

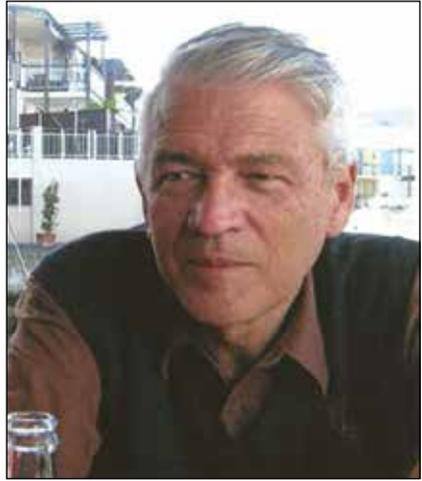
William Henry (Bill) Bizley (1942–2016)

BILL Bizley's life was that of an academic, a Senior Lecturer in English with a special interest in the work of T.S. Eliot. But he had at least three private passions: music, trains and local history. And *Natalia* provided the ideal outlet for the last of these, local history.

Bill served on the editorial committee of the journal for 32 years, from 1981 until 2013 when increasing ill-health obliged him to resign. During this time he produced no fewer than 13 major articles. The first appeared in No 13, "The Natal scene at Union". A year later he wrote what he modestly described as "a commemorative note" on the first Professor of Botany who in 1930 became the first Principal of the Natal University College, John William Bews. For No 17 he ventured into the realm of oral history with an evocation of the 1920s and 30s in Pietermaritzburg, based on his interviews with a panel of elderly survivors of the period.

Natalia No 19 saw a marriage of Bill's interests in trains and local history: an article on "Mr Reid's Ten-wheeler". The following year appeared "The Rall Conversations", the story of the life and times of Horace Rall, based on an interview with the veteran politician. Issue No 23/24 published what became probably Bill's best-known piece of research: "U-boats off Natal: the local ocean war 1942–44" (with a follow-up, "More about the U-boats", the following year). Its fame resulted in a number of speaking engagements.

The centenary of the Anglo-Boer War produced two articles from Bill's pen: "Maritzburg during the siege of Natal as reflected in *The Natal Witness*, October 1899–March 1900" and, four years later,



"Poetry in *The Natal Witness*, November 1899–February 1900". In between, in No 31, was "Pietermaritzburg's most famous accident", the story of a crash between a train and a tram at the level crossing in Mayor's Walk in which numerous children aboard the tram were injured and one lost his life.

Natalia 38 published the intriguingly titled "A horse, a singer and a prince – two busy months in the life of Pietermaritzburg" and No 40 had "I see you – two marches and the fall of a champion" (about the African politician A.W.G. Champion). Finally, in *Natalia* 43 appeared what was to prove Bill's last contribution, "Sioux/Zulu – the battle for identity in the age of progress". Much of the thinking for this article was done flat on his back in hospital with a broken pelvis sustained in a fall. It compared the resistance of the Sioux in North America and the Zulus in Natal to the colonial advance, with what proved pyrrhic victories at Little Big Horn and Isandlwana respectively. In these various articles Bill has left an enduring legacy.

JACK FROST