

Notes and Queries

The French connection

We are indebted to Mrs Fleur Webb for this photographic record of a remarkable occasion — the investiture by the French Ambassador to South Africa of Ms Glenn Flanagan as a *Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*. Ms Flanagan is a lecturer in French at the Technikon Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus, and the award was conferred in recognition of her work in promoting French culture and tourism in KwaZulu-Natal.

Her imaginative initiatives since 1995 have resulted in a far greater awareness, among French and South African people, of the many links between this province and France. The tourism potential of these links is increasingly recognised, as for example at places associated with the Prince Imperial of France and his mother the Empress Eugenie.

The investiture ceremony took place at Uqweqwe near Nqutu on Sunday 6 June 1999, at the memorial site of the death of the Prince Imperial during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. Members of the French Foreign Legion, flown in from the Comores, attended the Ambassador. Ms Flanagan's efforts have raised funds from French, British and South African sources for a skills training programme to benefit people living near that site, and for improved facilities at the nearby rural school, including sponsorship for a teacher of French, so that the area may

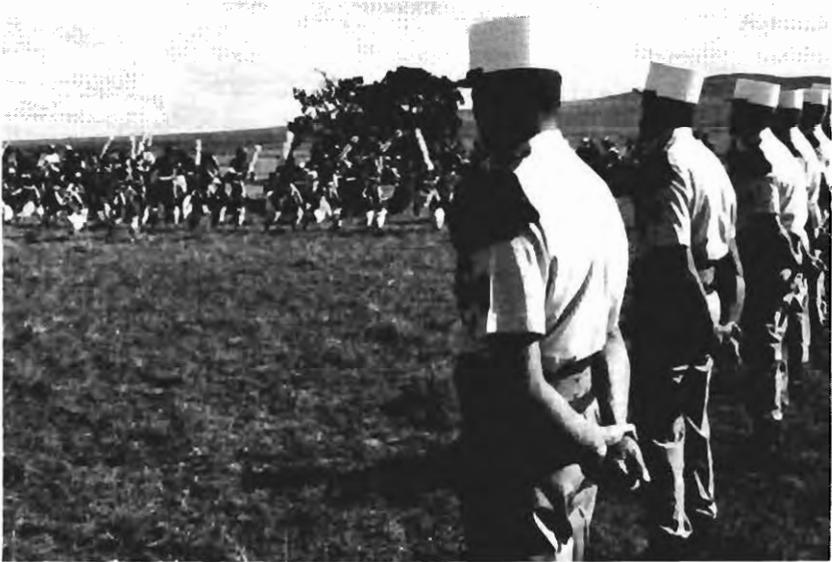


On the day of her investiture into the Order, Glenn Flanagan, *Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*, flanked by legionnaires, stands at the monument marking the place of Prince Louis Napoleon's death.

produce recruits for the tourism industry who, in particular, will be able to speak to French tourists in French.

Further recognition of her researches was accorded to Ms Flanagan four months later, on 22 October. She accompanied a rather special party of French tourists who attended the re-enactment of the Battle of Talana outside Dundee. They were members of the Dauphiné-Savoie regional association of the 'Institute of Higher Learning of the French National Defence Force'. After the day's events, with no earlier hint of what was to come, the leader of the party, General Broussaud, presented the Institute's medal to Glenn Flanagan.

JOHN DEANE



At the Ambassador's ceremony on 6 June 1999, soldiers of the French Foreign Legion watch a display by Zulu warriors. As they were performing a purely ceremonial duty in a friendly country, the French soldiers did not carry arms.

Closure of the OK Bazaars

At the end of December 1998 the OK Bazaars shop at 160 Church Street, at the corner of Chapel Street closed, marking the end of an era for one of Pietermaritzburg's most prominent trading sites.

Those who knew the OK Bazaars in its heyday will remember it as a fascinating shop where one could buy almost anything small for not very much. In fact when it first started in Johannesburg in 1927 it had only three prices — threepence, sixpence and a shilling! The OK Bazaars was an instant success and soon spread throughout South Africa and the Rhodesias. It came to Pietermaritzburg in 1935, opening on the corner of Church and Timber streets, where The Hub now is.

It soon acquired several other trading groups, including the Sowden and Stoddart chain, which had a long-established business at 160 Church St. Sowden and Stoddart (their shop was generally known as 'Sowden's' for short) continued trading as a

separate entity in the city until 1960, when it was closed and the OK Bazaars took over its site. In 1962, the beginning of the 'depression years' in Pietermaritzburg's architecture, the attractive old shop was demolished and replaced with the present undistinguished construction.

