

Notes and Queries

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SOCIETY AND THE KILLIE CAMPBELL MEMORIAL BURSARY

Ian Smith writes

THE SOUTH AFRICAN National Society (Sans) was founded in Cape Town in 1905 after a series of meetings which began the year before and involved such notable people as Lord de Villiers and J.H. Hofmeyr. The stimulus for its establishment seems to have been the threat to the existence of Cape Town Castle. Mrs Koopmans de Wet, a foundation member of Sans, was particularly active in the successful campaign for its preservation. Other campaigns followed. The realisation of the need to protect the rapidly dwindling rock art and floral heritage of southern Africa resulted in the Bushman Relics Protection Act in 1911 after significant pressure from the politically connected members of Sans

in the young Union government. These same members played a leading role in the establishment of Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens two years later. Sans continued to play a significant, though diminishing, role in the preservation of South Africa's heritage in the twentieth century.

Immediately after its foundation and even before Union, branches were established in several centres. The Natal branch was founded in 1907. Sadly, however, as the century wore on, the branches faded. In 1980 the Cape Town branch closed leaving only the Natal branch in existence.

The aims of Sans are clearly spelt out in its constitution and a brief synopsis is:

- to cultivate a love for, and appreciation of, the natural, historical and cultural heritage of South Africa and all its peoples,
- to promote interest in, and appreciation of, those aspects of natural resources, history and culture which are important all the South African people,
- to give general support and publicity to the S.A. Heritage Resources Agency and the Amafa/Heritage KwaZulu-Natali, the heritage conservation organisation for this province, in their task of preserving the natural, historical and cultural heritage of South Africa, and
- to support any other body or organisation engaged in, or faced with, a similar task

With these aims it is hardly surprising that the late Dr Killie Campbell was deeply involved in the Durban branch of Sans and, besides her unique contribution through her home *Muckleneuk*, she spearheaded the drive to ensure the preservation of the Old Court House, now the Local History Museum, as well as the Robinson home, now the Old House Museum. Working in tandem with her longtime friend and fellow member of Sans, Daphne Strutt, she played a significant role in providing some of the exhibits and old photographs for the Durban Room of the Local History Museum.

The preservation of Drakensberg rock art together with the preservation of the Dlinza forest near eShowe are further examples of the work of the local branch of Sans.

Public meetings of Sans, to which interested people are invited, are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 5 pm at the KwaMuhle Museum, 130 Ordinance Rd., Durban.

Since 1982 the Durban branch of Sans has awarded the Dr Killie Campbell Memorial Bursary in honour of Dr Campbell's work. The bursary is awarded to post-graduate students in the discipline of History, attending a university in KwaZulu-Natal. Their area of research, or their dissertation, needs to be on a topic relating to South Africa, preferably KwaZulu-Natal. The bursary has been awarded annually for the past 30 years. Two recent recipients are Barbara Wahlburg, who became head of research at the Albert Luthuli Museum, and Mxolosi Mchunu, presently senior research officer of the KZN Legislature research library. The amount to be awarded is discussed by the committee each year, and for 2013 it is anticipated that it will be in the region of R15 000 to R20 000.

Information concerning the bursary is to be circulated to the various universities and education departments – e.g. the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Zululand, Unisa, and the Department of Education.

For further information contact:
The Chairman,
South African National Society
P.O. Box 47688
Greyville 4023
or by email: naureenc@nisc.org.za

A NOTABLE CENTENARY

By John Deane

IN a time when national and international chain stores take an ever greater share of the retail market, we see the closure and disappearance of businesses that once seemed to be permanent features of a city's commercial life. One could rattle off a string of shop names that were well known to generations of people in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, but which are now no more. A noteworthy survivor in the capital is the family firm Ghëla Outfitters, which has been in business for over 100 years, in the same premises on the corner of Langalibalele (previously Longmarket) and Retief streets.

In 1911 Ghëla Dayaram came to Pietermaritzburg from India, set up in business as a tailor, and then brought his family over to join him. His son Harkishan learnt the skills of the trade and in due course took over the business, being succeeded in turn by his sons Jay, Nana and Madan. Though they do stock ready-made men's clothing, tailoring is still a very important part of the business – the making and expert alteration of garments. Jay, who runs the Liberty Midlands Mall branch, was trained not only in the family shop, but also at the Tailor and Cutter Academy in London.

Ghëla Outfitters has survived not only the economic ups and downs of the past century, but the discriminatory social and political conditions that prevailed for most of that time. One example of the petty prejudice it was subjected to is scarcely credible in the 21st century. Long before the notorious Group Areas Act of 1950, residential and business segregation was generally applied in Natal. Retief Street was the recognised



The premises of Ghëla Dayaram when the firm opened in 1911

boundary between the European and Indian residential areas of central Pietermaritzburg. The Ghëlas' shop (with many white customers) and their home were on the same site, and for a time certain windows had to be bricked up because they "overlooked the European area". Such memories, which might be amusing if they were not so hurtful, are part of the story of this fine family firm as it enters its second century in the city.



Ghëla Dayaram today, still on the same site

A LIFE OF STUDY AND SERVICE

By John Deane

NATALIA notes with sadness the death of Dr Charles Swaisland in Oxford in July 2012 at the age of 93. In his retirement he was for many years a volunteer assistant at the Rhodes House Library in Oxford, where his main task was to compile a territorial index of the papers of the Aborigines' Protection Society, on which he was a recognised authority since his 1968 doctoral thesis on the society. His interest extended far wider than the APS, however. His knowledge of 19th-century southern African history enabled him to assist many researchers, his advice and guidance being always generously given. Some of those who sought his help became personal friends. Of particular importance to KwaZulu-Natal is the fact that Charles Swaisland rescued for Rhodes House a collection of Bishop Colenso's papers when an old house in Amersham, Buckinghamshire, was demolished. He took a keen interest in the restoration of the Colensos' house at Bishopstowe near Pietermaritzburg from 1995 to 2009, and made generous donations to

assist the work.

