

# *A sketch of colonial Umkomaas*

*by Duncan Du Bois*

THE uMkhomazi is the second largest river on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast. The river first came into prominence in correspondence initiated by Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs, in 1851 when he proposed the establishment of a “black kingdom”, as he termed it, south of the uMkhomazi. With his locations policy proving difficult to implement, he envisaged that as many as 50 000 Africans would follow him to the area south of the uMkhomazi if the colonial authorities permitted it. But his plan was firmly rejected by Natal Governor Benjamin Pine and by the Colonial Office in London.<sup>1</sup>

The first official colonial presence in the Umkomaas area commenced in July 1853 when Henry Francis Fynn was appointed Assistant Resident Magistrate in the Lower Umkomaas division in what was then Durban County.<sup>2</sup> He was also the first to operate a ferry at the drift on the river

charging five shillings for wagons and sixpence for foot passengers.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of Fynn’s customers were local Africans, as apart from isolated mission stations south of the uMkhomazi, there were only three permanent white settlers in the district – Bunting Johnson, John McKenzie and John Higham.<sup>4</sup> The presence of crocodiles in the river underlined the need for a ferry service as in 1853 a missionary, Reverend J.A. Butler, was attacked while crossing the uMkhomazi on horseback. He suffered severe lacerations to his thigh but survived the ordeal.<sup>5</sup> In 1858 Henry Reynolds became the first officially appointed ferryman on the lower uMkhomazi.<sup>6</sup> Reynolds also opened the first accommodation house, as it was called, at the drift where he operated his ferry.<sup>7</sup> After his death in 1862, it traded as the Drift Hotel and was managed by his widow, Georgina for more than 40 years.

The turning point in the history of the South Coast came in 1857 when the newly elected Legislative Council decided to promote the development of the coastal areas by inviting applications for Crown land grants. Dissatisfaction with the existing Byrne land grants and news of the success of sugar on the coastal belt prompted many to take their chances and make a fresh start south of the uMkhomazi river.<sup>8</sup> Following the proclamation in the *Government Gazette* on the opening up of Crown land grants, there was a flurry of interest and by 1859, according to Robert Mann, there were 93 colonists in the coastal area between the uMkhomazi and Ifafa rivers.<sup>9</sup>

In what the *Natal Mercury* termed “the southward extension of the cane enterprise”,<sup>10</sup> the allocation of land grants to the new planters seems to have been something of a lottery. Soil types, the nature of the terrain and transport access were factors which were glossed over.<sup>11</sup> Instead enthusiasm abounded especially over the success of the first sugar planter in the district, John McKenzie, of Craigie Burn estate on the uMkhomazi river where he had settled in 1855. A sample of his sugar was described as “equal to the best quality from Mauritius”. He had invested £5 000 in a mill and employed a Mr C. Peddie who had had long experience in sugar manufacturing in the West Indies.<sup>12</sup> McKenzie’s mill was the first one to be erected south of Isipingo. His experience and status earned him the title “king of Umkomaas”.<sup>13</sup> In 1858 Captain Patrick Maxwell founded Canonby estate which also bordered on the uMkhomazi. In 1860 he was joined by Lewis Reynolds whose name became both prominent and synonymous with

the South Coast in later years.<sup>14</sup> A few miles beyond the uMkhomazi, Joseph Landers established Renishaw estate on the uMphambinyoni river. Thus, the nucleus of the sugar fraternity evolved in the Umkomaas district.

### **Travel and transport**

The uMkhomazi river, however, posed a serious challenge to travel and transport. In reporting on his tour of the South Coast in 1861, *Mercury* editor John Robinson described the challenge the uMkhomazi posed to the traveller as follows:<sup>15</sup>

The road wriggles along the steep hillside in its descent to the river. ...The declivity which has to be overpassed is corrugated and serrated after the fashion of most Natal hills... sheer precipice plunging down on the one side and a stony cliff wall shooting up on the other.

When the Arbuthnots trekked to their new home on the uMzinto river, Jane described the uMkhomazi valley as a “precipice” which resulted in “breakdowns, misadventures, delays and much anxiety”.<sup>16</sup> Frustration with the difficulty in accessing the region beyond the uMkhomazi resulted in the first public meeting of the new residents held on 24 March 1860. A petition signed by 37 colonists implored the Government to address the issue.<sup>17</sup> But 37 years would pass and many more petitions would be compiled before a bridge was built over the uMkhomazi. Out of this exasperation an innovative solution germinated: river port shipping.

