's first pharmacist. Its rare period fireplaces and other interior features have been carefully preserved and the present owners intend restoring external details such as the wooden verandah and imposing stone and wrought iron gates. Charles Pearson, a prominent hardware merchant, built his house at 48 Tatham Street. It has been tastefully restored by its present owners, Mr and Mrs Waldo Thöle, and is a fine example of its period.

'The Hollies' in Union Street was the establishment of A.A. Smith, a successful lawyer and member of the powerful Smith 'dynasty' of early Dundee. Mr Smith's stylish living included a conservatory and five coach-houses. The house is remarkable for its fine mahogany archways, fireplaces and overmantels, locally made by the master craftsman Serridge, who also left his mark on Dundee's Edwardian courthouse.

Ambulance Corps Memorial

A committee under the chairmanship of Mr Chetty, Headmaster of the Dundee Indian High School, is working with the National Monuments Council on the design for a memorial to the Indian Sepoy Ambulance Corps which served at the Battle of Talana in October 1899. The R.A.M.C. dressing stations stood amidst a bluegum plantation on the banks of the Steenkoolstroom, and the site has remained untouched since 1899. The route of advance of the British infantry is also still open, and the National Monuments Council has laid out the artillery and infantry advance from General Penn-Symons' camp to the summit of Talana. It makes an excellent educational trail.

The Indian Historical and Cultural Affairs Committee is undertaking research into the Indian communities of Dundee, Dannhauser, Glencoe, Wasbank, Hlobane and Pomeroy. Assistance from any source and gifts or loans of documents, photographs or artefacts would be much appreciated.



Restoration, Conservation, Adaptation

While Dundee fears for its Masonic Hall, developments in Durban and Pietermaritzburg may encourage conservationists. In the capital, the Boom Street house known (slightly inaccurately, as an earlier issue of *Natalia* demonstrates) as ‘the oldest house in town’ has been carefully restored and is now an adjunct of the Voortrekker Museum. A growing recognition of the value of character in the townscape has no doubt influenced the architecture of two substantial new commercial buildings — the shopping centre at the corner of Boshoff and Boom Streets and the new premises for Game stores in the city centre. A third promising trend is the adaptation of buildings that have architectural merit or historical interest to new uses. The preservation by the Edgars group of the facade of Ireland’s in Pietermaritzburg is an example of how this type of conservation-conscious development can be commercially advantageous, and the transformation of the redundant railway workshops in Durban into an attractive and extremely popular complex of shops, restaurants and cinemas is a telling lesson for those who equate demolition with progress. What a similar treatment of Pietermaritzburg’s lost Market Hall might have done for that city must forever remain a matter for conjecture, but an interesting move in the capital is the renovation and adaptation of private houses by non-commercial and non-official groups: the conversion of a large house in Connaught Road in Scottsville into a museum and headquarters for the Comrades Marathon Association is one such venture, and the Midlands Arts and Crafts Society has similarly started turning a near derelict semi-detached House in upper Prince Alfred Street into a studio and exhibition centre. Full documentation of these ventures promises to be interesting material for a future edition of *Natalia*.

*Conservation in the Workplace*

A comparison of group photographs taken in 1947 and 1972 alerted *Natalia*’s editor to the fact that Messrs Kendall and Strachan, the firm that prints this journal, has had a remarkably stable staff over many years. Of a staff of some thirty-five people, three have been with the company for forty-one years and another four for forty. With another two employees in the thirty to forty year bracket, the man who has notched up a quarter of a century with Kendall and Strachan ranks a lowly tenth in terms of length of service. The average for the whole staff is nineteen years, and this high degree of job-satisfaction is widely attributed to the management skills of Mr Howard Lumley, who retired this year after a mere thirty-four years in the business.

*Kwa-Oregon*

‘Our aim is to show children’s artefacts that reflect the human needs of kids around the world.’

The idea of a children’s museum — a museum both of children and for children — is an appealing one, and the city of Portland, Oregon, has such a

thing. Amongst its exhibits is 'a rattle from Zulu (sic) completely handwoven of grass'. Portland's acquisition of the rattle came about through their Ms Tricia Knoll and Dr Tim Maggs of the KwaZulu Monuments Council and the Natal Museum. A large number of Zulu artefacts together with various books — including a collection of songs by Pessa Weinberg, *Our Village Bus* by M. Mabetoa, and a beginner's course in Zulu — was despatched to Oregon early in the year, and enthusiastically received. The artefacts, identified in an explanatory list, were largely domestic articles and utensils, but included items of traditional dress, a pair of dancing shields and a spear, as well as '1 woven rattle — not traditional'.



