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agtersy van die omslag se buitekant.  
The table of contents of the present issue is on the reverse  
side of the cover.

LAND SURVEYOR A.L. DEVENISH  
IN WAR AND PEACE IN TRANSVAAL

Introduction by

C de Jong

Anthony Lennox Devenish was born at Victoria West, Cape Colony, in 1852 and became a farmer and well-known land surveyor in Transvaal. Dr. Maria Hugo published an article with his short biography in the "Dictionary of South African Biography"<sup>1)</sup>. The text of this article follows here.

Devenish, Anthony Lennox (\*Victoria West, CC, 16.10.1852 †Pietersburg, 3.5.1898), surveyor and farmer, was the third son of Anthony Lennox Devenish and his wife, Anna Maria Catharina van der Westhuizen.

D. grew up on the family farm near Victoria West, and after attending the Diocesan College (Bishops) in Cape Town (1870-73) he spent two years qualifying as a surveyor. He left for the Transvaal in 1875 where he was employed in the office of the surveyor-general, Sam Mellville. Acting as surveyor-general for three months the following year, D. made the acquaintance of General P.J. Joubert with whose assistance he afterwards undertook extensive surveying work in the Wakkerstroom district; here he married Eliza Francis Short, daughter of Samuel Short, a schoolmaster, on 31.1.1877. D. took his wife to the Ermelo district but as there were indications of a Zulu uprising (1879) they returned to Pretoria, and having in the meantime bought two farms near Bronkhorstspuit, D. decided to farm. While they were living there the battle of Bronkhorstspuit (10.12.1880) took place. D. was commandeered for military service, but since he refused to comply was given a month's grace, fined £50, ordered to provide a horse and equipment for a substitute, and appointed commissariat-officer of the camp at Bronkhorstspuit where the British wounded were cared for.

After the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-81) he decided to move to the Cape Colony but returned after six months with about a hundred ostriches and some breeding cattle. Economic conditions being extremely poor, the ostrich farming a fiasco, and without a market for either his farm products or the coal that was mined on his property, D. sold his farms and went into partnership with the surveyor F.B. Rissik in Pretoria. Shortly after this the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand (1886) caused a tremendous increase in surveying on the goldfields and elsewhere. The government appointed him to survey the town of Schweizer-Reneke, the western border of the Transvaal, and the town which was later named Pietersburg after General Piet Joubert. D., who surveyed extensively in the Northern Transvaal, came

to own several farms in that area, and also worked some alluvial gold-claims on the Tsama River, near the Letaba goldfields, with very satisfactory results.

He took a great interest in the development of Pietersburg, and became one of its leading citizens. Active in civic affairs and chairman of the board of executors, D. campaigned for the building of a railway line to Pretoria. His kindly, genial manner, and his readiness to assist his neighbours in such things as writing a letter or drawing up a deed of sale won him the respect of the community. Streets in Pietersburg, Louis Trichardt, and Pretoria are named after him. After an illness of a few days he died of typhoid fever.

Two sons and seven daughters were born of D.'s marriage to Eliza Short. His widow lived in Pietersburg for many years before moving to Haenertsburg where she died in 1913. Her reminiscences, entitled "Twenty years in the Transvaal Republic" (infra), contain interesting information on conditions during the last years of the Republic.

M. HUGO

Obituary: "The Press", 4.5.1898; - E.F. Short, "Twenty years in the Transvaal Republic", ts. in the possession of Col. A.D. Irvine (grandson), Pta.; - N.C. von Broembsen and A.D. Irvine, "Anthony Lennox Devenish", ts., Jan. 1977, in the possession of Col. A.D. Irvine, Pta.

Source: "Dictionary of South African Biography", volume 5, by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Pretoria, 1989. A street in Groenkloof, Pretoria, has been named after Devenish. Therefore the book "Street and place names of old Pretoria" by Tom Andrews and Jan Ploeger (J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1988, p.24) contains a note on him.

The main source of Dr. Hugo is the biography by Devenish's widow, Mrs. Eliza Francis Short, written during the second Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 for their nine children and edited and printed in a small number of copies by her grandson, Colonel A.D. Irvine at Pretoria on 26 November 1976. I am pleased that this biography is now published in "Pretoriana".

Further Mr. T.E. Andrews published particulars from Mrs. Devenish's biography in his monthly News Letter of our Society in September 1977, p.1.

**Mr. and Mrs. Devenish: two different characters**

Mr. A.L. Devenish appears to have been a loyal British subject. He refused to take up arms against British soldiers in the first Anglo-Boer War 1880/81 and the Transvaler rebels or independence fighters respected his will to remain neutral. After the war he and his family soon returned from the Cape Colony to Transvaal and he was generally respected and esteemed, because he was always obliging to his

employers and acquaintances and had many prominent friends among them.

His wife Eliza Short was quite a different character. She was the daughter of a well-educated English teacher who immigrated with his wife from London to Cape Town. Eliza was born there in 1857. She became a house teacher of the Cape farmer Guillaume van Niekerk and migrated with him and his family to a farm at Bronkhorstspruit in 1874. On 31 January 1877 she married the land surveyor A.L. Devenish in Transvaal. They had two sons and seven daughters. After her husband's early death in 1898 she made a tour with their children to Great Britain and the Continent. During the war 1899-1902 she wrote her memoirs of her marriage. After the war she returned to Transvaal, as she did after the first Anglo-Boer War 1880/81, but in 1902 Transvaal had come under the British government which she so highly praised. She lived for many years at Pietersburg, moved to Haenertsburg and died in 1913.

She was a very English lady, highly jingoist, much more than her husband was. She had a low opinion of most Transvaler Boers and calls them inveterate liars, young and old, furtive, bigots, braggarts, narrowminded and coursemannered. These are characteristics attributed to a pioneer population in a backward country. In conflicts between white and black people she mostly sides with blacks against Transvalers. Her "bête noire" (scapegoat) was President Paul Kruger as the leader of Transvaler nationalists. She believes every nasty tale told about Kruger. She ~~reluctantly~~ calls the Transvaler Boers goodhearted and kind to prisoners of war. She has great esteem for a few Transvalers, such as Kruger's opponents President T.F. Burgers and Commandant-General Piet Joubert, who became a good friend of the Devenishes as prominent inhabitants of Pietersburg, founded by him in 1886, though she admits that he was anti-English. Her bitter complaints about some Transvalers' behaviour to her husband and her during the first Anglo-Boer War concern trifles for people who have survived the atrocities and horrors of World War I or II or both wars.

She regrets British magnanimity to return independence to Transvaal in 1881, so that this country could no longer enjoy the blessings of British Government, and the Jameson Raid into Transvaal in 1895/96 which contributed as much as the Transvaal independence in 1881 to the outbreak of war in 1899.

She was an educated woman and wrote an interesting biography of her venerated husband full of useful particulars of life in Transvaal in the 19th century.

TWENTY YEARS IN THE TRANSVAAL REPUBLIC

by

Eliza Francis Short (Mrs A.L. Devenish)

This is the story of Mary Trevor-Jones' grandfather,  
Anthony Lennox Devenish, written by his wife,  
Eliza Francis Short



The picture above is the only known photo of land surveyor Anthony L. Devenish. The persons are from left to right: Audrett, L. Adendorf and A.L. Devenish on the alluvial goldclaim at the farm Frischgewaagd in Northern Transvaal about 1890/91. Adendorf died at Louis Trichardt during the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902. - This information was given by Comt. P.W. Möller, Groblersplaas, Louis Trichardt, 21 April 1957. Photo State Archive Pretoria

### Foreword

The author of this chronicle, Eliza Francis Short, was born in Cape Town in 1857, the day her parents and two children arrived from London by sea to settle in South Africa.

Her father was a scholar and school master and, as a friend of Charles Dickens, assisted him in the editing of several of his books.

Anthony Lennox Devenish, whom she married at Wakkerstroom in 1877, was the grandson of Lieutenant John Mearles Devenish of H.M. 55 Foot Regiment who came to the Cape in 1808 with his wife Ellen Stretch on exchange to the Cape Corps.

He grew up on his father's farm near Victoria West and went to school at the Diocesan College, Cape Town, Bishops, and then, after qualifying as a surveyor, went to the Transvaal in 1875 when he was 23 years old. He died at Pietersburg in the prime of his life in 1898, survived by his wife, two sons and seven daughters.

Her reason for writing this chronicle is expressed on page 27 as follows: "If I have enlarged somewhat too much on our experiences and sentiments of these times, it is because I wish our children who may read this, perhaps years later, to know what their father's opinions and trials were, in having been cut off in the prime of his life and work, leaving several children too young to realise their loss. It is for them that I am endeavouring to write down whatever of interest I can remember of his life in the early days of the Transvaal. Moreover, the record of those early days may possibly throw a sidelight on the great Boer and Uitlander question."

After her husband died, she took her children on an extended visit to England and the Continent where this chronicle was written.

She returned after the Boer War (1899-1902) to her home in Pietersburg and later moved to Haenertsburg where she died in 1913 of a heart attack at the age of 56.

A.D. Irvine  
 PRETORIA.  
 26th November 1976

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## Chapter 1

### Describes a Boer trek to the Transvaal in 1875

About the time that a number of Boers trekked from the Transvaal to Damaraland (1875) there was an exodus of about fifteen families from Victoria West, Cape Colony. These families were slipping into the places of their more adventurous, if less cultivated, brethren across the Vaal.

A prominent member of these "Trekking" was a Mr. van Niekerk,<sup>1)</sup> a well-to-do Dutch farmer of Victoria West. He and several friends had made a very pleasant hunting trip into the Transvaal some months previously. They liked what they saw so well that they decided to sell out in the Colony and begin life anew in that land of promise, thought to be flowing with milk and honey. Of drought and locusts they did not then dream.

Van Niekerk and his wife were a typical Dutch couple, with a large family and primitive ideas as to comfort and cleanliness. They were well fitted to become pioneers in a new and scarcely civilised country. They nevertheless shared the ambition, then just growing amongst the Dutch colonists, to employ a \*governess and have their children taught English and music. Having found a lady who could accommodate herself to their way of living, they gave up their children in her care with a feeling that in point of respectability they were beyond reproach.

Van Niekerk and his friends had purchased farms near Pretoria from some of the Damara Trekkers<sup>2)</sup> and arrangements were now made for the long and tedious journey. Much had to be done before a start could be made. There was endless baking of rusks and making biltong (dried meat) whilst a sale was held of all surplus stock. From Victoria West to Pretoria, a distance of 550 miles, was in those days a three months journey by wagon and with sheep and cattle, a migration in this fashion could hardly be conceived now. Van Niekerk's party alone consisted of four large wagons loaded with baggage, furniture, pumpkins and children. Then what confusion in getting off the different herds and flocks of sheep, inspanning the wagons, saying last goodbyes to weeping relatives and old Colonial servants who had decided to remain in the old Colony.

Then followed a long monotonous trek. The party passed through the outskirts of Colesberg, Philippolis and Fauresmith, halting on Sundays at some farm, being invariably hospitably received by the Free State burghers, a people far superior to their cousins across the Vaal. The Sunday halt was utilised after public worship for baking bread and preparing generally for next week's journey. On reaching Bloemfontein, then a very quiet, sleepy-looking place untroubled by railway, Van Niekerk and some of his fellow trekkers

\*The author was the governess. (Note of A.D. Irvine.)

went to see President Brand who received them kindly and wished them success in their new life. To the townspeople the large convoy of wagons, tents, etc., was the cause of considerable interest and curiosity. Both travellers and stock suffered severely from the cold during this trek, as those who know the bleak bare country will fully understand, it being early in July, the coldest month of the year.