His connections with Africa and South Africa were many, possibly beginning when as a young man serving in the Friends' Ambulance Service in the Second World War he spent some time recuperating in Durban, and stayed with a Quaker family in Pietermaritzburg.

After the war he spent 15 years as a district officer in Nigeria, later lectured in administration at the University of Birmingham and at universities in South Africa, and served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius. He acted as a monitor during the first democratic elections in Zimbabwe in 1980 and South Africa in 1994. In recent years he had been Vice-Chairman of Anti-slavery International, active in Overseas Aid, a local councillor and local museum administrator. He spent holidays restoring old coaches on the North Norfolk Railway, and attended evening classes in Chinese language!

Charles Swaisland is survived by his wife Cecillie (who contributed an article in *Natalia* 23/24) and two daughters.

SOME MORE BUNNY CHOW

By Elwyn Jenkins

IN HIS NOTE on "Banyan trees and bunny chow",¹ Adrian Koopman gives the etymology of "bunny" and "chow" and a possible date of origin for this quintessential KwaZulu-Natal meal. There is a lot more that can be said about it.

"Bunny chow" is defined by Rajend Mesthrie in his *A Dictionary of South*

African Indian English as "a take-away meal comprising curry stuffed into the hollowed-out part of a half or quarter loaf of bread".² That "bunny" comes from the Hindu word for merchants and traders is undisputed. But the origin of "chow" that Koopman quotes the lexicographer Jean Branford as giving in *A Dictionary of South African English*³



Bunny chow hollowed out



Bunny chow, filled with chicken and dahl, and topped with the hollowed out bread

may not be right. She says it comes from the Chinese and means “food”, but Mary Alexander has a different version: “*Chow* is South African informal [English] for food, perhaps from ‘chow-chow’, a relish that gets its name from the French *chou* (cabbage).”⁴ Whether it comes from Chinese or French, it is not a uniquely South African word: it is recorded in both British and American dictionaries.

There is a cluster of words relating to bunny chow. Koopman records that bunny chows are called “bunnies”. Another name, that he does not mention, is “kota” (for “quarter”), while the hollowed-out piece of bread is known as “the virgin”.⁵ “When ordering a bunny chow in Durban, the local slang dictates that you need only ask for a ‘quarter mutton’ (or flavour and size of your choice),” according to Wikipedia.⁶

One version of the origin of the food is briefly quoted by Koopman from *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles (DSAEHP)*.⁷ There are at least three others. The

DSAEHP citation is worth quoting in full, as it sounds authoritative. It comes from a letter by G. Varma in the *Daily News* of 16 January 1984:

Your readers may be interested to know that this tavern [*sc.* the Queen’s] gave birth to the “Bunny Chow”... I asked a friend to bring some lunch for me. Since we had no containers, I asked him to cut the bread at the crust ... scoop out the soft portion and fill it with curry... In those days all Gugerati [*sic*] Hindu businessmen were called “Baniyas”, so we called our take-away lunches “Bunia Chow”. On my return to Durban in 1981 after an absence of over 25 years, I noted “Bunny Chow” had become a household name.⁸

Other versions are given in an article on Bunny Chow in Wikipedia:

One story ... has it that a restaurant run by people known as Baniyas (an Indian caste) first created the scooped-out bread and curry dish in Grey Street, Durban. The food was a means to serve take-aways to excluded people. During the apartheid regime, Indians

were not allowed in certain shops and cafes so the shop owners found a way of serving the people through back windows etc...

An alternative story ... is that, as in India, merchants who traditionally sold their wares under the “bania” tree... were called “bania”... It is more likely that the name “bania chow” was adopted to describe the staple meal of Indian merchants than taken from a restaurant run by Banias, though the true origins remain somewhat disputed.

Stories of the origin of bunny chow date as far back as the migrant Indian workers’ arrival in South Africa. One account suggests that [they] required a way of carrying their lunches in the field.⁹

Websites abound with recipes for bunny chow and advertisements for the best outlets in KwaZulu-Natal. But that has not inhibited Cape Town from muscling in. A quotation in the *DSAEHP* from the *Cape Times* of 15 January 1986 proclaims, “That old Cape favourite Bunny-Chow – a loaf of bread stuffed with snoek or curry”.¹⁰ Old Cape? Snoek? Enough to make a KwaZulu-Natal purist shudder.

The House of Govenders (Govenders House of Curries, Govenders Curry Kitchen etc) founded the Bunny Chow Barometer in 2004. According to the QuarterBunny website, “It all started when Chris Chappé and Donovan Baney were sitting having a bunny at Govenders (one of many!) and thought people should instantly know where to find a good one.”¹¹ Now called the Coca-Cola Bunnychow Barometer, it is part of the “Celebrate Durban” initiative, and is held annually in September on the banks of the uMngeni at the Blue Lagoon. Its aim is to provide the public

with a guide to the best bunny chow establishments. In 2011 about 50 eateries competed. For more information and publicity, the Quarterbunny website offers “the inside scoop on bunny chows”, and you can order a t-shirt emblazoned on the front **I ♥ BUNNY CHOW**.