Centenary of the Durban Museum

The Durban Museum celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in July. The prime mover in its establishment was Councillor J.S. Steel, and it was first opened to the public on 23 July 1887, with the Mayor, Councillor W.E. Robarts, officiating. It was housed in the then Town Hall (now the central Post Office), and in 1910 it moved into the newly-completed City Hall. The Art Museum, which had been founded in 1892, moved with it.

The natural history collections, still remarkably fine, formed the nucleus of the museum, and as the natural and cultural history collections grew, it became necessary to expand into other premises. The cultural history collection was placed first in the Old House Museum in St Andrew's Street and then, in 1966, moved to the Old Court House adjacent to the City Hall. The Court House itself is a most appropriate setting for the collection, being a fine piece of architecture dating from about 1870 and, according to a Durban municipal newsletter, Durban's first public building.



Soldier Settlement after World War I

Mrs Pam Arnold of Pietermaritzburg is researching the settlement of soldiers in Northern Natal after the First World War. Her particular interest is Malonjeni, on the Buffalo River near Dundee, but she is also collecting material on any other such settlements in the Utrecht, Vryheid, Newcastle and Ladysmith areas. She would welcome news of any person who settled on these allotments or of their descendants, and documents and photographs would be a great help. Her address is 6 Barry Road, Wembley, and her telephone number (0331) 52602.



The Lady Usher Literary Award

Any journal able to list amongst its contributors the recipient of a major literary award — as is the case with this edition of *Natalia* and Mr David Robbins's piece on Douglas Livingstone — must count itself fortunate. The fact that the Natal Society has itself instituted an award for excellence in South African English writing is not yet widely appreciated.

Director of the Natal Society Library, Mrs Shona Wallis, elaborates:

The Lady Usher Literary Award is available to South African writers whose work is published in South Africa. The purpose of the Award is to promote the use of the English language in South Africa. The administration of the Award is controlled by the Council of the Natal Society.

The Award came about in 1984 through Miss P. Reid who was the President of the Society at the time. She had long cherished the wish that the Natal Society should offer a prestigious literary award.

The idea became a reality when Lady Usher, of Nottingham Road, Natal, in response to a request from Miss Reid, gave a sum of money to the Natal Society to be used specifically for a literary award.

To date two awards have been made: the first in 1985 to Mr R.O. Pearse for his biography *Joseph Baynes, Pioneer* published by Shuter and Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1983; the second in 1986 to Mr Willem Steenkamp for his short novel *The Horse Thief* published by Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town in 1985.



Life in Durban from 1910

The allure of things colonial often diverts attention from the fascinating minutiae of more recent times. Miss Esme Stuart has given us these glimpses of Durban in the early years of Union and the reign of Edward VII — a time when even Halley's Comet would do the decent thing.

Salisbury Island, not yet a concreted fortress, adorned the Bay as a favourite picnic spot. Yachting parties would land there to lunch, and, there being no jetty as late as the 1920s, the men would wade ashore carrying the young ladies. Glenwood was the arboreal sanctuary which its name suggests, then known as Stella Bush and the haunt of monkeys all too prone to snatch the lunch packets of pupils at the Stellawood School. Northwards along the Berea the young ladies of the Girls' College were similarly plagued until the clearing of the bush and the construction of Guildford Road. But the age could still recompense its schoolchildren with substantial mementoes of significant events: when Lord Methuen, the last colonial Governor, opened the new Town Hall, 'we children were presented with small electro-plated mugs, three-handled, with an engraving of the Hall on the side'.

Miss Stuart recalls weekly school swimming lessons in the town's only swimming pool, 'behind the G.P.O. on West Street, small and smelly' and the grandness of the new Beach Bath, 100 yards long and 25 wide, when it was opened in 1912. In the larger private gardens, the contemporary status symbol was not a swimming pool but a tennis court. She remembers too the early bioscopes — the Pictodrome, Thornton's, and the Empire — with their silent films and hardworking pianists. On the corner of the Esplanade and Field Street stood the Criterion, offering theatre of the music-hall type, with Claude Dampier, Will Fyffe, and the Dolly Sisters providing favourite turns. For more elevated theatrical performances, the Theatre Royal was a miniature of any auditorium in Shaftesbury Avenue. Many of Britain's greatest actors graced its boards — Matheson Lang, Oscar Ashe, the Neilson Terry's, Marie Tempest, Irene Vanbrough, Sybil Thorndyke, and

many others. All were seen in their prime. 'To the consternation of our parents we used to attend matinées in the gods for 1/6d. We saw dozens of first-rate performances, including the finest ballets — the Russian Ballet, the Ballet de Monte Carlo, and Sadlers Wells (later the Royal Ballet). Their sets were all superb.'