Endless flats of almost bare veldt had to be traversed without even the excitement of shooting game, as the buck had all left for warmer veldt. Truly, the Boer is a born pioneer. What other people could endure such hardships and be content to take six months over the journey if three could not suffice? The roads were in a state that defies description, but both man and beast took them quite calmly.

At Potchefstroom a halt was made for a few days. The lovely Mooi River being a glad sight after the long waterless stretches they had had to cross. Here too they were introduced to ex-President Pretorius who did all in his power to make welcome the weary travellers. At length after nearly four months of slow trekking they reached Pretoria and it was with joy they realised that only a few short treks would bring them to their longed-for destination, appropriately named \*Rustfontein, i.e. fountain of rest. Having left Victoria West early in May, 1875, they arrived at Rustfontein on 16th August. The journey now takes less than three days by rail.

## Chapter 2

### Settling down in their new home

The Cape Colonists were delighted with their new home. It was a rambling old Dutch homestead with rather tumbled-down-looking houses, strongly built, with the usual large "voorhuis" or living room with small bedrooms leading off and a kitchen at the back. There were numerous outhouses built on the same plan. The previous owner having had several married children, they each had been provided with a house and garden plot near to their parents' house. A not uncommon plan with the Boers of settling their married children until they were able to purchase farms for themselves. There was a splendid orchard with fruit trees of every kind, but it had been neglected for months so that the tall grass vied with the trees in height and choked the flower garden entirely.

The departure of the previous owners strongly illustrates the character of the Boer. These people had good farms, plenty of stock and everything that should make life worth living to them, but the restrictions of Government, be it ever so lenient, were found irksome and they preferred to start afresh and to endure endless privations and dangers on

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\*5 Miles north of Bronkhorstspuit. (Note of A.D. Irvine.)

a lengthened journey to a new and unknown land, so that they may live as they pleased and be free to shoot game whenever and wherever they found it, and to manage the natives according to their own ideas.

The caretaker the new settlers found living in one of the smaller houses in a poverty-stricken way, was named MacDonald, a Scotchman, who had lived for many years amongst the Boers. He was quite a character in his way. He could tell the most wonderful stories about lions and defied anyone to discredit the most outstanding improbabilities. He wanted to know if Queen Victoria was still (1875) Queen of England<sup>3)</sup> as he had not heard anything from the outside world for years. Although his English was so mixed with Dutch that it was hard to make out what he said, and in spite of his having married a Boer woman he was always treated by the burghers as an outsider and hence had stayed behind when his companions left for woods and pastures new.

Van Niekerk had a letter of introduction from his late Pastor the Rev. Mr. Leibbrandt, at present the "Keeper of the Archives" in the Cape House of Parliament,<sup>4)</sup> to President Burgers, then President of the Transvaal Republic. Mr. Burgers welcomed the newcomers most cordially and promised to do all in his power to assist them. His Government was just then on the eve of a war with Secoecoenie and scarcely had the Colonists settled down to their farm work when they were told to hold themselves in readiness to be commandeered at any moment for personal service. This was a heavy blow to them and they thought regretfully of the homes they had left in the Cape Colony, where under the British flag commandeering was unknown. They had heard much of the glorious freedom of the Republic, but here was a sudden and rude awakening for which they had not bargained.

The older men straightaway discovered various ailments of long standing but forgotten in the excitement of the Trek. When the Commandeering Officer arrived and he had taken care that these newcomers were first on his list, he treated their ailments with scant ceremony, saying that if he were to listen to that sort of things there would be no men to fight the Kaffirs. He thereupon read out the order that on a certain date and at a given place they were to present themselves with horse, saddle and bridle, food and what ammunition they had to last for a month. Failing this, a fine of fifty pounds would be the penalty. The newcomers, as has been seen, were not adventurous spirits longing for a fight. Indeed, several declared that as they were forced to go they would keep well behind the Koppies. Several men declared that they would return to the Cape Colony if spared after the war, a vow many of them carried out, returning wiser, if poorer, men. The war dragged on its weary length, causing much misery, and was only concluded with the help of "Tommy Atkins"<sup>5)</sup> after Sir Theophilus Shepstone's annexation of the Transvaal in April, 1877.

### Chapter 3

#### In which appears the hero of these pages

In the same year, towards the end of 1875, that Van Niekerk and his party left Victoria West, three young men, two theological students from Stellenbosch near Cape Town and a young surveyor named Devenish from Victoria West who had just passed his survey examination at the Cape, arranged to make a trip together to the Transvaal, that then almost unknown little state. It had been brought into greater prominence by the recent trek to Damaraland as also the smaller one from Victoria West.

They started off in a comfortable little spring wagonette and six mules with good Cape drivers, plenty of provisions, guns and ammunition for any shooting they may chance to get on the way. The surveyor undertaking to be the pilot, secured a rough map of the route and they were soon travelling along in fine style.

They did the journey in about three weeks and had many experiences, both pleasant and otherwise. Game was now most plentiful all along the route and they often had to resist the most tempting opportunities of bringing down a buck because they could not carry so much. They always left some game at a farm house or Kaffir kraal as they passed. It was always gladly received, for though game was plentiful, cartridges were scarce in those days.

After a fairly enjoyable journey they reached Pretoria and being furnished with letters of introduction to President Burgers and Mr. Sam Melville, the surveyor General of the Republic<sup>6)</sup>, and other influential inhabitants of Pretoria, they soon found themselves in quite a whirl of invitations from the kind-hearted and hospitable people.

The two students were only on a visit, but our young surveyor had come to cast in his lot with the Boer Government and begin his career under its patronage. Happening to know Mr. van Niekerk and several other members of the late Trek Party who had all settled more or less in the Pretoria district, they paid an early visit to Rustfontein. They were heartily received and had to listen to the grievances of the settlers. The Transvaal Boers, though seemingly friendly, indirectly threw every obstacle they could in their way and to the end these Colonial Boers were made to feel that they were aliens in the land of their adoption.

After the departure of his friends on their return to the Cape, the surveyor General gave Devenish employment in his own office. It was at this time that he first made the acquaintance of General Joubert, then member of the Volksraad for Wakkerstroom. They became good friends at once and their friendship lasted to the time of his death. At that time General Joubert was living in Pretoria and with the help of a tutor, struggled hard to master the English language. It so happened that he occupied a room next to Devenish's, divided only by a thin wooden partition, and it was almost comical at times to hear this middle-aged man struggling with the syllables of the Child's First Reader and learning to spell and count in English.

This speaks well for the man, he knew that the knowledge of English would be to his advantage in the future. Had Paul Kruger possessed similar ambitions he might have avoided much that has happened since he undertook the guidance of the State.

Van Niekerk soon found that with such doubtful neighbours around him it would be well to have his land surveyed. He wrote to Devenish and asked him to do the survey. He started work at once on Rustfontein and very soon had the survey of the entire neighbourhood. This led to many disputes and even lawsuits. The Boers having in many instances shifted their beacons onto Government or neighbours' ground and held these encroaching beacons so long undisputed that they had grown to think that they really belonged to them. In many cases the man who had shifted the beacon was dead so that the present holder honestly believed that they were his rightful property. When the surveyors came and finding them distinctly out, ordered them to be put back, the owners were filled with righteous indignation and considered themselves robbed of their land. The encroachment had more often been made on Government ground and this gave rise to the Boers thinking that the surveyor was in league with the Government to rob them. The question became a vexed one all around and caused much litigation. A general Survey Law was passed, but was not carried out till many years later.

Soon after the completion of this survey, Devenish was appointed Acting Surveyor General in place of Mr. S. Mellville, who went to the Cape Colony on three months leave. During this time he made many friends in Pretoria and entered fully into all the stirring events of President Burgers' most difficult and thankless term of office. Pretoria was then a quiet social-little place, with grass growing in the streets and water furrows in all directions. Thatched homes nestling among the vines and fruit trees gave it a very rural appearance. At that time money was becoming so scarce that it was quite an event to see a Sovereign, "Blue Blacks"<sup>7)</sup> were becoming the current coin of the State, when the annexation to England came to save the country from bankruptcy.

#### Chapter 4

##### Incidents and description of typical Boer life

Rustfontein farm being on the high road from the interior to Pretoria, one often had the small excitement of seeing a hunter's wagon on its return journey, laden with beautiful skins of wild animals, horns, elephant tusks and native curios of every kind, young wild animals and on one occasion a seven week old lion cub. It was so tame that it was let loose and frolicked with the children. Another time a hunter arrived with a family of three dwarfs found somewhere in the interior.<sup>8)</sup> They had been brought away much against their own wills.

Before going on with my story, let me describe the life of the Boers as I knew them twenty and more years ago. They were without exception early risers, and when at home always begin their day by singing a Psalm or two. Many a time have I been awakened by the sounds of their inharmonious dirge,

but it is well-meant, and doubtless serves its purpose. Prayers over, they drink their early coffee and go forth to their several duties. They have breakfast about eight o'clock consisting principally of bread and coffee and sometimes biltong. Their dinner at twelve o'clock principally consists of meat and mealies and sometimes pumpkins. The meat is always cut up into small pieces before cooking and each one helps himself with a three-pronged fork. They always eat with their knives, even the better classes think this good form. Their food is generally well cooked, as it always devolves upon the housewife to attend to this personally. The Boer women are very capable. The husband can go on commando or a hunting trip or transport riding for months, and in his absence his wife will generally, with the assistance of the native servants, sow or reap the crops and attend to everything on the farm. After the early dinner, if in summer, the adults of the establishment take a nap. This is a regular institution which makes up for the early rising. After this, coffee is served all around and is kept going through the rest of the day. The evening meal is at eight o'clock to which all the children are allowed to remain. Prayers are then again read and sung and they all retire for the night without the trouble of undressing, only the shoes are taken off.

Notwithstanding all their daily prayers, the Boers are a most untruthful people. The smallest child is ready with a lie at the least provocation. There are many exceptions, but generally they are not to be trusted and do not trust each other. The younger Boers are often however anxious to copy British ways, especially the girls, so there is hope of improvement in them, especially if English education is encouraged. In courtship the Boer is always most cool and unemotional. When the young man arrives to pay his attention, a casual observer would never detect the particular object of his admiration. His behaviour is the same to all, not even a look will betray him. He appears stupidly indifferent to all the girls and one can only guess at his errand by his arriving on Saturday afternoon with somewhat of a smarter appearance than usual, his great weakness being a bright coloured saddle blanket for his horse. The steed often borrowed for the occasion, having undergone an unusual brush-down and extra good feed, is quite frisky and on arrival at the chosen one's home is made to perform sundry antics which show off his capabilities as a rider and thus captivate the fancy of the women kind.

Another sign of his errand is a blue or green gossamer veil tied around his broad brimmed felt hat. This is a great piece of extravagance which his lady duly appreciates. The lover's appearance generally calls forth a joke against the suspected object of his visit and he is treated by the older members of the family in a slightly contemptuous and offhand manner. However, he makes up for it all later on when the old folks have gone to bed by leaving his lady love all to himself for a little while. The lovers then "sit up" in the front room with a solitary candle to light them. The rule being that as soon as the candle burns out they must each retire to their respective bedrooms, the girl usually sharing

the parents' room. The mother sees to it that the candle is not too long. Hence arises the standing joke amongst the Boers of the "op zit kers", "sitting up candle", for sometimes one or other of the lovers is not above producing a fresh candle when the first is burnt out. The mother is nevertheless equal to the occasion and when she thinks it's time, calls out in an unmistakable voice, that it is time for everyone to be in bed. A hint the lovers dare not ignore.

The Boer women give little thought to dress. A plain full skirt and bodice to match with an apron is the ordinary attire, not forgetting the cappie or sun bonnet which is their constant headgear. They always look their best in their everyday dress. Their Sunday best is often amusing, being a clumsy attempt at the fashion of the nearest "dorp" involving great clashing of colouring. The men generally look clumsy and unkempt, a barber's services being entirely dispensed with and their clothes hanging loosely and ill-cut to their somewhat ungainly figures.

