

Notes and Queries

LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE

Contributed by Jewel Koopman

The Alan Paton Centre celebrated its 20th Anniversary by organising a conference, which took place from 15 to 17 July 2009. This conference was a great success, in that it attracted a group of Alan Paton scholars, researchers and academics who gave some very interesting papers. The atmosphere at the conference was good, with much interaction and useful discussion after most of the papers. The venue was the Council Chamber of the UKZN Pietermaritzburg Campus. The conference, and the 16th Alan Paton Lecture, which formed part of the conference, was organised by the staff of the APC, Jewel Koopman and Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen.

The conference was opened by Prof. Ijumba, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research at UKZN, and by Mrs Anne Paton, Alan Paton's widow, and major donor of material to the Alan Paton Centre, who travelled from England in order to attend.

The keynote speaker was Professor Peter Alexander of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. He is a Paton scholar of renown, and the author of *Alan Paton: A Biography*. His new publication, *Alan Paton: Selected Letters*, where he has edited a large number of previously unpublished letters for the Van Riebeeck Society, was launched at the conference. His keynote speech was entitled 'I will give you the man: Paton's Spirituality', which took a fresh look at Paton's religious background and thought processes.

Peter Alexander also gave the 16th Alan Paton Lecture, which was entitled 'The Examined Life: Alan Paton as Autobiographer'. This excellent paper gave new insights into Alan Paton's writing of biographies, including the one on Roy Campbell, which he had decided not to write, but instead had handed over to Peter Alexander. At this function, speeches of welcome were made by Professor Donal

McCracken, Councillor Zanele Hlatshwayo, the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, and Dr David Paton, Alan Paton's son. The introduction was given by Dr David Levey, a Paton scholar who lectures at UNISA.

Two of the other delegates were from the USA: Prof Bernth Lindfors, Emeritus Professor of the University of Texas, and Anne Reef, of the University of Memphis, Tennessee. Prof. M.Z. Malaba came from the University of Namibia, and another delegate came from Nigeria. There were 24 papers altogether, 19 of which were presented by delegates from various South African universities. A second book written by a delegate was also launched: *The Imagination of Freedom: Critical Texts and Times in Contemporary Liberalism*, written by Andrew Foley, and published by the Witwatersrand University Press.

SHADOW GAME

Contributed by Shelagh Spencer

Last year saw the re-publication in the Penguin Modern Classics series of *Shadow game* by Pietermaritzburg resident Michael St George Power. First published in London by Michael Joseph in 1972 under the pseudonym Laurence Eben, it was reprinted as a Panther paperback

A cocktail party was held on the first evening in the Hexagon Dive, where Paul Datlen, Mbo Mtshali, Ntokozi Madlala and Diana Wilson read a selection of Alan Paton's poetry from *Songs of Africa*. A snack supper and birthday party was held on the second evening, after the Lecture. The conference ended with a 'Paton's Pietermaritzburg' literary tour, which was conducted by Prof Lindy Stiebel and Jewel Koopman.

A video of the conference is being made by Roger O'Neill, and the intention is to publish conference proceedings. The conference was sponsored by the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, and Corporate Relations. The Alan Paton Lecture was sponsored by the Liberal Democratic Association.

two years later. Treating as it does, with homosexual sex across the colour line, both editions were banned by the South African government. Power's earlier books were *Holiday* (1962) and *Gathering of golden angels* (1963).

ITALIAN GRAVES IN PIETERMARITZBURG

Contributed by Jack Frost

Previous issues of *Natalia* (*Natalia* 16, 1986 and *Natalia* 18, 1988) have published accounts of the presence of Italian prisoners of war in Pietermaritzburg during the 1940s. The POW camp stood beside the road to Durban in what was then virgin veld, where the suburb of Epworth has subsequently developed. The most tangible relic of their presence is the stone church which they built in 1943-4, dedicated

to *Madonna delle Grazie* (Our Lady of Graces).

After the war, the camp was closed and the church stood abandoned and neglected by the side of the Durban road. Vagrants on their way between the interior and the coast used it as an overnight shelter. Fires were lit in the nave and vandals removed the doors and smashed the stained glass windows. Mercifully, in the 1960s it was



The Mass is celebrated in the well-filled, beautifully restored church built by Italian prisoners of war.

rescued from ruin, restored and offered a measure of protection by being declared a national monument.