Number 160 Church St has long been one of the city's prime trading sites. During the 1860s it was owned by the Natal Bank. In 1868 John Jex Chapman in partnership with Henry Griffin started a grocery business there, known as 'The Golden Canister', which later sold drapery, haberdashery and hosiery as well as groceries. The shop's name derived from a large gold-painted canister on top of the building. According to legend, during the Anglo-Zulu War a group of military officers, having drunk rather more than was good for them, removed the canister and kicked it down Church St. It was never replaced.

Apparently Chapman retired from the business in about 1886. It was carried on by Henry Griffin's son William Henry, the firm being re-named W.H. Griffin & Co., as which it continued until 1914. An advertisement in 1899 describes the firm as 'drapers, milliners, clothiers, furnishers, grocers, tea and coffee dealers and flour and sugar merchants'. When W.H. Griffin closed in 1914 the shop was taken over by E.G. Mendenhall, a general dealer.

Sowden and Stoddart opened at 160 Church St in 1921 and bought the property from Mr Mendenhall's estate in 1927. 'Sowden's' soon established itself as one of the best so-called 'Ladies' Shops' in Pietermaritzburg, with a wide range of the very latest in drapery, millinery and dresses. It was the sole agent for Gossard corsets, then an indispensable item of every lady's attire. Later Sowden's also sold electric stoves and refrigerators.

When the OK Bazaars took over in 1960 the property was registered in the name of Federated Holdings, OK's property-holding subsidiary. In 1993 the property was acquired by the Anglican Church, whose cathedral and associated buildings stand on the adjoining site. This proved to be a poor investment, as the OK Bazaars was soon in terminal decline. The large building, with two stories and a basement, has now stood unoccupied for a year.

DAVID BUCKLEY

A new monument at Isandlwana

One of the more obvious symptoms of the skewedness of social perceptions in South Africa's past has been that monuments tended to commemorate only white participation in the notable events of history. In December 1998 and January 1999 two of the more obvious omissions in KwaZulu-Natal were corrected, with the dedication of monuments to the Zulu who fought the Boers at the Ncome River, or Blood River (which is not a translation of the Zulu name) in 1838 and the British at Isandlwana in 1879.

The Isandlwana monument is the work of sculptor Gert Swart. Unlike conventional war memorials, it invites the visitor to engage actively with it. Three steps lead on to a low circular plinth, on which lies a bronze representation of an *iziqu*, the carved necklace awarded to warriors who had proved themselves in battle.

The man who was granted the title to wear the *iziqu* would carve it himself. There is an example in the museum at Rorke's Drift — thorns are interspersed with small

carved wooden pegs. Swart uses the same motif, but adds five lion claws, symbolic of Zulu kingship.

The plinth itself is of concrete edged with stonework. Let into its front arc at intervals are four niches, each with a bronze headrest. The monument is set at, and approached from, the side of the battlefield towards the Nqutu Plateau, from where the Zulu forces launched their assault on the British camp. The lion claws face the Nqutu heights, directly away from the Isandlwana mountain itself, and the necklace curves away towards the battle field to left and right, much as the 'horns' of the Zulu military formation. In this configuration, the royal claws stand for the 'chest' of the Zulu force — the solid phalanx of experienced and hardened men who drove forward to the centre of the battle while the younger and faster soldiers of the horns ran round to outflank the foe.

The approaching viewer thus sees the mountain beyond and framed by the monument, just as the advancing Zulu veteran saw the enemy camp as the left and right horns swept around it. In the battle, the right horn skirted behind Isandlwana, closing in behind the British camp and all but cutting off the last fugitives. On the monument the right arc of the necklace pushes impassably against the edge of the plinth. On the left, however, there is room to pass around the thorns and beads of the necklace and come into the centre of it.

The claws and thorns convey the belligerence mixed with apprehension which the advancing warrior must have felt. Once within the circlet, the necklace becomes a protection, and a calmness descends. Swart intends the viewer to mount on to the plinth, experience the agitation of the soldier in battle, and pass into the tranquil centre to reflect on the nature of violence and of peace.