#### Chapter V

#### Settled in Wakkerstroom, Shepstone's March to Pretoria and Zulu War

On the return of Mr. Sam Melville, the surveyor General, to Pretoria our young surveyor, whose fortunes I will follow to the end of this narrative, was again at liberty to seek fresh employment.

Through the influence and goodwill of General Joubert he soon acquired an extensive survey in Wakkerstroom District which was the home of the whole clan of Jouberts. Here Devenish settled and soon after, his marriage to the writer to whom he had long been attached, took place. (On 31st January, 1877, his father presented him with a Bible at Wakkerstroom. It was probably a wedding present and is in my possession. A.D.I.)

I had come to the Transvaal from the Cape Colony with his father and sister on a visit. Mr Devenish Senior, a wealthy farmer, well known at Victoria West, had come to the Republic principally to invest in Transvaal properties and he bought some very valuable farms at a fairly low rate.

(From here one page of the manuscript is missing. A.D.I.)

Wakkerstroom being a border town, the inhabitants became very uneasy for fear of a Zulu raid and we decided to move away to a farm called Rolfontein near Ermelo, the residence of the Brothers Robertson, who had a large store there.

About this time Paul Kruger, then acting for the British Government, and ex-President Pretorius, passed through Wakkerstroom to the Zulu border to hold an Indaba with Ketchawayo, the Zulu king.<sup>9)</sup> It ended most unsatisfactorily for hardly had they returned when a Zulu Impi was sent across to seize some Boer cattle. War followed and the Boers fought side by side with our soldiers against a common foe.<sup>10)</sup> Other families from Wakkerstroom had come to Rolfontein as soon as the war broke out and here the terrible news of \*Isandhlwana

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\*January, 1879 (Note of A.D. Irvine)

reached us and gave the greatest sorrow and alarm.<sup>11)</sup> Our principal dread was that the natives living around would take the opportunity to join the Zulu cause and fall upon the isolated farms. Fortunately for us they did not do so. Devenish however soon found that the tension of this insecure feeling was telling upon his wife's health. He decided to move to Pretoria where they would be quite beyond any fear of that kind. He always looked back with the greatest gratitude to the Robertson Brothers for their many kindnesses during this time of terrible anxiety.

## Chapter VI

### Another move to Pretoria where our surveyor tries farming

It was with a great sense of relief that we settled down in Pretoria and soon we had the gratification of hearing that the war was over and Ketchawayo a prisoner on his way to England.

Surveying work being at a standstill, my husband thought it best to turn his attention to farming and secured two valuable farms adjoining his old friend Van Niekerk's at Rustfontein\*.

He made things as comfortable as he could for his family on this primitive homestead and went to Wakkerstroom and purchased a large stock of sheep and cattle wherewith to stock his farms. On his return with the help of native labour he got large crops into the ground for with the Military occupation of Pretoria and other towns, grain and all farm produce were fetching very high prices.

The neighbours were mostly Boers except the Van Niekerks and their party. They looked upon this English speaking farmer in their midst with their usual dislike and suspicion. They disliked seeing his extensive crops which made their own efforts look so small, and tried to influence the natives against him, knowing that insufficient labour during the reaping time would certainly cripple him. This, however, was not so easy, seeing that he always paid higher wages and treated them better than their Boer employers did.

Our nearest neighbour was a Mr. Erasmus,<sup>12)</sup> a wealthy cattle farmer who often came over to see us and made a great show of friendliness, but my husband could never really feel that he was sincere in his attempt at friendship. Later events proved he had good cause to find that his impressions were not at fault. In the coming troubles of 1881 he proved himself anything but a friend. Meantime we led an isolated life without English speaking society of any kind. We were kept fully employed in trying to work the farm to some advantage with so many drawbacks around. This was no easy matter.

To testify to the climate in these parts, I can here state a fact, that perhaps few would credit, that during our sojourn on this farm of nearly six years duration, with a young family, we never had a Doctor in the house or anything serious the matter. Illness came of course, which with God's help, care and the ordinary medicine chest we managed to combat successfully, assisted entirely by a good climate and a healthy outdoor life and occupation. The thatched roof

\*5 miles north of Bronkhorstspuit (A.D.I.)



house was cool in summer and warm in winter, though lacking nearly every convenience to be found in an ordinary English dwelling. We had a beautiful fruit garden which proved to me those old "Voortrekkers" must have taken great pains in the selection of fruit in laying out those orchards. They were principally raised from the pips and stones brought from the old Cape Colony.

As the winter approached, we found that the stock would not thrive unless moved to winter veldt. Having 1200 sheep it was a very important matter, so we decided that the whole family should migrate. We were fortunate in being able to buy a most comfortable travelling wagon, almost like a house on wheels compared to the ordinary Boer wagon. This same wagon was purchased years afterwards by Lord Randolph Churchill<sup>13)</sup> and in it he travelled to Rhodesia via Pretoria and Pietersburg. I remember seeing him pass through the latter town and looking at him with a double interest as being my first sight of a real live Lord and the owner of our old friend the travelling wagon.

Having made every preparation we started for the Bush Veldt, where there was plenty of good grazing for the cattle and a nice mild climate with plenty of game and fuel, both agreeable accessories to camp life as those who have experienced it will know. We had to travel very slowly but after about five days trek pitched our camp in a charming spot. We had not been there a week when we experienced a great fright. Our little son, then about three years old, trotted off after one of the shepherds without being seen by any one and soon got lost in the dense bush. A frantic search ensued and after some hours of suspense to both parents, the little fellow was brought home by a Boer who had picked him up in the veldt and thought he must belong to Devenish by his speaking English. Needless to say great care was taken to prevent a recurrence of this alarming incident and that Boer had ever after only to make a request to have it granted by the thankful parents. The days passed very slowly with us, but we had brought plenty of good reading which helped to pass the time. There was always any amount of shooting, both bucks and birds being very plentiful in those early days.

We had Boer neighbours all round but at good distances apart so that their cattle and herds should not interfere with one another. Many Boers, even if they possessed no stock at all, would trek regularly every winter for three or four months to the Bush Veldt, living their ideal life of nothing to do and plenty of game to shoot and biltong to make.

Our stay in the Bush Veldt lasted three months and then we returned to our farm.

## Chapter VII

### Boer Revolt and Battle of Bronkhorstspruit (20.12.1880)

As time went on, the political situation became more serious, the Boers talking openly of upsetting the Government. Paul Kruger, who had been refused an increase in salary under the British Government, was dismissed from the Civil Service and turned all his attention to the spreading of discontent and sedition on every side. About the beginning of December, 1880, my husband with his neighbour Erasmus,<sup>14)</sup> went to Pretoria together on some farm business. While there, they were approached by the Government as to the loyalty of the



Cornelis Johannes Gerhardus Erasmus (1842, Natal, 7/8 Januarie 1909, Hondsrivier) eienaar van die plaas Hondsrivier. Hy het hom ongeveer 15 jaar lank beywer vir die stigting van 'n dorp op sy plaas en het eers in 1909 daarin geslaag om probleme en struikelblokke te bowe te kom. Vier jaar voor sy dood was die stigting van Erasmusdorp uiteindelik 'n voldonge feit en die verwesenliking van 'n jarelange ideaal. C. J. G. Erasmus was vanaf 1870 tot 1877 diaken van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Pretoria, terwyl sy vader, Jacobus Lourens Rasmus Erasmus (1810-1880), eienaar van Onderstepoort, in 1854 een van die eerste diakens van Pretoria Philadelphia-gemeente geword het en van toe af vir jarelank as diaken en ouderling op die kerkraad gedien het en 'n steunpilaar van die gemeente was. Hy is in 1853 as volksraadslid verkies maar kon die sitting op Rustenburg nie bywon nie as gevolg van 'n ernstige verwonding deur 'n luiperd langs die Apiesrivier.

Source of the photo and caption above is: H.M. Rex en andere, "Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Bronkhorstspuit 1869-1969", N.H.W.Pers, Krugersdorp 1969, p.74.

C.J.G.Erasmus was one of the Devenishes'neighbours.

Boers in their neighbourhood and were asked if they would call a meeting at a suitable place, to ascertain the number of loyal Boers who could be relied on, and to point out to them the desirability of maintaining a loyal front in the event of any disturbance arising, and promising them arms and ammunition wherewith to defend themselves in case of the worst. They did not much like the task set them, knowing that there was a very strong feeling against the Government for which there certainly was some cause. Promises made at the time of the Annexation had not been strictly kept. Besides, a great want of tact on the part of the Government officials at this critical time led to friction and discontent which played into the hands of Paul Kruger and his companions. However, my husband and Erasmus both promised to do what they could. Our friend Erasmus was playing as it afterwards appeared a double game; from the first. It was arranged to call a meeting to be held at Rustfontein, Van Niekerk's farm. It being the most central, and Van Niekerk and his party being loyal, gladly entered into the plan of organising a party of loyalists. Notices were sent out and the day of the meeting arrived. It was very poorly attended, Erasmus only arriving at the last moment, and then he tried to give an impression that he only came by accident, having forgotten all about the meeting. The other Boers who were present were sullen and seemed afraid that they would be betrayed. They would not hear of taking any ammunition from the Government. My husband and Van Niekerk taking the lead, a resolution of loyalty to the Government was drawn up and signed by them and a few wavering timid Boers. Erasmus signed too but saying however that it was not strictly binding to anybody, which remark set some of them more at ease. Erasmus and Devenish again went to Pretoria and reported progress. The latter telling the Government that he was by no means sanguine of much loyalty and Erasmus saying as little as possible. However, they returned with some guns and ammunition which by the way Erasmus offered to take charge of; Devenish keeping one gun and some rounds of cartridges. He felt oppressed by a presentiment of trouble which nothing could allay.

On the 20th December, 1880, the Boers struck their first blow, lying in wait at a favourable position of attack for the ill-fated company of the 94th under Colonel Anstruther.

It was wonderful how the Boers kept their secret, for neither my husband nor the Van Niekerk party knew anything of their preparations or of their intentions to attack the troops though living as it were in amongst them.

On the morning of that day so fatal to many of the 94th Regiment, my husband, suspecting that there was mischief aboard, drove over with his family to Van Niekerk's farm to talk matters over with them. The Van Niekerk's too felt that something was wrong as they had seen parties of mounted Boers in threes and fours that morning riding past. Not knowing that the troops were expected on their march to Pretoria from Lydenburg, we could not think what to expect. Anxious and distressed we returned to our farm and when nearing the homestead, heard sounds like thunder at repeated intervals though there was not a cloud in the sky. This was alarming enough but we never guessed at the truth. We had just reached the home when a Mr. Watkins appeared. He was the local postmaster, an English Colonist, lately married to a Boer

girl, and lived on her parents' farm. He had walked over from his farm not daring to saddle a horse for fear of being asked where he was going to, to tell us the awful news that the whole Company of the 94th had been cut up.

As he spoke stray shots could be heard as here and there a poor soldier was done to death. Watkins told us that his wife had confided to him early that morning that her father and brothers were going to waylay and shoot the "Rooineks" (soldiers) that afternoon but they had not told her the place of attack... At great personal risk he went off immediately after she had told him, in the direction of where the troops were coming and met them at a farm where they had just halted for luncheon. He asked to see the Colonel on urgent business and after much delay as it seemed to his feverish anxiety, was introduced to Colonel Anstruther. Mr Watkins told him that a strong force of Boers were going to waylay and attack them that afternoon. The Colonel asked a few questions but finding that Watkins could not tell much more than bare facts of their intention to attack, treated the matter as a huge joke and said to some of his officers: "Well, if this young man is correct, we shall see some fun to-day." However, he courteously thanked him for his warning. When next Watkins saw that gallant officer he was stricken down with seven bullet wounds. Alas that our English soldiers will always make so light of their enemies.