The Fire Station in Pine Street housed both the Fire Brigade and the 'Galloping Ambulance', the only ambulance in the town and a vehicle whose bells and charging horses made a lasting impression. The fire brigade was the pride of Durban, but there remains the memory of a tragic ending to a demonstration by the brigade at Lord's Ground (Durban's major cricket field before the creation of Kingsmead): 'the Fire Master, named Lambeth, trusted his two children to take part in the event. Something went wrong, and the children were burned to death'.

When motor cars became reasonably common, Isipingo was a popular place for a drive, but for their picnics the younger set, who could not afford cars, generally took the train and then a horse-drawn tram from the station to the beach. Durban's electric tramway would convey children and coupon holders from Marriott Road to the Post Office for a penny, while the full fare was twopence. The trams had cow-catchers, and some carried large cisterns of water to settle the dust on roads that were little more than tracks. Vause Road and Ridge Road are remembered by Miss Stuart for their dust. Musgrave Road, however, 'was the Park Lane of Durban'. From Berea Road to Mitchell Park, the road was flanked by the residences of Durban's leading citizens: Dr Sam Campbell's, 'cream exterior, flat roof, with black wrought iron balconies. Next came Dickenson's, with its large flamboyant; further along, the W.G. Brown's; then Galloway House, the residence of Mr A.H. Smith; then Walter Greenacre's large house and garden; the Sidney Greens', with a garden stretching down to Currie Road; Dr McKenzie's; then Sir Benjamin Greenacre's Caister House; then Edwin Greenacre's; a large residence housing bachelors; the Elgie's; the Egeland's; then the Ocean View, the only hotel. All had beautiful views of the sea, town and Bay'.

The slow pace of travel was not a major inconvenience: 'The Union Castle mailboat arrived on Sunday mornings. When the ship was sighted, a black ball was sent up the tall white mast that stood next to the lighthouse at the end of the Bluff. This would be a signal for those on the Berea who intended to meet the ship to leave for their tram journey to the Point'. A less leisurely era was heralded in April 1918, when schoolchildren crowded onto the Greyville golf course to witness the first official visit to Durban of an aeroplane.

1918 also brought the Armistice, a moment of unimaginable joy. 'Soon the Boys came home, and the gaiety of the Roaring Twenties began. Dinner dances at the Marine and Royal Hotels were a constant delight. At the Hotel Edward, that 'asylum for the aristocracy', as it was called, there was a very exclusive dance club called Ciro's — an added joy in the Season. Humbler dances were held monthly at St Thomas's Hall — good fun because everyone knew everyone. Claret cup was the universal drink'.

'The July Handicap and the Gold Cup always brought crowds for the Durban Season. The Governor-General with his entourage spent weeks at King's House each July Season, when garden parties were eagerly attended

by those invited. These were great social events, with the Navy in full dress and civilians in morning dress and their ladies in long, flowing chiffons, long white kid gloves, and picture hats. The vista from the imposing green terrace of King's House was very beautiful, with a glorious view of the winter blue ocean with flowering trees and gardens in the foreground. There were generally five ships of the Royal Navy in port from Simonstown, and the officers were always present at the balls in the Town Hall.'

There were other significant visitors, and also less ostentatious parties in private homes 'when carpets were rolled up, French chalk rubbed into the floor, and, to the accompaniment of anyone at hand to play the piano, we would dance. Walking miles across the Berea with evening shoes carried in bags, we generally sang'. Surprise parties were popular: 'one party actually proceeded up Musgrave Road on foot in spontaneous fancy dress, accompanied by a home-made jazz band, to greet the surprised hosts'.

A more serious purpose underpinned some of the high-spirited fun. 'In 1920 the Durban Bachelor Girls' Club was inaugurated. May Poynton was the first president, and was a real go-getter. On the club committee were such well-known women as Hannah Joel, Killie Campbell and Katie Cottam. We worked to build a home for indigent girls. Any fund-raising effort, such as mannequin parades in the garden of Muckleneuk, was indefatigably supported. A major effort was the production of an annual musical comedy by Gus Brown, who visited London each year and returned with the latest dance steps and tunes. The shows were of professional standard, and all staged at the Theatre Royal. Our annual shows always ran for a week, and included many favourite operettas — *High Jinks*, *The Arcadians*, *Our Miss Gibbs*, *The Quaker Girl*, and so on. We soon reached our target for the home, and Cambridge House was opened in 1924.

