

A Byrne settler's experiences in early Natal

Introduction

These letters and covers were purchased in 1998 by a specialist researcher in the Natal colony's postal history, Mr John Dickson, of Ilminster, Somerset. They are in good condition and the writing on the whole is easy to read, except for the last portion of that of 9 June 1851, which is cross-written on the first page. Until the letters surfaced nothing was known about Archibald Keir Murray *sen.* (born *c.*1813) other than that he was related to Archibald Keir Murray *jun.*, was a Byrne & Co. settler ex *Ina* whose land allotment as such was claimed, and that in January 1851 he was a signatory to a petition drawn up by Pinetown residents and presented to the Government. He travelled to Natal in the company of his cousin Archibald Keir Murray *jun.* (1815–1881), the latter's wife Janet (Jessie) Anderson (1823–1911), their five children and Janet's siblings Esther (1823–1899), Robert Shand (1830–1878) and Martha (Patty) (1836–1900).

Archibald Keir Murray was a son of Capt. James Copland Murray, RN (born 12 May 1774), and Helen Hunter, the eldest daughter of Thomas Hunter, Esq.¹ of Kirkconnell, Kirkcudbrightshire. These two were cousins. They were married 9 May 1805, and eventually had nine children: seven sons and two daughters. J.C. Murray was the eldest son of Alexander Murray, Esq., 'proprietor of the lands of Inglosten [*sic*]², and feudal superior of the Lordship of that ilk'³. James Murray entered the Navy in 1790 at a time of war with France, and served in the European theatre until 1801 when he was put on the half-pay list (i.e. leave of absence on half-pay). In 1830 he was given the rank of Retired Commander on the junior list, and in 1840 was promoted to the senior list.

Glasgow-born Archibald Keir Murray *jun.* (the 'Archy' of the letters) was the founder of Pinetown. He was the eighth child of William Murray (28 April 1778, Dumfriesshire – 20 April 1851) and Margaret Hunter (19 June 1780, Dumfriesshire – 1863), and grandson of Alexander Murray above. James Ecroyd, a Byrne settler ex *Unicorn*, describes Archy as being formerly of Glasgow, where he published 'some railway time tables'. Donald Francis McDonald, also ex *Unicorn*, identifies him to his family in an 1851 letter home as 'the person who started a pamphlet in Scotland known as Murray's Time Tables'⁴, he had also that shop in Argyll Street called the American Pegged Boot⁵ and Shoe Shop⁶.

Charles Barter, ex *Globe*, 1850, writes in his *The dorp and the veld; or, Six months in Natal* that Murray was an intelligent immigrant ... 'with a great deal of Yankee spirit in his composition'⁶.

subject of division in a colony such as this'. (In 1843 a number of Established Church of Scotland members had seceded and founded the Free Church of Scotland, the point at issue being their demand that parishioners be allowed to choose their own ministers. Only in 1930 was this rift healed.) At a meeting in Pietermaritzburg on 10 October 1850 it was resolved that a congregation be formed. From then until March 1851, when he accepted a call to Pietermaritzburg, Revd Campbell was based in Durban. The third letter more or less repeats previous information, but mentions Congregationalists and a 'Mohamedan place of worship about to be erected'. The latter statement is puzzling. No other contemporary reference has been found to this. The Congregationalists organized a church in April 1851, with a teacher, John Corbett Adams, as their first preacher.

In the last letter Murray declares his intention to leave Natal early in the new year. As no further references have been forthcoming about his presence in the colony, it would seem that he was the Mr Murray who sailed for Cape Town in March 1852. He was a steerage passenger on the coasting vessel *Rosebud*.



D'Urban, Natal, 9th June 1851.

My Dear Father & Mother,

I wrote you some time in October last & am not a little surprised to perceive by your last letter that it had never reached you, although mine to Mr McLaughlin a few weeks earlier had arrived, the latter was forwarded by a private conveyance (a returned emigrant). Yours through the Post Office, but I am only one of many who have to complain on that head, the result of which a few months past has been the dismissal of the former & the appointment of another Post Master here¹⁰. I may here again mention that several of your letters referred to never reached me – My last I wrote on my return from Pietermaritzburg in acknowledgement of yours of 21st March enclosing the introduction to Mr Pine, this was of no use to me further than a few unmeaning civilities¹¹.