The ramifications of bunny chow go further. In 2006 a South African film company released a comedy called *Bunny Chow*. Directed by John Barker, it starred Kagiso Lediga, Kim Engelebrecht, Joey Rasdien and David Kibuuka. A synopsis is given on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb):

Three comedians and a weird guy named Cope embark on a raucous weekend journey to Oppikoppie, South Africa’s biggest rock festival. The guys slip out of the city for a few dusty and increasingly absurd days with hopes of mass debauchery, drugs, rampant sex, true love and conquering the comedy stages, but they get more than they bargained for.¹²

I have watched the opening scenes, where I was struck by the visual evocation of Durban’s modernist flatland architecture (the film is shot in *cinéma vérité* style). But I could go no further. A scathing review on IMDb concludes, “Guess SA comedy’s gonna stay in the stone age a little longer. Nice work guys.”¹³ Another review tries hard to be patriotic: “It’s the movie’s subject matter that really makes it worth watching. In a local industry dominated by heavy, imported messages, it takes a certain amount of guts to make a movie this frivolous and fun.”¹⁴

From movies to crime – to the world of TV films about Cold Case Files. Pietermaritzburg has its own unsolved case, the Bunny Chow Murder. Some time after 1960 – I have not been able to trace newspaper reports, and am writing

from memory – a woman was murdered in the middle of the day in her house in the sedate suburb of Bisley. Her killer lay in wait for her inside the gate to her driveway. While he (presumably it was a male) was waiting for his victim to return home, he set about consuming a bunny chow, but left part of it uneaten when her arrival interrupted his meal. The only clue that he left was that the bunny chow had a hardboiled egg inserted in the curry. At that time, the sole bunny chow outlet in the province that sold this culinary variation was in Howick. But there the trail went cold. Perhaps a reader may be able to contribute a note on the subject to the next issue of *Natalia*.

NOTES

- 1 Koopman, Adrian. “Banyan trees and bunny chow,” *Natalia*, 41, December 2011, pp. 90-1.
- 2 Mesthrie, Rajend. *A Dictionary of South*

- African Indian English* (Cape Town, UCT Press, 2010), s.v.
- 3 Branford, Jean. *A Dictionary of South African English* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1980).
 - 4 Alexander, Mary. “South African English.” <http://www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com> (accessed 14 December 2011).
 - 5 Wikipedia. “Bunny chow”. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunny_chow (accessed 14 December 2011).
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996).
 - 8 *DSAEHP*, s.v.
 - 9 Wikipedia. “Bunny chow”.
 - 10 *DSAEHP*, s.v.
 - 11 QuarterBunny. <http://quarterbunny.co.za> (accessed 14 December 2011).
 - 12 Internet Movie Database. “Bunny Chow”. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0837786/> (accessed 14 December 2011).
 - 13 Ibid.
 - 14 Channel24. “Bunny chow”. <http://www.channel24.co.za/Movies/Reviews/Bunny-Chow-20081201> (accessed 14 December 2011).

REVD JOHN DUBE MADE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In May, 2012 the presidential guest house in KwaZulu-Natal, King’s House, built in 1904 as a coastal residence for Natal’s colonial governors, was renamed after John Langalibalele Dube, the first president of the ANC by President Jacob Zuma. This issue of Natalia also features a review of the first biography of Dube. It is thus of interest that the researches of Natalia editorial committee member Sylvia Vietzen turned up the following item on Dube in the issue of 25 September, 1936 of Indian Opinion.

THE Rev. John Dube, one of the best known Native leaders of Natal, has had the degree of Doctor of Philosophy conferred upon him by the University of South Africa. (*It was Professor Edgar Brookes who was the chief motivator of this. – Ed.*) This is a signal honour, and the first occasion that it has been conferred on a Native by a South African university. The Rev. Dube, who is the son of a

chief who relinquished his rights to chieftainship in order to become a Christian minister, was educated at Adams Mission, Amanzimtoti. Many years ago he went to America to study medicine, but later abandoned it entirely in favour of the Church. He then returned to South Africa as a minister under the American Mission Board. He was the first president of the South African National Native

Congress and has been president of the Natal Native Congress since its inception. The Rev. John Dube is also the founder and principal of the Ohlange Institute at Phoenix, near Durban, the only Native school in Natal for higher education which is entirely controlled by Natives. He founded the well-known Native newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, of which he is the editor. For many

years he has taken a prominent part affecting Native welfare and is regarded with respect by both Europeans and Natives. He has addressed the Rotary Club on two occasions on the Native Bills, and was the first Native, in this case too, to address its members. He is a forceful public speaker in both Zulu and English and has written much on Native subjects.

“THE LAST OUTPOST”: THE NATALIANS, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Shelagh Spencer writes

THIS is the title of a chapter by John Lambert (an ex-Pietermaritzburg resident and historian, most of whose academic career has been in Pretoria), in *Settlers and expatriates: Britons over the seas*, edited by Robert Bickers and published

in 2010 by the Oxford University Press. It is a companion volume to the latest *Oxford History of the British Empire*. Lambert is also the author of *Betrayed Trust: Africans and the State in Colonial Natal*. (University of Natal Press, 1995)

THE MSUNDUZI/VOORTREKKER MUSEUM CENTENARY (1912-2012)¹

Bill Guest, who has written a centennial history of the museum, gives an overview of its remarkable growth

THE VOORTREKKER Museum was established on 16 December 1912 in the picturesque Church of the Vow Building on Pietermaritzburg’s Church Street. It was launched with the initial intention of accumulating items of interest relating to both “English and Dutch” pioneer settlements in the region. This broad collection policy may have been in response to the enthusiasm with which many English-speaking members of the local community supported the efforts of the Dutch Reformed Church



The original Church of the Vow

to re-purchase and restore an historical structure which it had deconsecrated and sold in the 1860s. By 1937, when the museum was declared a National Monument, its objectives had narrowed to the Voortrekker focus which was in keeping with its name and in response to an inflow of donated items which threatened to fill it to overflowing.

