

Colonial riverport shipping on the South Coast

by Duncan du Bois

MARCH 25, 2011 marked the 150th anniversary of the occasion that a ship, the *Natalie*, first steamed into the Umkomaas River on the South Coast. It was the event of the year for local farmers and their families as they gathered on that day near the river mouth of what was optimistically called Port Scott (John Scott was the Governor of Natal at the time) to witness history in the making.

An advertisement in the *Natal Mercury* of 21 March, 1861 had indicated what was to be attempted and offered tickets for the voyage at two guineas (two pounds and two shillings) per passenger. Two years earlier Dr Robert Mann in his comprehensive survey entitled *The Colony of Natal* had confidently described the Umkomaas river as suitable “for the shipment of produce

... with a channel navigable by small craft”.¹

Since 1857, when applications for the purchase of Crown lands along the South Coast in Alexandra County had been invited, some 72 farms (each roughly 500 to 600 acres in size) had been granted to European settlers, and at least 30 were occupied.² In 1859, Dr Mann had described the coastlands beyond the Umkomaas as “rapidly filling up” with colonists.³ Whilst there was no doubt as to the agricultural prospects of the area in terms of cotton, coffee and sugar production, it was described as “a beautiful wilderness wanting in all aspects of civilised settlement”.⁴ Foremost in what was lacking in Alexandra County was access by means of road transport. Compounding the situation was the existence of nine rivers between

Durban and Umkomaas, many of them impassable during the rainy season.

As the *Natal Almanac and Yearly Register* of 1863 noted, “The distance of this division from the port ... is such that the absolute necessity for the early establishment of a shipping-place for its produce is manifest.” It went on to lament the absence of bridges and the expense and delay which was incurred over the “scarcely-formed roads” as prohibiting “an adequately remunerative profit to the producer”.⁵ In May 1860 farmers in the Lower Umkomaas area held a meeting chaired by James Arbuthnot of the estate Umzinto Lodge, to petition the colonial government over the shocking state of the county’s roads.⁶ On the South Coast in 1860 there were no bridges either – a state of affairs that would prevail for decades. In 1870, pioneer sugar planter William Pearce described the Umzinto and Illovo rivers as being “infested with crocodiles”.⁷ The only way across the Umkomaas – *the gatherer of waters*, as Robert Russell noted⁸ – was by ferry. The fees that could be charged by ferrymen, as laid down in 1850, remained unchanged in 1862 when Georgina Nelson was appointed as ferry keeper at a salary of £36 per annum⁹: five shillings for a loaded wagon, three shillings for an empty one, one shilling for a person on foot or on horseback.¹⁰

Skippered by Captain W. Anderson, the 63 ton *Natalie* arrived off the Umkomaas at about noon on Monday, 25 March, 1861 only to find that the tide was not full enough to attempt the difficult passage into the river mouth. With its 5’4” draught, Anderson prudently waited for two and a half hours before attempting to take the vessel in. His patience was rewarded. Within minutes the *Natalie* steamed easily through the

mouth and anchored at a point 400 yards up the river much to the delight of the locals.

In reporting the event the *Mercury* of 28 March 1861 claimed that river navigation in Natal was “at last an accomplished fact” and that “Durban had a partial rival in the new port at the mouth of the Umkomaas”. Although exaggerated, the enthusiasm of the time was understandable. In those days the only means of reaching Durban from the South Coast was by ox-wagon over rough terrain fording several rivers – a journey that could take up to five days. The *Natalie*’s historic entry of the Umkomaas was seen, therefore, as a breakthrough for travel and transportation in that it brought access to Durban within a few hours at a saving of some two pounds and 10 shillings per ton of cargo. This was especially significant for the emerging sugar industry centred then in



The grave of Georgina Nelson in Umkomaas. Born in 1826, she was the postmistress from 1862 until at least 1892 at Umkomaas and also ferry-keeper for a period in the 1860s.

the Umzinto district. So confident were the agents of the Umzinto Sugar Company of the prospects of “coastwise shipping”, that in an advertisement in the *Mercury* on 11 April inviting leases on lands adjoining the Company’s recently completed mill, they cited the relative proximity of their lands to the Umkomaas as a transport benefit.