Two world wars put an end to such conventions as the use of visiting cards. 'Mothers, with their silver card cases used to call and return calls formally. Their "At Home" day cards were usually printed in copperplate, one wide card and two narrow for the husbands.' The wars were destructive of other things as well. 'The Cave Rock was an enormous natural formation on the beach below the Bluff, near the whaling station. It had a flat top and there was a wide hollow passage through its centre where the sea came through, causing a dangerous backwash as the tide went out. In the early days a Natal girl called Katie Richards had been drowned in the cave. We were never allowed to bathe there but it was a favourite picnic spot which we reached by the ferry. When stationed at 4th Heavy Battery during the last war, I walked down to see this old haunt, and with an intense shock saw only a vast heap of stones. It seemed that its huge bulk had interfered with the sights of those 6 and 8-inch guns above at the Battery, and the artillery had had to destroy it. Durban was never told.'

For other losses, such as that of 'Dead Man's Tree', the fig tree which stood outside the Post Office and which for fifty years had daily been plastered with funeral notices nailed to its trunk, Durban had only itself to blame, together with the endless pursuit of 'progress' — a pursuit that has not always brought improvement to either the town or its people.



Notes on Empangeni

The question of the English meanings of Zulu place names is one of both perpetual controversy and perpetual fascination. Mr Adrian Koopman of the Zulu Department at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg has supplied this erudite dissertation on the name Empangeni.

Anyone can play this game. You need a Zulu dictionary (I use the Doke & Vilakazi *Zulu-English Dictionary*), **and** any other reference book that contains Zulu names. The game **begins** with an apparently simple question, in my case 'What does "Empangeni" mean?'

Well, no problem there. *E-* *-eni* is the Zulu locative form meaning 'the place of', so all we have to do is look in Doke & Vilakazi to see if there is a noun *umpanga* or *impange*. Yes, here we are, page 510:

-mpange (impange, izimpange) n. Species of forest tree, *Olinia cymosa*.

A bit vague, that 'species of forest tree'. Let's look in Eugene Moll's *Trees of Natal* to see what an *Olinia cymosa* is. Moll offers *Olinia emarginata*, *Olinia radiata* and *Olinia ventosa*, but no *Olinia cymosa*. Perhaps the Zulu names given by Moll will provide something.

Olinia ventosa: the 'hard pear' or *hardepeer* in Afrikaans, but no Zulu name given;

Olinia emarginata: the 'mountain olinia' or *berghardepeer*, known as *uNquthu* or *umzaneno* in Zulu and;

Olinia radiata had the aliases 'Natal olinia', *Natalhardepeer* and *umzaneno*. It's back to Doke & Vilakazi, and let's start with *uNquthu*. D. & V. offers us *isinquthu* (back of the head), *umquthu* (powdered protective charm), and *quthu* (referring to plucking or pulling out by the roots), but no *unquthu*. Perhaps it should be spelt *ungquthu*. Page 563:

'-ngquthu (ingquthu, izingquthu) n.

1. Vessel of basket-work or pottery, with flat-covered top and small mouth;
2. Ox given to the bride's mother, extra to the lobolo cattle;
3. Thick, stumpy beard;
4. *hlonipha*¹ term for the female organ.'

Not many trees there. Perhaps A.T. Bryant's older Zulu-English dictionary can help. But no — all Bryant can add is '*u-qutu*: small kind of grasshopper; short person'. It looks as if Moll's *uNquthu* doesn't exist.

Perhaps we'll have better luck with his *umzaneno*. Doke & Vilakazi have no record of *umzaneno*, but offer instead the abbreviated version *umzane* as 'white ironwood tree, bastard sneezewood, *Toddalia lanceolata*'. What can Moll offer us here? The White ironwood is also apparently known as the *witysterhout*, *vepris lanceolata*, or in Zulu, *umozane*, *umzane*, or *isutha*. *Umzane* we have just looked up, and *umozane* leads us back to the same place with D. & V.'s 'white ironwood tree, bastard sneezewood, *vepris lanceolata*', although D. & V. provides no clue as to why the white ironwood should be *Toddalia lanceolata* in one case, but *Vepris lanceolata* in the other. And we'd

¹ *hlonipha* term: a word used by women in respectful avoidance of another word.