In 2008 it took on a new role as a military cemetery when the remains of Italian soldiers and civilians who had died during World War 2 and who had been buried in a cemetery in Hillary, Durban, were exhumed and re-interred in the grounds of the church. Along with the remains of prisoners of war who did not return to their homeland, now rest those of the many unknown individuals who perished following the sinking of the *Nova Scotia* off Cape St Lucia in 1942, an incident which resulted in the greatest loss of life in South African maritime history.

The *Nova Scotia*, a hired transport, was carrying not only returning South African servicemen, but 765 Italians, mostly civil internees from Eritrea, when she was struck by three torpedoes fired by U-177. The German captain was appalled when he discovered that he had sunk a ship carry-

ing his Italian allies and radioed for help, which resulted in a Portuguese ship rescuing 192 survivors, but some 750 lives were lost. Many of the bodies were later washed up on the beaches of Natal, unidentifiable and mutilated by sharks. They were presumed to be Italians and buried with other POWs in Hillary.

It is these remains which have been brought to Pietermaritzburg to rest, appropriately, in the precincts of a church built by their fellow-countrymen.

In October 2008 a Requiem Mass was con-celebrated in Italian by three priests. Not only was the little church packed to capacity with invited dignitaries, including the newly-appointed Italian ambassador to South Africa, but the overflow congregation filled a marquee in the grounds.

Wreaths were then laid in memory of those who had died far from their homeland by representatives of many organisations after the grave had been blessed and sprinkled with holy water.



The Italian consul lays the first wreath on the grave of Italian POWs who died during World War 2.

CHURCH RECORDS

A break-in and fire in April 2009 drew attention to the Natal Diocesan Archives in Pietermaritzburg. Many people do not know of its existence, and Natalia asked the present Archivist, Mary Gardner, to contribute a Note. She provided the following information.

The Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Natal began in the secretary's cupboard at the Old Deanery in Pietermaritzburg when St Saviour's Cathedral was demolished in 1981 after the parishes of St Saviour's and St Peter's had combined. Diane and Tim Scogings were asked by the new dean, John Forbes, to collect the registers and documents from both parishes and those from disused churches stored at St Saviour's, and to sort and pack them into the office accommodation.

The Archives had a nomadic existence to begin with, moving from the cupboard to Bishop Alfred Mkhize's office (to which

Diane had access when the Bishop was not using it), to the house ironically named Buckingham Palace because of its very many rooms (where the Care Shop now is), to various halls and rooms in the new Cathedral Centre and eventually to the room at the end of the passage on the first floor. To some people's amusement this was provided with a red light outside the substantial metal door to indicate that the Archives staff are present.

Diane, with her interest in genealogy, and, with advice and help from various people, set about creating a well-organised archives from which it was easy to access

information. Elaine Pechey, retired headmistress of Longmarket Girls' School, joined her in 1981 in Buckingham Palace. They created a parish archives for the new Cathedral of the Holy Nativity, but its reputation soon spread and it was decided to convert it into a diocesan archives. This change was discussed at meetings during the ensuing years and in 1985 it became a reality.

The Archives continued to flourish under the enthusiastic and able (but unpaid) care of Diane and Elaine, helped by many voluntary workers, mainly retired women and men, parishioners of local Anglican churches, one of whom, Elaine Peel, is now (2009) busy creating a similar archive in the Diocese of George. They rescued registers and other documents from belfries, dusty cupboards, floors of vestries, as well as from well-organised collections. A collection came down from Ladysmith after floods, and had to be dried. They had registers indexed and micro-fiched and drove to Johannesburg to hand copies of the micro-fiches to the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, which stores Anglican records.

They sorted and filed documents. They visited parishes as far afield as Stanger, collecting information and documents, photographing church vessels, furniture, stained glass windows, memorials and graves. A most comprehensive collection was built up. Volunteers combed through back numbers of the *Natal Witness* for relevant hatched, matched and dispatched notices and relevant reports, articles and social information. In the late 1800s and the early 1900s, particularly in Pietermaritzburg, the Bishop was often at the centre of social engagements, holding regular garden parties, which the officers of the regiments quartered at Fort Napier attended, and at which regimental bands often played. In 1968 Bishop Inman moved

his office and residence to Durban, though Pietermaritzburg remained the cathedral city.

In 2001 Diane and Tim Scogings went to live in New Zealand but Elaine Pechey continued to work in the Archives until 2006 and remains a consultant. In 1997 Mary Gardner became the first paid part-time worker, in 1999 Mary Mullinos was employed on a similar basis, and in 2006 Canon Dr Ian Darby was employed as researcher. Volunteers continue to come in regularly to assist.