I now have to acknowledge your favors of 22nd Nov. '50, & within these two weeks that of 11th February, and am indeed distressed to notice your anxiety on my account, altho' no doubt you must have heard from Cousin Archy's letters that I was well in health – I wish to God I could inform I was well in other respects. But of this anon. The Parcel of newspapers &c. by that of 22nd Nov. safely reached me, & happened at the moment to be peculiarly acceptable. Many thanks. I am very, very sorry to learn the death of Cousin James, but more especially to hear by a letter dated in March received by Cousin Archy, that Uncle Murray¹² is upon his deathbed – these are melancholy news. On the other hand I cannot but express my gratification here on hearing that both my Parents are well – long may you continue so ... You appear to be very anxious with respect to my Leg – I sincerely wish I could pass over this subject in silence, as I have hitherto done because the truth will only distress you, but since I cannot make it, I may now say that it has not been well since I landed in Natal – you can form no conception of the trouble it has caused me, and at the present time it is sheer necessity alone that compels me to move about. Two or three weeks before arriving the steerage ladder

broke down with me, & took the skin all off the bone, after landing I of course, like nearly every other fresh arrival, got what is called here 'Natal sores' – a kind of scab or boil which is peculiar to the climate, & which breaks out mostly on the legs. You may fancy what a state I was in – and now am in, for they are far from yet being ... & which of the legs is the worst is a Query. Were it not that I have experienced a few ups & downs already in life, they might affect my spirits worse than they do – although at times I must confess I feel a sinking of the heart occasionally when thinking upon the matter, & what they may eventually lead me to. But, we all live in the 'Pleasures of Hope' – in those 'blessful visions' of things on this side of Time, which, with but too many are but 'the baseless fabric of a vision'. But to resume – since my last letter has apparently miscarried, I may as well give you in a few words a note of what I have been about. You are already aware that after my landing last year I assisted Archy in the disposal of his stock of Pegg'd Boots & shoes. Afterwards I went up the country about 12 miles to his property¹³ & staid there for a couple of weeks to see if I could cure my leg, the change did it some little good. I then came down & being without employment, I commenced as a regular day-laborer in the harbour at 3/6 per day, at this work I continued nearly a month¹⁴, but being obliged to wade in the salt water occasionally my Leg began again to look serious & I was forced to give it up – I then became Policeman, a not very agreeable occupation, but necessity has no law – apprehending & taking charge of criminals. At this I continued again upwards of a month, but being obliged to be on foot always & often at all hours, my unfortunate Leg now began to assume a very alarming appearance – I consulted the Doctor, who at once informed the Jailer¹⁵ that I was unfit for duty – refused lodgings in the Station-House, I was forced to take a small room elsewhere at 3/– per week – in this room, with my mattress upon the floor, I lay upon my back better than 3 months, subsisting upon dry bread & Kaffir-tea¹⁶ (I could not afford a more substantial diet). At the expiration of that time finding my Leg considerably better & my cash nearly exhausted I was forced to decamp. Just then your letter with the introduction to Governor Pine arrived – and I at once determined upon moving up to the seat of Government. – I took a cast up in a Waggon to 'Pine-Town', (Cousin Archy's place) From him I got the lend of a Horse, & he accompanying me, away we started for Pietermaritzburg – the result of this I have already stated – we then returned to Pine-Town – Cousin Archy happening at that moment to be in want of a Barman to his Accommodation House Hut, (he calls it a Hotel, why the erection of the two Huts cost somewhat about 30/6¹⁷). I offered my services – I now thought I was at last in a comparatively snug berth – I was miserably mistaken, however – obliged to be on foot all day serving Grog to drunken waggons, – knocked up at all hours of the night – many of them no sleep at all. Universal referee in all subjects of dispute, putting a stop to fights – waiting at table – serving eatables & withal being obliged to have an everlasting 'Yes Sir' in my mouth and 'Landlord's laugh' at command. I found it excessively harrassing, besides I could scarcely walk now with my legs – and Mrs Murray (who now considered me in the light of a common domestic) gave me no rest, interfering every where and in everything – retiring herself to bed every night at 9 o'clock, she appeared to have no consideration for the fatigue either of me or her sisters (her sisters were the cooks of the establishment). Many times after being up all night, & when I have endeavoured to secure an hour's sleep during the day, has she turned me up with the exclamation of 'Archy, attend to your business! You did not come here to sleep at these hours' –