The *Mercury* of 16 May, 1861 affords an insight into the service the *Natalie* was providing. On her second voyage to the Umkomaas the ship had several women and children among her passengers as well as 20 tons of cargo. She returned to Durban loaded with 40 tons of sugar from Umzinto estates. That was the equivalent to about 12 wagon loads. When conditions made entry into the river mouth too risky, barges were used to ferry goods to and from the *Natalie* while she anchored offshore.

As things turned out, however, the *Natalie*’s first voyage to the Umkomaas was her only incident-free one. In May she struck a sandbank on entering the river and had to wait for high tide before proceeding further. Then on 11 August 1861, departing with 736 bags of sugar she slammed into the rocks on the south side of the river mouth and heeled over. 137 bags of sugar were salvaged but it was not until January 1862 that the *Natalie* was refloated and towed back to Durban, where major repair work was carried out.

The official enquiry held into her misfortune affords a more detailed insight into the hazards involved in river shipping. It noted that even though the ship had entered the river mouth on a full spring tide on 6 August, she had “dragged the ground slightly and when inside grounded on a sandspit causing the loss of two entire days”.¹¹ Five days later, when the master of the *Natalie*

decided to leave, the effects of the spring tide on the depth of water were decidedly reduced. The enquiry found that William Graham, her captain on that occasion, had been rash in attempting to depart fully laden with about 50 tons of sugar on an ebbing tide. Graham claimed that he had carefully monitored the water levels and that there was a depth of six feet and eight inches, a foot more than the *Natalie* required. Yet the ship had grounded in the mouth of the river. A heavy sea had caught her astern and swung her broadside in the surf. Efforts to right her failed and she eventually came to rest on the rocks. Captain Pat Maxwell, a seafaring man with 20 years experience who had been living at Umkomaas since 1858, told the enquiry that he considered it “an act of madness for the vessel to attempt to go out the morning she started”.

Despite the disappointment which the loss of the *Natalie* entailed, the enquiry remained positive in its conclusions. “We consider that the wreck of the *Natalie* does not detract from the value of the river Umkomazi as a place for shipment at the proper season of the year.” The enquiry panel felt that the “character of the vessel” rendered her unsuited to the entrance of the Umkomaas “both in regard to her great length and draught of water as well as [being] insufficient in steam power. Vessels of such a class should not attempt the navigation of the river in the dry season.” Captain Maxwell endorsed this view, stating that the *Natalie* was about 20 feet too long for the type of challenge the Umkomaas presented. He felt that a shorter vessel would not have been wrecked.¹²

Renamed the *Congune* by her new owners, she enjoyed a new lease on life but her voyages no longer took her to Umkomaas. Meanwhile the *Natalie*

Government seemed determined to press on with the prospect of river-port shipping on the South Coast. In June 1862 the Colonial Engineer, Peter Paterson, was directed by Governor Scott to conduct a survey of the “capabilities” of the seaboard for “shipment of coastal produce”. Paterson’s report was based on cursory observations (he felt a proper survey would take 18 months) and focused only on the coast between the Umkomaas and Ifafa rivers. For the latter and the Umzinto river, he saw potential for the use of surf boats to ferry goods from the beach to a waiting ship. Rough piers of rubble could be constructed to afford some shelter for the surfboats. Although he thought the Umkomaas had potential as a small craft harbour, he advised the blasting of rocks from the mouth of the river in order to minimise the risk posed to navigation.¹³ Accordingly, the colonial budget for 1863 assigned some £4 000 for the improvement of the mouth of the Umkomaas, of which £3 074 was spent by the end of that year on construction of a seawall.¹⁴ Optimism persisted. The *Natal Almanac* felt that the wreck of the *Natalie* “did not prove the unsafety of this port”.¹⁵ In expectation of progress two townships were surveyed on either side of the river mouth and named North and South Barrow respectively.

