

## *Henry Ogle*

H. F. FYNN'S diary describes Ogle as a 'mechanic'—one of three who arrived on the *Julia* in May<sup>1</sup>. This party organised by Francis Farewell consisted of some Hottentot servants and a crew of about 20. The mechanics were to build a 'factory' in readiness for the later arrival of Farewell and other members of the party. At this time Ogle was 20 years old and one of the only three Englishmen in the party, the others being Fynn and Cane. Ogle had come to the Cape as an 1820 settler of the Mouncey party.

Fynn tells the story of the first night's camp in the rain, when in spite of a smoky fire, they were attacked by 'wolves', and Ogle had to fight to recover from the enemy all but one leg of his leather trousers with a Dutch 60 dollar note in the pocket; thereafter he helped to beguile the tedium of the long night with his singing.

They built a 12-foot 'factory' of wattle and daub where the Durban Post Office now stands, Ogle's and Cane's huts being close by.

After the July 1824 attempt on the life of Shaka and Fynn's share in his recovery, Fynn urged the newly arrived Farewell to visit Shaka to congratulate him on his recovery. Ogle was one of the party who visited the royal capital near the Mhlatuzi. They persuaded Shaka to grant them the land called 'Bubolango' about the port, extending 100 miles inland and 25 miles along the coast. A copy of this grant, signed on 7th August 1824, can be seen in the Local History Museum in Durban.

Gradually Ogle and the others built up protected refugee areas on the Bluff and around the Bay — from being empty territory it had by 1827 an estimated population of 4000.

When Gardiner arrived in 1835, Ogle urged him to start the Berea mission overlooking the Bay. He was a member of the first Christian congregation at the Port. Together with Gardiner, James Collis, F. J. Berkin and John Cane he was elected to the first town committee of what was named D'Urban, but as they kept no records we do not know the extent of their work. Ogle was also a signatory of the petition of 30 residents of the Port, to request the British to annex the area between the Umzimkulu and Tugela Rivers as 'Victoria Colony'.

Ogle accompanied Gardiner on the interesting journey to the Cape in 1835, together with Dick King, George Cyrus, John Wyngart and their servants. As the route along the coast was cut off beyond Faku's country by the generally disturbed conditions resulting from the frontier war of 1834-5, Gardiner's party initially tried unsuccessfully to cross the Drakensberg. After traversing the area now known as Underberg and then striking southwards they returned to the Mpondo country of Faku, and finding that the hostilities had ceased followed the recognised route.

Back at the Port, Ogle was a signatory to the welcome address to Piet Retief, approving of Trekker settlement in Natal.

After the murder of the Retief party in February 1838, Ogle accompanied Cane's *Locusts* on a commando expedition of 2000 Durban natives to march against Dingane. Instead they raided a minor chief to retrieve stolen cattle and there was no fighting. Later in the year Ogle refused to participate in Alexander Biggars' second commando expedition though he had been created 'captain' over a contingent of 700 friendly Tuli warriors of Chief Umnini on the Bluff. Without his leadership they defected before the disastrous battle which resulted.

Immediately afterwards Dingane's *impis* attacked the Port in April 1838, occupied it and for nine days spread destruction while the settlers sought refuge on ships or on Salisbury Island in the Bay. When the *Comet* left for Delagoa Bay on the 11th May, only eight or nine men remained to build up the settlement again. One of them was Henry Ogle. Soon they were reinforced by groups of refugee Trekkers who under Karel Landman established three laagers around the Bay.

When a small British force under Major Charters briefly occupied Natal in 1838-9 to endeavour to restore peace between the Trekkers and Dingane, and perhaps prevent the formation of a separate Trekker government, Captain Jervis who was left in charge succeeded, through Ogle, in opening negotiations with Dingane. An agreement was reached that the Tugela was to be the recognised boundary between the Zulu and the Trekkers, but the arrangement was never effective because of the Battle of Blood River and the subsequent withdrawal of the British force. Ogle would have met the young Theophilus Shepstone who was a member of the expedition.

The rest of Ogle's life was quieter and less eventful. He was destined to become the oldest white settler in Natal — the only one of the original settlers to make a permanent home in Natal. He died on February 20th, 1860, the anniversary of the day on which he first set foot on Natal soil.

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