or words to that effect – Cousin Archy during the day was seldom at home, being generally occupied abroad with some of his various schemes on hand – superintending the building of his new ‘Hotel’, surveying his village allotments, or down here at Durban – I’m in fact now his factotum in everything but the cooking department. Matters could not continue thus always. In the beginning of the year his brother and sisters¹⁸ left them & went away up the country¹⁹, one afterwards returned at the earnest solicitation of Archy to assist at Mrs M’s accouchement²⁰, but now I believe intends leaving again very shortly. In the end of February I likewise complained to my cousin in regard to the harrassing nature of my employment & desired to know what I was slaving there for, in other words what remuneration he intended giving me, upon which he said that having made no regular agreement, he was under the impression that I wished to remain there until I could obtain more suitable employment. In great wrath I at once packed up my traps & again came down to the Bay here – some short time afterwards I met him here & again renewed the subject, when he eventually promised to give me ten pounds for my services during the 6 months I was with him – part of that sum I have since received, I know not whether I ever will the remainder, as no dependence can be placed upon his word. Kind hearted he no doubt is when one is fortunate to find him in the humour, but he is utterly destitute of principle. As to his wife, I never was mistaken so much in my impressions, now since I have come into contact with her, or at least she is very much changed since coming here. All she appears to care for is making money & if Archy, herself & children are comfortable it matters not how the rest of her household are. He on the other hand still continues the go ahead person he formerly was, eternally occupied in speculations, & when he comes down here gambling, playing billiards & spending money like water – and this I may here mention, be assured that his character here now is very far from standing so high as it did half a year since. Two weeks ago he removed to his new Hotel²¹, which is undoubtedly the best roadside accommodation house between this & Pietermaritzburg, but this is all he is now doing to any purpose, his projected village Pine-Town is not progressing so well as he anticipated, & the emigrants which he managed to locate upon his land have in part left it & gone elsewhere. Since I left my cousin’s I have been again at Pietermaritzburg (60 miles from this) looking for employment, but without success. Here I am now hanging about jobbing & living from hand to mouth as I best can. Better times I hope are yet coming – at present they cannot be much worse with me – were it not that my unfortunate Legs incapacitate me, I would at once volunteer & go down to the seat of war²² upon the frontier, under Sir Harry Smith. But, what, you will ask, has become of my farming speculations – I answer nothing – all is blown to the winds – farming is a pure absurdity down in the neighbourhood of D’Urban – the very few of the inhabitants or rather say emigrants who have turned their attention that way have now abandoned it & left for the Cape of Good Hope in disgust. About 100 to 150 miles up the country beyond Pietermaritzburg something might be done with capital, but down here it has proved a complete failure hitherto. Of the arrivals of emigrants within a year past, 2/3rds have left for the C.G.Hope – with the exception of Indian corn, Beef, Pumpkins, & a few Potatoes, all our supplies are received from the Cape, & as Natal has next to no exports²³ the returns have to be made in money – this of course must keep the Colony poor. Last year the imports were upwards of £50,000 & the exports about £10,000, this speaks for itself. A colony that is not self supporting can never be prosperous, & as the majority

of emigrants who have hitherto arrived here are mechanics, laborers, & people of that stamp, but with very, very few of any little capital, even manual labor now is difficult to be got. Happy are those considered, who, after a few months' residence here to see how matters are regressing, are enabled to leave it for the Cape, notwithstanding the gloomy aspect of things down there now, caused by the War. Excepting Beef, every thing is enormously high here, a 6d Loaf is about the size of a 3d one at home²⁴.

You are aware, no doubt, of Byrne's failure²⁵, his affairs here are in great confusion. The 'Ina's' passengers have not yet got their Land Orders – to me it now makes little difference – Cousin Archy had my land certificate along with his (45 acres) when I left Pine-Town I asked him for it or at least its equivalent in value – say perhaps 6 pounds to 6 pounds ten shillings. To this he refused either in one way or another, saying that he considered the land is justly his for compensation for my passage out. This is a sample of his principle? and how he has made his relatives out here, & others who cannot help themselves, subservient to his own aggrandisement & interests²⁶. My opinions with respect to his conduct towards me, I have not failed to express publicly here. I understand that his wife's family are on the way out to Natal. I doubt much after a few months' intercourse there will be a fresh split in the family. Archy's family are thriving remarkably. You ask if there are any churches here. There are two in D'Urban, one Episcopalian & the other a Methodist – I attend them occasionally. Mr Campbell the Presbyterian minister which came out some time ago has now got a church in Pietermaritzburg with a very respectable congregation. When occasion offers I hope you will continue to send me out a newspaper occasionally. Even when I was up at Pine-Town, it was only by stealth I could obtain a sight of an English paper – now I never see any of them. When you next write to Alexander inform him that I am in possession of his two last letters of June '47 & November '49, and that as soon as I have got leisure [*sic*] & my mind is at ease I will endeavour to write him at some length. Say the same to James. I am not in a position at present to write to any one as I ought – sitting upon the floor writing upon my knees. This I hope will excuse the present way in which this scrawl is written. Give my kindest respects to Joseph – I have not convenience just now to write to him either. Remember me kindly to Mr & Mrs Turner & family & all other friends. I hope to be enabled to write you again shortly – in the meantime, believe me, when I say often often do I think of you & often do I regret coming here to Natal.

I ever am, My Dear Parents

Yours very affectionately

A.K. Murray Sr

NB Do not fail to put the Sr to my name in addressing letters to me.

Of course I would not wish Aunt or any others of our relatives to see this letter.



D'Urban, Port Natal
4th, August 1851

My Dear Parents,

My letter of 9th, June, will, I hope, reach your hands in due course, and in some measure allay your apparent anxiety in my behalf – I now have the pleasure of acknowledging receipt of your note inclosed in Cousin Archy's letter by 15 May Steamer to the Cape. From it I observe that Uncle Murray²⁷ had paid the debt of nature and gone to 'that bourne' where, sooner or later, we must all follow – this event from the tenor of previous letters, of course, was not unlooked for. I likewise observe that Brother Tom had gone to America. I hope, poor fellow, that fortune, not misfortune, will now attend him. The 'Jane Walker' has not yet made her appearance, but she may be looked for now every day – the Anderson family, I learn, are all coming out by her – the Miss Anderson²⁸ that came out with us per 'Ina' was married lately, if her sisters are as active, and goodlooking as her, they will not be long before they follow her example – that class of females (not fine ladies) being in demand here. All the folk at Pine-Town, are, I understand, in good health, but I don't think business is so brisk with them there as it has been, or that his speculations are succeeding so favorably as he at one time anticipated.