In 1856 Captain Patrick Maxwell, a seafarer of some 20 years’ experience, claimed that after examining the mouth of the uMkhomazi, it ought to be navigable by vessels of up to 60 tons.<sup>18</sup> So positive was the feeling that



*Umkomaas railway bridge and mill 1914*

shipping on the uMkhomazi would become a reality that an advertisement placed by Robert Acutt in 1859 for a farm just south of the uMkhomazi described it as being “contiguous to the site of the proposed port and harbour at the mouth of the Umcomaas”.<sup>19</sup> The initiative to establish shipping on the uMkhomazi came from Messrs McArthur, Muirhead and Company of Durban. They purchased a 63 ton vessel, the *Natalie*. With a draft of only five-feet and four inches, she was thought suitable for the task.<sup>20</sup>

On 25 March 1861, the *Natalie* became the first ship to navigate the entrance of the uMkhomazi. The implications of her voyage were significant: in terms of distance it meant an ox-wagon journey to Durban, which could take up to five days, could be reduced to a few hours and realise a saving of £2.10s per ton. So optimistic was the *Mercury* about the uMkhomazi’s prospects that it claimed Port Scott was set to become

a partial rival to the port of Durban.<sup>21</sup> But those thoughts were short lived. Following her third entry of the river in August 1861, the *Natalie* was severely damaged and lay stranded at the river mouth until January 1862 when engineers managed to repair her sufficiently to return to Durban. Re-commissioned and renamed the *Congune*, her coastal service excluded the uMkhomazi.<sup>22</sup>

Although Peter Paterson, the Colonial Engineer, pointed out that winds, tides, currents and sandbanks presented “serious, although not insurmountable obstacles to navigation” of the uMkhomazi, the dire need for an alternative means of transport tended to blind opinion as to the realities of attempting river shipping. Consequently, the Natal Government authorised the construction of a stone breakwater on the south side of the river. By December 1861, one hundred feet in length had been laid.<sup>23</sup> In 1862 a further £4 000 was voted to improve

the river mouth by blasting rocks in the entrance.<sup>24</sup> Interest in the prospects of the district was such that Governor John Scott embarked on a tour of the South Coast in September 1862, the first by a governor to that part of Natal.<sup>25</sup> But despite the efforts made to improve the river entrance, no callers followed the *Natalie*. In September 1864, the *Albion* paid a single visit to the uMkhomazi. After loading sugar, strong winds delayed her departure for several days.<sup>26</sup> No other ships ventured into the uMkhomazi for the rest of the decade and by 1868, the so-called harbour works at the river mouth were in a derelict condition.<sup>27</sup>

By the 1870s thinking on river shipping had become more circumspect. After inspecting the river mouth in 1872, the Surveyor-General, Dr P.C. Sutherland noted that until the settlement at Umkomaas grew in size, there was no urgency to expend further resources on developing the river mouth.<sup>28</sup> Prospects brightened in 1873 when Mr T.N. Price of Durban sent the *Anthony Musgrave* to the uMkhomazi. The ship entered the river on 8 August, discharged fourteen tons of cargo and took on 30 tons of sugar – the equivalent of fifteen wagon loads.<sup>29</sup> The *Anthony Musgrave* made another three visits to the uMkhomazi before she was wrecked at the mouth of the river in November 1873 and officially abandoned in February 1874.<sup>30</sup> However, the loss of the *Anthony Musgrave* produced two positive developments: the Government allocated £1 500 to improve access to the river mouth and local stakeholders formed the Alexandra Shipping Company in a bid to promote regular coastal shipping.<sup>31</sup>

The ongoing frustration of the

inhabitants of the South Coast with the lack of bridges and proper roads, despite submitting petitions urging the Government to address their plight, underlined the earnestness of those involved in establishing the Alexandra Shipping Company. The Government evidently shared that concern because in November 1874 it endorsed a loan of £3 000 to the Company as well as a subsidy of ten shillings per ton on cargo shipped to or from points on the South Coast.<sup>32</sup> But once again a promising initiative came to naught. Wagon transporters reduced their charges by 25 percent resulting in several sugar planters opting for the cheaper overland route, thereby dealing the Alexandra Shipping Company a setback. By the end of 1875 the company was sold and subsequently liquidated.<sup>33</sup> Apart from one call to Scottburgh by a new ship, the *Somtseu*, in 1878,<sup>34</sup> there were no further callers to either the uMkhomazi or to Scottburgh for the rest of the decade. Twenty years on, the travel and transport woes of settlers beyond the uMkhomazi remained unchanged.