But the severe economic downturn of the mid-1860s crippled the sugar industry and dashed prospects for river shipping. Throughout the rest of the decade, expenditure on roads in Alexandra County was niggardly – never amounting to more than £550 on any one occasion.¹⁶ Floods in August 1868 devastated the existing roads and proved a major setback. Hopes flickered briefly in 1873 when a vessel named the *Anthony Musgrave* steamed up the

Umkomaas and loaded sugar on a few occasions. But its service was shortlived and in November 1873 the *Mercury* reported the ship as being “ashore at the mouth of the Umkomaas ... full of water”.¹⁷ In 1874 occasional service to the South Coast was provided by the *Alexandra*, which was reported as having “looked in off Umpambinyoni” at Scottburgh and the cutter *Phoebe*, which sailed to Umkomaas.¹⁸

With the economy having recovered by the early 1870s expenditure on roads in Alexandra County was more generous: in 1873, £843 was budgeted for the road from Umkomaas to the Umzimkulu while in 1874, £1 400 was allocated for repair and maintenance to roads within the County. In particular, hopes were raised over the allocation of £5 000 for construction of a bridge over the Umkomaas. But another 20 years would elapse before such a project would actually reach the drawing board.¹⁹ In 1874 the report of a Select Committee on measures for the immediate relief of transport listed five basic approaches. Overall, railway construction was ranked as the top priority. But where the South Coast was concerned, shipping was recommended. “The establishment of shipping facilities at certain points along the seaboard would not only prove locally advantageous as regards the conveyance of produce, but would also be of benefit to the whole community.” The report concluded on a significant note: “Any project which may be started to achieve this should receive liberal assistance from the Government”.²⁰ As if the report had been anticipated, £1 500 was allocated to works at the mouth of the Umkomaas which commenced in July 1874.²¹

Intentions, however, failed to translate into action. A year later only £282

of that allocation had been spent.²² But thinking beyond the Umkomaas began to gather momentum in 1876. The report of a Select Committee on European Immigration contained two significant submissions. The first was by a Mr R. Woolley of Esperanza. While extolling the advantages of agricultural enterprise in the Lower Umzimkulu area, he cited transport costs from Durban as being prohibitively expensive. Unless steps were taken to open the Umzimkulu to shipping, he opined, Alfred County would continue to languish as an undeveloped backwater. The sole Legislative Council representative for Alexandra and Alfred Counties, Mr D.C. Aiken, described the lack of development along the South Coast belt as “most lamentable”. He saw the Umzimkulu river as the key to progress. “If the Umzimkulu were in any other country but Natal, there would be running in and out of it steamers and sailing vessels ... I do not hesitate in saying that Port Shepstone will one day be as important a place as Durban.”²³

James Giles, the resident magistrate for Alfred County, echoed Aiken’s view in his annual report for 1877: “The prosperity of this part of the country cannot be expected to make any great stride until the mouth of the Umzimkulu shall have been opened”.²⁴ Giles’s colleague in Alexandra County, Gould Arthur Lucas, made similar remarks in his 1876 report. The lack of cheap transport was a “perennial bane” which was exacerbated by the non-existence of roads between Umzumbe and the Umzimkulu. As a result, much good land was not being utilised while the limestone operation at Umzimkulu was hamstrung because of road access and transport difficulties.²⁵ However, both Giles and Lucas in their respective reports for 1879 noted a significant development: a private venture to remove rocks from the mouth of the Umzimkulu was under way on the initiative of Mr David C. Aiken. Magistrate Giles expected steamers to start entering the river mouth from April 1880.²⁶



The Somtseu being loaded by hand with sugar from the mill on the north bank of the Umzimkulu River in 1888