With respect to myself I am happy to inform you that I continue in my usual health, and that my Leg although far from being well, is still no worse than it has been for some time past, and I still live in the hope that it will eventually heal up. In addition to the information I gave you in my last, I now have to state, that on the 14th June I again joined the Police of this place, until something better turns up, or until my unfortunate limb gets sound, when I will endeavour to make a move elsewhere. A Policeman is certainly far from being an agreeable occupation, and the pay is very poor, but it keeps one afloat until better times come round. Many here would be glad to get it as 2/3rds of the emigrants which came out here have been disappointed in their expectations. A great many latterly have left for the Cape, and many more would follow if they had the means – not that the country is bad, but there is a want of capitalists, and farming does not appear to succeed unless at a considerable distance from the coast, and even there Cattle breeding is the principle [*sic*] occupation – down in this neighbourhood Agriculture is confined to a few acres of Potatoes, Indian corn, & such like, which is often, as I have witnessed, destroyed in a few hours by the periodical swarms of Locusts. Our supplies of provisions nearly all come from the Cape and the Mauritius. This place & Pietermaritzburg have certainly risen, & are yet increasing rapidly in the way of buildings, such as they are, but every other house is now a shop²⁹, many of which do not contain £3 amount of property, in this way folk manage to live from hand to mouth, making an existence. I myself job about, ... making a shilling when I can – this is colonial life – and thank God, I am able to do it, neither do I consider it, as many might do, a hardship.

I need say nothing concerning the War on the frontiers with the Kaffirs, as now since Steamers run to and from the Cape of Good Hope, you hear through the newspapers all that goes forward more correctly, and nearly as soon as we do here. Every thing is quiet in Natal – the seat of War being nearly 500 miles distant from us, and no communication except by sea occasionally from Algoa Bay and the Cape. ... Expect to hear from me again shortly in answer to your expected favour per 'Jane Walker'. I will likewise en-

deavour to make up a long letter to Alexander in time for the next spring ship. But I may as well mention for your information, that in my present employment I have not much time to spare, although occupation makes my mind easier than it has been lately.

Give kindest respects to all the Dunloskin folks³⁰, as well as other friends

And believe me, as always,

Yours most affectionately,

A.K. Murray



D'Urban, Natal, 20 Dec. 1851.

My Dear Father & Mother,

My last to you was under date of 4th August, and am sorry to think that I have allowed a longer time to elapse in again writing, than I at that time intended – but, indeed, you must make allowances, and take into consideration that I have not now the convenience or even the time to keep up my correspondence with old friends that I had in bygone days – not by any means that I would wish to extenuate neglect on my part to you, but, because, what in former days I used to consider as a pleasure, is really now become an effort – not but that I have the will, but that my present occupations are so harrassing and often so disagreeable, that as soon as I am off duty, I am fitter for my bed than anything else

I now have the satisfaction to acknowledge receipt of your favors of 22 May, 9th July, and 10th Sept. It appears to me somewhat strange that at the date of your last you had not received mine written in June last. but I suppose it must have arrived too late at the Cape for the mail of that month³¹, these inconveniences often occur between this and the Cape of Good Hope as we have only coasting vessels to rely upon, & these sailing at periods to suit their own purposes. . . . I am sadly grieved to think that the absence of letters from me has caused you so much uneasiness – but some how the idea of writing home bad accounts to you makes me so miserable that I defer doing so from week to week in anticipation of prospects improving – Vain Hope.– nothing but disappointments have hitherto attended me here in Natal, nor does the horizon appear to clear up as time wears on. One piece of good news, however, I am right glad to inform you of, viz. that my leg (unfortunate limb!) has at length been coaxed into what I consider a sanitary state, and although far from being yet well, still I have now hopes it will ultimately get sound – you can have no idea what misery the wretched member has caused me since I set forth on ‘Afric’s burning sands’. My long confinement under your fostering care was felicity compared to the 4 months I suffered here, laying upon the floor of a small room, without a friend to do a hand’s turn for me, and living upon 6d a day, indeed, I was afterwards informed that it would not have been so bad at that time had I been supplied with proper ointment³². Thank God, my health then, and ever since, has invariably been good, and to this alone am I indebted for not being ‘ere this under the sod – As to sickness of mind, or as it is commonly expressed ‘Lowness of sprits’, I must confess it does occasionally get the upper hand, but I have now first and last become so

steeped in disappointments that I am in a measure callous concerning the Avenir – you may, however, safely rely on my holding fast my integrity and that it shall be my earnest endeavour never to forget the glorious precepts taught me by you, in younger, happier days – Apropos – you have on more than one occasion enquired if there are any Church accommodation here – we have 3 – 1 Episcopalian, 1 Methodist, and a Congregationalist, besides a Mahomedan place of worship about to be erected.]