Umkomaas's experience as a river port enjoyed a brief revival in the early 1880s before it was finally terminated. Following the successful deployment of the *Somtseu* to Port Shepstone in 1880, five calls to the uMkhomazi were made in 1881.<sup>35</sup> When the *Somtseu's* schedule was disrupted after she had to undergo repairs, the *Mercury's* Umkomaas correspondent complained that "the *Somtseu* is badly wanted here."<sup>36</sup> However, the risk involved in negotiating the mouth of the uMkhomazi resulted in it being abandoned as a port of call. The last occasion that a ship called there was in December 1883.<sup>37</sup> From 1886 until it ceased operation in January

1893, shipping from the beach at the mouth of the uMzinto river eased the transport plight of sugar farmers in the Lower uMkhomazi district.

### **Social development**

Although, as will be seen, Umkomaas was the first settlement on the South Coast to acquire town board status, it was not the first to enjoy an official town planning proposal. That honour belongs to Scottburgh. In 1859 the Surveyor General's office produced a sketch of the proposed village of Scottburgh replete with the very street names it bears today – Scott, Arbuthnot, Gallwey, Airth, etc.<sup>38</sup> But as a village Scottburgh did not develop until the early twentieth century. After Umzinto, Umkomaas was the only other significant settlement in Alexandra County, as the area was named officially from 1865.<sup>39</sup> On the Surveyor-General's map, Umkomaas was referred to as South Barrow and

North Barrow, the uMkhomazi river separating the two proposed townships. In 1865 some 39 land lots were put up for auction in South Barrow.<sup>40</sup> No development took place on the north bank of the river. Reference to the settlement as South Barrow ended officially in 1924 in terms of Provincial Ordinance No. 6 which proclaimed the town as Umkomaas.

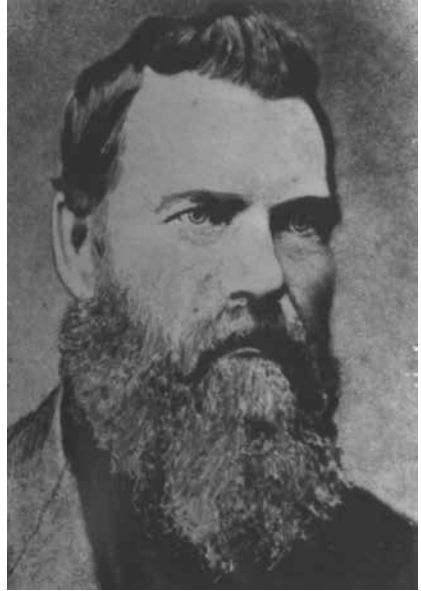
An early indication of social cohesion was the formation of the Umkomaas Rifle Club in February 1860. Prominent members were Alexander Brander, John Higham and Alex McLean.<sup>41</sup> Rifle clubs were seen as essential to establishing a grass roots defence system in the Colony which was sparsely settled by whites and in which the African population was estimated as in excess of 100 000. In terms of Ordinance 11 of 1855 the establishment of Volunteer Corps was officially promoted.<sup>42</sup> Reports in the



*Pont over the Umkomaas River*

*Mercury* in 1863 and 1864 noted that the Umkomaas Rifle Club had had successful shooting competitions at Canonby estate which were followed by convivial social occasions.<sup>43</sup>

In 1862, Reverend Arentz Tönessen established the first church in Umkomaas but when he left the area in 1876 it stood empty for want of a pastor.<sup>44</sup> In 1864 a temporary building was erected for a public school in Umkomaas. Henry Carter was the schoolmaster.<sup>45</sup> In 1866, at the height of the recession which devastated Natal's economy, the school was reported to be in decline with only eight pupils registered compared to nineteen in 1865.<sup>46</sup> By 1862, Umkomaas enjoyed a thrice-a-week mail service. However, some residents complained of the inconvenience which resulted from the location of the post mistress, Mrs Georgina Reynolds (later known as



Nelson after she re-married), on the north bank of the uMkhomazi. The Commission on the re-organisation of the postal service recommended



*(Top) Canon Tönessen and (above) St Bride's church*



that Mrs Reynolds should establish a locked receiving box at a safe place on the south bank.<sup>47</sup>

Umkomaas society's first taste of music and the arts occurred in April 1874. Described as a "rich and rare treat" that afforded "gratifying proof of social advancement", an audience of 70 gathered on the premises of a new store owned by a Mr Price for an evening of song and dance and a recital by the "Umkomaas Amateurs".<sup>48</sup> On 19 May 1875 the school room was the venue for an evening of dancing attended by 60 residents.<sup>49</sup>