For nearly four decades the Voortrekker Museum survived on a shoe-string budget. Its council attributed these straitened circumstances to the “step-motherly treatment” of the government, which insisted that it was not a “state institution” but a “state-aided” museum that should more appropriately be financed by the local provincial and municipal authorities. In practice, only token contributions were forthcoming from those sources and by way of private funds. Virtually all expenses had to be covered by an initial annual

state grant of £150 (R300), which was increased to £240 (R480) in the mid-1920s and remained unchanged into the 1940s. Consequently, the expanding collection was confined to the old church building, a council member served as honorary secretary-treasurer and the poorly-paid staff was restricted to a curator and a caretaker. The former was almost certainly lacking in any formal training, judging by the subsequent confusion arising out of the cataloguing system developed in those early years.

The museum enjoyed a dramatic change of fortune when, in April 1948, it was transferred from the control of the Department of the Interior to that of the more sympathetic Department of Education, Arts and Science. More significantly, in the following month the National Party came into office with a decidedly more assertive attitude towards the promotion of symbols of



The Andries Pretorius House, restored after removal in 1981 from its original site on his farm Welverdiend in the Edendale valley

Afrikaner cultural heritage such as the Voortrekker Museum. By 1955 its annual state grant had risen by almost 300% to £700 (R1 400). There was another 300% increase by 1967, a further 400% by 1973, an additional 94% by 1980 and 479% more by 1985.

These hefty financial injections, coupled with vigorous appeals for private donations, enabled the Museum to reinforce its Voortrekker focus. This was achieved, firstly, with the opening in 1960 of a much-needed additional building, the E.G. Jansen Extension, named after one of its dedicated early trustees and, secondly, by the unveiling in 1961 of the Piet Retief statue. A year later this bastion of Afrikanerdom in the heart of the old trekker capital was further strengthened when the neighbouring new Voortrekker Memorial Church was consecrated. It was exactly 101 years after the deconsecration of the original Church of the Vow and replaced the “Toring” (Spire) Church which had served its congregation in the intervening years. The Voortrekker focus was emphasised even more with the erection in 1970 of the Gerrit Maritz statue and the removal in 1981 of the Andries Pretorius house from the site of his farm *Welverdiend* (subsequently known as Edendale) to be reconstructed adjacent to the museum.

By 1980, when the National Monuments Council awarded the Voortrekker Museum its bronze plaque, it enjoyed a vastly improved national profile that attracted 60 000 visitors a year, rising to 65 000 in 1982. This included increasing numbers of what were still broadly termed “non-white” persons, who were quietly admitted in contradiction of the official policy of segregation. In 1985 the South African Museums’ Association honoured the museum

with its so-called “accreditation”, the first of more than 200 institutions in the subcontinent to be so recognised. Meanwhile, it continued to expand with the 1982 opening of the Voortrekker house at 333 Boom Street. In 1984 the Museum’s ongoing spatial crisis was eased with the purchase from the Dutch Reformed Church of what was named the *Ou Pastorie* (Old Manse), which had been opened as a manse in June 1954 in close proximity to the Church of the Vow building.

In 1989, after protracted negotiations, the museum also gained the magnificent Longmarket Street Girls’ School building for which new exhibits featuring aspects of the trekker lifestyle were initially planned. More recently, in 2010, after the Dutch Reformed congregation had moved out of the centre of town, the 1962 Church of the Vow building and its adjacent hall were acquired, providing ample room for expansion for the foreseeable future.

The house in Boom Street was the Voortrekker Museum’s first but by no means its only satellite. In 1989 it assumed control of *Zaaylager Farm*, just across the Bushman’s River from present-day Estcourt. There, in February 1838, Gerrit Maritz’s laager had successfully resisted Zulu attack when other Boer parties encamped at Weenen and elsewhere in the midlands were overwhelmed. It was also believed to be the site of the first trekker farm established beyond the Orange River, where Hans “Dons” de Lange had built an irrigation furrow and planted crops – hence *zaai* (*saai*), to “sow”. The intention was that this would become a working farm museum in imitation of those already established overseas but with employees dressed as Voortrekkers and a restaurant offering traditional



The Longmarket Street Girls' School building, adjacent to the museum and acquired for it in 1989 after protracted negotiations with the province

trekker cuisine complete with *witblitz* (“white lightning” liqueur).

In 1989 the Voortrekker Museum also took over the management of a property on the northern side of Majuba mountain, scene of the 1881 Boer victory over the British. Here, too, there were ambitious plans to develop a major tourist attraction, complete with accommodation and a funicular railway up to the battle-site. More relevant to the Trek era were discussions about developing additional satellites at Vegkop in the Orange Free State, where the Voortrekkers won a significant victory over Mzilikazi’s Ndebele, at Retief’s Pass in the Drakensberg, through which the ill-starred leader was said to have entered Natal, and at Bloukrans, one of the sites where trekker families were killed by the Zulu following Retief’s death at King Dingane kaSenzangakhona’s capital.

The Vegkop, Retief’s Pass and Bloukrans options were not pursued

but in 1993 the Voortrekker Museum did acquire control over the monument at Blood River. Council accepted that it was the most obvious institution to develop this new shrine to Afrikaner heritage and nationalism, situated on the laager site of the 16 December 1838 Boer victory over the Zulu.

By 1994 the Museum’s spatial responsibilities had expanded out of all recognition in little more than 80 years since its establishment. Its staff complement had also grown, increasing from the initial two to 12 by 1985 and 27 a decade later. In September 1977 Dr Ivor Pols was appointed curator and three years later his post was upgraded to director, befitting the first university graduate in that position. He brought to it a much-needed professional expertise which, for all the industry and commitment of his predecessors, had been seriously lacking.

The National Government’s financial generosity continued until its demise.