I always make a point of attending the Methodist chapel, when duty permits me. By the by, Mr Campbell, the Free Church minister who came out some time ago, having been lately, I understand, released by the Synod of Dumbarton from his charge there, (Established, & Free Kirk folks are synonymous here) has now a Presbyterian Church in Pietermaritzburg, & as his congregation have by an effort, managed to subscribe upwards of 50 pounds, the Colonial Government, (as in all similar cases) will double it – consequently he is comfortable – N.B. the Dutch Boers in Africa are all Protestants, say Presbyterians.

I have continued in the Police force of this place since June last, but it is my intention to leave it the end of the month, now that my Leg is getting sound, as nothing is to be got by remaining in it, – only a bare livelihood – a mere pittance, for which one is harrassed about, continually on your legs from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. and 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. month about alternately – it is so very disagreeable to me to be continually guarding felons & arresting thieves, & I can assure you from the low state of the colony & consequent want of work, we have an abundance of that class here. In the beginning of the year I shall make a bold push for some other place, I care not where, & altho' without 5/- in the world to call my own, better do that than fritter away one's days without the prospect of doing any good here – perhaps I may find my way to Algoa Bay where, from the influx of troops to the seat of war, money must be circulating, or should opportunity offer I may endeavour to get to the Mauritius, & if no employment can be had there, thence, if possible, to Australia, where I believe, gold has lately been discovered in abundance. Here, positively, there is nothing doing just now, and things appear to be getting from bad to worse, the country is good enough & the climate delightful, but we have next to no capitalists here to carry on farming, consequently no exports, ... that many are in great difficulties and not a few in town, which I know, are working for their food. Since Byrne's failure (he is now here³³) emigration has of late ceased – those already arrived, who have been able to scrape together the means or who have had the opportunity, have all left the colony... This country no doubt may prosper in time, but it will not be in our day, & then only by the importation of a wealthier class of emigrants than those which have hitherto arrived, besides the Kaffirs are sure, sooner or later, to give trouble, perhaps sooner here than many anticipate – already are they become very insolent & independent, & will only work when it suits themselves.

E're this, I suppose, you will have heard of the safe arrival of the Anderson family³⁴. I saw them all after landing – they are now up at Pine Town, & the old man I understand, has several acres of ground turned up & under cultivation – I seldom see cousin Archie now, if we meet we are civil enough to each other but nothing more. ... I do not think matters of late have been turning out so well with him as he at one time expected. He begins now, I believe, to feel the pressure of the times as well as many others. His Hotel business I observe, is advertised in the papers to lease, as he now intends to devote his time to farming – this is the wife's work, I am sure, for, if report speaks truth, he has now

become too jolly a landlord and so far as appearances go, he both looks like it, having now become as big as a puncheon, with a round puffed up brandy countenance – when he comes down here, I know, he carries on [?sad] orgies – I generally endeavour to keep out of his way when he is in town. He is ... now better known than he has been in Natal – more respected for position than principle, although to give the Devil his due he is a clever persevering fellow, & just the person suited for the colony. His wife's family will now be of great use to him on the farm, as they will cost him nothing but their food & leave Mrs M., alone for keeping them at work.

Having now exhausted my subject matter, at least such as I think will be interesting to you, I will conclude, that you may depend upon hearing upon my further movements next month, as I shall be certain to let you know where I am going previous to leaving the colony. In the meantime I shall anxiously look forward for the arrival of next mail in the hope to hearing again from you – Adieu! And rely upon it, that wherever I may wander, & whatever hardships are yet before me, never suppose for a moment that I shall forget my duty to you, or cease to remember you with that affection which you so well merit.

Yours most sincerely and affectionately,

A.K. Murray

P.S ... Give my kind respects to Mr and Mrs Turner & family, also to Cousin Joseph & wife, & Brother James ... There is yet, I hope, 'a good time coming'.

NOTES

1. The term 'Esquire' was a meaningful title at this time. For example, in the *Directory of Durban and Pietermaritzburg* for 1853 (Pietermaritzburg: Lumb, 1852), in the Durban list of residents there were 29 Esquires among the 349 males listed.
2. It would appear that this is an error for Ingleston, Kirkeudbrightshire.
3. W.R. O'Byrne: *A naval biographical dictionary...* London: John Murray, 1849, pp. 801–2.
4. There is confusion about the publishing connection – his son Joseph's death notice in the press in 1882 describes him as the nephew of Alexander Murray, 'the well-known Scottish publisher of timetables and guide books', while a family history written by a descendant, maintains that Archy was in partnership with his elder brother Thomas, a bookseller and publisher of Glasgow, and they drew up the first Scottish railway guide known as *Murray's Time Tables* (1841), following the appearance of the first such publication *Bradshaw's Railway Time Tables* in 1839. See R.W. Anderson: William Anderson (1790–1873) and his descendants. Typescript, 1984.
5. Pegged boots were constructed with the use of small wooden pins or pegs to secure the upper between the inner- and the outer-sole. The points of the pegs were then cut away and smoothed level with the inner-sole.
6. Charles Barter, *The dorp and the veld...*, London: Ward Lock, 1852, p.19. D. F. McDonald maintained that Archy had been in America (this must have been before his marriage in 1841), while Dr W.H.I. Bleek, the philologist, thought he was an American. Possibly his promotion of pegged boots had something to do with the American association. See Rita Bleksley, 'A letter from the past', *Personality* 9 June 1966, and O.H. Spohr, ed., *The Natal diaries of Dr W.H.I Bleek, 1855–1856...*Cape Town: Balkema, 1965, p.92.
7. Alfred Southam, who was in Natal from 1848–50, maintained that apart from a few acres of cotton and sugar-cane and a few tropical fruits, the sole farming product was oats for horses, while the only farmers in the country 'of any consequence', were the African women who raised 'great quantities of Indian corn' which they sold to the whites for fodder. See Great Britain. Parliamentary papers XLV no. 596 (1860) p.94.
8. Half-pay officers however, were free, with the permission of the Admiralty, to follow other avocations
9. Natal sore . . . a painful swelling that bursts, forming an ulcer. Probably impetigo, a bacterial infection