better check up on that bastard sneezewood too. But first — *isutha*. Here again D. & V. are reluctant to accept Moll's Zulu word, but offer instead *insutha* as 'species of grass, e.g. *Harpehloa capensis* and *Elionurus argeneus*, worn in the hair to secure hospitality when travelling.' Not particularly useful in the present enquiry, but a handy tip for the next time you go travelling. What does Moll say about D. & V.'s *Toddalia lanceolata*? It doesn't exist. The closest Moll can offer is *Toddalipsis bremekampii*, also known as the wild mandarin (*wildenaartjie* in Afrikaans), or in Zulu *umozane*, which D. & V., as we have just seen, regards as the *Vepris lanceolata* or bastard sneeze-wood. Oh yes! — the bastard sneezewood. Back to Moll, who offers twenty three different kinds of bastard, from the bastard brandybush to the bastard white stinkwood, including the bastard currant resin tree and the bastard turkey berry, but no bastard sneezewood. The 'legitimate' sneezewood, according to Moll, also goes by the names *nieshout*, *Ptaeroxylon obliquum*, *umthathe* and *ubhaqa*, which gives us two more items to take back to Doke & Vilakazi. According to them, *ubhaqa* has the following meanings:

1. stalk of tambootie grass, used as a torch for lighting in the hut;
2. torch, lamp, light, candle (*inkanyezi enobhaqa* — comet, lit. 'star with a torch');
3. tall, handsome person;
4. a forerunner, who lights the way for others;
5. beast given by bride's family to bridegroom's father.

[cf. meaning (4) for *ingquthu* above]

Again, no trees here, except the mention of tambootie grass, which I have no intention of following up. We have better luck with *umthathe*, for which D. & V. give:

- '1. fresh mealies (before being stored);
2. sneezewood tree, *pteroxylon utile*,' with once more, D. & V. differing from Moll in the botanical name. Doke & Vilakazi add the Zulu proverb *umthathe uzala umlotha*: 'the sneezewood tree bears ashes', i.e. even a good man's children may turn out bad.

But we seem to have strayed somewhat from Empangeni. Is it perhaps a misspelling? Should there be an 'h' after the 'p': 'Emphangeni'? I see Doke & Vilakazi give *umphanga* 'species of bush-fern, *Encephalartos*, whose seed-vessel was used as children's snuff-box'. Let us see what Moll has to say about



National Monuments in Natal

The historical value of the following buildings was recognised during the year ended 31 March 1986:

1. *The Howard College building and the Memorial Tower building at the University of Natal, Durban.*

The cost of erection of the Howard College building was financed by a grant from T.B. Davies, a shipping magnate whose son Howard was killed during the First World War. The building was completed in 1931.

The Memorial Tower building's ground floor was completed in 1947. The building's erection was financed, amongst others, from the University War Memorial Fund. An important characteristic of the building is the tower with the so-called Light of Remembrance, which is still a nightly landmark and which serves as a permanent reminder of those who died during the two world wars.

2. *The old railway station at Bellair, Durban.*
This Victorian building was erected in 1900 as part of an upgrading project. It replaced the original station, which was built from 1876 to 1878 by the Natal Government Railway when laying the railway line between Durban and Pinetown.
3. *The Marian Villa at 282 Alexandra Road, Pietermaritzburg.*
This Edwardian house, originally known as Lansdown, was designed and erected in 1914 for Dr Conrad Akerman by the architect Clement Stott. In 1962, when the property was acquired by the Dominican Order, a chapel was fitted into the layout of the building for use by the Dominican Sisters. In 1980 the building was converted into a home for the elderly by the parishioners of St Mary's church. The building is at present known as Marian Villa.
4. *The main building at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.*
This building was designed by the architect J.C. Tully. The foundation stone was laid on 1 August 1910 by the Duke of Connaught and the building was opened in 1912. It is the oldest building on this campus.
5. *The old agricultural hall at Murray Park, Estcourt.*
This sandstone building, which was designed by the architects Kent and Price of Durban, was erected by A. Fraser, a local builder. The building was officially opened on 9 December 1901.
6. *The Thornley House on the farm Dundee, at Talana Hill, Dundee district.*
The Thornley farmstead was erected in about 1897 after Peter Smith, the founder of the Borough of Dundee, purchased the farm for his youngest son. This farmstead was occupied by the Boer forces on 20 October 1899 during the Battle of Talana Hill, during which the farmhouse and stables were used as a field hospital and a mortuary, respectively.
7. *The George Shaw House at 67 Church Street, Utrecht.*
This house with its late-Victorian feature was erected in 1905 by George Shaw, postmaster of Utrecht (1893-1897) and later businessman.
8. *The Dirk Uys House at 242 Church Street, Utrecht.*
The original portion of this house dates from the 1860s. The building was enlarged and modernised shortly after 1910. The house, which is one of the oldest buildings in Utrecht, is closely associated with several prominent local members of the Uys family.

Compiled by MORAY COMRIE