On hearing Mr. Watkins' tale, we decided to go back to Van Niekerk's farm for the night, where we should not be quite so isolated in case the Boers should follow up their victory by attacking us. Just as we were leaving, a party of natives came running, breathlessly almost scared out of their senses. They were some of the drivers and leaders of the convoy of wagons which the troops have travelled with. They had fled at the first shots, leaving wagons and oxen to their fate. They begged to be allowed to remain on the farm and work only for their food, thinking their best plan of escape was to be in service. They were allowed to stay and never had master more willing servants in their fear of being discharged and thrown on the mercy of the Boers.

We found the Van Niekerks in the greatest trouble and consternation at the news, which had just reached them through a native. The men all kept watch that night, fearing they knew not what as they were all known to be loyal, but their fears were groundless as the Boers were all too busy looting the wagons and personal belongings of officers and men, to give a thought to anything else. They were only anxious to get back to their homes to show their wives and children the many treasures they had captured and gladden their gentle hearts with the tales of the "Rooineks" they had shot down in cold blood.

The next morning the sun shone bright and clear upon the dreaded battlefield, the aching misery of the wounded and the sad task of the burying parties. As we were driving home a Boer mounted on an English charger, armed with rifle and revolver, both captured from the British, rode up and ordered my husband to alight instantly (accompanying the command with a significant movement of the revolver) and listen to what he had to say. The Boer then took a large piece of paper out of his bag and reading from which he ordered Devenish in the name of Commandant Joubert<sup>15)</sup> to appear in three days with his

own horse, saddle and bridle and food for a month, at a certain place from where they would proceed to the front to shoot the English and drive every one out of the country; he further added that one lot of "Rooineks" would not soon forget what they had given them the day before.

Late that night old Mr. Van Niekerk, his two sons-in-law and a friend came to see us and tried very hard to persuade my husband to join them in their proposed flight to the border and thus escape being forced to fight, for they had all been commandeered. My husband would not consent to leave his family. Van Niekerk and his party started off that very night and ultimately reached Kimberley after weeks of sleeping in the tall grass all day and living on herbs and roots, hiding in the Kaffir kraals, etc. The natives being most kind and helpful to them, when they found that they were fleeing from the Boers. When peace was restored they did not dare to return to their farms and eventually sold out at a loss and became utterly ruined people.

After a night of anxious deliberation, my husband set off to Commandant Prinsloo's farm.<sup>16)</sup> He had been left in charge of affairs after the onesided Battle of Bronkhorst-spruit. A dreadful old man he was at all times, but now doubly formidable with his newly acquired power and booty including a gold watch and chain and a handsome seal ring which had belonged to one of the officers of the 94th Regiment. He begged Prinsloo to be let off personal service at all costs, as he could not take up arms against the English. At first Prinsloo angrily refused to listen to him, there were only two ways, "for them or against them", and he might choose the latter at his own risk. Devenish left him in despair not knowing what to do, and was mounting his horse when he was recalled by Prinsloo. The old man had thought the matter over and here seemed a chance of a little private speculation, so in his coarse rough way he gave him to understand that he would be let off for a month by the payment of £50 in cash and sending a good horse and other prerequisites for a month for a substitute. Needless to surmise who would be the gainer by this concession. However, my husband only too gladly consented to pay the money. To be free for a month was a respite indeed, but thankful as he was to be let off for the present he nevertheless lived in an atmosphere of danger and uncertainty being entirely at the mercy of that capricious old Prinsloo who suddenly finding himself invested with undreamt of power was a perfect demon. In these times, any old scores or grievances a Boer had against a loyal, was amply avenged. Du Preez, the Boer who had the honour of doing the commandeering the morning after the Bronkhorstspruit catastrophe, was a man whom we had employed to transport some loads of grain to the Pretoria market and there had been a disagreement about the payment. This happened only a few weeks before the war broke out, so now was the time for vengeance.

Twice a week my husband had to go to an adjoining farm and had to pass Du Preez' farm. This old man over sixty, actually laid in wait to shoot him and was only prevented from doing so by the accident of Devenish's horse breaking loose and leaving his master to get back as best he could. This saved his life for Du Preez openly boasted the next day that he had waited for hours behind a bush where he had

expected him to pass, to shoot him. Devenish meanwhile reached home by a shortcut and found his wife in the greatest alarm at his horse returning riderless. They laughed at the trick his favourite horse had played them, little knowing then that it was the saving of his life and thus does Providence often frustrate the evil design of men.

#### Chapter VIII

Devenish appointed by Prinsloo to attend to the wants of the Bronkhorstspruit camp

A few days after the events related in the last chapter, six mounted Boers arrived at our farm with an order from Prinsloo that my husband was to come to him at once on urgent business. It seemed that Prinsloo had received orders from Headquarters to look after the wounded prisoners and it occurred to him that Devenish would be the best man for this purpose; so he appointed him Commissariat Officer over them. A duty he gladly undertook, for he had been longing to know how these poor wounded soldiers were being treated, not daring to show too much interest in them by enquiring.

After telling my husband what he wanted him to do, Prinsloo went with him to the English camp where he was introduced to Dr. Ward, the medical officer in charge, who was told to apply to Devenish in future for whatever they needed.

Dr. Ward took him to Colonel Anstruther's tent where the poor Colonel lay mortally wounded, but looking bright and cheerful. The Colonel seemed pleased to see one who could speak to him in his own tongue. On being asked what could be done for him, the Colonel replied "Get me some good English stout". Unfortunately none could be got anywhere. He died soon after. The besieged camp at Pretoria sent on another doctor and necessaries for the wounded under the Red Cross flag, but it was too late for the Colonel whose case was hopeless from the start.

Devenish now spent all his time in catering for the English camp and was very happy to be able to be of some comfort and service to them, driving over to see them every day. The Boers looked with some suspicion upon him but could not do without his services. He was able to supply them with good mutton from his own flocks and brought up slaughter oxen for them.

An incident happened which gave us fresh cause for anxiety. Pretoria was still besieged and the British Military Authorities were growing very anxious for news of the wounded comrades at Bronkhorstspruit, the Boers allowing no direct communication between them. Knowing that my husband was living in the close neighbourhood of Bronkhorstspruit and sure to be loyal, Col. Bellairs<sup>17)</sup> sent out a native runner with a short note, merely asking him how the wounded were faring. This messenger managed to dodge through the Boer guards safely and reached our farm late in the evening. On entering and greeting his old master, Jan, the native very mysteriously pointed to the lining of his tattered coat to indicate that his message was there. No time was lost in cutting out and after reading it we told the native where to sleep and gave him something to eat, telling him to be in readiness to start back to Pretoria the next evening with a reply.

This was a source of anxiety and danger, for if Devenish had been discovered in the smallest way to be in communication with Pretoria, he would have been shot with scant ceremony or trial. The Government at Pretoria little knew the danger to which they were exposing a loyal and defenceless subject. The Boers in their then mood would have been glad of an excuse to make an example in the district as they had already done in several others.<sup>18)</sup> My husband started off early next morning to the English camp to consult with Dr. Ward as to a suitable reply. They together drafted a short note which he brought home and copied in his smallest type, for he had decided to place it between two pieces of cardboard in the shape of a button and cover it with some of the tatters of the overcoat. This necessitated making four buttons for the sake of uniformity, no pleasant task considering the grimy material from which they were made. They were all firmly sewn on and Jan being informed as to which was the button chuckled with amusement and pleasure at the happy thought of carrying the letter in that form, saying that even if the Boers caught him they would never guess at those harmless looking buttons. He went off delighted in outwitting them so easily.

We afterwards heard that Jan caused great amusement in the British camp when he proudly produced his button.

## Chapter IX

### Boers search Bronkhorstspuit for arms

About a week after the button incident, a fresh cause of anxiety occurred.

Devenish was driving along in his cart on his usual daily visit to the camp, when passing a farm on the way he saw rather a large number of horses grazing kneealtered a little way from the house.

Thinking something must be wrong, he drove up to the homestead and on entering found a dozen or more Boers smoking and hurrying up the old woman to give them some coffee quickly as they were going to search the English camp for arms which they had just heard were still in their possession. They were all vowing vengeance on the whole camp if the report proved correct.

Devenish took in the situation, but fearing to arouse suspicion by going off too soon waited for some coffee too, saying something pleasant to the old woman and asking her to serve him first as his horses were standing in harness. After swallowing the coffee with as much haste as he dared, he got up and with a nod to the men that he would see them again at the camp, drove slowly off till he got out of sight of the house, when he drove for dear life, not thinking for a moment that the English would have any arms but wishing to warn them of what was coming. On reaching the camp he immediately told what he had heard. On enquiries being made it was ascertained that the only weapons in camp were a revolver which had belonged to the late Captain Nairn and a sword owned by a wounded officer. Lieutenant Hume who was then in the camp, fearing that in the then mood of these conquering heroes, even these weapons might arouse ill-feeling, my husband offered to put them under the seat of his cart. The great risk to himself he thereby ran did not occur to him at the

time. The weapons were hastily put away only just in time, for the Boers were even then arriving.

They searched all over the camp, even under the beds of the wounded, but found nothing, so returned to their homes telling the soldiers that it was well for them that nothing was found. Devenish left about the same time as they did with the innocent cause of all the commotion safely tucked under the seat of his trap. He was not feeling quite happy, at his self-imposed task of finding a safe hiding place for them, as he knew the Boers might take it into their heads to search our house at any time.

The fact of the matter was, that the Boers in this district were already beginning to be very tired and restless at being kept on commando so long. It was only by little expeditions of this kind that they were kept in good humour. General Joubert had all he could do to keep his army from going "huis toe" in a body, until the unexpected success of Majuba. On arriving home there was a consultation as to a suitable place of safety for the weapons. They could have easily been buried in the garden, but it being a very wet season, they would have become hopelessly rusted in no time.

It so happened that we had in our bedroom a small table with a drawer in it. The top of the table had been loose and Mr. Devenish having set a Kaffir boy to secure it with nails, Kaffir like turned the top round so that the drawer came to the back of the table and was so securely fixed that it could not be altered for fear of its collapsing altogether. This gave some annoyance at the time but soon proved a blessing. The revolver just fitted into the drawer and the table turned to the wall gave no suspicion of any such receptacle. We could, however, find no suitable place for the sword and at last in desperation just hung it against the wall behind the bed curtains.

These little matters may seem very trivial now, but at the time they were mountains for those poor people who were so completely at the mercy of the Boers. Not very long after this a party of Boers, armed to the teeth, came to our house with an order from Prinsloo to search for arms. This was a great shock to us and I turned cold in hearing their errand and trembled all over, though it was one of the hottest of February days. It was a marvel that they did not notice my guilty looks. Well, they ransacked the house, one Boer standing at the front door and another at the back with loaded rifles to stop my husband's escape in case anything was found. At last they came to our bedroom and I thought all was up with us, but went into the room with them and stood watching them breathlessly. They pulled out drawers, my linen press was opened and everything scattered about on the floor. They actually pulled off the bedding and mattress, yet never thought of pulling away the curtains which concealed the sword. I suffered tortures in those few moments; the chances were so great that they must see it, but thank God, they did not, for otherwise it would have fared badly for my husband, if even those solitary weapon had been found, for they were much annoyed at the last search of the English camp proving a wild goose chase.

When they had satisfied themselves that there was nothing concealed, the Boers told me to be quick and give



them some coffee and not stare at them as if they were going to eat me.