- which can enter a lesion caused by the scratching of a tick, flea or mosquito bite. Horatio Vertue ex *Aliwal* describes them as 'painful and troublesome to cure'. Vertue's 'unfortunate legs' were covered with them, and 'it is cruel work after working like a slave all day to be tormented at night'. Six weeks later (5 Jan. 1850) he writes, 'I have been cruelly punished with my legs, and am scarcely able to crawl about'. See P.W Laidler and Michael Gelfand, *South Africa: its medical history 1652–1898*, Cape Town: Struik, 1971, and Horatio Vertue, *Journal* 4 August 1849 – c. November– December 1851 (Mr Eric Vertue, Helderberg Village, Somerset West).
10. On 1 March 1851 Francis Spring, an officer with experience in the Hong Kong post office, was appointed Post Master General for Natal, and was stationed in Durban. Prior to this William Robert Shaw Wilson, the acting clerk to Durban's Resident Magistrate, had acted as postmaster during the illness of the postmaster, Valentinus Alexius Schonberg (c. 1812–75). See John Dickson, *The seaborne mails of Natal part I: from the beginning to 1850, Natal and Zululand post* vol.2(2) June 1998, pp.27–47.
 11. Benjamin Chilly Campbell Pine (1809–91) landed in Natal on 16 April 1850, and remained the Colony's Lt.-Governor until he departed on leave in Mar. 1855. He did not then return, and was succeeded by Sir John Scott. Pine had a second, brief, term of office in Natal, 1873–75. It would seem that few emigrants were in a position to produce letters of introduction to senior officers of the Natal Government. It was rare that such letters had any effect.
 12. i.e. William Murray (1778–1851), father of Archy.
 13. At Pinetown.
 14. It could be that Murray was assisting in landing cargo and getting it passed through the Customs House. Fellow *Ina* passenger, Thomas Duff, was engaged in this work at 3/6d and 4/– a day from 1 to 9 April. See the reprint of *First impressions of Natal by a Perthshire Ploughman* (1850) in *Natalia* 7, 1977)
 15. Thomas Dand. Dand was also the owner of the premises leased to the Natal Government as Durban's gaol and hospital.
 16. 'Kaffir tea', according to George Russell's *History of old Durban*, (Durban: Davis, 1899) was infused from an indigenous herb, *Athrixia phyllicifolia*, which was cheaper than the tea imported from the Cape, and was both 'nutritive and refreshing'.
 17. It is known that A.K. Murray sen. was in Pinetown in January 1851. James Ecroyd, a *Unicorn* passenger, who slept at Murray's hotel *en route* to Pietermaritzburg from Durban on the night of 7/8 January, describes the accommodation thus ... 'The beds were stretchers made of branches with strong canvas stretched across to sleep on. No mattress, simply a rug and a sheet to sleep on.' He was 'devoured by fleas. The dust floor had not been swept for weeks. There were four beds, all occupied. In the centre of the room was a large table at one end of which were bottles of brandy, gin, etc. & tumbler glasses. Two more travellers arrived in the night & finding all accommodation taken, each had a glass of brandy & went on.' James Ecroyd, *Letters*, 1850–51. (Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban)
 18. i.e. Esther, Robert and Martha.
 19. Possibly to Ladysmith.
 20. Archy and Janet's 6th child, Jessie, was born on 13 March 1851.
 21. Archy appears to have had this under construction by the latter quarter of 1850 when *Unicorn* passenger Donald Francis McDonald worked on it. Once completed McDonald described it as 'a fine large hotel...with every accommodation, such as stables, kraal & outhouses.' *Supra* Rita Bicksley.
 22. i.e. the Eighth Frontier War, 1850–53.
 23. This latter statement corroborates Horatio Vertue's avowal that he thought 'but little of a country that has no export, and I doubt if it ever will'.
 24. Horatio Vertue, writing in January 1850, maintained that 'wheaten bread', butter, milk and cheese were too expensive to eat.
 25. Joseph Charles Byrne, whose Natal Emigration and Colonization Co., brought 2 700-odd settlers to Natal during the years 1849–1851.
 26. Archy's stand here does not seem unreasonable. A number of emigrants paid the passages of other emigrants, family, servants, etc., and took their land allotments in return. A steerage passage cost £10. It would seem, however, that A.K. Murray sen. had expected that the 45 acres would be his.
 27. i.e. Archy's father, William Murray. See note 3.
 28. Esther married Edward William Tilney/Tinley in July 1851.
 29. J. S. Moreland, Byrne & Co.'s Natal agent, corroborates this. He noted *inter alia* in a letter to the *Natal Independent* in Mar. 1852 that, in one street in Pietermaritzburg there were 35 stores, and in Durban