The collection was constantly added to until further rooms were required, one for the registers, then another for documents from the diocesan office in Durban office. A fourth room became necessary as more documents came in from the Don Africana Library and the university's Killie Campbell Africana Library, both in Durban. The registers and documents date from 1849, when the Colonial Chaplain, Revd W.H.C.Lloyd, was appointed by the Colonial Secretary and was based in Durban. Documentation of various kinds continues to arrive, sometimes consisting of one sheet of paper or one photograph, sometimes boxes of documents or books, and albums of photographs.

There is a collection of Bishop Colenso's papers and of the papers of all the Bishops who have succeeded him. Most bishops, particularly during the apartheid years, were involved to a greater or lesser extent in political matters, and this was specially true of Bishop Michael Nuttall who played a role in various crucial negotiations in the province. (This is also true of the present bishop, Rubin Phillip, but his papers are not yet available.) All documentation relating to the Anglican Church in Natal, and sometimes that from further afield, is stored here, as are the records of all the ecumenical and non-church organisations in which Anglican clergy or prominent lay

people have been involved. These records include both formal documents, such as reports and minutes of various meetings, and informal ones such as letters, memoirs, and articles, from parishes or individuals. Among many other things, the difficult lives of the early clergy, the large areas covered by some parishes, the circumstances of catechists, are often startling and eye-opening. As the Archives is largely dependent on what is supplied to it, there is far more information about some parishes than about others. There is, for example, a great deal about Springvale Mission near Highflats and St James, Morningside, but almost nothing about some parishes, large and small, rural and urban.

These documents are available to researchers, and have been used in the writing of histories, articles, theses, long essays. Researchers are asked to donate a copy of their writings to the Archives.

The bound copies of church magazines are fascinating sources of religious, social and personal information about what happened in the past. For many years St Peter's published its own magazine, *St Peter's Bells*, while the St Saviour's equivalent was named, variously, *St Saviour's Journal*, *Natal Diocesan Magazine*, *St Saviour's and the Midlands Church Chronicle*. *St Peter's Bells* limited itself to the doings of St Peter's and its daughter churches in Maritzburg, while the St Saviour's magazines drew reports from churches throughout the Diocese. Churches in other areas also published magazines. The longest-lasting was *The Vineyard*, a diocesan magazine, which continued until 1969. These are invaluable sources for researchers.

In addition to their other responsibilities, the Archives staff conduct tours of St Peter's and the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity. Reactions to the latter building are often very strong, people either liking the very modern design or hating it! The

staff are also responsible for setting up displays when a parish has either a centenary or another significant anniversary and asks for the display, or for events such as Heritage Week. The most recent display was at St Christopher's Church in Sobantu for its 70th anniversary. For displays, of course, anecdotes and photographs are very necessary, so relevant contributions are always welcome.

The tsunami of paper work coming in to be sorted, recorded and filed has been made more difficult to handle by a recent burglary and fire. The Archives had installed a new computer, and this became the object of burglars, who stole it and spread chaos in the work room during the night of Monday 20th April 2009.

The chaos was sorted out, and the room locked up on the Tuesday evening, but the old computer, rejected by the burglars, had been left and the Uninterrupted Power Supply box knocked over. Here a slow fire quietly developed over Wednesday, which was Election Day and a public holiday. On Thursday morning the staff were confronted by billows of smoke and foul-smelling soot. Luckily the metal security door (which had come from the firm of Accountants, James Craib, Winterton and Turner, previously occupying Buckingham Palace) which was designed to protect the main Archives room from burglary and fire, had in fact kept air out so that the fire, starved of oxygen, burnt itself out, and no documents were lost.

The window above the computer was cracked but not broken: otherwise the devastation would have been enormous and many irreplaceable documents would have been lost.

So there is no lasting damage, but every book, every document, in fact almost every page or sheet of paper was smothered in soot, and these have all to be cleaned painstakingly by being vacuumed, brushed

and dabbed with special sponges before they can be put back into the repainted rooms. It is an enormous job. Two of the once-a-week volunteers, Pixie Griffin and Brian Spencer, came almost daily for some weeks to help. We donned our oldest clothes, medical masks and plastic goggles, and faced the task. Its effect on our appearance can be judged by the fact that Pixie was asked by a neighbour if she had been to the hairdresser and had her hair darkened!

It is impossible to list everything that is in the Archives. Anyone who is interested may come in to see what there is. Researchers are welcome; and there are many subjects which warrant research. The Archives welcomes anything that might be of interest as people clear out attics or trunks or search through papers and books left by those who have died. Some copies of magazines are missing and might be lurking in some forgotten trunk. We hope that in 2050 researchers at the Archives

will be able to find valuable information not only about what we regard as the past but about our current activities, including experiences that are sometimes tragic, sometimes entertaining.