Photograph by Archibald Sinclair, courtesy of Illovo Sugar Ltd

His prediction proved accurate. On 7 May, 1880, the twin-screw 47 ton schooner-rigged vessel, *Somtseu*, successfully entered the mouth of the Umzimkulu. Ninety feet long, seventeen-and-half feet in beam and drawing only four feet and nine inches of water, she was ideally suited to the tricky coastal trade.²⁷ Her first voyage, however, was not without incident. The *Mercury* of 15 May 1880 explained that a hawser rope from the lighter which the *Somtseu* was towing had become entangled in the ship's screw causing a loss of steerage as she entered the river mouth. This had resulted in her being carried onto the rocks. Fortunately, only "trifling damage" had been sustained.²⁸ Port Shepstone, in the *Mercury's* view, could become an "effective counterpoise" to Port St Johns and "throw open ... a part of the Colony which has hitherto remained almost a sealed book by reason of its distance and inaccessibility".²⁹

Curiously, reference to the mouth of the Umzimkulu as Port Shepstone was made long before there was any settlement there or before shipping was seriously contemplated. It occurred in a proclamation made by Acting-Governor Col John Jarvis Bisset issued in 1866.³⁰ Also at this time the first thoughts on the potential of the Umzimkulu for shipping were recorded. Sidney Turner, one of the first residents of the lower Umzimkulu area, noted that when the Surveyor-General, Dr Sutherland, had visited in February 1866 to obtain samples of the limestone deposits, he had expressed interest in "seeing what can be done towards opening the [river] mouth".³¹

The projected schedule of the *Somtseu's* visits to Port Shepstone for the following months was published in the *Mercury* on 1 June and seemed to give

credence to Magistrate Giles's expectations. The dates listed were: 3 June, 19 June, 3 July, 19 July, 31 July and 16 August. In any event, the resident magistrate's report for 1880 noted that the *Somtseu* was providing good service to both the river-ports, Umzimkulu and Umkomaas.³² Government interest in the potential of the Umzimkulu was soon manifested. The Colonial Engineer, Captain Hime, visited the area and filed a report in October in which he noted the rock-blasting work being done by William Bazley whom David Aiken had hired. However, Hime remained sceptical as to the outcome. "We refrain from expressing any opinion as to whether the removal of the rocks in the river mouth may have any effect on the sand-bar or on the deep-water channel which is said to exist" Nonetheless he hedged his bets by recommending that if the work Aiken had undertaken was successful, the Legislative Council should reimburse him for it. In this vein he urged the Council not to grant any private concessions as to terms and conditions of usage of the Umzimkulu.³³

Within a year the Legislative Council voted £10 000 for the development of the mouth of the Umzimkulu and took over the works which Aiken had initiated.³⁴ A Select Committee report published in November 1881 noted that in the 18 months the *Somtseu* had been servicing the Umzimkulu it had shipped 1 470 tons of goods at a saving of £4 per ton. Voyages usually took eight hours as opposed to eight to 10 days by wagon to Durban.³⁵ But it was not all plain sailing. In his report for 1881, the resident magistrate for Alfred County complained that the vagaries of the river caused shipping to be unreliable and that many locals were again resorting to wagon transport.³⁶ His colleague in

Alexandra County, Gould Lucas, criticised the owners of the *Somtseu* for not charging rates lower than those charged by the wagon owners. Nonetheless, he noted that the *Somtseu* had shipped a great deal of sugar from the Umkomaas.³⁷ Noting this, the Legislative Council representative for Alexandra and Alfred Counties, Thomas Reynolds, put forward a motion in August 1882 requesting that a sum of £500 be added to the Estimates for 1883 for the purpose of removing rocks at the entrance to the Umkomaas so as to reduce navigation hazards.³⁸

In October 1882 the *Somtseu* was reported as being aground at the mouth of the Umzimkulu. In order to keep the service running another vessel, the *Adonis*, was deployed.³⁹ In March 1883, with the *Somtseu* back in service, the *Mercury* published a lengthy story about a trip down to the Umzimkulu aboard the vessel. Whilst the voyage itself took only six hours, the ship had to spend three days in heavy seas off the river mouth before it could enter.⁴⁰ Another ship that also frequented the South Coast river-ports at this time was the *Lion*.