The Blood River/Ncome battlefield, showing the Voortrekker laager recreated in bronze oxwagons on the one side and the new Ncome Museum on the other side of the river

Between 1985 and 1991 the annual state grant increased a further 317%. In addition, several *ad hoc* amounts were awarded for building alterations and the acquisition of more properties. The museum's financial situation was improved even further by the outgoing government's final gestures of largesse in the form of R3 million to upgrade the Pietermaritzburg Museum complex, *Zaaylager* and Majuba, followed by another R500 000 for various projects and a massive R1.3 million annual grant for 1994/5. Afrikaner nationalism had already passed its zenith when, in 1994, the democratically elected ANC Government came to power. This heralded a phase of uncertainty concerning the museum's administrative and financial future until June 1998 when government recognised the institution as one of five national museums that would remain under central, not provincial, control and funding.

The Voortrekker Museum was now expected to transform its collection,

exhibits and staff. Prompted by two far-seeing memoranda which Ivor Pols had produced in 1982 and 1993, council had already decided that the school building would not, after all, be utilised for the extension of Voortrekker themes. Instead, it was to become a multi-cultural museum representing all ethnic groups residing in KwaZulu-Natal. The older premises, at the Church Street end of the property, were to retain the exclusively Voortrekker identity for which they were originally intended and internationally renowned. But, as the political climate in South Africa changed, the main focus and centre of gravity of the Pietermaritzburg complex shifted towards Longmarket Street. A concerted effort was made to begin collecting items which reflected the material culture of previously marginalised groups and to reflect them in a variety of new exhibits planned for the school building.

Beginning in 1993, the staff and the council were also transformed in

an effort to reflect the region's multi-ethnic demographic profile. By 2011 the museum's personnel comprised 30 Africans and three Indians, as well as one coloured employee and four white persons. There was still a gender imbalance in that females only occupied 15 of the 38 posts. Africans then held two of the three "senior management" and two of the four "middle management" positions. In 2002 the first black director, Sibongiseni Mkhize, a history graduate of the local university campus, succeeded Ivor Pols. He has since been followed in that office by two more black appointees. In 1999 council's first black chairman, Professor J.S. Maphalala of the University of Zululand, was appointed. He has also had two black successors, who were joined by several other black members of council.

The new policy of multi-cultural transformation was most dramatically illustrated by the fate of the museum's satellites. While Voortrekker House in Boom Street was retained, the trekker focus was not maintained elsewhere as the management of *Zaaylager* farm, the Majuba property and the Blood River Monument were all returned to their respective owners. Instead, from 1998 government placed the Museum Council in charge of one of the nine new "Heritage Sites" which it had identified as being of great significance to previously marginalised ethnic groups. Its brief was to build a monument, directly across the river from the existing Blood River memorial, which was to honour the Zulu warriors who fell on 16 December 1838 in defence of their kingdom. An initial R3.75 million budget was provided, followed by a further R800 000 grant-in-aid.

Although still incomplete, what has since emerged there is not a sombre

tribute to the dead but a museum which constitutes a triumphant celebration of Zulu culture, military traditions and ethnic consciousness. The Blood River Monument and Ncome Museum are probably unique in southern Africa in offering visitors two different interpretations of the same momentous historical event. The development of this project, complete with its own budget, staff and construction programme, soon became a major focus of council's attention, eventually raising it to the level of a partner rather than a mere satellite of the Pietermaritzburg operation.

The process of multi-cultural transformation made a change of name for the Voortrekker Museum essential. "Msunduzi Museum (Incorporating the Voortrekker Complex)" was agreed upon after several options had been considered. Meanwhile, the implementation of the new policy attracted considerable funding from the new ANC Government. Between 1994 and 2009/10 the annual state grant increased by 549%, by which stage it amounted to nearly R8.7 million. Huge additional grants were awarded from the Government's "Transformation Fund" – R365 000 in 2003 to spend on the Pietermaritzburg site and R285 000 to further develop Ncome, with another R693 000 awarded in 2004/5 for general expenditure and a further R1 million in 2005/6. In recent years annual increases in the state grant have been more modest while expenditure continues to escalate, raising the possibility of a return to the financially lean years of nearly a century ago.

The use of state funds for such purposes can probably best be justified by generating public interest in the institutions so favoured. In 2009/10 the Msunduzi Museum attracted 17 333 visitors,

its success in the school market being already well established in an urban area with a large number of educational institutions. In that year Ncome drew 16 475 visitors and clearly appealed more to adults, for whom its various “Living Heritage” events and its annual 16 December “Day of Reconciliation” celebration held strong interest. In 2012 the focus has been much more, though not exclusively, on Pietermaritzburg as the Msunduzi Museum’s schedule of

centenary celebrations draws to a close on that anniversary. It is to be hoped that this well-advertised programme will have the effect of attracting renewed public interest to what has undoubtedly become one of South Africa’s major heritage complexes.

1 Based on Guest, Bill *Trek and Transition A History of the Msunduzi and Ncome Museums (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex) 1912-2012*. (Pietermaritzburg, Msunduzi Museum, 2012).

THE MSIMANG BROTHERS OF EDENDALE WHO HELPED FOUND THE ANC

by Peter Croeser

TWO Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, brothers played a key role in founding and establishing the African National Congress which celebrated its centenary in 2012. Richard and Selby Msimang, grandsons of one of the founding *kholwa* fathers of Edendale, Daniel Mavuso Msimang, helped organise the ANC launching conference 100 years ago and were elected to serve on its first executive committee.

In January 2012, delegates and dignitaries from all over Africa and overseas gathered for the ANC Centenary celebrations in Bloemfontein. They paid a special visit to the Wesleyan Methodist church at Waaihoek, Mangaung, outside Bloemfontein where the South African National Native Congress (SANNC) – renamed the African National Congress in 1923 – was born on 8 January, 1912.