### **Georgina Nelson (15 November 1825 – 9 March 1911)**

Colonial society undoubtedly afforded opportunities for women to fulfil roles for which they would not have been eligible in their home countries. The frontier nature of vast areas of Natal, such as the Lower uMkhomazi, and the multi-tasking roles required within settler families in order to survive,<sup>50</sup> were one of the reasons Victorian attitudes to women were moderated. The civil lists in the *Blue Books* show that over a 20-year period at least six women were employed as post mistresses while many more were employed in schools. One of these was Georgina Reynolds, her married name at the time of her appointment in April 1862 at Umkomaas.<sup>51</sup> The death of her husband, Henry, on 18 January 1862, posed a crisis for Georgina and her six children as her family would no longer have the benefit of his income of £36 per annum as ferry-keeper.<sup>52</sup>

In informing the Colonial Secretary of the death of her husband and noting that he had also served as postal clerk, Georgina asked if she could be granted "continuance" of those offices. To

underline her request, she pointed out that she owned the ferry by virtue of the fact that it was built by her late husband and that it was larger than the one which the Government supplied. In a further bid to promote her cause, she referred to a petition which was circulating in Lower uMkhomazi in support of her application for the posts. Her request was granted and her appointments confirmed on 9 and 17 April 1862, respectively.<sup>53</sup> Georgina remained post mistress of Umkomaas for over 30 years, retiring in the early 1890s. After marrying Nicholas Nelson, she gave up the post of ferry-keeper. In March 1865, his appointment as ferry-keeper was confirmed.<sup>54</sup> The Nelsons owned and managed the Drift Hotel four miles up the uMkhomazi<sup>55</sup> until Georgina retired in 1904. She was noted for her convivial role as hostess. The hotel was a popular destination for honeymoon couples.<sup>56</sup>

Georgina spent her last years at Dalfrey cottage in Umkomaas. She was in good health until a week before her death when she tripped over a rug and broke her thigh bone. Unusually for a woman at that time, her funeral was attended by a very large number of people and she was accorded a black-bordered obituary column in the *Natal Mercury* headed "A pioneer colonist of Natal". Usually only the obituaries of prominent politicians or clergymen such as Bishop Colenso received black border embellishment. Her obituary noted that kindness and willingness to help the sick were the hallmarks of her character.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the role of women, it is of note that women managed three of the four hotels in Umkomaas in 1905. They were: Mrs Williams at the Umkomaas Hotel, Mrs Salmon at the

Rand Hotel and Mrs Humphreys at Humphreys Hotel.<sup>58</sup>

### **Economic stagnation**

By 1870, Umkomaas, as the gateway to Alexandra County and the rest of the South Coast, found itself just as much hamstrung by the lack of infrastructure development as the rest of the region. Investors were not attracted because of the lack of proper roads and most crucial of all, a bridge over the uMkhomazi. The Surveyor-General's report for 1870 for townships laid out by the Government confirmed that. Of 660 acres available on the south side of the uMkhomazi, only 38 erven had been sold. Despite offerings of 700 acres in Scottburgh, and 4 400 acres in Port Shepstone, no sales were recorded.<sup>59</sup>

Following his second tour of the South Coast, *Mercury* editor John Robinson remarked that "if the district is to make any progress at all", a bridge over the uMkhomazi was essential. In motivation, he argued that the "traffic would provide a revenue more than sufficient to cover the whole cost of the bridge."<sup>60</sup> Enthusiasm for the project was such that John Bazley of Ifafa made a model of the bridge which he exhibited at Black and Baxter's store in Umzinto.<sup>61</sup> A sum of £5 000 was placed on the Estimates of 1872 and was still there in 1874. But no bridge materialised. A petition presented to the new Governor, Benjamin Pine, in 1873, pointed out that the absence of a bridge was a "great obstacle to the progress and prosperity" of the County.<sup>62</sup> But officialdom seemed deaf to the pleas and petitions of the South Coast. Other issues such as the Langelibalele affair and the Anglo-Zulu War relegated the region in terms of the colonial Government's priorities.

Moreover, of critical significance was the discovery in 1878 of substantial coal deposits in Northern Natal and the Government's absolute commitment to expedite the rail link to that area.<sup>63</sup> Thus, while a spate of bridge building took place in that region,<sup>64</sup> the watery divide of the uMkhomazi remained unbridged.