- there were more than 60 – both towns having populations of about 1 500.
30. Presumably the Turner family mentioned at the end of the first letter. The cover of the third letter was initially addressed 'care of Mr Turner. ?Dunloskin, Dunoon, Scotland', but Murray later scored this out, substituting 'Kilmun, Scotland', the address to which the 4 August 1851 letter was despatched. Kilmun and Dunoon are across the Clyde from Greenock, within easy reach of Glasgow by water, to the extent that Dunoon was what one would now call a 'dormitory town' for prosperous Glasgow residents.
 31. John Dickson has deduced that the 9 June letter was not posted immediately and probably was carried to Cape Town on the *Douglas* which sailed for the Cape on 18 July, and left from Simon's Bay on *HMS Birkenhead* on 12 September 1851. His 4 August letter also reached England on this *Birkenhead* voyage (see his article 'The sea-borne mails of Natal: part II January 1851 to August 1852', *Natal and Zululand post* vol.2(3) Sep. 1998 pp.53–74).
 32. James Brickhill's Natal Ointment and Lotion, later known as his Natal Specific, the ingredients of which included Hottentot fig (*Aizoaceae*) and other Natal plants, was used for Natal sores. The first advertisements traced date to late 1851 (*Natal Witness* 28.11.1851, *Natal Times* 5.12.1851), but therein it was stated that it had been in production since 1843. The *Directory of Durban and Pietermaritzburg*, for 1853 shows there were three civilian doctors in Durban in 1852, two of whom (Dr Charles Johnston and Dr E.W. Holland) would have been in the town when Murray sought medical advice. Both landed from England in late 1849, so possibly when Murray consulted one or other of them in about May 1850, neither would have had much experience of local medicine.
 33. J.C. Byrne surrendered his estate in Sep. 1850. He was in Natal from July 1851 to April 1852 as agent, with Edward Parke Lamport, of the assignees of his own insolvent estate.
 34. The Andersons came, not on the *Jane Walker* as expected, but on the *Isle of Wight*, in September 1851. Prior to emigrating they had resided at Chryston, near Garnkirk, Lanarkshire. The party consisted of: William (1790–1873) and his wife Elizabeth (1797–1878), and children Isabella (1819–1900), Elizabeth (1825–96), Christiana (1828–98), Mary Ann (1834–1911), William Smith (born 1839) and Archibald Murray (1843–1936). Elizabeth, Christiana, Catherine and Mary Ann all married prominent Klip River County personalities, viz., respectively, David Newton, John Allison, Capt. Johannes Hermanus Marinus Struben, Klip River County's magistrate in the 1850s, and Humphrey Evans Knight. Archibald Murray Anderson has Pietermaritzburg connections in that he built and resided in *Aberfeldy*, New England Road, Scottsville.

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SHELAGH SPENCER

On arriving, Archy sold to advantage the stock of American pegged boots and shoes he had brought with him, and then moved inland. He purchased 1 381 acres of the farm *Salt River Poort* (which later came to be named the *Pinetown Estate*). In 1851 he laid out a township there and named it in honour of the newly-arrived Lt.-Governor Benjamin Pine. Besides his village allotments he also offered rural land to prospective buyers. He persuaded D.F. McDonald's father, Alexander, to settle in Pinetown in 1850 as the village teacher, and was much involved in organizing the construction of a Presbyterian Church in Pinetown, which opened early in 1852. The most well-known of Archy's 13 children was Sir Thomas Keir Murray (1854–1936) of *Cleland*, outside Pietermaritzburg, a cabinet-minister in the Natal Government, and founder of the rugby trophy, the Murray Cup.

When the Murray party arrived in March 1850, Natal had been a British colony for seven years, but only after its annexation as a district of the Cape Colony in 1845 did it have a structured administration with a Lieutenant-Governor, etc. Until the influx of over 4 000 British settlers to the Colony during the years 1849 to 1851, the economy was in a rudimentary state. Industries, if one could call them such, were brick-making (to which, in Pietermaritzburg, one could add tile-making), while in Durban, Samuel Beningfield had salt-pans, and James Napoleon Wheeler was making lime.