The ANC was the brainchild of four young overseas-educated black South African lawyers, three of them from Natal. Richard Msimang of Edendale, Pix-

ley Ka Isaka Seme of Inanda (nephew of John Langalibalele Dube) and Alfred Mangena from Estcourt. The fourth was George Montsioa, grandson of the Paramount Chief of the BaRolong Tswana of Mafikeng. It was at a meeting of the four young lawyers in Pretoria in 1911 that the decision was taken to launch a national body representing the political interests of all black South Africans.

Richard Msimang (1884-1933) the son of Joel Msimang, founder of the Independent Methodist Church of South Africa, was among the first pupils of the Ohlange Institute, founded by John Langalibalele Dube at Inanda, outside Durban. He later attended Healdtown at Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape. When he was 17, in 1901, he was sent to an English public school, Queen’s College, in Taunton, Somerset, where he also studied law through the University of London.

In November 1910, he returned to South Africa and opened a legal practice in Johannesburg. His first major



Richard Msimang



Selby Msimang

project for the SANNC was researching with his brother Selby and author Sol T. Plaatje the impact of the 1913 Land Act which saw hundreds of thousands of black South Africans displaced.

Richard had a sharp legal mind and represented the ANC on many occasions in negotiations with government. He also chaired the committee that compiled the 1919 constitution of the SANNC. A keen sportsman at school and in later life, he was vice-chairman of the South African Non-White Athletics Union and a founder member of the Johannesburg Bantu Football Association in 1929.

Henry Selby Msimang (1886-1982), the younger brother of Richard, was born in Edendale, but received his primary education at the Emakosini Primary School in Nhlangano, in southern Swaziland, at the mission station established by his father, Joel.

He completed his education at Healdtown and qualified as a teacher, but never taught. He moved to the Transvaal and started work in 1908 as a court interpreter in Germiston, and then as a postmaster in Krugersdorp

before clerking for Advocate Pixley Ka Isaka Seme in his Johannesburg office. As Seme's assistant he became deeply involved in the preliminaries to the Mangaung, Bloemfontein, conference that gave birth to the ANC.

Following the launch of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) on 8 January 1912, Selby, who was based in Johannesburg, took on the day-to-day administration of the SANNC, assisting the elected secretary, Sol Plaatje, who was then living in Kimberley. He later took on the labour portfolio and served on the Anti-Natives Land Act committee with his brother, Richard, raising funds to send a deputation to Britain in an attempt to get the Natives Land Act of 1913 repealed. He supported himself in a variety of jobs while continuing his active association with the ANC.

In 1917 he edited the short-lived Bloemfontein newspaper *Morumioa Inxusa* (Messenger) and became involved in the labour movement, organising a strike of Bloemfontein municipal workers. For this he was arrested and detained, but returned to the fray in

1919 by making contact with Clements Kadalie, founder of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU). Together they planned the establishment of a national ICU and in 1920 held a meeting in Bloemfontein with this in mind. Msimang was elected president of the national ICU. When Kadalie failed to be elected to the executive he withdrew with his supporters. This led to increasing animosity between Msimang and Kadalie, resulting in Msimang's resignation as president and his distancing himself from the ICU until after Kadalie's resignation in 1929. Msimang then rejoined and during the decline of the ICU he held the post of national propagandist. From 1928 to 1937 he worked as a labour advisor in Johannesburg.

Msimang also became a member of the Joint Council for Europeans and Bantu. He was still involved in the activities of the SANNC/ANC and served on the national executive committee of the ANC during the terms of office of presidents J.T. Gumede (1927-1930) and Pixley Seme (1930-1937). In 1932 he was a member of the so-called revival committee that wanted to strengthen the organisation from within to prevent its stagnation. Three years later, during the first meeting of the All-African Convention (AAC) in Bloemfontein in December 1935, he was elected secretary.

From 1942, however, he settled in Edendale near Pietermaritzburg. Continuing his deep interest in the labour movement he became a member of the

Native Representative Council (NRC) in 1948 and in December that year he represented the ANC in discussions with the AAC in an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the two organisations. Early in 1949 he represented the ANC in discussions with prominent Indian leaders in an effort to reconcile Africans and Indians after bloody clashes between them in Durban and surrounding areas in January of that year. When Albert Luthuli defeated A.W.G. Champion as president of the ANC in 1951, Msimang was elected provincial secretary, but he later lost interest in the ANC and resigned the following year.

In 1953 Msimang, together with Peter Brown and Alan Paton, founded the non-racial Liberal Party of South Africa. From 1956 until 1968, when the party was declared a prohibited organisation and was forced to disband, he served on the executive committee and, in due course, became the national vice-chairperson. His activities were, however, hampered in 1965 when he was banned from attending meetings for five years by the government. Failure to make one of his mandatory weekly visits to the police station (due to ill-health of a family member) resulted in him being sent to prison. He was then in his seventies.

In later life he joined the IFP, becoming a member of Inkatha's National Council in 1975 before finally retiring from national politics (at 89). He died in Edendale at the age of 95.

NASTERGALKONFYT AND UMSOBO JAM

by *Adrian Koopman*

THE members of the *Natalia* Editorial Board were spreading purple jam onto freshly-baked scones. It was a research session, set up to determine, by taste alone, whether or not “nastergalkonfyt” and “umsobo jam” (see photograph) were one and the same thing. The umsobo jam, bottled by Hilton Honey Farms, had been bought locally in Pietermaritzburg; the nastergalkonfyt had been bought at a “country food shop” in the little town of Clarens in the eastern Free State. After the tasting session, the general consensus was that “nastergalkonfyt” and “umsobo jam” are simply two names for the same preserve.