By 1889 no fewer than 14 petitions had been submitted since 1871 by the residents of Lower uMkhomazi requesting a bridge.<sup>65</sup> Colonial engineer Albert Hime proved the greatest obstacle to these requests. He routinely cited the financial condition of the Colony and the engineering challenge which the uMkhomazi posed or he simply denied that the absence of a bridge constituted any drawback to economic progress south of Umkomaas.<sup>66</sup> A great ally of the South Coast's infrastructural needs was John Robinson in his roles as *Mercury* editor and as colonial legislator. He consistently supported appeals for a bridge over the uMkhomazi. In 1891 he castigated Hime for having "shamefully neglected" the infrastructure needs of the South Coast and harshly dismissed Hime's excuses about the "state of finances".<sup>67</sup>

Exasperation with the situation boiled over on 31 January 1893 when a meeting, which was noted as the "largest and most influential", was held in Umzinto concerning the "intolerable state" of the uMkhomazi drift.<sup>68</sup> During the 1892 Council session Hime had finally conceded that a bridge would be built and that his preference was for one that served only a railway rather than a dual purpose road/rail bridge. But the actual realisation of this bridge would depend on the construction of the railway. In 1892 no plans existed to extend the line south of Isipingo.



Exacerbating the situation, Hime stated that the survey for the line from Isipingo to Umkomaas “may not be carried out for years to come”.<sup>69</sup> Then nature once again demonstrated that the South Coast was a hostage to its moods. Heavy rains in January 1893 made the uMkhomazi impassable. Wagon traffic was held up for two weeks before it was safe to use the pont.<sup>70</sup>

Frank Reynolds, chairman of the 31 January meeting, described the Government’s failure to build a bridge over the uMkhomazi as “a monument of shame”. After several speakers had castigated the Government, the meeting resolved on an unusual step: it decided to forward the grievances of Alexandra County directly to the Secretary of State for Colonies in London, the Marquis of Ripon. The implication of this, as the *Mercury* reporter stated, was that “not a single man there believed that any redress could be obtained from the Government”.<sup>71</sup> There is no record of such a despatch having been forwarded to the Secretary of State. Moreover, the Governor would not have taken the embarrassing step of doing so at a time when Natal was on the verge of embarking on a responsible government dispensation.

### **Railway**

Supportive of the South Coast’s infrastructural needs in the years prior to the onset of responsible government, John Robinson, as Natal’s first Prime Minister (1893-1897), was instrumental in ending the region’s isolation by his swift promotion of a Bill (No. 37) to extend the railway from Isipingo to Umzinto. As he stated at the time, the Bill “ought to have the

unanimous support of every member of this House”.<sup>72</sup> By the end of July 1894, the Umzinto Railway Bill had become Act 28.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, the Robinson ministry took over the operation of the pont on the uMkhomazi and reduced its charges by a third.<sup>74</sup>

By March 1895 the survey work was complete and tenders were called for. Messrs Middleton Bros, a firm with Canadian railway experience were awarded the £93 000 tender.<sup>75</sup> One of the outcomes of the survey was that for reasons of construction and economy, the railway would run along the seashore. Thomas Murray in his capacity as Minister of Lands and Works had anticipated such a routing and predicted, very accurately as things turned out, that “the beautiful spots along the seaside in a few years time will develop into favourite seaside resorts”.

Umkomaas obviously represented a key station in the extension of the line which reached only as far as the north bank of the uMkhomazi while engineers busied themselves with the construction of a bridge across the river. The bridge required fifteen spans each 55 feet in length.<sup>76</sup> Excitement at the prospect of the rail link was rife on the South Coast. Predictions as to when the line would reach the various points on the coast were a staple part of conversation. Mid-1896 was seen as the time when the line would reach Park Rynie. It was speculated that the extension to Port Shepstone could be expected some time in 1897.<sup>77</sup> But such hopes were dashed. Labour shortages and the scourge of rinderpest, which decimated livestock herds and, as a result impacted negatively on ox-wagon transport, affected the pace of rail extension.<sup>78</sup>

On Monday, 22 February 1897, 60 dignitaries filled the first two passenger coaches that made up the first train to steam from Durban to the north bank of the uMkhomazi.<sup>79</sup> Work on the bridge over the uMkhomazi took several more months to complete so that it was exactly seven months later that the first train passed over what had been a watery barrier to colonial transport for over 40 years. On 1 December the first train reached Park Rynie. A journey from Durban that previously could take a week by ox wagon was reduced to four hours.<sup>80</sup> But it was not until 5 May 1923 that a motor bridge was opened across the Umkomaas river, as it came to be called in post-colonial times.<sup>81</sup>

### **Progress through new commerce**

The coming of the railway ended the isolation and detachment of the South Coast and integrated it with the rest of the Colony. It also brought a new commerce – tourism and the hospitality business. Under the hotel section of the Business Directory published in the *Mercury*, apart from Durban and upcountry establishments, the only other hotels advertised were those on the South Coast.<sup>82</sup> The *Mercury*'s "Man in the Moon" column on 16 April 1898 was lavish in its praise of Umkomaas as an attractive holiday resort. In an election speech in Umkomaas in 1901, Frank Reynolds remarked that before the coming of the railway, Umkomaas had been "a wilderness". But since 1897 it had blossomed as a community comprising between 30 and 40 houses.<sup>83</sup>