Attempts had been made to find exportable crops – the first cotton was grown as early as 1842 and sugar-canes were imported at the end of 1847. At the time emigration to Natal was being promoted, cotton was much vaunted as a possible staple, but, when it was investigated by a Manchester resident knowledgeable about the product, Alfred Southam, who came to the Colony in 1848 fully equipped to grow it, it was found that the only cultivation was by the largest landowners (and only in small acreages), merely to illustrate its luxuriant growth and thereby sell their land to prospective planters.

The new immigrants set about trying to find profitable crops. As an example, at *Wentworth* near the Bluff, Horatio Vertue, a Byrne immigrant ex *Aliwal*, 1849, decided on market gardening, because vegetables sold 'very dearly' in Durban, 'as no one takes the trouble to grow them'. He planted mealies, potatoes, broad beans, French beans, onions, turnips, carrots and radishes in virgin soil, but after six weeks, with the lack of rain and manure, the excessive heat and 'stiff breezes' drying out the land, he realised that success was eluding him. He remarks, 'What staggers me is, that no one cultivates the land⁷. At first I attributed it to the indolence of the people, but this opinion is somewhat altered'. He also observes that sometimes he thought the ground would grow nothing but Indian corn (i.e. mealies) and pumpkins. (In fact the 1850s came to be known by Natal settlers as the 'mealie and pumpkin years'.) To illustrate the vagaries of climate and soil within short distances, to the north-west, on the Durban side of the Umbilo river, J.L. Feilden, one of the few settlers with capital, was in 1854 successfully growing arrowroot, tobacco, coffee, yams, calabash, East India melons, citrus, bananas, pine-apples, figs and guavas, in addition to sugar and cotton. Settlers also tried other crops, e.g. indigo, coffee and chillies for cayenne pepper. Such was the diversity of experiments that Natal was dubbed the 'colony of samples'. Eventually sugar became the coastal staple, while for some years coffee and tea were also exported. Inland, to beef-farming was added wool, dairying and later wattle-bark as paying propositions.

After its peak in the period 1849 to 1851, due to the activity of emigration companies and societies, the flow of new settlers dwindled. Also the loss of new immigrants

that Murray highlights was added to after he had left, when the gold discoveries in Australia took their toll. Between 1852 and 1854 four ship-loads of Natalians sailed directly for Melbourne, while others made their way there via Cape Town or Mauritius. In 1852 the white population was calculated as 7 500-odd, while the 1857 return, despite a certain amount of private immigration in the intervening years, was 7 312

From 1858 onwards, as a result of a government-sponsored scheme, a new period of immigration began. Under its provisions, existing settlers could stand surety for the repayment of fares of friends, relations, or prospective employees. Then from 1866 to 1870 there was another scheme aimed at people with capital. In these ways immigration continued on a small scale, but, despite these moves, Natal as a destination was not in favour with the general 'immigrating public'. By 1872 the number of whites was only about 18 000.

Murray came to Natal intending to farm. His background was not of the kind that would have made him an ideal colonist. He was not in the first flush of youth. Also, his financial resources were minimal (not unexpected when one considers he had eight siblings, and a father who had been on half-pay even before marriage⁸). The fact that his passage was paid for by his cousin reinforces the impression that money was scarce. A member of the middle class, he was well-educated, but, not unexpectedly, had no trade. As an artisan he could have commanded wages of 5/- a day and more, instead of the 3/6 he earned as a labourer. These disadvantages were exacerbated by the fact that he arrived in the colony in a vulnerable state because of the injury to his leg. His condition, once he had landed, deteriorated because of Natal sores⁹ and the fact that despite ill-health he was obliged to work for his bread. Although he had relatives at hand, when he needed support, very little materialized. One cannot discount the fact that his health and the consequent handicap to his movements coloured his view of the Colony. To this, however, one must add disillusion occasioned by the highly favourable picture of Natal's prospects as advertised in the United Kingdom by J.C. Byrne & Co.

It is obvious that Murray came from a God-fearing family. Despite all his tribulations, he retained his faith and also hope that conditions would improve. In two of the letters he refers to his parents' queries as to the availability of churches in Natal and mentions the Methodist, Episcopalian and Presbyterian congregations. The Methodist connection began in 1842 when Revd James Archbell (1790–1866) was sent from the Cape to establish a mission in Natal. He and his family travelled from the Umngazi mouth in Pondoland with Capt. T.C. Smith and his force when they marched to Port Natal to assert British authority over the Boer republic of Natalia. The first permanent Anglican presence dates to February 1849 when the Revd James Green (1821–1906), later the capital's renowned Dean Green, arrived. Revd William Campbell (1802–1873), a Free Church of Scotland minister, landed in Natal in September 1850 on the *Unicorn* on a twelve-month leave of absence from his post as Free Church of Scotland minister at Alexandra Dunhill in the Presbytery of Dunbarton. Byrne & Co. gave him and his family assisted passages on the understanding that he would minister to the *Ina* and *Conquering Hero* passengers (which ships had previously sailed from the Clyde, each bearing a majority of Scots). He had been commissioned by the Free Church's Colonial committee to organize a church in Natal, uniting 'all the different denominations of Presbyterians into one body, without any reference to the particular views held by each at home, the causes of which could only exist there, and therefore could not form a