We get requests from all over the world for help with copies of certificates. For example: 'I was baptised sometime in the 1930s but I don't know exactly when, nor do I know which church. I think it may have been somewhere in Durban'. Or: 'I have to give a speech about the wood-and-iron church kits that were used in the 1800s. Can you give me any information?'

We are usually able to respond to such requests. There is no need for anyone to crawl under the stage in a church hall and wade through unsorted cardboard boxes of documents. We can go to the computer, the micro-fiche, the box-files, the filing cabinets, the bound volumes and usually find what is being sought.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MACS

Moray Comrie writes:

The Midlands Arts and Crafts Society, better known as MACS, was constituted in 1984. Its declared mission was 'to enrich the life of the community by providing a creative environment for art and craft appreciation and development', and the founders identified a number of objectives. First amongst them was 'to encourage art and craft of a high standard, with strong emphasis on originality and creativity'. Interaction between artists and craftspeople in various disciplines, including the performing arts, was to be facilitated and there should be co-operation with other organisations with similar interests. Regular exhibitions would give exposure to the work of local artists and craftspeople and help to 'promote public awareness

and appreciation of artistic quality'. The support of children's work was mentioned, and there was to be a catalogue listing local artists and craftspeople for the information of the public and other interested parties.

From an early stage MACS was provided with premises at a nominal rental by the Msunduzi municipality, first in a small house on Prince Alfred Street above what is now the Camps Drift canal, and then at 173 Alexandra Road. These premises provided accommodation for many of the activities organised by the society. There have been regular programmes of classes, courses in workshops covering the techniques of such skills as drawing, painting, creative knitting, beadwork, felting, mosaic-making and the like, and MACS has indeed

provided a focal point for gatherings of a diversity of creative people. There have also been monthly exhibitions, lunchtime talks, poetry readings and shows of 'wearable art', a year-end sale of products and so on. Under the leadership of internationally respected craftsperson Jutta Faulds as its seemingly perennial president, MACS steadfastly maintained its commitment to high standards, its rejection of the commonplace and kitsch, and an originality verging on quirkiness.

In many ways, MACS has achieved its objectives and made a significant contribution to fostering the creative arts and crafts in the community, although many of the people active in the Midlands proper gradually have fallen away and the membership has largely been made up of middle to upper class 'Maritzburg suburbanites. Apart from the periodic organisation of a 'teachers' forum', not much attention has been given to children's art, and the register of local artists and craftspeople has not materialised. In fact, beyond a stable core of passive supporters and a small number of regular participants in its activities, instead of expanding over the years MACS has experienced a steady exodus of members.

One of the features of the Alexandra Road house was the popular coffee shop that drew many visitors and greatly in-

creased public awareness of the society and its activities.

The African Art Centre also found accommodation in MACS house, and there was a second-hand book outlet and small boutique together with the craft outlet. In recent years, however, recurrent thefts and vandalism drained both the energies and the coffers of the society so that closure looked imminent.

In late 2008 a decision was made to move to smaller and more secure premises. Declining an offer to retain access to the studio and gallery space and to maintain the coffee shop and a small arts and crafts outlet at Alexandra Road, the executive chose to jettison these appendages and move out completely. MACS marked its 25th anniversary in its new home in Haldane Road in Pelham.

With the branch library and other municipal divisions moving into the house, MACS Art House has become Library House. Library Director John Morrison has envisaged a thriving community centre there. The coffee shop has remained, and with new activities coming in and some former MACS groups gravitating back to the studio, together with the holding of an exhibition by local artists in May, perhaps the first steps towards realising that vision have been taken.

A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE WRECKED MINERVA, 1850

*Natalia 32 carried a note on the photograph of the wreck of the Minerva. Brian Kearney takes the matter further.*¹

A photograph, purportedly of the *Minerva* (Fig. 1) has been widely published as an illustration of the remains of the vessel which was wrecked on the Bluff rocks on 5 July 1850.

However, there are a number of reasons for questioning its authenticity. It appears

that it was first used in a newspaper article written by Captain Alex Anderson in the 1920s where he described several early wrecks off Durban.