The Isandlwana battlefield is now a protected reserve. While the bronze sculpture was cast at a foundry near Lidgetton in the Natal midlands, the plinth and its stonework were made by local craftsmen, and the monument itself was paid for by the Zulu people through the sale of cattle by the *amakhosi*. The dedication of the monument by King Zwelithini was the focal point of events on 21 January 1999 to mark the 120th anniversary of the battle.

M.H. COMRIE

Making light of war

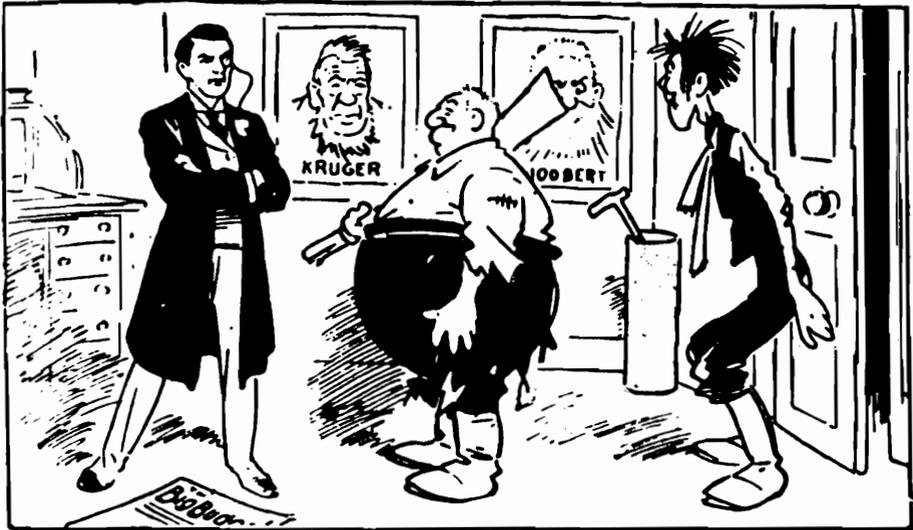
War provides children (except those unfortunate enough to be caught up in the real fighting) with inspiration for their fantasy games. The writer remembers being in a group of South African students in Vienna in the 1950s when they were accosted by an elderly Austrian who informed them that fifty years earlier he and his friends had 'played [their] games about the Boers and the British'. The conflicts of the adult world find an echo in games of 'cowboys and Indians', 'Yankees and Confederates', 'British and Germans', and all the rest. Even when fathers and brothers are away at the front, the small fry tend to find the whole idea of war exciting, and can deal with it in a light-hearted way. Comic papers give it their own particular treatment, pandering to children's taste, and perhaps also doing their bit to keep morale high.

South African newspapers kept the drama and agony of the Anglo-Boer War constantly before their readers; but for another kind of publication, the war in South Africa was a rich source of juvenile humour. Week after week papers such as the *Big*

Budget and *Chips* contained comic strips in which ragamuffin characters like Weary Willy, Tired Tim, 'Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy outwitted and outfought equally outrageous caricatures of Boer soldiers and generals. The illustration opposite is an example. The text under the pictures may be too small to be easily legible in this reproduction, but a sample will suffice. When the two British heroes have blown up Kruger and Joubert by filling their meerschaums with explosive, the narrative ends: 'BANG! — and two figures went up like the price of coals in winter. "It is dem Alf unt Beely vunts more," howled Kruger. But when the pals who were bolting with all the Boer war plans heard the language used by Joubert, they sadly sighed, "Oh, wot a norfully wicked man!"'

Caricature, however, could be abandoned when not appropriate. Notice in the following picture the 'straight', even flattering, depiction of Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, as he speaks to the two incredible scarecrows.

AIRY ALF AND BOUNCING BILLY



By all accounts papers like *Big Budget* and *Chips* also had a considerable unsophisticated adult readership!

JOHN DEANE

Heritage Day event

'Pietermaritzburg : some community perspectives' was the theme of the Heritage Day Seminar held on 22 September 1999 in the Colin Webb Hall on the campus of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The Seminar was co-hosted by the Alan Paton Centre and the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, and its purpose was to bring to light historical and community information on Pietermaritzburg, most especially of areas which have been ignored in the past, such as Oribi Village, Sobantu, Georgetown and Mountain Rise.

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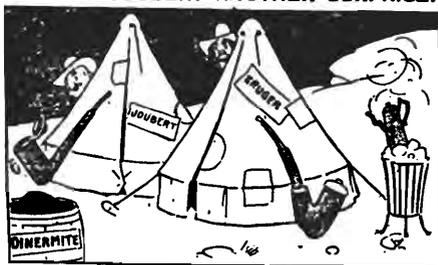
WEEK ENDING SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1899.