I gladly got the coffee with all speed being only too willing to expedite their departure. They were annoyed at this second fruitless search for arms, out of which they had hoped for some chance of exercising their power and ill-will, and felt a bit foolish no doubt.

After drinking their coffee, which they remarked was d... English stuff, they flung their cups and saucers onto the floor and rode off to our infinite relief. The sword was afterwards restored to its rightful owner, little knowing at what risk it was preserved.

Devenish was kept fully busy in supplying the needs of the hospital camp and had to go about a good deal to buy up what was required for them.

One morning Dr. Ward informed him that their medicines, etc. were running out, so he had to get an order from Prinsloo to proceed to Middelburg with Dr. Crow, who had been sent from Pretoria to assist Dr. Ward soon after the Battle of Bronkhorstspruit. Middelburg being the nearest town in the hands of the Boers, it was thought best to send there for what medicines they required.

After securing a pass, Devenish and the doctor started off, the latter delighted at the chance of an outing after his hard work and confinement in camp and was in high spirits. The journey took them several hours with cart and mules and they only arrived there late in the afternoon, tired and dusty. After presenting their passes and showing their orders from Prinsloo they were allowed to proceed. They went to the only chemist's shop and got all they could which was by no means all they needed and then went to their hotel.

After dinner they went out for a stroll, down the main street, lighting their cigars as they went, ignorant of the fact that it was forbidden to smoke in the streets after 6 o'clock. As they sauntered along my husband heard some Boers saying "Look at those Rooineks smoking". He at once threw away his cigar and urged the Doctor to do the same, but he indignantly refused. Presently they came up to a Boer guard who roughly accosted them demanding their passes and told the Doctor to put his cigar away instantly. The Doctor again refused and was promptly laid hold of and would have received a merciless sjambokking had Devenish not assured them in their own language that they did not know that smoking was forbidden and that they were both under orders from Prinsloo to get back to the English camp as soon as possible. The Doctor was furious, the cigar had been knocked out of his mouth, and he had received several severe cuts with the sjambok which had hurt his feelings more than anything else. He vowed vengeance on the Boers when the war was over, little dreaming what an ignominious ending that war was soon to have.

They started back at dawn the next day and got back to their camp without further adventure.

## Chapter X

### Battle of Majuba Hill; Great Britain makes peace

Some weeks passed in quietness, interrupted now and then by reports from the front of a more or less exciting nature, always to the advantage of the Boers. The poor loyalists and

English at the hospital camp fully realised how "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" and were beginning to wonder what the British army could be doing, when the awful news reached them of the Battle of Majuba. A young Boer despatch rider came to our farm fresh from the battlefield and told us what he had seen with his own eyes. That the English were all killed and that they had been driven down the mountain with their petticoats flying. We knew he must be referring to the Highlanders and much against our will we were forced to believe that a part of his story was true. We felt confident that England would soon retrieve her loss and show the Boers that they had not killed all her soldiers. We smiled at those who made much of the news and assured them that there would soon be a different story to tell, for the English could never be beaten by a handful of Boers.

Alas, before the end of the week was out we had, indeed with shame and dismay, to hear another story - that England was making terms of peace after a reverse. Never shall I forget the shame and misery these tidings caused us. My husband would not credit them and gave them the lie direct over and over again until at last he heard the news from a perfectly trustworthy source and was obliged to accept it as an acknowledged fact. He felt then that he could never hold up his head as a British subject again. Had the Boers only been beaten and made to respect the English nation, this terrible war, even now being fought out in Africa might have been avoided.<sup>19)</sup>

My husband went over to the Bronkhorstspruit camp and found that they had already received official news of the Armistice and had received orders to proceed to Pretoria as soon as possible, an ambulance being sent out to bring them in.

The bitterness of the loyalists and English was indeed great, their faith in England's justice was shaken. Had the Boers not been the humane people they really are at heart their position would have been positively dangerous. As it was, they felt utterly crushed, and for a long time they did not dare to use the English language, so great was the derision and contempt it created in the breasts of the inflated conquerors. Even the kindest of the Boers did not spare those unhappy betrayed people who had risked so much in their loyalty and good faith to England.

General Joubert certainly knew better than most of the Boers when he quoted the proverb "half an egg is better than an empty shell" to some of his burghers, who flushed with victory would fain have refused the terms offered by the British Government. He well knew that they had not beaten the English and that Sir Evelyn Wood held the Boer Army in the palm of his hand. Joubert knew that one reverse would have sent every burgher flying to his home and felt that it was a piece of undreamt of good fortune in their favour that caused Gladstone to decide upon an ignominious peace.

Devenish felt how impossible it had become for us to live on in the Transvaal under the altered circumstances. He went to Pretoria and gave up the sword and revolver which had caused so much anxiety. The revolver was handed back to him to keep as a relic of Bronkhorstspruit and as such is still in the family possession.

The Military Authorities paid his account for supplies and money advanced by him to the hospital camp during the siege and thus ended with all its trials and hardships and crowning disappointment to those who had been most loyal, the War of 1881.

Soon after this we started with sore hearts on a journey back to the Cape Colony leaving the farm and what we could not sell in the hands of a caretaker, hoping that time and absence would remove the sting of the effect of England's treatment of her loyal subjects. Nor was ours an isolated case. I can with truth say that there were hundreds of people who had staked all on England's good faith, but were left to shame and ruin. Many could not even afford to move out of the country and this was truly a hard lot.

Devenish always felt convinced that sooner or later there would be war again between England and the Boers. The seed of future strife and trouble being surely sown by that misplaced magnanimity.

But he did not live to see his worst fears verified or to know what a terrible war it would be, when it did come.<sup>19)</sup> Who would have thought that the well governed little Free State would have made common cause with Paul Kruger? God grant that it may soon be over and peace restored to these misguided people.

If I have enlarged somewhat too much on our experiences and sentiments of these times, it is because I wish our children who may read this perhaps years later, to know what their father's opinions and trials were, in having been cut off in the prime of his life and work, leaving several children too young to realise their loss. It is for them that I am endeavouring to write down whatever of interest I can remember of his life in the early days of the Transvaal. Moreover, the record of those early days may possibly throw a sidelight on the great Boer and Uitlander question. For in the years to come a new order of things will prevail and the old life with its primitive ways and ideas must give away to the march of civilisation and I feel convinced that the majority of the Boers themselves will come to see that progress, justice and prosperity under the British flag is far better than the empty sentiment of independence they enjoyed under the onesided oligarchy which landed them in sore trouble and misery.

## Chapter XI

### Devenish leaves the Transvaal for a time

Having decided to leave the scene of so much trouble and disappointment, he starts once more on his journey to the Cape Colony.

We had a light wagon with a good span of oxen and native leader and driver, so travelled on as fast and prosperously as such journeys usually allow. We reached Kimberley in about a fortnight's time and stayed there only long enough to lay in fresh stocks of supplies, etc. and then journeyed to De Adar and on to the Prieska District where my husband's elder brother lived on his farm Om Draais Vley. He farmed extensively with sheep and ostrich.

Mr. John Devenish and his wife (Ellen MacDermid) gave us a hearty welcome, having experienced great anxiety about us during the war. They could get no news of us at all and knew

that we would be loyal and therefore in bad odour with the Boers. There was, of course, much to relate and they felt with us the shame of the lately made peace and advised us to give up all thought of returning.

My husband stayed with his brother for about two months planning and discussing where it would be best to settle. We came to the conclusion that it would be best to return to our farm in the Transvaal and make the best of a bad business, especially as most of our capital was locked up in that country. Our family were far from well and missed the healthy Transvaal air; so all things conspired to make us return.

We bought about one hundred ostriches and with some breeding cattle we began a most tedious journey back to the Transvaal, rendered more slow and tiresome by the troop of ostriches. They proved a continual source of worry and anxiety. They were like the old woman's pig, who would not go and when it did could not be stopped. Many of these birds died on the way from disease and accidents and some being chased by dogs were never recovered. We arrived back with about fifty birds.

We found things at the farm much as we left them and the Boers had cooled down and seemed glad to see my husband back. His short absence had shown them the value of having a man in their midst to whom they could go in any emergency for help or advice. They knew they could trust him and had always been attracted by his kindly, genial manner, his readiness to write a letter or draw up a deed of sale or anything that they could not manage themselves. They were mostly illiterate in those days and the majority of them are not much better now, thanks to Paul Kruger's crafty policy.

They found again that their independence had not brought them much grist to their mill. Money was already beginning to circulate less freely after the military had been withdrawn from all the towns and the markets were very soon glutted with produce. This was a very sore point with many and they would have been reduced to bluebacks<sup>7)</sup> again had not the discovery of the Witwatersrand Gold Fields just saved them.

Anyway, they were glad to welcome our surveyor. The late war was still a dangerous topic which always led to some gratuitous insult to the poor loyalists. This feeling would have almost died out if it had not been fanned into life again by a new faction coming upon the scene in the shape of the Africander Bond.<sup>20)</sup>

Soon after our return we noticed that the Boers were much influenced and interested in the meetings being held all over the country. Every Boer you met was full of the idea that he was an Africander, and as such was something more than he had ever thought himself to be before and it behoved them to guard their language and help to build up a nation of their own, which would entirely exclude those hated designing English.

Every field cornet was instructed to hold regular meetings in his ward, where now and then an orator from headquarters would appear to instruct and keep them up to the mark. The Rev. S.F. du Toit<sup>21)</sup> was the chief man in Pretoria and being a minister of the Gospel had great influence with the Boers. They have great respect for their pastor and implicit faith that anything in printed form must be true. Little slips were issued and sent about to all remote

districts and the Bond work prospered and took deep root. This was the real beginning of the race hatred which grew apace and made Paul Kruger's intrigues an easy matter.

One of the field cornets finding that he badly wanted a secretary for these meetings, begged my husband to join them, which for policy sake he did for a time. He soon found it so utterly opposed to his principles, that he would have nothing more to do with it. He at first thought that if men like himself joined the Bond, they would perhaps be able to oppose its sinister object and draw it into a more wholesome channel but he soon gave it up as impossible.

There is no shadow of a doubt that the Africander Bond, assisted by England's magnanimity, is the primary cause of all the trouble raging now in Africa.

## Chapter XII

**Farming proves hopeless- our surveyor takes up his theodolite again**

Our farming was soon fast becoming a positive farce, with no market to speak of, the cost of transport to Pretoria taking away all the little profit there might be, it was a sorry lookout. The ostriches were a dead failure but out of them some good did come. While quarrying for stones to make them a camp, my husband first saw indications of coal on his farm. Further prospecting found this to be correct for he came upon a good seam of splendid coal only twenty feet from the surface. This was a good find, but like everything else in those times there was no sale for coal as wood was cheap and plentiful. He tried for a while to work it himself, but soon found that it required more skilled handling than he could give, so he had to engage a proper miner to work it systematically.

There was very little demand for coal, there being no railways or factories. There was only the Eerste Fabrieken at Zwart Koppies, a factory for distilling brandy from grain, and even they would not pay much for coal, wood being brought to them at little cost. So altogether this mining did not prove of much value to him. He allowed a Cornish miner named Tamblin to work the mine at his own expense and paying him a small royalty on the coal he sold. This too proved unsatisfactory, so eventually the farm, coal mine and all was sold at a comparatively low figure. My husband decided to give up farming for good and start working at his profession again.

He unfortunately sold out just before the Witwatersrand gold fields (1886) were discovered. Had he waited even a few months he would have got thousands instead of hundreds but luck did not usually attend his transactions.

The Rand Gold Fields of course boomed everything and he decided to devote all his attention to surveying as everyone wanted his land surveyed and got a touch of gold fever.