Improving the mouth of the Umzimkulu for navigation proved to be a work in progress over many years. In his reports for both 1883 and 1884, the colonial engineer remarked positively on the efforts of William Bazley in constructing a training wall to increase the scour in the channel and how much of the work entailed the use of the diving equipment which the Colony had specially imported.⁴¹ By 1886, some £8 283 of the original £10 000 budgeted had been spent on the Umzimkulu works.⁴² At this time the *Alfredia* was also putting in a regular appearance at the Umzimkulu on the spring tides.

Unfortunately she was wrecked off Port St Johns in August 1887.⁴³ A table of the goods shipped to and from Port Shepstone in 1886 is illustrative of the state of development in the area. The two most prominent exports from the lower South Coast were hides and sugar. Imports, however, included almost every manufactured item imaginable with general merchandise having the largest number of packages.⁴⁴

By 1887 a spot the colonial engineer had identified in 1862 as having potential as a shipping place was being utilised, namely, the bay area off the Umzinto River mouth. The Public Works budget for 1889 shows an amount of £600 earmarked for the improvement of the facilities there.⁴⁵ In 1890 the acting colonial engineer, J.F.E. Barnes, submitted a report on the shipping prospects of Umzinto bay. He described it as “a little bight of the sea, sheltered on its northerly and southerly sides respectively by two distinctly-marked lines of reef at a distance of 100 yards apart ... [which] project into the ocean at nearly right angles to the shore”. Although he found the depth of water satisfactory the bay itself “was strewn with rocks”. Within the limited budget he recommended the construction of a jetty, an iron derrick for the purpose of lifting and the purchase of several lighters.⁴⁶ The *Somtseu*, *Lion* and *Carnarvon* traded at Umzinto bay until 1893, when heavy seas destroyed the timberwork forming the outer part of the pier. The Government halted further expenditure on the facility and it ceased to operate.⁴⁷ The inevitability of the southward extension of the railway also served to indicate that the days of river-port shipping appeared numbered.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, work on the entrance to the Umzimkulu continued. A training wall or breakwater some 1 602 feet in length had been built by 1892 and nearly £25 000 had been spent.⁴⁹ In terms of Law 3 of 1893, Port Shepstone was declared a full fiscal port. That meant it became a collector of customs duties, clearing ships for international travel, requiring bills of health and imposing fines. The year 1894, however, proved a disappointing one for the *Somtseu*. Compiling his report late in September the resident magistrate noted that the ship had been unable to enter the river since May and that this had proved a “great drawback to the district”.⁵⁰ But the following year the river proved more reliable, with the *Somtseu* and the *Pioneer* running regularly on the spring tides throughout the winter. From April 1895 a small dredger, the *Sandpiper*, was at work, although the colonial engineer felt that her power was “extremely limited”.⁵¹

Patience with the reliability of shipping on the Umzimkulu wore thin as the decade ran its course. Remarks by the secretary of the Delta Lime Company, Mr J. Weighton, in 1897 provide a critical insight. In his report attached to that of the mining supervisor for Alexandra County, Weighton complained that transport was retarding the limestone business on the Umzimkulu. With wagon transport having become very expensive owing to the effects of the rinderpest outbreak, commerce was more than ever dependent on sea transport. Three times in his report he placed question marks after the words “port” or “harbour” in order to indicate his scepticism about the Umzimkulu’s status as a port. He cited occasions when after loading a vessel with cargo it had had to be off-loaded because conditions in the

river mouth prevented it from leaving; that the cost of sending lime to Durban was no different from the cost of landing it in Cape Town from England. He saw the railway as the “only salvation” for the lower South Coast.⁵²