As the gateway to the South Coast, by 1903 Umkomaas was described as "a favourite watering place of Natal". An estimated 500 visitors attended

the sports entertainment held on the grounds near the railway bridge on the 1903 Easter Monday holiday.<sup>84</sup> But the popularity of Umkomaas as a destination for holiday-makers and day-trippers served to highlight its shortcomings in terms of its lack of a proper water supply, sanitation and the need to harden its main thoroughfares. The establishment of a town board was seen as the solution to those issues. Throughout 1904 efforts to promote acceptance of the need for a town board were made.<sup>85</sup> Consensus was finally achieved in June and an appropriate resolution was forwarded to the Governor.<sup>86</sup> On 19 January 1905, seven members of the Umkomaas Town Board were elected.<sup>87</sup> John Stennet was the first town clerk. Umkomaas became the first settlement on the South Coast to have town board status.

The benefits of the board were soon evident. By November 1907 the bathing area at the beach had been secured with stanchions and torpedo netting, thereby preventing bathers from being swept out into the surf in a backwash. As a report noted, "Umkomaas depends entirely on the sea and the river for its charm".<sup>88</sup> Another accolade for Umkomaas appeared in the *Mercury* on 20 January 1906 when it was described as "the Scarborough of Natal, the queen of watering places". Further evidence of its growth manifested itself in the erection of 12 street lamps, the clearance of brushwood from four miles of streets and the provision of latrines for Africans. Before the end of 1907 more street lamps were erected, a sports field was in the process of preparation and a landing stage for pleasure launches on the foreshore

of the river had been built. The first motor launch, the Victoria, made its appearance on the river.<sup>89</sup> By 1910 two other launches, the Fly and the Swift, were also active on the river.<sup>90</sup> The river was apparently navigable for eight miles until the first rapids were reached.<sup>91</sup>

Umkomaas's municipal budget for 1909/1910 makes interesting reading:<sup>92</sup>

**Revenue:** licences £109; rents £47; rates £200. Total: £356

**Expenses:** wages and rations £144; sanitary £30; lighting £1; insurance £3; PO Box £1; advertising £10; clerk £50; contingencies £87. Total: £356.

No other settlement on the South Coast enjoyed that type of governance.

After the hall burnt down in December 1909, the new one was scheduled to be opened on 10 June 1910. A telephone service was expected by late 1910.<sup>93</sup>

### Indian community

Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed's study entitled *Inside Indian Indenture* has only two references to Indians in Umkomaas.<sup>94</sup> One concerned a labour complaint by sugar planter J. Parkin of Hull Valley estate in the Lower Umkomaas district in January 1908. The other reference was to the entrepreneurial success of an Indian named Moonsamy Govender. After completing his period of indenture, he bought land in the Umkomaas district and grew sugar and tobacco.<sup>95</sup>

The "Umkomaas Area Annals" make reference to two other Indians. B.C. Rambachan was 14 when he came from India as an indentured labourer to Umzinto. After serving his indentured contract he moved to Hull

valley in the Umkomaas district where he worked as a blacksmith. He later purchased 425 acres of land close to the uMkhomazi and grew tobacco and cane. Dasrath Maharajh completed a five-year indenture contract in 1870 with J.J. Crookes. He then worked for 15 years in Hull valley renting land from Rambachan on which he grew vegetables and fruit.<sup>96</sup> A report in the *Natal Witness* in 1877 noted that Indians were fishing in the mouth of the uMkhomazi and supplying the local market. However, the report remarked that the distance from Durban prevented their enterprise from being "a profitable occupation".<sup>97</sup>

While white settlers took pride in the growth of Umkomaas, they exhibited intolerance towards the "intrusion" of Indian settlers. Disdain towards Indians as settlers had been a reality since the early 1880s across colonial Natal. Just weeks after Natal entered the Union dispensation in 1910 a petition was launched in Umkomaas against the issuing of further trading licences to Indians. "Great indignation was expressed locally" when a trading licence was transferred from a European to an Indian whose premises were situated within half a mile of local white storekeepers.<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately such sentiments prevailed far into the Union years and beyond.