Anderson was a colourful character, the son of Captain William Anderson, a harbour pilot, and he had grown up at the Point



Fig. 1: The newspaper photograph purportedly of the wrecked Minerva.

in the mid nineteenth century. He went to sea as a young lad and his experiences were vividly told in his delightful book *Windjammer Yarns* which was published in London in 1923.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century he became one of the pioneers in the deep sea fishing industry off the Natal coast. Anderson gave several radio broadcasts in the 1920s about life in early Durban and the Point and transcripts of these and his newspaper interviews are contained in his manuscripts in the Campbell Collections of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As he grew older his accounts became more quaint, and were laced with much hyperbole.

The caption to the photograph read 'This unique photograph, the property of Captain Anderson, the writer of the accompanying article, is probably the only one in existence showing the wreck of the East India Company's fine frigate, carrying 300

pioneer colonists. She is seen here on the Bluff rocks'. The *Minerva* was the largest of the ships chartered by Byrne to carry emigrants to Natal. She had been built in Bombay in 1812 as a frigate and still had gunports on the lower decks and quarter galleries but had been converted by the East India Company to carry passengers.

The ship anchored in 12 fathoms of water on Wednesday 3 July 1850, but the situation at the outer anchorage off Durban was not acceptable to Port Captain William Bell and pilot Archer. However, Captain Moir of the *Minerva* declined to move his vessel. When Bell sent Archer out again on Thursday with instructions to shift the *Minerva* to another anchorage, this was not possible due to a change in the wind direction.

After drifting that night towards the Bluff rocks, the ship was wrecked in the early hours of Friday morning. All the passengers were saved, though they lost

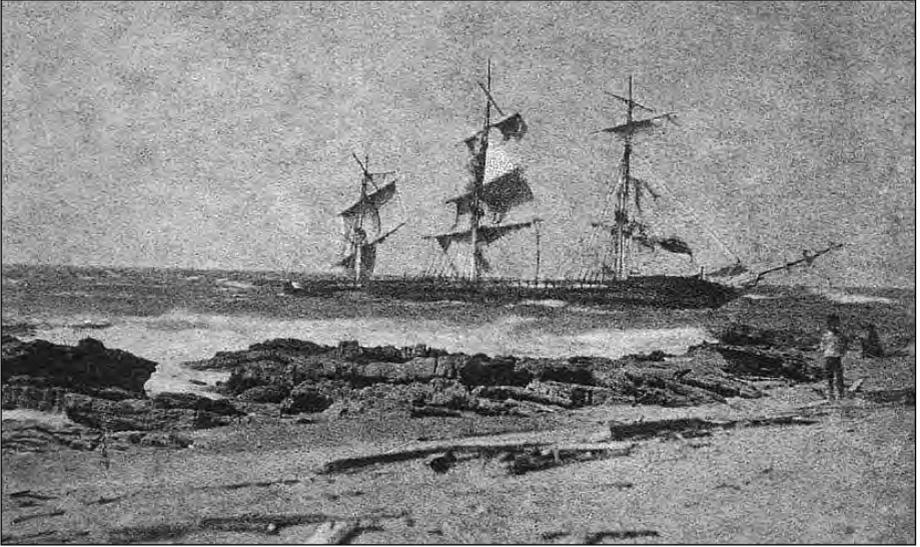


Fig. 2: A photograph of the wrecked Defiance, 1871.

most of their possessions and they came ashore on Friday. A seaman from another ship, the *Henrietta*, was drowned in a rescue attempt.

All the accounts describe how the ship broke up progressively during that day and the *Natal Witness* of 12 July claimed that within 24 hours wreckage was strewn for miles along the beaches. George Russell, a young boy at the time, stated that ‘she became a total wreck immediately after all on board had been safely landed’.²

Anderson was four years old at the time. His photograph required a photographer to have been present in Durban and to have crossed over from the Point to the Bluff, through the distressed crowds of survivors and rescuers, where a camera could be placed above the rocks to record the remains of the vessel.

According to Bensusan³ the first studio photographer in South Africa was W. Bing of Grahamstown in 1846. The first photographic studio in Durban was that of Burgess in 1857, followed by Brock’s in 1859 and several other in the 1860s. Their

equipment was specifically for studio purposes with cameras needing long exposure times and it is not likely that they could be used outside or easily carried around.

The first private individual recorded as possessing a camera in Natal was Bishop Colenso who used one in 1858 to record his house at Bishopstowe. So if the vessel was in an advanced state of collapse and there were no cameras or photographers in Natal in July 1850, how can one explain Anderson’s photograph and one which showed a fairly intact vessel?