He went into partnership with a prominent Pretoria surveyor (John Rissik, who later became Surveyor General) who, being a Hollander, was in the Government's favour and had a large section of work in hand. A part of it being the survey of Montsio's location, a Koranna Chief with whom the Boers had lately made war. He was only a small chief and easily disposed of. They were utterly routed and men, women and children taken prisoners and given out as servants to the burghers who had assisted in the engagement. Devenish and his

partner both went out with a big staff of assistants in order to finish it off as soon as possible, Devenish taking his wife and eldest son, then about eight years of age. The other children were placed at Loretto House Convent, Pretoria.

Montsio's location was near Vryburg, it was called Schweizer Reneke after the two officers who were killed while storming the Koppie, not a very formidable one, if I remember rightly.<sup>22)</sup>

The surveying party were no sooner camped at the location when one of their servants, a Hottentot from the Cape Colony, came rushing in to say that the whole veldt was covered with skulls and human bones<sup>23)</sup> and he would not go back alone to bring in the horses which had been turned out to graze. No amount of physical or moral persuasion would induce that Hottentot to move away from the camp after dark. The Cape Hottentot is at all times a superstitious individual and this one was no exception to the rule. One of the surveyors put a skull on top of his tent pole, which awed the natives very much. I was very glad to move away from this gruesome neighbourhood when the surveyors had finished their work. One can get used to most things, but it is depressing to say the least of it, to meet with skulls and human bones in whatever direction you may chance to walk.

After we had been camping about these dry and barren parts, as the survey work dictated for about two months, we found that this sort of life was by no means the best thing for our little son, whose liking for lessons was diminishing fast. I tried to teach him but he was invariably missing, when I was ready for him. Boys like preferring to go off with the herd and dogs hunting hares or snaring birds, fishing too in the nearest pools, being a great temptation, so we decided that something had to be done to get him to school. Just before leaving Pretoria, we had received a letter from our brother-in-law, Thos. Hugo,<sup>24)</sup> Manager of Cape of Good Hope Bank, Graaff Reinet, and subsequently General Manager of the National Bank, Pretoria. He was married to my sister. The letter suggested that we should send our son to them where he could be educated with their only son who was about the same age.

The idea was a good one, but just then it was difficult to send the child so far away on his own as there was no railway even to Kimberley then.

It happened that we were short of provisions in camp and the work admitting of no delay, it was decided that I and the children and native nurse girl should go by ox-wagon to Kimberley, the nearest town of any importance, buy provisions and have them sent on by return wagon to the camp and ourselves take a train to Graaff Reinet where our elder boy was to be put to school.

### Chapter XIII

#### Revolver versus fists

My husband engaged a respectable old Boer to take us to Kimberley and arranged everything he could think of to make us comfortable.

Just before starting, my husband brought out the revolver of Bronkhorstspuit fame and in the presence of the Boer, gave it to me telling me to be sure to keep it safe from the children and yet handy and not to scruple to use it

if necessity arose. I remember the Boer laughing and remarking that he would do more with his fists than I could with the revolver, but he had good cause to thank his stars that we had that weapon, for it certainly saved his life and ours too for that matter. How this happened I will now tell you.

We started off very comfortably, my husband accompanying us a short way on horseback, at the last suffering many doubts and fears as to the advisability of us on this long rough journey. It was a great hardship for us both that he could not go with us, but as that was out of the question, we made the best of it and parted as cheerfully as the circumstances permitted.

I found it a new experience travelling with a Boer who, though anxious enough to please, was not accustomed to wait on womankind, his experience being quite the other way round. However he did condescend to do things for me that he would never have dreamt of doing for his own womenfolk, noting me a nuisance no doubt all the time. However, we managed to get on fairly well. He shot some bucks at times which considerably delayed us. My little son was a great comfort to me, as he had no lessons to worry him, made himself most useful when meals had to be prepared. We travelled on for about six days without any misadventure. When we got to the last outspan, close to Kimberley, we could easily have got into the town that evening but the Boer, considering his oxen more than our comfort decided to stay there for the night. I must have just got off to sleep when I was awakened by hearing the most terrifying yells and shouts of natives. Wakening the nurse girl we listened intently and could hear that there must be a dozen or more drunken natives around the wagon shouting and throwing stones. They were evidently coming from Kimberley and finding this solitary wagon with the Boer and Kaffir leader sleeping quietly under it thought it a tempting object of assault. The noise they made was dreadful, the nurse and I were half paralysed with fear. They pulled the Boer from under the wagon and knocked him about. He managed to get loose and got on top of the box seat and from this point of vantage tried to beat them off with the butt end of his whipstick. They pelted him with big stones, we could hear them strike the wagon in every direction. I heard them say in Dutch to him "jou verdomde Boer, you are not on your farm now to illtreat us, we'll kill you this time." A threat they would no doubt have carried out had I not at that moment opened the sail of the wagon and calling the Boer's name, handed him the revolver, at sight of which they all ran away as fast as they could. It was a bright moonlight night and the Boer fired upon them hitting one. They stopped for a few moments then ran off dragging the wounded one along with them. The Boer fired another shot after them, then handed me the revolver saying "Thank God that you had it with you." He was much hurt by the stones and said he felt wounded all over. I told the Boer to inspan at once and let us get to our friends in Kimberley. He was more tractable now and we reached Kimberley at midnight. Our friends received us most heartily and were much concerned to hear of our narrow escape and fright. I don't think I was ever in my life so thankful to get into bed in safety as I was that night.

The next morning my friends heard that a native had been shot dead by a Boer just outside the town and the authorities

were on the lookout for the culprit. Our Boer took alarm and went off at once to the Free State border which was not very far off and where he was safe from arrest, there being no extradition treaty in those days.

I was glad not to be delayed and perhaps have to give evidence, everyone who heard it feeling that the natives deserved what they got.

I lost no time in purchasing the provisions and sent the wagon back to where the Boer had arranged to meet it. We then took train for Middelburg, the nearest terminus to Graaff-Reinet, from where my brother-in-law sent a cart and horses to meet us. We then had a five hour drive amongst the most lovely scenery but sometimes so dangerous that one forgot to admire nature's handwork, in the fear of toppling over those awful precipices. However, we arrived safely and were most heartily welcomed by the Hugo's.

After about six weeks of most enjoyable stay at Graaff-Reinet and making all arrangements about our son Lennox's education, I returned to our camp leaving the boy with his aunt and uncle. I was very unhappy at parting with him, but knew that he would be in good hands and be kept at his lessons which was the main point.

My husband, meeting me on the return journey, was greatly annoyed at all we had endured since parting from him and he said that though not usually given that way, he had a strange presentiment on sending us on that journey which prompted him to give me the revolver.

#### Chapter XIV

#### Devenish surveys the western border of the Transvaal

Having completed the survey of the Location and also many private farms in its neighbourhood, my husband next received instructions from the Transvaal Government to make a survey of the whole of the western border. It was some time after the Boer raid into Stellaland when Sir Charles Warren's expedition was sent out to put a stop to any further depredations on the part of the Boers, and it was thought necessary to have a proper survey of the line, so as to more accurately define the boundary between the Transvaal and Bechuanaland.

The Griqualand West Government also sent a surveyor to survey the line on their side conjointly with the Transvaal surveyor and they worked together all along the line. It so happened that the Bechuanaland surveyor, Mr. Harry van Reenen, was an old College friend of my husband. They were at the Diocesan College, Rondebosch, as boys together and were very pleased to meet again.

Mr. Van Reenen seeing that I was in camp with my husband, brought his wife out too in their comfortable spring wagon. Together we managed to break the tedium of veldt life by walks, afternoon teas and sometimes dining together. I think they have always looked back with pleasure to this survey trip.

As soon as the Border survey was finished, we moved to Pretoria in slow stages and stayed to do any private survey that came his way. He was brought in contact with the heroes of the Stellaland raid who were most indignant with Paul Kruger for stopping their landgrabbing, not understanding what pressure had been brought to bear on him.



Devenish was taken to see the spot under a wild fig tree where the unfortunate Bethel was murdered by those lawless men under the command of Commandant de la Rey, probably the same man who is now fighting against our troops.<sup>25)</sup> We spent New Year's Day of 1887 on a farm close to Vryburg and there had an opportunity of witnessing a typical Boer's way of spending New Year's Day. It is a great day with them, Christmas day being entirely a church day but "Nuwe Jaar" as they call it is a rollicking day of enjoyment and plenty of good cheer. They began their day at early dawn as usual by firing off guns at intervals and then handing sweet cakes and coffee to all in the house. A constant stream of relations and friends arrived in the course of the morning, each arrival being welcomed by rifle firing and distribution of cakes and coffee. Then came the early dinner consisting principally of roast lamb, sucking pigs and poultry to which all the men sit down first, the women waiting upon them. After the men are finished they go outside and smoke while the women and children partake of whatever is left and all help to clear away and then dancing commences. A musically gifted youth is generally found amongst the company, brings forth a concertina which he plays in fairly good time and they start dancing on the smooth sand floor they usually have in front of their doors. In this case it was on a distinct slope but nothing daunted, they danced with a will. In time or out of it, it was all the same as they seldom listened to the music, their chief enjoyment being in trying to outdo each other in energy. The pair who could keep it up the longest was the admiration of all.

The men keep their hats on and the women their cappies and the men cast off their partners without ceremony if they show any signs of getting tired, laying hold of another by sheer force if necessary. The whole making the most incongruous scene one could imagine and all this with the temperature 96° in the shade. However, they enjoy themselves thoroughly at such times, and make welcome any stranger who may chance to arrive, to all they have going. There are however a great many Boers who do not approve of dancing at all and I once heard a Boer say that he would sooner see his child dead than at a dance. These non-dancing people play rough games, practical jokes and other questionable ways of passing the time.

#### Chapter XV

#### The survey party returns to Pretoria

On our way back to Pretoria we passed through the Rand or Johannesburg as it was afterwards called, then a bare waste of country studded with tents and iron shanties with batteries rising up in all directions. People were flocking to these gold fields from all parts and rumour was rife as to the richness of the gold reefs.

We stayed on in Pretoria for a few weeks with Mr. Hugo (my brother-in-law), who will be remembered by many old friends in Pretoria as the late General Manager of the National Bank, which post he so ably filled until his early and lamentable death about three years ago.

After a time my husband secured some survey work close to Johannesburg and they camped for weeks at Doorn Kop where that unfortunate Jameson Raid Battle took place some years



Cartoon by an unknown artist (W.H.Schröder?) of Mrs.E.Devenish's scapegoat President Paul Kruger, giving Randolph Churchill the boot. Indeed, Churchill's letters in the London paper "Daily Graphic" had been very critical of South Africa. The original caption reads: "After these letters in the Daily Graphic you could not expect anything else, my lord (words of Kruger). - This cartoon of President Kruger kicking lord Randolph Churchill out of the Transvaal appeared in a Pretoria shop window soon after lord Randolph left the Boer capital. (Source:) South African Library." - From Brian Roberts, "Churchills in Africa", London 1970, p.50.

afterwards. We often went to Johannesburg and stayed with friends. It was fast becoming a prosperous and go-ahead city, boasting the best theatres in South Africa. Friends often came out to visit our camp and wondered at my enjoyment of the rough life, but I was happy to help my husband by my presence and companionship, to hear of his far harder past, of rough work and responsibility, and now since it has been my great misfortune to lose him, it is the greatest solace of my life to think that I did try to lighten his labours by sharing the discomforts inseparable from a surveyor's field work in a country like the Transvaal. The hardships of which only those who have experienced it themselves can fully realise.

As soon as the work was finished at Doorn Kop, he secured an extensive survey in the Zoutpansberg which is a very rich and fertile district about 170 miles north of Pretoria.