### ENDNOTES

- 1 Shepstone to Pine, 9 December 1851, Encl., Despatch No. 12, 50; Guy, J., *Theophilus Shepstone and the forging of Natal*, (Scottsville, 2013), 209-210.
- 2 Pridmore, J., 'Diaries and Despatches: The life and writing of Henry Francis Fynn (1803-1861), and Henry Francis Fynn Junior (1846-1915), *Kleio*, 36, 2004, 136.
- 3 CSO 74, No. 27, 29 December 1854.
- 4 CSO 96, No. 217, 12 August 1857.
- 5 *Natal Mercury*, 3 February 1853.

- 6 CSO 106, No. 112, 27 July 1858.
- 7 CSO 105, 11 May 1858.
- 8 Morrell, R., *From Boys to Gentlemen: settler masculinity in colonial Natal 1880-1920*, (Pretoria, 2001), 26.
- 9 Mann, R.J., *The Colony of Natal*, (London, 1859), 79-80.
- 10 *Natal Mercury*, 10 June 1858.
- 11 Hocking, A., *Renishaw – The Story of the Crookes Brothers*, (Bethulie, 1992), 41.
- 12 *Natal Mercury*, 9 September 1858; 10 June 1858.
- 13 Osborn, R.F., *Valiant Harvest: the founding of the South African Sugar Industry*, (Durban, 1964), 298.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 304-305.
- 15 *Natal Mercury*, 9 May 1861.
- 16 Arbuthnot, J., *Autobiographical Sketch*, (Arberville, 1897), 17.
- 17 *Natal Mercury*, 5 April 1860.
- 18 *Natal Mercury*, 4 July 1856.
- 19 *Natal Mercury*, 17 November 1859.
- 20 *Government Notice*, No. 123, 1861.
- 21 *Natal Mercury*, 28 March 1861. A detailed account of colonial river port shipping on the South Coast was published in the 2011 issue of *Natalia*.
- 22 CSO 137, No. 1459, October 1861: Report on loss of steamer *Natalie*; *Natal Mercury*, 21 January 1862.
- 23 Select Document No. 28, 1862, 15, 21, presented to the Legislative Council on 15 June 1863. The *Natal Blue Book* for 1862, C17, reported that £582 nine shillings and eight pence had been spent on the improvement of the mouth of the uMkomazi.
- 24 *Natal Mercury*, 5 September 1862.
- 25 *Natal Mercury*, 26 September 1862.
- 26 *Natal Mercury*, 1 October 1864.
- 27 *Natal Mercury*, 12 November 1868.
- 28 CSO 426, No. 2403, 7 December 1872. The *Natal Blue Book* for 1872, H2-3, recorded £222 in the Public Works budget for work on the entrance to the uMkomazi.
- 29 *Natal Mercury*, 12 August 1873.
- 30 *Natal Mercury*, 16 September, 30 October, 20, 22, 25 November 1873; 17 February 1874.
- 31 *Natal Blue Book*, 1874, H4; CSO 511, No. 869, Alexandra Shipping Company, Limited. In 1865 a petition presented by Robert Arbuthnot and signed by 29 inhabitants of Lower uMkomazi, requested aid for the formation of a “Coast Shipping Association”. Nothing came of the matter. See: Natal Legislative Council, *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. XII, 1865, 241, 26 July 1865.
- 32 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1500, 10 November 1874; Natal Legislative Council, *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. XXII, 1874, 439. Shipping from the beach at Scottburgh had come to be regarded as a safer and surer way of beating the hazards the uMkomazi mouth posed. This was emphasised by Captain G. Walker of East London who was engaged to examine beach shipping prospects. He did so by swimming out through the surf to the backline waves at Scottburgh to prove the ease with which cargo could be sent out on surfboats to a waiting vessel. See: *Natal Mercury*, 27 May 1874.
- 33 *Natal Mercury*, 26 January 1875; 22 January 1876; 12 April 1877.
- 34 *Natal Witness*, 25 June 1878.
- 35 *Natal Mercury*, 13 January, 14 March, 19 April, 5 and 17 May 1881.
- 36 *Natal Mercury*, 7 September 1881.
- 37 *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1883. The ship was the *Zulu*.
- 38 CSO 111, No. 53, 16 March 1859. Governor Scott approved the plan on 29 March 1859.
- 39 CSO 229, No. 1647, 21 August 1865. The County was named after the Princess of Wales.
- 40 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XVII, No. 980, 14 November 1865.
- 41 *Natal Mercury*, 16 February 1860.
- 42 By 1904, there were 62 Rifle Associations on record. See: Natal Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, Vol. LX11, 1904, xiv-xvi; xix.
- 43 *Natal Mercury*, 10 July 1863; 12 July 1864.
- 44 Umkomaas Annals 1828-1980, edited by A Warner, p. 76. MS FED, Killie Campbell Manuscripts, 55070; *Natal Mercury*, 1 February 1876.
- 45 *Natal Mercury*, 2 February 1864.
- 46 CSO 254, No. 1577, 23 April 1866.
- 47 Report of the Postal Service Commission, Document No. 6, 1863, 4, 13 May 1863.
- 48 *Natal Mercury*, 14 April 1874.
- 49 *Natal Mercury*, 27 May 1875.
- 50 Beall, J.D. “Class, race and gender: the political economy of women in colonial Natal,” (MA thesis, University of Natal, 1982), 115; Gordon, R.E. (ed.), *Dear Louisa: History of a pioneer family in Natal 1850-1888* (Cape Town, 1970), 168.
- 51 *Natal Blue Book*, 1862, M22.
- 52 £36 was the standard annual income ferryman received from the colonial Government. There were thirteen official ferrymen in Natal at the time. *Natal Blue Book*, 1866, M28.

