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Cover illustration

Detail from 'Reflecting a Vision of South African Culture', a richly-decorated panel made in 1996 by the Indian women of Pietermaritzburg for the Victoria & Albert Museum's Shamiana Mughal Tapestry exhibition in London. The panel, one of 30 contributed from Indian communities around the world, was facilitated by the Natal Museum and the Tatham Art Gallery. The *SS Truro* featured in the panel carried the first indentured Indians to South Africa in 1860. The V&A exhibition toured England and Scotland and the World Trade Centre at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. (By kind permission of the Natal Museum where the panel is kept.) Photograph by Peter Croeser.

ERRATUM

Readers of *Natalia* 39 may have been puzzled by the heading 'Life in the Slow Lane' which appeared above Jewel Koopman's Note on p.94, and was totally unrelated to the content. This was, in fact, the proper heading of a Note by Adrian Koopman that had appeared in the previous issue (*Natalia* 38). The error occurred during the typesetting and layout process, and was unfortunately not noticed during proofreading. Jewel Koopman's note should have been headed 'The Alan Paton Centre 20th Anniversary Conference'.

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Editorial

ONE OF THE features which distinguishes *homo sapiens* from the rest of the animal kingdom is our consciousness of the passage of time. Birthdays and anniversaries of various kinds are duly marked and those which are multiples of ten seem to attract particular attention. The year 2010 has seen a wide variety of these: the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the centenary of the establishment of the Union of South Africa, the 200th anniversary of the birth of the composer Frederick Chopin are but a few. Closer to home, *Natalia* itself has reached what seems to be a corpulent middle age with the production of this its 40th issue.

Last year, marking the 60th anniversary of the granting of the charter which changed it from a constituent college of the University of South Africa into an independent university and looking towards the 2010 centenary of the establishment of tertiary education in this province, we published an article on the University of Natal at a time when official recognition of this event appeared unlikely. However, various faculties and departments of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as diverse as Chemistry and Law have organised centennial events – thereby, it seems, dragging the authorities of the University as a whole into a belated acknowledgment of this milestone. And 150 years ago, 1860 saw both the introduction of Indian indentured labourers and the coming of the railway to Natal. We are grateful to Duncan du Bois and Michael Cottrell respectively for commemorative articles. Our front cover, too, has been specially chosen in reference to Indian immigration.

The Anglo-Boer War, like the Anglo-Zulu War, continues to attract scholarly attention. A 110th Anniversary Conference held in Ladysmith in January drew no fewer than 150 delegates and various international as well as local speakers. One of the latter was Professor Johan Wassermann who has provided us with a sympathetic article on the unenviable position of Afrikaners in Natal who remained loyal to the Crown at a time when the entire northern portion of the colony was under Boer occupation. Sadly, they received little recognition from the colonial authorities of the sacrifices they made.

Another Anglo-Boer War theme is that of the so-called concentration camps for Boer women and children. Not many people are aware that one of these was set up in Pietermaritzburg on the hillside opposite the Botanical Gardens. Elizabeth van Heyningen offers a fascinating insight into life in this camp, mercifully a less miserable existence for those interned there than in camps elsewhere.

The related topic of prisoners of war in Pietermaritzburg, albeit of a later era, is explored by Stephen Coan with regard to World War II German POWs held in a camp adjacent to that of the Italians on the road to Durban, their general locality still indicated by the happily restored shale church which the latter built.

The three *Spud* novels have been a publishing phenomenon, making their creator John Van de Ruit South Africa's top-selling author. By the time *Natalia* appears, the *Spud* film will have been released. Besides local popularity, however, they have also attracted academic attention and we are grateful to Janice Robertson for a perceptive article.

Bill Bizley, a long-standing member of the *Natalia* editorial committee, has made significant contributions to the journal over the years. In this issue he offers a substantial piece on the Industrial and Commercial Union which styled itself the first black trades' union in the world and, astonishingly, in the late 1920s was able to stand up to the white political establishment with a protective police presence and the support of the Supreme Court before internal dissension led to its demise.

To complete this offering of articles, our previously unpublished piece this year comprises the memories of Mary Carlyle Mitchell, a daughter of John Bird, of the Pietermaritzburg of the 1870s and 1880s, who paints a picture of a town as far removed from the teeming and dirty Pietermaritzburg CBD of 2010 as if it had been on a different planet.

Adding to the size of *Natalia* 40, some of our notes are substantial. Dr T.R. Moodley has been inspired by the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Indian community to record the story of his remarkable grandmother, Annamah Vather, who threw off the shackles of conservative Indian society to become a prominent landowner in Pietermaritzburg. And although she did not become a property baroness, Isabella Giles, the wife of a young midlands farmer in the 1860s could have had no easier a life than Vather. Val Ward tells her story.

Shelagh Spencer, another long-serving member of the *Natalia* editorial committee was recognised for her life-long research into early colonial settlers in Natal with the award of an honorary doctorate by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She was invited to address the other graduates at that particular ceremony and we publish her speech on African genealogies as another substantial item in the Notes and Queries section.

The Grim Reaper continues to do his work and, as usual, we publish obituaries of prominent Natalians who have died since *Natalia* 39 appeared, among them Simon Roberts, a long-serving member and sometime chairman of the Natal Society Council.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the past year is that, in a digital age, the entire *Natalia* corpus going back to its first issue in 1971 has been made freely available on the Internet at www.natalia.org.za For this we have to pay tribute to the determination and hard work of the chairman of the Natal Society Foundation,

Peter Croeser. We hope, therefore, that not only this edition, but the journal as a whole will enjoy an increasingly wide readership.

This year also saw the launching of the Foundation's new publishing venture, 'Occasional Publications of The Natal Society Foundation' to meet a need for publishing books of academic merit and interest considered 'unviable' for commercial publication. The first in this new series is due out as we go to press: *A Fine Band of Farmers Are We! A History of Agricultural Studies in Pietermaritzburg, 1934-2009* by *Natalia* editorial committee member Bill Guest, Professor Emeritus in Historical Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

As *Natalia* goes to press comes the news of the death of David Buckley in England. A self-effacing bachelor, he was a librarian at the Natal Society Library from January 1968 until his retirement in November 2001, for many of those years in charge of the Special Collections and Map sections. He indexed all the graves in the Albert Luthuli (Commercial) Road cemeteries and was widely known for his knowledge of government publications. He served as the secretary to the *Natalia* committee for many years and drew up the Index which we published in *Natalia* 31. We will remember him with gratitude.

JACK FROST