PRICE 1D.

AIRY ALF AND BOUNCING BILLY GIVE KRUGER AND JOUBERT ANOTHER SURPRISE.



1. The pals are fairly on the war path now, and the British soldier boys (three cheers for 'em) won't think of parting with the B.B. boys. Last night the two unapproachable crept towards Kruger's camp, to see what they would do in the way of making things nasty for the Boers.



2. Uncle Kruger and nephew Joubert were fast asleep and dreaming about all the Britishers they were going to shoot down from behind since they'd rocks to throw. "Bill," whispered Alf, "I've got an idea." "Oh," muttered Billy, "don't let old Kruger see you, or he'll make you pay tax on it."



3. "How just fancy this dynamite and these two pipes being left outside our campsite like," chuckled Alf, as he glanced over his big dam horse. "Yes, yes," purred Billy, "we shall have to knock 'em not to leave things about. Won't nice comfy make the dear boy? I'll have when they wake up."



4. And while the pals hid behind the tent, Kruger and Joubert woke up and went to light up. "Ah," sneezed Kruger, "such luck to shooting a red-neck I do like a pipe of good tobacco." And Joubert murmured, "I should say so, too. You are always poisoning me from me."



5. "Great Baden-Powell," yelped Kruger, "was in the matter of the dam staff?" And Joubert roared "dam Kruger British they not everywhere. There is a koppel of dam in mine pipe. Get out wild ones!" But that dynamite was on business only, and before the Dutchman could say "Oom Poo!" there was a big—



6. BANG!—and two figures went up like the price of coal in winter. "It is dam Alf and Billy wants more," howled Kruger. But when the pals who were bolting with all the Boer war plans heard the language used by Joubert, they sadly sighed, "O, not a wordly winkle I am!"

A hundred-year-old comic strip. This page of the Big Budget (price: one penny) is referred to in 'Making light of war'.

An introductory talk was given by the chairman, Professor Bill Guest. Professor Paul Thompson read a paper on Oribi Village, dealing with the three successive communities that have occupied the place when it was a Military Camp and Hospital, an emergency housing scheme and a so-called Government Village. This was followed by a paper entitled 'Sobantu Village, 1920s–1950s: a historical perspective' by Sibongiseni Mkhize of the Natal Museum. Jabulani Sithole followed on with a talk on his current research topic, the 1980s conflict situation in Sobantu.

After tea, Yunus Bayat, a quantity surveyor, spoke about his family history, and the detrimental effect that their forced removal from their premises in Church Street to Mountain Rise had on his family. He brought some interesting exhibits, such as his grandfather's scroll, turban and presentation gold watch. His grandfather Amod Bayat in 1908 travelled with Gandhi and a delegation of four others to England to bring the plight of the South African Indian community to the attention of the British Government. The scroll thanks him for this act, amongst others. The watch bears the inscription 'Presented to Amod Bayat by the Natal Indian Congress, October 3, 1926.' Mr Bayat senior was president of the Natal Indian Congress in 1921.

These talks were followed by a slide presentation by Ismail Cassimjee, a local architect, on the planning process in the future development of Pietermaritzburg. Leonard Nkosi, a retired school principal, then spoke about the history of Georgetown. The Seminar was attended by about 55 people, who contributed a variety of interesting questions between papers.

JEWEL KOOPMAN

Urban decay

Pietermaritzburg has fallen on hard times. The structure that created and defined the physical and economic development of the city has changed. The city is decaying, brick by brick, being replaced by a transient, throw-away architecture and flagging informal economies.

Lewis Mumford in a visionary paragraph captured the essence of a city. 'Cities are a product of time. They are the molds in which men's lifetimes have cooled and congealed, giving lasting shape, by way of art, to moments that would otherwise vanish with the living and leave no means of renewal or wider participation behind them. In the city, time becomes visible; buildings and monuments and public ways, more open than the written record, more subject to the gaze of many men than the scattered artefacts of the countryside, leave an imprint on the minds even of the ignorant or the indifferent. Through the material fact of preservation, time challenges time, time clashes with time: habits and values carry over beyond the living group, streaking with different strata of time the character of any single generation. Layer upon layer, past times preserve themselves in the city until life itself is finally threatened with suffocation: then in sheer defense, modern man invents the museum.'

