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Cover Picture

This photograph has scribbled on it 'George Bell's team, Kokstad, 1903. George Bell was the senior driver for Strachan and Co. at that time. His trap seems well-laden with post-bags. And is his team made up of horses or mules? At any rate, the white team was reserved for the glorious entrance into Kokstad itself.

(Photograph: Ken Strachan collection)
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Editorial

This year marks Natalia’s quarter-century and as editor I wish to pay tribute to my predecessors. The inspiration for Natalia came from Mr Ron Brown, then University Librarian on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal, who in 1969 produced four editions of a cyclostyled newsletter entitled ‘Natal Notes and News’. This grew in popularity and in 1971 it was replaced by a fully-fledged journal entitled Natalia, edited by one of Natal’s most illustrious historians, Professor Colin Webb. He edited five editions before his departure to take up the King George V Chair of History at the University of Cape Town at the end of 1975. His place was taken by Dr John Clark, the author of Natal settler agent (Cape Town, 1972), who edited the journal in 1976 and 1977. The editorship returned to the university with the appointment of Mr John Sellers, senior lecturer in economic history, who edited three editions between 1978 and 1980, including the classic Natalia No.8, which commemorated the centenary of the Anglo-Zulu War and which has become a sought-after Africana item. His successor was Mr T.B. (‘Jack’) Frost of the Natal Education Department who remained at the editorial coal-face for a record eleven years! I succeeded Jack Frost in 1992, as the first museum-based editor. My task has been considerably lightened by the work of Mr John Deane who assisted with the editing of Natalia 23 and 24, and with this edition, No.25, and by the continued presence of Jack Frost on the committee.

In addition to the editors, Natalia has been well served by three other people who deserve special mention. June Farrer, Secretary to the editorial committee until her retirement as Deputy Chief Librarian of the Natal Society Library in 1990, is still proof-reader extraordinaire; Margery Moberly, whose expertise as a publisher has contributed enormously to the technical quality of our journal; and Shelagh Spencer, the doyenne of Natal settler biographical historians, who has assisted both editors and authors with the most detailed biographical information at all times. The other members of the editorial committee have all devoted knowledge, skills and hours of time out of their busy lives to ensure the accuracy and technical quality of this journal. Most of all, Natalia would not have been a success had it not been for the support of contributors and readers alike. Without a sustained interest in the past, the people, the environment and the culture of the province, Natalia would have been neither produced nor read.

The next twenty-five years will bring huge challenges as KwaZulu-Natal grapples with its great political and socio-economic problems. We firmly believe that there is a place for a journal of this type to maintain a record, stimulate debate and bring the highways and byways of human experience to the attention of the readers of all backgrounds. Natalia needs to reflect the changing conditions in the province and in the country as a whole. We look
forward to contributions which help to illuminate the history and culture of all our region’s inhabitants.

*Natalia* often publishes the Natal Society’s Annual Lecture. The 1995 lecture was delivered by Dr Brian Stuckenberg, recently retired Director of the Natal Museum, on the subject of Portuguese shipwrecks on the African coast and particularly in the Mozambique Channel. As its focus was far broader than Natal and as Dr Stuckenberg relied extensively on illustrative material, it has not been published in this issue.

Our previously unpublished piece this year is contributed by Bill Bizley and is an extract from Mary Moore’s account of a post cart trip to Harding nearly a century ago. Its companion piece is an interview by Bill Bizley with his mother and aunt about a trip a few decades later to Eshowe to see the Prince of Wales in 1925. We thought it appropriate to publish it in this, the year of the first British royal visit since 1947. Bill Bizley also writes follow-up in ‘Notes and Queries’ on his article last year on ‘U-Boats off Natal’.

In this issue we feature two articles on Natal-related writers and journalists: Frederick Hale’s piece on the controversial turn-of-the-century Durban journalist George Hardy Webb; and John Kearney’s article on Bertram Mitford and the Bambatha Rebellion. The editorial committee is pleased to offer these articles that explore the connection between history and literature, after several issues in which we have not had much literary input.

We also offer two historical articles on subjects where apartheid had a strong bearing. Mark Coghlan’s piece on the so-called Horticultural League and the clandestine anti-Nationalist Freedom Radio of the 1950s and 1960s is an excursion into an unexplored field, but one which may be of considerable interest to readers with memories of those years. Christopher Merrett has provided us with a critical look at the social impact of the Comrades Marathon on Natal society and particularly at the impact of racist ideology on the organisation of sport.

We have our usual offerings of ‘Notes and Queries’, book reviews and several tributes to prominent Natalians.

GRAHAM DOMINY
Select List of Recent Natal Publications


HAW, Simon. Taking stock: the Natal Education Department looks back. Pietermaritzburg: Natal Education Department, 1995. [Published to mark the Department’s centenary in 1994]