While I was Acting Director of the Campbell Collections of the University of Natal in 1996, I spent much time browsing through the collections and elsewhere at Muckleneuk. At the back of an old stationery cupboard I found a cardboard box with glass photographic negatives. I recognised most of them as being illustrations which Alex Anderson had used in his book *Windjammer Yarns*. Four years later when Denzil Bazley’s publication *Nil Desperandum: The Bazley Story*, appeared, I was struck by something vaguely

familiar about an illustration which he used on page 82. This was of the wreck of the *Defiance*, which had run aground near the Umzimkulu River on 6 October 1871.

I thought nothing more of it at the time until writing up the stories of the shipwrecks off Durban when I began to question Anderson's photograph. Scanning the photograph of the *Defiance* and inverting the image produced a picture remarkably like that of the *Minerva*. [Fig 2]

Is it possible that Anderson had used a glass negative of this photograph and inverted it to produce one of a ship pointing in the right direction, towards the north? Anderson's daughter Kathleen was an accomplished artist, who had herself produced at least one painting of an event which had happened long before her time. This was of the commencement of the first Natal Railway in 1860. She may have been asked by her father to unwittingly contribute to a forgery by providing figures on the beach and the rocks in the foreground and to change the rigging which was different from that of the *Defiance*. For this she probably used a painting by Sanderson of the wreck of the *Minerva*. All of this would be quite easy with a glass negative.

McCord Hospital

McCord Hospital – which opened its doors for the first time one hundred years ago – has a fascinating history. It was officially opened in May 1909 by Dr James McCord who, with his wife Margaret, had come to South Africa from the USA, sent by the American Board of Missions to work at Adams Mission in Amanzimtoti.

Before opening the hospital they worked from a dispensary in Beatrice Street, with the phenomenal nurse, Katie Makhanya. They performed minor operations, dispensed medicine and spread the faith of non-denominational Christianity.

In addition, comparing Anderson's photograph with a number of paintings of the *Minerva*, which would have been painted after the wreck, shows a different ship. I have also been unable to find any earlier use of the photograph before the 1920s, which is most surprising given the significance of the wreck in the lives of many colonists.

Finally we have the words of Anderson himself where he described the photograph as 'unique' and 'probably the only one in existence'. If it was a forgery it would certainly have been the only one in existence.

NOTES

- 1 After I had sent this note to *Natalia* for inclusion in the journal, a member of the editorial committee contacted me to ask whether I was aware of the piece which had been written by Shelagh O'Byrne Spencer and published in *Notes and Queries*, *Natalia* 32, December 2002. I was not aware of Shelagh's article and thus I imagine that this strengthens the case against the ship in the photograph being the *Minerva*. It also supports the explanation that a photograph of the *Defiance* was used to create the picture.
- 2 Russell, G, *The History of Old Durban*, p. 80.
- 3 Bensusan, AD, *Nineteenth Century Photographers in South Africa*, *Africana Notes and News*, Vol 15, No 6, pp. 219–252.

Moving onto the Berea was quite an adventure, as in those days it was on the outskirts of the city, where elephants still roamed in the forested environment. The city changed over the years and the emerging white suburbanites were unhappy about having a hospital with mainly black patients on their doorstep. The hospital even attracted the attention of Hendrik Verwoerd, who also tried to close it down in the days of apartheid, but with no success.

However, the McCord Hospital (then known as the McCord Zulu Hospital) held

firm to its vision, which is represented by the cross on the building – a longstanding symbol of Christian witness. The backbone of the hospital has always been the dedicated and caring nurses. This institution was one of the first in the country to have training programmes for black nurses, starting in 1914.

Dr Taylor and Dr McCord were also instrumental in the establishment of the

Durban Medical School, which is still an important part of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Dr James McCord was succeeded by superintendents who were as dedicated and committed as he was. These were Dr Alan Taylor, Dr Howard Christofersen, Dr Cecil Orchard, Dr Trevor Anderson and Dr Helga Holst.

– With acknowledgements to
The Mercury

JOHN MORTIMER

Bill Bizley reports on links between a British author and Natal:

The death in January 2009 of the British lawyer, author and playwright, John Mortimer – famous as the creator of the ‘Rumpole’ series – will be of particular interest to readers of *Natalia*, especially as regards the author’s antecedents in Natal. Mortimer’s grandfather, also John, was a partner in the firm Bale and Mortimer, while his father John (about whom Mortimer wrote the prize-winning biography *A Voyage Round My Father*) won prizes in the 1900s for his literary compositions whilst a scholar at Michaelhouse.