Pietersburg, the chief town, is now a rising little place with a railway to Pretoria and was for some time the seat of the Boer Government after Kruger's flight. When we first saw it, it was merely a farm with a tumble-down homestead on it. My husband was appointed by the Government to survey and lay out this township, which he did. It has steadily grown notwithstanding many discouragements and drawbacks through mismanagement and neglect of the Government. Paul Kruger was too busy raking in the enormous revenues now flowing from the gold mining industry at the Rand to give much thought to remote little Pietersburg.

The town got its name from General Piet Joubert<sup>26)</sup> who always took a great interest in it, which prevented it falling into oblivion in those early days. Its mineral prospects are most promising and would have been heard of more if the richness of the Rand had not put it in the shade.

My husband was the first man in the district to agitate for a railway, trying to get memorials signed by the burghers asking the Government to have a line built from Pretoria to Pietersburg. Paul Kruger was always averse to railways.<sup>27)</sup> It brought civilisation too near to the Boers and they felt that it did away with their loved transport, the ox-wagon. I don't think a typical Boer is ever more in his element, than when sitting on the box seat of his wagon with a good load of transport and his pet span of oxen, all alike in size and colour. Give him a good whip, his gun to shoot any chance game, some coffee and dried rusks and he would not change place with the first in the land. My husband used to talk and argue with the Boers and point out the advantages of a railway, but when it came to signing a memorial for it they felt like signing away their birthright.

Mr. Carl Hanan<sup>28)</sup> was the first to try to get a concession for building the Pretoria/Pietersburg railway. My husband tried all he could to assist him but it was no use. Paul Kruger told the burghers that a railway built up in that direction would enable Rhodes to reach them too easily, Pietersburg being more or less on the way to Rhodesia.<sup>27)</sup>

My husband liked the climate and prospects of Zoutpansberg very well, and having very paying survey work up there, decided to make Pietersburg his home. Being on the spot he was able to buy up the pick of the erven and farms at a fairly low rate. He purchased three erven in the best part of

the town and at once started a nursery of gum and other ornamental trees with which he afterwards laid out the grounds and built a large and comfortable house which became in time a truly happy home to his family, endeared to them all by the fact of his having planted and personally tended almost every tree on the place.

As soon as we were settled in our home, he would no longer hear of my going out with him on his survey trips, though sometimes the family went just for a week's picnicking which was always thoroughly enjoyed.

The Government School was kept by a Hollander who taught English two days a week as a foreign language. His knowledge of English being very limited, my husband tried to get up a good private school where English could be properly taught.<sup>29)</sup> After several attempts he gave it up as hopeless and was forced to send his children all the way to Cape Town, a journey of six days by coach and train at enormous expense. (Their eldest son Lennox went to school to Bishops and the girls to St. Cyprians Diocesan College.)

The educational question was a great grievance to the Uitlander population who, though so heavily taxed, could not secure good education for their children in the country.

## Chapter XVI

### The Jameson Raid and Matabele rising

Things went on more or less quietly. The gold fields in Zoutpansberg were being steadily developed, the greatest drawback to their success being the want of a railway to Pietersburg. The Uitlander grievances and Paul Kruger's obstinacy being the constant topics in every mind and tongue. People wondered what would come of it, often they thought it must surely bring war with England, when to everyone's astonishment and dismay the Jameson Raid came as a thunder-clap in its suddenness. It created a great deal of indignation in the minds of friends and foes alike and turned the tide of feeling entirely in Kruger's favour. He did not fail to take immediate advantage by imprisoning all the members of the Reform Committee and securing large sums of money as fines when he did finally release them.

Now too he could continue openly what he had been doing secretly, to lay in great stores of arms and ammunition for future use. How well he accomplished this is seen in the war now dragging through its weary length.

The Boers in Pietersburg were greatly excited and there was much talk of shooting down every Englishman in the country. Whatever the motives of that Raid, as we all know, it was a fatal mistake and only aggravated the grievances it sought to relieve and led to much misery and illfeeling all round.

As an outcome of that Raid, one cannot help attributing that terrible rising of the Matabele in Rhodesia which resulted in the murder of so many innocent lives.

We had good cause to remember that cruel time, when a much loved brother who had settled in Rhodesia some years before was cruelly murdered by the Matabele. He was one of the "Cape Mounted Rifles" who so ably assisted in the first war with the Matabele. He was saved from perishing in "Wilson's Last Stand"<sup>30)</sup> and was among those to whom the Chartered Company awarded a farm for their services. After the war was

over he had settled on his farm Shorts Drift and made it a most desirable residence and paying concern, having a native store and Wayside Inn which was much appreciated by travellers in those scanty populated parts. A fortnight before he was murdered he replied to a telegram from my husband asking if he was safe: "All right, still trading", the next news we heard was he and two friends were murdered while on their way to one of the Forts, they having been advised by the Authorities to come there for safety. The Matabele hearing that Jameson had been captured with his whole force by the Boers, no doubt thought they now had their chance to wipe out the whole white race altogether, for they spared neither women nor children. However, it has been some small comfort to know that they have been punished and subdued after all.

We had now settled permanently in Pietersburg and my husband may be said to have held the monopoly of all survey work for several years.<sup>31)</sup> Although it was an isolated place owing to its great distance from Pretoria, life was quite bearable to those who made up their minds to live there.

Our surveyor being one of these, did all in his power to make it a desirable and flourishing town. He was often away for months, especially in the winter time when he could get to parts which are fever-stricken in summer. But when at home he always entered heartily into and promoted everything to the good and improvement of the town and its inhabitants. He will always be remembered as the moving spirit of the place. His genial and ready sympathy was felt at all times, by many friends who may chance to read this. Alas, how many of them will have survived this cruel war we have yet to learn.

My husband's faith was great in the Zoutpansberg gold fields and also its farming capabilities and he spent much money and time in acquiring and developing property. The only drawback then was no railway. This is now no more an obstacle as we have our line completed thanks to the pluck and energy of Mr. B.W. Wright, the contractor, who has so ably carried out his difficult task.

Where ever his survey work took him, my husband was always on the look-out for mineral indications and his prospecting pan and stamper were never forgotten when preparing for a long camp out. A great rush was at one time made to Wood Bush Range, Haenertsburg, which is a most delightful part and some wonderful specimens of gold quarts have been brought from there. The little town of Haenertsburg lies on the top of the mountains and being so high up, the air is pure and fresh and wild fruit and flowers abound. The scenery here is magnificent, it has been called the Sanatorium of the Zoutpansberg and for many years has been the refuge and hospital of the fever patients from the low country, or Murchisson Range where the richest gold fields are situated. From May to October it is considered quite safe to go to these low-lying parts which are thickly occupied by both Boers and prospectors during these healthy months. The Boers generally go with their cattle as the climate is mild and there is always a good amount of shooting, even lions are frequently shot there.

My husband owned some alluvial gold claims on the Tsama River near the Letaba Gold Fields which he worked for some months with very satisfactory results until the drought and famine in Zoutpansberg made mining impossible. He took us all

down to this mine on one occasion which we enjoyed, being very interested in the mode of getting at the gold. We occupied a comfortable little shanty with verandah all round and had quite a little farmyard of pigs and poultry and cows, with a vegetable garden which made working a gold mine quite an ideal experience.

A twenty horse power engine was put up on the bank of the river to pump the water into the sluice boxes and the gold producing earth was brought down an incline by trucks on rails and shovelled into the sluice boxes, by the natives. The empty trucks would then be drawn up by four oxen, to be refilled at the mine. Great was the excitement on "washing up" day, once a month when the engine was stopped and the boxes cleaned. The gold is collected by quick-silver and how grand a sight to see the little heap of gold in a plate (ninety ounces in this case), and how interesting to watch the whole process, seeing it put into the retort and turned out an oval lump of pure gold, more especially when it is your own property. And here I must tell you how on one occasion all work was stopped by the native herd rushing into the camp in great excitement and alarm, saying that there was a lion close by. He spoke in Kaffir and instantly every pick and shovel was thrown down and about ninety natives rushed off in the direction indicated, yelling and shouting, enough to scare away any army of lions; some of them catching up a piece of burning wood from the fire where their midday meal was being prepared. The only ones left on the scene were Devenish, his family and the man in charge of the engine. The children and nurse, a Cape Coloured girl, were so terrified, more by the noise of the pursuers than anything else, the nurse declaring that she could hear the lion roar but this might have been imagination.

After a while the natives all returned and told us that the spoors of the lions were there right enough. My husband and a Boer overseer in his employ then took horses and guns and went in search but after a long ride returned without success, having lost the trail in the long grass.

Two days afterwards a Boer wagon stopped at the camp and the Boer enquired if they would buy a lion skin which had been shot the day before. On looking at it we found that it was riddled with bullet holes and thus not worth much and on further enquiries we found that it must have been the same lion that had given us all such a scare. The Boer told us that they had made a snare for it and after catching it had fired all those shots into it, to make sure it was dead before approaching it, a wise precaution and quite in accordance with Boer mode of warfare. However, the sight of the skin gave us a sense of security from any further lion scares and is the nearest approach to a real lion story and a poor one for sooth.

It was a strange thing that though Devenish had travelled about in all directions in the wildest parts, he never came in personal contact with a lion, though it was his great ambition to slay his own lion and he was too honest to slay one in imagination. He often found their spoors or came upon their deserted lair and had even heard their roar in the distance, he had never given himself the time to specially hunt them.

## Chapter XVII

## Illustrious visitors to Pietersburg and our Queen's Jubilee

The little town was now and then enlivened by a visit from General Joubert, the God Father of Pietersburg, "Pieters City" from whom it had its name.

The General had for many years been a personal friend of my husband and they together worked systematically to oppose Paul Kruger's misguided Government at every election for the Presidency. He strove to support Joubert, but to no avail, for Kruger's secret service and money and intriguing policy were all powerful. The old General was often our guest on his visits to Pietersburg and was always genial and kind to everyone. He could speak fairly good English as everyone knows who has heard him speak in public. It is almost prophetic to recall his remarks and convictions of an ultimate war with England unless the Kruger Government could be altered. He said he knew if it came to that it would mean utter loss of independence to the Republic.

He has not been spared to see this war to the end and perhaps he would not have wished to do so.<sup>32)</sup> He was anti-English but consistent and reasonable and would have avoided this war if he had been in power.

On one occasion when he was staying with us, one of the surveyors who had a camera asked permission to photograph him. He very cordially assented and when seated on the verandah for the purpose, seeing our little son Graham, called him to come and stand beside him. When they were properly posed the little fellow said, "now there will be two Generals" which much amused the old man who patted the child on the head with the remark "Who knows what he may be some day."

This led to his asking my husband and eldest son, Lennox, to join the two Generals, which they did and now sad to say, the little boy is the only survivor of that impromptu group.

Every three months the Boer Nachmaal would be held on the Market Square when all the functions of marriage, christening and confirmation would take place. They camped out in their wagons and tents on the Church Square where they would religiously attend all the services. They would do all their shopping at these times, so it meant a fairly busy and prosperous time to the storekeepers but I think the general public were usually much relieved to see the Nachmaal wagons as they are called file out of the town but no doubt, not more so than those good people were to get out of the dorp as they called it. The ordinary Boer hates the town and all pertaining to it except the market where he can sell his produce and looks upon it as a necessary evil.

About once a year President Paul Kruger would visit Pietersburg, which event created the usual stir and excitement such visits generally do in a small place, but he was by no means popular in the Zoutpansberg district and for that reason took care to administrate it with his own particular flunkies, who could watch his interests, for as a rule, however much you may be in the right, there is no getting over the main in possession. He would be the guest of the Landdrost or Magistrate on these occasions, never making up personally for all the expense his host might be put to. In

order to make manifest his popularity, deputations would be rife, each party would air their grievances or wishes and could be gruffly repulsed as was the old President's usual manner, or made jubilant with promises which would most often prove of the pie crust stability as his mood might dictate.