On 22 February 1897 the railway line from Durban to Umkomaas was opened. That same year the Legislative Assembly passed Act 21, which set in motion the construction of the railway from Park Rynie to Port Shepstone. At a cost of some £17 000 and involving the construction of over 20 bridges, it was clear that the Colonial Government was investing in what it believed was the only solution to the South Coast’s transport dilemma.⁵³ As if sensing that the era of river shipping was over, the owners of the *Somtseu* sold her to a firm in Lourenço Marques. But soon a new 32-ton ketch also named the *Somtseu* was plying the Durban – Port Shepstone route. In 1898 she was joined by the new 140-ton *Penguin* belonging to the Port Shepstone Shipping Company. The *Penguin* made its maiden voyage to the Umzimkulu on 19 August, returning safely to Durban on the 24th. Also servicing the route was the 24-ton, locally-built schooner, the *Sobantu*.⁵⁴

But questions began to arise regarding the prudence of continuing to fund the works at the mouth of the Umzimkulu. In June 1899, when a vote came up in the Legislative Assembly for £568 for the cost of hauling and moving ships and lighters, Mr M.S. Evans of Victoria County queried the expense in the light of the coming rail link. However, Port Shepstone’s position still enjoyed key political support. Newly appointed Prime Minister Albert Hime made it clear that his government did not want “to place any disabilities upon a portion of the Colony which is as yet not

supplied with a railway”.⁵⁵ Despite the absence of a dredger and a lack of flow in the river as a result of an exceptionally dry season, as the Chief Engineer for Public Works remarked, passage in and out of the river in 1900 was satisfactory. There were 67 successful entries of the river mouth, which resulted in the moving of 7 695 tons of goods.⁵⁶

After July 1901, however, when the railway reached Port Shepstone, opposition to further funding of the works at the mouth of the Umzimkulu began to coalesce. In July 1903 the Legislative Council – the upper house of the Natal Parliament – endorsed a motion put by Victoria County member Marshall Campbell opposing any further expenditure on the Umzimkulu until it could be shown that the railway was unable to meet the needs of the area. Campbell cited the facts that not a single ship had entered the river for over a year and that only one train went to Port Shepstone daily with an average of only one and a half trucks worth of goods. Port Shepstone, he contended, did not need a railway and a port.⁵⁷

The Legislative Assembly, however, was content to continue to pour money into developing the port and approved the expenditure of a further £10 000 for extending the construction of the training wall which Barnes Kinsey, the harbour engineer, had initiated in 1897. Whereas Bazley’s wall had followed the natural curve of the river mouth, Kinsey’s wall was straighter and intended to produce a deeper, more navigable channel. In the words of J.G. Maydon, the newly installed Sutton ministry “had not the smallest doubt that the completion of the work ... will make the port of Port Shepstone available to relieve Durban to a certain extent as well as aid the development of this country”.

Maydon went on to cite fishing as playing a crucial role in the future of the port in that the best fishing grounds were to the south of the Umzimkulu. At a cost of a further £3 000, the Assembly approved the dispatch of a dredger to the Umzimkulu.⁵⁸

The *Snipe* arrived early in 1904 and performed “good, steady work throughout the year,” as the resident magistrate, J.J. Jackson, noted in his annual report. He even ventured to state that despite the general economic depression, “renewed confidence in the future of this town appears to have resulted from the date of the entrance of the dredger”.⁵⁹ Yet the “Point Notes and Notions” column and the comprehensive Shipping Gazette published regularly in the *Natal Mercury* did not report any vessels destined for the South Coast riverports during 1904. Instead two previous callers, the *Lion* and the *Penguin*, met with disaster in July and August, respectively, and sank. A new vessel, the *Dee*, advertised as having a shallow draught, called at ports from Lourenco Marques to Mossel Bay but did not visit Port Shepstone. Nor did the *Umzimvubu* which ran regularly to Port St Johns. 1905 was no different. The *Snipe* beavered away removing tens of thousands of tons of silt deposit. Work on Kinsey’s training wall, which employed some 200 African labourers, continued. A depth in the channel of between seven and eight feet at low tide was reported in February 1905.⁶⁰ But, according to reports in the *Mercury* on shipping movements, no vessels called at either Port Shepstone or the Umkomaas in 1905.