At the end of the apartheid era, author Mortimer paid a visit to South Africa in 1992, and his very readable account of his visit makes up Chapter 22 of what was his final autobiographical work, *Murderers and Other Friends* (Viking, 1994). His satirical eye was as lively as ever, as when he observed the black waitresses at the

Granny Mouse hotel ‘dressed up as Beatrix Potter illustrations’, and wondered at the ‘bewildered teddy bear’ that awaited him there in the lavatory of his bathroom.

With a sharp nose for family scandal, he records that his Edwardian aunt Gertrude Pechey – who specialised in cockney accents and sang ‘Twilight’ to the mandolin – may indeed have advertised herself as Mrs Norma Pechey, but (says Mortimer) was in fact mistress to that ‘savagely old general’ Sir Duncan McKenzie, of Bhambatha fame. ‘Gertie’ survived into the second half of the twentieth century, holding court on the polished verandah of *Dimity Cottage*, which readers might remember as a dentist’s consulting room in Pietermaritz Street, (more or less opposite Deanery Lane) and which lasted well into the 1980s.

(Ref Mortimer: 1994, 220/1).

THE NAMING OF OXEN

Submitted by Adrian Koopman

The wagon was one of the Boer’s most cherished possessions. He drove it himself, taking pride in the skill which he attained in the use of the long whip; in the co-ordination of the animals’ strength when confronted with heavy

constructions. When the road was good, he sat upon the *voor-kist*, calling out the names of his beasts as they happened to slacken in exertion or speed. The oxen knew their respective names and instantly responded to the call.

Thus James Young Gibson, writing on 'The Kap-tent Wagon' in the July 1918 issue of *The South African Journal of Science*.

Many writers of narratives of exploration set in the days of ox-wagon travel devote some pages to the actual niceties of travel in this manner. The point is often made that when the wagon encounters difficulties in the way steep hills, crossing rivers, going over large boulders or through deep mud, it is not the brute strength of the 16 or 18 oxen that eventually gets the wagon through, but the intimate knowledge the driver has of the individual abilities and strengths of each ox in the team. In such cases the driver calls to each ox in turn, perhaps with a deft tap of the long whip on the shoulders of the ox, or, more likely, by calling it by name.

Sir Percy Fitzpatrick in his much-loved *Jock of the Bushveld*, makes similar reference in, talking of an experienced driver attempting to pass another wagon stuck on a hill (1984:133):

We were halfway up when we saw old Charlie coming along steadily and without any fuss at all, He had no second driver to help him and he did no shouting. He walked along heavily and with difficulty beside the span, playing the long whip lightly about as he gave the word to go or called quietly to individual oxen by name, but he did not touch them.

As Gibson points out (1918:5), not only did each ox have a name, each had a fixed place in the team, these positions being guided by characteristics and aptitudes displayed by the oxen when in training. These positions, for a 12-ox team, were named as follows, with *hot* depicting the near or left side, and *haar* referring to the off or right side:

The front yoke was *hot voor* and *haar voor*, and these two oxen were the most experienced, trustworthy and strong members of the team. Behind them were the

naast voor pair, and behind them the *op acht*. Behind them again were the *op zes* pair, behind them the *naast achter*, and *achter* referred to the 'wheel oxen' nearest the driver. These oxen, like those in *voor* position had to be particularly strong, as they were also carrying the *disselboom*, or wagon-shaft.

It is interesting to note that four of these positions have entered the Zulu language, with *ifolosi*, *inasifolo*, *inasitela* and *itilosi* respectively meaning front-ox, next-to-front-ox, next-to-back ox and back-ox respectively. In present times when ox-wagon driving is next to non-existent, the terms *inasitela* and *isasifolo* have disappeared from common usage, but *ifolosi* and *itilosi* are words with new life, referring respectively to front-line players (strikers) and back-line players (defenders) in such team sports as soccer.

Fitzpatrick gives the names of six oxen in the narratives of Jock (1918:136):

'Achmoed and Bakir, the big after-oxen who carried the disselboom contentedly through the trek', 'little Zole, contented, sociable and short of breath', 'Bantom, the big red ox with the white band, lazy and selfish, with an enduring evil obstinacy'; 'Rooiland, the light red, with yellow eyeballs and topped horns, a fierce, wild and unapproachable creature', and 'then there was old Zwaartland, the coal-black front ox, ... the sober, steadfast leader of the span, who knew his work by heart and answered with quickened pace to any call of his name.'

Of these six, Achmoed and Bakir with their faintly Muslim-sounding names, and Zole, are individual names which do not occur in any pattern, and (as far as my own research goes) are found in *Jock of the Bushveld* and no other source.