Retired botany professor Esmé Hennessey, who grew up as the daughter of a country doctor in the uMzinto district,¹ says in a letter² that the jam is made from the fruit of the plant *Solanum nigrum*. She explains:

The English name (hardly, if ever, used in South Africa) is ‘black nightshade’. The Zulu name is **mSoba**, which is the only name I knew for the plant in my childhood.

Hennessey and her playmates used to eat the berries straight off the bush. Her mother

... once tried to make jam from them but Mum was not a cook and the results were not good. However, some of the more-domesticated farmers’ wives in the district (uMzinto) stewed the fruit for inclusion in fruit pies.³

Three names for the same plant, then: the Latin name *Solanum nigrum*, the Afrikaans name “nastergal”, and the Zulu name “umsobo”. And each of these shows variation of form, depending on



Windmill advert at the Country Food Shop in Clarens

the authority consulted. Let us take the name “nastergal” first. Smith gives all the following forms for the Afrikaans name of this plant:⁴

nagtegaalbossie, nagskaal, nagskaalbossie, nastegal, nastergal, nastergaalbossie, and nastergaalbossie.

Smith states:

The original was the Dutch vernacular ‘nachts-schaduw’ (= nightshade) which in v[an]d[er] Stel’s time had become corrupted into ‘nagtegaal’, perhaps as a result of striving after meaning, as it is very doubtful if the bird ‘nagtegaal’ (nightingale) was in any way associated with this plant.

How “nagtegaal” then became “nastergal” is not explained. It is quite conceivable that a hand-written “g” at some time was incorrectly copied as an “s”.

The Zulu name for the plant also shows variation. Hilton Honey Farms markets the jam under the name “umsobo”, and Doke and Vilakazi⁵ also record the word as “umsobo”. The Clarens country food shop uses the form “msoba”, Esmé Hennessy writes this as “mSoba”, and Van Wyk and Gericke⁶ acknowledge both “umsoba” and “msoba”, but not “umsobo”. On the other hand, while Hennessy, the Clarens food shop, Doke and Vilakazi, and Smith, are all prepared to identify this plant by the botanical name *Solanum nigrum*, Van Wyk and Gericke say it is *Solanum retroflexum*. They obligingly add:

Several other species such as *S. nigrum*, *S. chenopodioides* and *S. melanocerasum* are similar to *S. retroflexum* and are used in the same way, both for their fruit and for the young leaves, which are popular as pot herbs.

Whatever the name, and whatever form the name takes, it seems that this jam has a very special place in the hearts, and indeed, on the palates, of South Africans. Inside the Clarens country food shop is a small poster which emphasises this point. With a nimble linguistic shift from the word

“nastergalkonfyt” displayed on the windmill outside (see photograph), the poster is headed “NASTERGAL JAM”. It goes on to describe this jam as a “rare find”, a “sweet delicacy”, and “the caviar among jams”. It explains:

Those who have tasted nastergal jam become addicted to the dark sweet-berry taste, the little fruit exploding in the mouth, and the syrupy juice that turns everything a royal purple.

It seems that this “caviar among jams” has even found its way into South African literature. The poster quotes Antjie Krog, in her book *A Change of Tongue*:

If she likes somebody, she opens jam with whole orange pieces; if she wants to impress somebody, she opens her green-fig jam bottled with copper pennies; but *nastergal*, bane-wort, picked with endless patience, a batch never consisting of more than a cup or two, takes first prize. This is really for special people.

The poster ends by promising that “Nastergal jam is delicious served with traditional mealie bread.” I must remember that next time I am organising a jam-tasting session with the *Natalia* Editorial Board ...



Nastergalkonfyt from Clarens in the eastern Free State and Umsobo jam from Hilton Honey Farms. Their taste proved indistinguishable.

NOTES

- 1 See Hennessy, E. 2000. Memories of a country doctor's daughter. *Natalia* 30. pp. 31-37
- 2 Personal communication dated 10.07.2011
- 3 Personal communication dated 24.05.2012. Esme Henessey wrote: "My mother would not have objected to the quote. I am an even worse cook than she was and so were both my grandmothers – so it runs on both sides of the family and we cheerfully admit it! Mum once made what was intended to be China-guava jelly (China-guavas are very small-fruited guavas of, probably, South American origin so Goodness knows where the English vernacular name came from: there are red-skinned and yellow-skinned varieties and we had both in the grounds of the house in Umzinto). When the concoction had been cooked and strained it was the most beautiful, clear ruby-red. It was poured into Ball jars to set and be stored. When the day came for the first jar to be broached (it was at lunch time and we were looking forward to having some on our bread and butter) Dad opened the jar and made to dip a spoon in the jam. Only the spoon struck rock! Eventually Dad (later that day when he came back from his afternoon hospital round) took a hammer to the Ball jar and removed the glass; then washed the solid mass of guava brittle, dried it and broke it into pieces. For quite a while after that we had pieces to suck which tasted splendid and lasted longer than bits of toffee! Although we asked Mum to make more she declined to do so, so when that batch was gone we were deprived of our delicious sweeties."
- 4 Smith, C.A. 1966. *Common Names of South African Plants*. Pretoria: Government Printer. p. 346.
- 5 Doke, C.M. and Vilakazi, B.W. 1957. *Zulu-English Dictionary*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press.
- 6 Van Wyk, Ben-Erik and Gericke, Nigel. 2000. *People's Plants: A Guide to Useful Plants of South Africa*. Pretoria: Briza Publications. p. 57

SONGS OF MY YOUTH

Natalia editorial committee member John Deane recalls the musical side of his primary school education at Merchiston