A public meeting held in Port Shepstone in April 1906 saw a representative of the Norwegian community, a Mr Hufft, deploring the fact that as settlers

they had been promised a port which would support a fishing industry. Hitchens of Alfred County and Archibald of Alexandra County, the local politicians who were present, endorsed this view.⁶¹ When the Natal Parliament met in July, in response to a petition presented by the Marburg settlers, Hitchens urged that work on the Umzimkulu harbour mouth be expedited. He claimed that Sir John Robinson had once stated that the railway was only part of the scheme to develop Port Shepstone. He argued that the lucrative fishing grounds off Port Shepstone justified “a small outlay” in ensuring that the Umzimkulu became the port of call for the fishing fleets. J.G. Maydon, the Minister of Railways and Harbours, was sympathetic, but cautioned that until the Umzimkulu harbour was “in daily demand for use”, the Government was wary about incurring further expenses there.⁶²

Although in 1907 a sum of £500 was still on the Harbour Works budget for the training wall at the Umzimkulu mouth,⁶³ the *Snipe* was long since out of commission and political sympathy had evaporated. Deploring the expense of more than £70 000 on a port that had failed to materialise, G.S. Armstrong of Victoria County rebuked the Alfred County representatives, Hitchens and Major Silburn, for making “grand promises” which they could not bring to fruition. “But that has nothing to do with us We have our duty to perform and that is to stop expenditure when we know positively there will be no return from it.”⁶⁴ The answer to the question posed by George Sutton in the Legislative Council 26 years earlier had finally been given: “The first thing we have to consider is whether the opening of the Umzimkulu is worth the money it is likely to cost.”⁶⁵

In the end the railway solved the South Coast’s problem of economic isolation. Notwithstanding the vision of David Aiken and others of a thriving port on the Umzimkulu and the efforts of William Bazley and Barnes Kinsey in trying to fashion the mouth of the river into a navigable entrance, the vagaries of nature – wind, tide, swell and river levels – not only defied human endeavour but, in terms of risk and reliability, put paid to the viability of riverport shipping.

NOTES

- 1 Robert James Mann, *The Colony of Natal*, (London, 1859), p. 79.
- 2 *Natal Almanac and Yearly Register*, 1863, p.40.
- 3 R.J. Mann, *Colony of Natal*, p. 77.
- 4 *Natal Almanac*, 1863, p. 42.
- 5 *Ibid.* p. 41.
- 6 R.F. Osborn, *Valiant Harvest*, (Durban, 1964), p. 60.
- 7 William Pearce, unpublished biography, p. 2, Killie Campbell Collection, KCM 99/62/3.
- 8 R. Russell, *Natal: The Land and its Story*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1904), p.24.
- 9 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, p. M. 28.
- 10 Government Notice No. 177, 27 March 1850; *Natal Blue Book*, 1867, p. B.7.
- 11 *Natal Government Gazette* Vol. 13, No. 677, 29 October 1861, Government Notice No.123.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Selected Documents presented to the Natal Legislative Council, Document No. 33, presented 14 July 1862.
- 14 *Natal Blue Book*, 1863, p. C.19; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XVI, No. 901, 24 May 1864. In contrast, budgeted expenditure on “improvement” of the road “from Durban towards Umzimkulu” was just £600. See: *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XV, No. 754, 21 April 1863.
- 15 *Natal Almanac*, 1863, p.41.
- 16 £550 was earmarked for repair and maintenance work on the Durban to Umzimkulu road for 1867 (*Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1007, 22 May 1866). £284 was listed as expenditure for a new road from Umkomaas to Umzimkulu. See: *Natal Blue Book*, 1867, p. H.4.
- 17 *Natal Mercury*, 22 November 1873; also 25 November 1873.