Is the museum the environment we want to create for Pietermaritzburg? A sterile space that encourages hushed voices and best behaviour? This is not an appropriate manner of re-use for a city that visibly challenged the adversity of the wilderness and broke the backs of our forefathers, black and white.

The types of economy that defined the planning and character of the city have changed. A trend towards decentralisation of business results in the once vibrant city centre emptying, being replaced with runs of similar businesses and sub-economic housing. The new city owners do not repair or replace the existing fabric. The way people use the city has changed. Streets rather than buildings are now the focus. Developers take the law into their own hands without recourse to official bodies. Combating serious crime is seen as being more important than punishing transgressions of land development ordinances. Prosecution is time-consuming and costly. Local authorities are preoccupied with politics and redressing the injustices of the past, thus neglecting to save the visible and tangible vestiges of the past.

Mumford comments: 'When the city ceases to be a symbol of art and order, it acts in a negative fashion: it expresses and helps to make more universal the fact of disintegration.' The Victorian vernacular of Pietermaritzburg is unique, but this fact seems unimportant in the greater socio-economic and political melting-pot. But it is an issue that people will take cognizance of once the first excitement of the new order is over and the sensitive areas of urban living become important. The city in a heritage context should be seen as a money-spinner, developing tourism and using buildings for that purpose. This has been emphasised often, but there has been little follow-up. Mumford again: 'Today we begin to see that the improvement of cities is no matter for small one-sided reforms: the task of city design involves the vaster task of rebuilding our civilisation.'

We need to revisit the initial conservation motives presented by Brian Bassett in his 1982 report *Cataloguing and Conservation in Pietermaritzburg*, which identifies the following reasons for conservation: 'Buildings and sites are part of a country's cultural heritage. Their destruction is therefore a blow to the morale and identity of any nation. Buildings and sites are three-dimensional documents of the past. They therefore make the past more actual to us and aid our understanding of our history and development, thus providing us with a firm base on which to plan the future.'

The way forward will be long and hard, and the effort needs support from everyone, from the person in the street right up to those in local and provincial government.

DEBORAH WHELAN

Important collection of Zulu woodcarving

In 1997 the Natal Museum purchased a valuable collection of almost 200 Zulu woodcarvings from Professor Frank Jolles — a former professor of German at the University of Natal, and an expert on Zulu material culture. These items will shortly be on temporary display and will complement the larger displays of African material culture of the Natal Museum. The Jolles collection includes four categories of woodcarvings: meat platters (*izithebe*), headrests (*isigqiki*), milking pails (*amathunga*) and spoons (*izinkhezo*). They were collected from a small area on either side of the Izinyati (Buffalo) River between Msinga Top and the Mahlaba Mountain. The relative remoteness of this region saved it from some of the political turmoil of recent times and from the attentions of dealers collecting African tribal artefacts. Professor Jolles' main objective was to acquire household utensils that people were willing to sell, and to establish who carved them by interviewing the owners and, as

far as possible, the carvers themselves. It became apparent that there was sufficient continuity of material culture to trace the family traditions of most of the carvers back to the time of the Bambatha rebellion (1906) and in one or two cases even before this period. This collection of Zulu woodcarvings is therefore one of the best provenanced of its kind in the world and is a valuable research resource.

For much of the 19th century the Izinyati River formed a boundary between Natal and the Kingdom of Zululand and there was traffic across it in both directions. In the early part of the 20th century there was a movement of people from the lowlands (Umvoti) into the mountainous area of Msinga and across the river to the Nqutu side. It is not certain why they moved but in the 1940s some of the families moved back to Umvoti in search of better pastures. Finally, in the apartheid years people expelled from farms around Muden and Weenen were resettled there. Some stayed, others moved to destinations further north. This history of ordinary people is reflected in the wide variety of forms and decorative motifs of the artefacts they left behind. Because much of the African local history of the 19th and even the 20th century has not been recorded, we have to rely on artefacts such as these to reconstruct the past — by correlating styles with people's personal recollections and with the oral tradition and then extrapolating the results to areas where the oral tradition fails. The feasibility of this method has been demonstrated for beadwork patterns, and the Jolles collection will now allow researchers to extend this method to woodcarvings. It therefore adds a valuable new dimension to the history of the Zulu people of the Msinga area.

FRANS PRINS

National monuments and heritage sites

The National Monuments Council Report for the year ended 31 March 1998 lists six new declarations of sites in KwaZulu-Natal. The following descriptions are taken directly from the Report.