- 53 CSO 147, No. 604. Her annual salary was backdated to 19 January 1862. Her petition was signed by 36 locals and endorsed by the former Chief Postmaster of the Colony, William Collins. CSO 144, No. 335, 26 February 1862; CSO 142, 29 January 1862.
- 54 *Government Notice*, No.25, 2 March 1865.
- 55 *Natal Directory*, 1908, 1,109.
- 56 *Natal Mercury*, 1 September 1904.
- 57 *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1911.
- 58 *Natal Mercury*, 11 May 1905. The other hotel in Umkomaas, the South Barrow, was run by a Mr Louch .The Umkomaas Hotel burnt down in 1910. Umkomaas Annals, 137.
- 59 Document No. 28, 1870, presented to the Legislative Council 7 July 1870.
- 60 *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.
- 61 *Natal Mercury*, 12 September 1871.
- 62 CSO 448, No. 2008, 20 August 1873; *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1453, 20 January 1874.
- 63 Governor Henry Bulwer made it clear that every effort should be made to “secure the means of our future coal supply”. CSO 646, No. 2149, 18 June 1878.
- 64 Bridges over the Sundays and iNcandu rivers were completed in 1883. Bridges were under construction over the iGagani near Newcastle, the Little Sterkspruit near Greytown and over the Tongaat in Victoria County. *Natal Mercury*, 7 July 1883; *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, FF94.
- 65 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XIII, 1889, 262-265.
- 66 CSO 1019, No. 2173, 12 and 15 May 1885.
- 67 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XV, 1891, 32-34.
- 68 *Natal Mercury*, 2 February 1893.
- 69 *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XX, 131-134; 147; Vol. XVI, 637-638.
- 70 *Natal Mercury*, 20 January 1893.
- 71 *Natal Mercury*, 2 February 1893.
- 72 *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol. 22, 489.
- 73 *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XLVI, No. 2690, 31 July 1894.
- 74 *Natal Mercury*, 20 July 1894.
- 75 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1894/95,C31-32.
- 76 *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1897, C40.
- 77 *Natal Mercury*, 5 December 1895.
- 78 *Natal Mercury*, 10 November 1897.
- 79 *Natal Mercury*, 23 February 1897.
- 80 *Natal Mercury*, 3 December 1897.
- 81 The bridge cost £38,000. See: *SA Sugar Journal*, Vol. 7, 1923 p. 463.
- 82 Hotels in Umzinto and Umkomaas were featured. See for example *Natal Mercury*, 30 January, 27 July, 5 August, 13 and 18 September 1899.
- 83 *Natal Mercury*, 6 September 1901.
- 84 *Natal Mercury*, 15 April 1903.
- 85 *Natal Mercury*, 15 January, 25 February, 19 March, 2 May, 14 June 1904. `
- 86 *Natal Mercury*, 14 June 1904.
- 87 CSO 1781, No. 715, 24 January 1905.
- 88 *Natal Mercury*, 11 November 1907.
- 89 *Natal Mercury*, 3 and 31 December 1907.
- 90 *Natal Mercury*, 10 January 1910.
- 91 *Natal Mercury*, 17 June 1908.
- 92 *Natal Mercury*, 2 June 1909.
- 93 *Natal Mercury*, 8 April 1910. *Government Notice* No. 287, 1909 stated that £830 had been earmarked for telephone trunk connections on the South Coast.
- 94 Desai, A. and Vahed, G., *Inside Indian Indenture – A South African Story 1860-1914*, (Cape Town, 2010), 167, 344.
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 Umkomaas Area Annals, 40, 42.
- 97 *Natal Witness*, 6 February 1877.
- 98 *Natal Mercury*, 25 June 1910.