- 18 *Natal Mercury*, 6 and 11 August 1874.
- 19 *Natal Blue Book*, 1873, p. C.13; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1453, 20 January 1874.
- 20 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1492, 29 September 1874.
- 21 *Natal Blue Book*, 1874, p. H.4.
- 22 *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, p. H.3.
- 23 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1613, 17 October 1876.
- 24 *Natal Blue Book*, 1877, p. JJ.9.
- 25 *Natal Blue Book*, 1876, p. JJ.11.
- 26 *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, p. JJ.14 and JJ.21.
- 27 R.F. Osborn, *Valiant Harvest*, p.155; T.V. Bulpin, *Natal and Zulu Country*, (Cape Town, 1977), p.365.
- 28 *Natal Mercury*, 14 May 1880.
- 29 *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1880.
- 30 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XVIII, No.990, 23 January 1866.
- 31 Daphne Child (ed.), *Portrait of a Pioneer – The Letters of Sidney Turner from South Africa 1864-1901*, (Johannesburg, 1980), p. 48. See also: Document No. 27, 1866, presented to the Natal Legislative Council on 9 July 1866: Report of the Surveyor-General on Alfred Quarries.
- 32 *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, p. JJ.121.
- 33 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1852, 2 November 1880.
- 34 *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, p. J.5 and FF.110.
- 35 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1914, 15 November 1881.
- 36 *Natal Blue Book*, 1881, p. GG.56.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. GG. 59.
- 38 *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. V, 1882, p. 439-441.
- 39 *Natal Mercury*, 26 October and 10 November 1882.
- 40 *Natal Mercury*, 28 March 1883.
- 41 *Natal Blue Books*, 1883, 1884, p. FF.94; p.C.3.
- 42 *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, p. J.4-.5.
- 43 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2260, 6 September 1887.
- 44 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2253, 19 July 1887.
- 45 *Natal Blue Book*, 1889, p. J.2-3.
- 46 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vo. XLII, No. 2429, 1 July 1890.
- 47 T.V. Bulpin, *Natal and Zulu Country*, p. 366; *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1893-94, p. C.32.
- 48 In 1893 the Legislative Council approved a £100 000 loan, £20 000 of which was budgeted for the building of a bridge over the lower Umkomaas. See: *Natal Government Gazette* Vol. XLV, No. 2621, 27 June 1893.
- 49 *Natal Blue Book*, 1892-92, p. J.9; *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1892-93, p.C. 43.
- 50 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1893/94, p. B.66.
- 51 *Natal Blue Book*, 1894/95, p. B.66 and C.53.
- 52 *Natal Blue Book*, 1897, p. H.107.
- 53 Select Document No. 17 presented to the Natal Legislative Assembly on 29 April 1897.
- 54 *Natal Mercury*, 16, 20, 25 August 1898; 5 & 18 August 1898.
- 55 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XXVIII, 1899, p. 82; 228.
- 56 *Natal Blue Book, Departmental Reports*, 1900, p. C.74.
- 57 *Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XII, 1903, p. 86-87.
- 58 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XXXV, 1903, p. 228-229.
- 59 *Lower Umzimkulu Division Magistrate's Report*, 1904, p. 67.
- 60 Government Notices Nos. 9, 72, 221 and 351 of 1905; Government Notice No. 645 of 1904.
- 61 *Natal Mercury*, 21 April 1906.
- 62 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XL, 1906, p.576-578.
- 63 Government Notice No. 533, 1907.
- 64 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. XLIII, 1907, p.286.
- 65 *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal*, Vol. III, 1881, p. 166.