The other three are typical of a pattern, a system of naming which is open-ended and creative, allowing for the compounding of elements which theoretically could

create more and more ox names. Normally, in this system, a reference is made to the colour or colouring/markings of the ox, to which another element may be added. In Fitzgerald's list above, 'Bantom', more commonly 'Bandom', refers to an animal with a band of a different colour around the beast. In Rooiland and Zwartland the colour terms *rooi* ('red') and *zwaart* ('black') are suffixed with *land*, which could either mean 'countryside' or 'field'. Another two common suffixes are *berg* ('mountain') and *man* ('man'). It was accepted that *-berg* referred to a particularly strong ox, as immovable as a mountain.

Blaauw ('blue, blue-grey, grey'), *rooi* or *roodt* ('red'), *bruin* ('brown'), *wit* ('white'), *vaal* ('pale, tawny'), *donker* ('dark, dark-brown'), *bont* ('speckled, multi-coloured') could all in theory be combined with *-land*, *-berg*, and *-man* to produce a number of ox-names like Blaauwberg, Witteberg, Vaalman, Rooiland, Donkerland, Zwaartberg, Zwaartman, and Bruinman. An ox with a *bles* ('white blaze') could be Blesbok, Blesman or, if strong enough, Blesberg. Another, with a cross-like marking on the back could be Kruisland or Kruisman.

Gibson (1918:5) gives us Jan Bloed ('John the blood-coloured'), Vaaltyn or Vaaltuijn ('tawny garden'), Geelbek ('yellow muzzle'), Akkerman ('ploughman'), Opperman ('labourer'), Bloem ('flower'), Boekhouder ('book-keeper'), Dwengeland ('tyrant'), Engeland ('England'), Fransman ('Frenchman'), Jonkman ('young man'), Landsman ('rustic'), Makman ('tame man') and Koopman ('merchant').

Burman (1988:30) has given us the names of an authentic 1852 team of 10 oxen: Colesberg, Human, Wildman, Platberg, Vryman, Sausman, Oortman, Kleinveld, Engeland and Koopman.

He adds, amusingly enough, that 'Engeland and Engelsman were usually the most refractory or worst pullers in the team'

and were placed near the back of the team where they could feel more strongly the weight of the whip.

Many of these ox-names have been adopted, and phonologised, into the Zulu language, and from modern-day examples of Zulu ox names, we get an even clearer picture.

In Zulu, Afrikaans/Dutch *-berg* become *-behe*, and it is found in names like uBhulobehe (Blouberg), uTafulibehe (Tafelberg) and uBontibehe (Bontberg). The suffix *-man* is found in uSoyisimani (Sausman), uAkelimani (Akkerman) and uGopumani (Koopman) all of which we have already noted above, and well as in the additional uLasimani (last man), uDayimani (daai man 'that man'), uGwayimani (kwaai man 'angry man') and uVelemani (vuil man 'dirty man'). Zulu also uses the suffix *-futhi* (*voet*) as in uVitifuthi (Witvoet 'white foot'), uLefuthi (luivoet 'lazy foot'), and uVelefuthi (vuilvoet 'dirty foot').

Other Zulu examples from my own research include uKhafalande (Kaffir lande), uSikhohlande (Scotland), uBokvele (Bokvel 'buckskin'), uLentusi (Lente Oes 'spring harvest'), uFethiboyi (Fat boy) and uLenkhasi (Ringhals, the Afrikaans word for a species of cobra, but in this case literally 'ring-collar', referring to such a marking).

Mzamane's 1962 work on Afrikaans adoptives in Southern Nguni gives just a few more examples to round off the picture: uFalimeyisi (Vaal muis 'tawny, dun mouse'), uLenkalisi (Rinkhals 'always indicating a white ring around the neck'), and uLomani (Rooi man 'red beast'). Mzamane's inclusion of uKaflani (kaffir lande) in a list of colour terms suggests that this name is used for black or dark-coloured beasts.

The Great Trek – that highly emotive historical event in Afrikaner culture – is long since over. Transport riding, for many

years before the advent of the railways the only way goods from the harbours could reach the inlands, and for many black and white people an important source of income – this too, is long since over. There are possibly, in some impoverished rural areas, where even a single tractor is still beyond the means of the farmer, oxen drawing a plough. Here, in these residual onomastic fields, where the descendants of Blaauwberg and Witteberg, of Ringhals and Bandom, of Daaiman and Kwaaiman, are still asked, by name, to pull a little harder, we may still be able to find the remnants of South Africa's ox-naming past.

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