A T A government primary school in Natal in the 1940s some of our teachers, and our principal, were British born, and most of the textbooks and readers we used were from overseas. There were very few locally-produced alternatives available, and so we had the Beacon Readers, the Haliburton Readers, the King's Highway, Ballard's *Fundamental Arithmetic*, Baker and Bourne, *Samples from the Bookshelf*, *The Silver Book of Verse*, Phillips' School Atlas (where each country's map had a small corner inset showing "The British Isles to the same scale"). I forget what history textbooks we used, but some of them were probably from Britain, and I suppose teachers had to

provide whatever local additives were prescribed – Jan van Riebeeck, the Great Trek, and the Battle of Blood River. I don't remember any mention of the Anglo-Zulu War – probably too sensitive, considering the thrashing the British were given at Isandlwana. Similarly, and probably in the interests of nation-building, we weren't taught that just 40 years previously two little Boer republics gave the mighty Empire a real run for its money.

There was no school library, and those of us who were avid readers were members of the Natal Society Library Children's Section for a subscription of two shillings and sixpence a year, I think. There were few local authors writing South African stories

for South African children, and so we devoured the books of P.C. Wren, G.A. Henty, Percy F. Westerman, Richmal Crompton, Hugh Lofting and Capt. W.E. Johns. Most of these were “boys’ books”, and I hope that girls had as much choice as we did. We liked the weekly comic *Film Fun*, and the paper many of us bought every week from the CNA was the *Champion* with its exciting instalments about Rockfist Rogan, R.A.F., the detective Colwyn Dane, and many others. You could say that our reading, in and out of school, was anglocentric.

No list of the books we used at school would be complete without the *National Song Book*. Once or twice a week we would unwillingly traipse down to “Singing”. It was a boys’ school, and this activity was rather looked down on. Our headmaster had a fine baritone voice, and at school concerts he would usually sing a solo, like “The Mountains of Mourne” or “The Road to Mandalay”. It went down a treat with the parents, but it embarrassed us boys to think that the head, of all people, should actually sing, on a stage, by *himself*. (This was the inhibited innocence of the last male generation before pop singers were invented.)

The Singing lessons usually began with some breathing exercises, and sight-reading from a book designed to teach us to sing from tonic sol-fa notation. This, incidentally, was one of the few locally-produced books, written by Cyril Wright, who did so much to promote music in Natal schools. After the tonic sol-fa drill and warm-up, out came the *National Song Book*, and it was time to sing real songs.

For the rest of the lesson we would be transported to that fairest isle, all isles excelling, that land of hope and

glory, which God had made mighty, and we asked Him to make it mightier yet. Because, you see, Britons never, never, never, shall be slaves. (They’d owned and traded a good many in their time, but *be* slaves? Never!) And of course we were Britons, even though we were South African schoolboys. The king was on the coins, the Union Jack flew at the masthead, we were members of the Commonwealth, helping the Mother Country to fight Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo. Several times a month we would run down to the school fence and watch regiments marching from the Drill Hall up Commercial Road on their way to the railway station, bound for East Africa, North Africa or Italy. Our juvenile patriotism was matched, and also formed, by the songs we sang. Even in the age of steel no one doubted that hearts of oak were our ships, jolly tars were our men, who always were ready (“Steady, boys, steady”) and they’d fight and they’d conquer again and again. We wouldn’t admit to actually liking Singing lessons, but we imbibed it all.

With adult hindsight, one realises that most of those songs, whatever sentiments they conveyed, were very good ones – so good that their tunes were shamelessly used for parodies. Even if we didn’t know much about Wales, our Singing teachers made sure we knew “Men of Harlech”. The words “Rhyfelgyrch Gwyr Harlech” in brackets under the title remained a mystery to us, and we never asked. That would have been showing too great an interest in Singing. But we knew that fierce the beacon light is flaming, with its tongues of fire proclaiming, chieftains sundered to your shaming, strongly now unite. We weren’t quite sure what it was all about, but we could sing it lustily, while Miss B. dealt out the special kind of

punishment that school pianos must endure. So when, a few years later at Scout campfires we encountered “The National Anthem of the Ancient Britons”, the new words slipped effortlessly into the well-known tune, and we could enjoy asking what’s the use of wearing braces, vests and pants and boots with laces, spats or hats you buy in places down in Brompton Road; what’s the use of shirts of cotton, studs that always get forgotten, these affairs are simply rotten – better far is WOAD! Woad’s the stuff to show, men, woad to scare your foemen, boil it to a brilliant hue and rub it on your back and your ab-do-men Listen to a Welsh male-voice choir and tell me the tune itself isn’t magically stirring. School Singing lessons had come into their own. From a distance our campfire might have sounded like a pre-match warm-up at Cardiff Arms Park – well, except for the volume and the vocal quality. But the tune was there, embedded, a permanent part of our mental furniture, thanks to Miss B., Miss S. and *The National Song Book*. And so it was with many other songs. Of course we showed no gratitude for this gift, and our Singing teachers in their

darker moments probably thought they were casting pearls before real little swine. If gratitude can be belated, retrospective, or posthumously bestowed, that’s what I feel now.

On the opposite side of the sub-continent, another Natalia committee member, Elwyn Jenkins, was having a rather different musical indoctrination. He writes:

In South West Africa, at the parallel-medium Emma Hoogenhout Primêre Skool (formerly the Leutweinstrasse School) in Windhoek, our songs were either from the FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge) Sangbundel, or Viennese waltzes. So we were either standing to attention, bawling out *Die Lied van Jong Suid Afrika* (“Opstaan, handhaaf en bou”) or crooning about “Green Vienna woods so gay” where we wandered the livelong day as the breezes blow and the branches sway, while outside, the sun was so hot it would explode the tyres on the bicycles leaning against the wall.