1. *The Property with the Old Supreme Court thereon, in College Road, Pietermaritzburg.*

The history of the Old Supreme Court is inextricably linked to the legal system as it applied to black South Africans in the colonial and union periods. It was built as part of the system for the administration of customary law, which in the present province of KwaZulu-Natal provided that crimes exclusively involving black people should be tried according to 'Native Law'. The structure was probably built about 1898 when the Native High Court was reconstituted after its abolition in 1895. It is a traditional Pietermaritzburg red-brick building and typical of official architecture of the late 1890s. The building is H-shaped with a central courtroom. Doors and door furniture are in the Edwardian idiom and the floors have wide planking. Certain formal rooms have fine cast-iron fireplaces with wooden surrounds. The courtroom has retained its teak furnishings.

2. *The Property with the historical house thereon at 131 Pietermaritz Street, Pietermaritzburg.*

This house was built between 1893 and 1897 by G.J. Cundell. It has a tiled roof with two unique stepped gables on the façade and three other gables on the main roof. The verandahs on both levels have typical wrought-iron work and timber balustrades. This fine late-Victorian red-brick residence is the last in an almost uninterrupted row of Victorian houses, two of which have already been declared as national monuments. The building is also a fine inner-city asset.

3. *The Property described as The 'Passive Resistance Site' on the corner of Umbilo Road and Gale Street, Durban.*

In 1946 the South African government passed the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, founded on separate residential areas for Indians and some indirect representation in Parliament. As a protest against this Act the Natal Indian Congress led by Dr M. Naicker, with the support of the Transvaal Indian Congress under Dr Y. Dadoo, resolved to launch a second passive resistance campaign (the first had been started by Mahatma Gandhi). They declared that numbers of Indians were prepared to break the law and even submit to arrest and punishment by occupying land denied to them by the Act. These Indians began by camping on an unused piece of land at the corner of Umbilo Road and Gale Street in Durban. Disturbances subsequently arose through attacks on the Indians by groups of Europeans. This forced the police to intervene, and it was on this site that almost 2 200 Indian men and women were arrested. They were later brought to trial and imprisoned. Shortly afterwards the [Indian Congress movement] joined hands with the African National Congress. This ultimately led to the defiance campaign, and arrest and banning of leaders of all races. This site therefore symbolises for Indians in KwaZulu-Natal the start of the Passive Resistance Campaign of 1946–48.

4. *The Property with the building known as 'The Residency' thereon, at 11–13 Wright Road, Ladysmith.*

This house is a prototype of what might be termed the 'Ladysmith Vernacular' — a type of residence which became popular in Ladysmith around the turn of the century. In construction it makes use of local materials. It consists of a sturdy core of local bluestone (dolerite) and a large corrugated-iron roof which, with its dormer vent, voluminous ceiling void and large verandahs on two sides, is designed to prevent heat from penetrating the interior. 'The Residency' is also characterised by typical Victorian fretwork detailing, three fine chimneys and a gable vent. Internally the house boasts a fine cast-iron and tile fireplace.

5. *The Property with the building known as 'Ottawa House' thereon, being Lot 2493, Waterloo Extension No.10, Inanda District.*

This mansion forms part of an estate which was once the property of one of the great 'sugar barons' of KwaZulu-Natal. Its first owner, A. Wilkinson, who named the estate in remembrance of his Canadian wife's home, originally planted the estate with sugar cane in 1861. It remained the property of the

Wilkinson family until 1926. The interior of Ottawa House shows predominantly Arts and Crafts characteristics. A notable feature is the cast-iron staircase, the only major stylistic contradiction in the interior....

6 *The Umhlatuzana Rock Shelter, Camperdown District.*

This rock shelter is situated in a deep gorge between Pietermaritzburg and Durban. It is well screened by vegetation, is 43 metres long and approximately 6½ metres wide. The deposits in the floor of the rock shelter built up to a depth of 2½ metres as a result of human occupation for long periods over the past 100 000 years. This rock shelter is of special importance because it is the only known site in the eastern part of South Africa with evidence that there were people living in this region continuously between 45 000 and 12 000 years ago. It was during this time that the gradual transition from the Middle Stone Age to the Later Stone Age tradition took place. The detailed record of the long period of occupation and the distinctive artefacts found at the Umhlatuzana rock shelter have been vital for a better understanding of the development of the Stone Age material culture in Southern Africa.