They would always get up a banquet in his honour to which he would only remain for the first course or not appear at all, but so despotic was his majesty that everyone had to be pleased, whatever might be his behaviour.

And now I should like to tell how they spent our good Queen's Jubilee in remote little Pietersburg. They had a Committee of English born, who arranged the festivities in a most loyal and elaborate manner considering that they were only a small community.

The Boer officials assisted them all they could to make it a success and the dear old Union Jack was allowed to wave freely in every direction on that day which was a concession, for since the Jameson Raid it would not dare to be seen in Pietersburg.

They had an impressive little service in the English Church conducted by their much respected Pastor, the Rev. H. Grellier, timed so as to be as near as possible at the same time as that greater function at St. Pauls, London. After the service they had sports, etc. and in the evening a Grand Ball was held in the Masonic Hall where under the Union Jack, God Save the Queen and Rule Britannia were sung by friend and foe alike in a most hearty manner. Two prizes were given for the best essay on the Queen's life to the Dutch and English schools. The first prize, value £7, was taken by a Dutch boy, to everyone's surprise, a boy who could hardly read English fluently, just as the Boers have surprised the world by their fighting qualities; what undue assistance was rendered in each case is not for me to say.

The following evening a huge bonfire was made on the Market Square when some fifty Indunas and their followers were treated to roast beef roasted in their own native style, being laid in quarters on the burning fire and the natives would dance round, leaping forward in turns with knife and stick used as a fork, to the charred roasting meat, cut off a piece and dance round again madly, eating it as they danced and singing their war songs. This performance lasted till most of the meat was taken off the bones, then the old Indunas would sit round these pickings, enjoy their feast undisturbed by the more noisy spirits who were entertaining the lookers-on by their wild songs and war dance. They had been previously duly informed through an interpreter that this meat was given in honour of the long reign of the Great White Queen at whose name they cheered in their own native fashion and executing another wild war dance, they marched off well pleased with the meat offered them.

The troubles of the Republic seemed never over. Following the Jameson Raid which caused so much bitter feeling between Dutch and English in every town, came the Rinderpest which carried off most of the cattle in the Zoutpansberg district and impoverished both Boers and natives and caused great distress in every direction. Close upon this came the drought and failure of crops, which caused a famine in the whole district, which was truly distressing. Whole kraals of natives died of starvation, though much was done to relieve



them. A large sum of money was sent from the inhabitants of Johannesburg and the Rev. Grellier personally superintended the distribution of one meal a day of mealie meal porridge to over a hundred starving women and children who flocked to the town for relief. It was a shocking sight to see some of these poor wretches, especially the children and very old people.

The poor white burghers were helped by the Government to some extent, but no one in the whole Republic was so chary of personally giving aid to these poor people as Paul Kruger. No distress of any kind, ever appealed sufficiently to him to make him disburse his much loved hoard, even when that dreadful dynamite explosion<sup>33)</sup> took place when his poorest burghers were the principal sufferers he was with difficulty induced to give a small sum while the Uitlanders gave their thousands spontaneously.

The war against the Chief Magoeba,<sup>34)</sup> who had been giving the Government some trouble, caused some little excitement in Pietersburg, as the burghers, volunteers and many of the native allies had to pass through that little town, making it feel almost important.

The Boers had a tough struggle with this chief but settled the matter effectually at last by accepting the assistance of two thousand Swazies, a fine body of warriors, who having an old grudge against Magoeba, gladly offered to help annihilate him.

It was a rare sight to see this large Impi of Swazies in all their war paint, shields and assegais marching through the outskirts of the town on their way to the front. The next time they were heard of, they had brought the Chief Magoeba's head to the General, he having told them to bring the chief dead or alive. A photograph of this ghastly object was afterwards to be seen at the Pietersburg Photographers. A gruesome sight but no doubt a mild one compared to the original which was put down at the door of the General's tent by the triumphant warriors.

I shall never forget the sight of the poor native prisoners, men, women and children in such a pitiable state of starvation after the siege they had endured as they were marched through to Pretoria, driven on by mounted burghers, whose anxiety to get back to their homes made them forgetful of the suffering of the poor creatures they were driving before them at so cruel a pace. Many fell behind and perished from cold and exposure. Such deplorable sufferings are often the unavoidable appendages of war.

### Chapter XVIII

#### Premature death and the last transaction of our lamented and honoured friend

And now in my closing pages I will relate Devenish's last transaction with the Transvaal Government which was interrupted in the midst by his sad and untimely death.

Some four years before, he bought a farm from a non-resident, now living in the Cape, who had held it for nearly twenty years and paid taxes to the Transvaal Government all that time. It was situated in the Spelonken District of Zoutpansberg close to the Chief Magato's mountain. These farms having been considered unhealthy, years ago, were deserted by the Boers and as time went on Magato quietly encroached and ultimately laid claim to all the country

around his stronghold for many miles, which had previously been occupied and was still owned by private people as well as the Government.

These farms are now considered very valuable both for minerals and agricultural purposes and it so happened that the farm in question fell into the territory thus claimed by Magato<sup>34</sup> and his people.

Some time after the purchase of said farm, Devenish went to have a look at it and have it surveyed and found it a most promising property indeed. He also noticed that the natives looked at him as if he had no business there, but did not actually interfere with him. He later on went with the Field cornet of the district to lay formal claim to it, with the result that the natives ordered them off in a most threatening manner, a hint they thought best to take. On returning to Pietersburg, he appealed to the Landdrost court for the right to occupy his own land.

The court gave judgement in his favour, and the sheriff was sent to the natives with a writ of ejection, unless they quietly submitted to his occupation. On the sheriff's arrival he was met by the Head Induna of the kraal to whom he handed the writ. This document was contemptuously torn up in his presence and the Chief told him that if he did not instantly take himself off, his person would be treated in the same manner. He further emphasised his threat by ordering a score of armed warriors to escort them with all speed off the farm.

The sheriff returned to Pietersburg most indignant at his treatment but very thankful to have got away with a whole skin.

Devenish then took proceedings against the Government in the High Court of Pretoria suing for possession of his property for which he had paid taxes for some years. He was fighting the battles for several companies and private persons who held property in the same way and could not get possession. The Government was bound to protect their interests and could not allow the Chief to go on defying its authority.

The final trial of this case was to have been held on the 1st June 1898 and it would have been interesting to see how the Government would have got out of the matter. Many witnesses were summoned by Devenish to prove his claim, but alas he was taken seriously ill and died unexpectedly on the 3rd May 1898 and the case had to be postponed.<sup>35)</sup>

The Government afterwards consented to pay all costs already incurred if the case was withdrawn and promised that the Chief Magato should be dealt with and made to give up the property.

The Chief was growing more insolent towards the Government and afterwards even refused to pay any taxes at all which was the last straw that brought about his ruin.

In the latter part of 1898 the Government made war against him and drove him out of his stronghold after a stubborn resistance on his part.

## Chapter XIX

### Death again blasts the already bereaved family

Since writing the foregoing chapter a new and crushing blow has fallen suddenly on the widow and children of our

lamented friend whose life history I have given in the previous pages.

Their eldest son Lennox, a promising young fellow of twenty-two, died of typhoid after only a few days illness at Wellington on the 13th December 1899 where he was farming temporarily with the two sons of Dr. Smuts of Rondebosch, Cape Town. He had only recently completed his course at the Agricultural College, Elsenburg, where he had gained the highest certificates.

He was waiting for this dreadful war to be over to proceed to Pietersburg and the Northern Border of the Transvaal to carry on farming on the farms his late father had acquired for that purpose.

Only eighteen months before his father was carried off by the same disease, an illness of only eight days.

I will not dwell on this doubly sad grief and loss at a time when scarcely a home in all England and South Africa is not mourning for some dear and valuable life. Sorrow is uppermost on every side and we, who now mourn our dear ones, can but pray and strive for victory over our grief and its inevitable and consequent changes, as our brave soldiers are fighting and enduring untold hardships, for victory and the supremacy of the dear old Flag which means equal rights to all once more in South Africa.

#### References

- 1) The author, Mrs. Eliza Francis Devenish née Short, does not mention Mr. Van Niekerk's christian names. According to another source his name was Guillaume - French for William.
- 2) The Damaraland trekker or Thirstland trekker who sold his farm at Bronkhorstspuit to Guillaume van Niekerk, was Johannes ("Hans") van der Merwe, father of Gert van der Merwe. Gert was leader of the first group of Thirstland trekkers who left their farms in 1874.
- 3) Mrs. Devenish often writes England and English where we should expect Great Britain and British.
- 4) Hendrik Carel Vos Leibbrand was born in Cape Town in 1837 and died there in 1911. He studied theology in the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and got there liberal theological ideas. He was a parson of the Dutch Reformed Church at Victoria West from which village G. van Niekerk hailed, in 1860-77. He resigned as a parson and became keeper of the Parliament archives in Cape Town. He was a hardworking and deserving archivist. See "Dictionary of South African Biography", volume 2, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Pretoria, 1972, p.385-387.
- 5) Tommy Atkins was the nickname of the British soldier, a volunteer in the 19th century.
- 6) Samuel Melville is mentioned as Surveyor General of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek at Pretoria on p.47 of the "Transvaal Book Almanac and Directory for 1877", compiled by Fred. Jeppe, Pietermaritzburg, 1877.
- 7) Blue Backs was the nickname of the paper money issued by the Transvaal treasury since the presidency of M.W.

- Pretorius. Due to overissue the paper money soon depreciated with 30% or more.
- 8) These dwarfs were perhaps Bushmen or San of whom a few had survived in remote places of Transvaal in the 19th century.
  - 9) This mediation by Paul Kruger between British, Boers and Zulus in 1878 is not confirmed by historians.
  - 10) The Boer assistance of the British in the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879 was largely restricted to Pieter Uys and his family in the district of Utrecht, Transvaal. Pieter's father, the Voortrekker leader, Pieter Lafras Uys, was killed by Zulus in 1838 and the family of Uys had a grudge against the Zulus.
  - 11) The British army which invaded Zululand at the start of the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, suffered a crushing defeat in the battle at Isandhlwana on 22 January 1879.
  - 12) This is probably Cornelis Johannes Gerhardus Erasmus, born in Natal in 1842, died on his farm Hondsrivier close to Bronkhorstspuit on 7 or 8 January 1909. He was a man of importance in the region of Pretoria as a Boer officer and as a member of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk. See H.M. Rex, chapter "Geschiedenis van Bronkhorstspuit" in the book "Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Bronkhorstspuit, 1889-1989", Krugersdorp 1989. His portrait photo is on p.74 of this work.
  - 13) Lord Randolph Churchill, 1849-95, was the father of Sir Winston Churchill. Randolph visited Southern Africa with a rather large and luxurious convoy of followers and wagons. He passed Transvaal on his way to Rhodesia in 1891. He criticized many people and circumstances in South Africa, especially the Transvalers, although they did all their best to accommodate him. Therefore an able, unknown cartoonist at Pretoria drew a cartoon which shows president Kruger who kicks Churchill with a bow out of Transvaal. See Brian Roberts, "Churchills in Africa", Hamisch-Hamilton, London 1970, p.52 and picture opposite p.50.
  - 14) This was the farmer CJG Erasmus, a member of the prominent Erasmus family in the region of Pretoria. See reference 12.
  - 15) This is Frans Joubert, commander of the Transvaal forces in the fight at Bronkhorstspuit on 20 December 1880.
  - 16) This is Commandant Solomon Theodorus Prinsloo, referred to in the chapter "Die Prinsloos van Bronkhorstspuit" in H.M. Rex en andere, in "Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Bronkhorstspuit 1879-1969", Krugersdorp 1969, p.285 seq. His portrait is on p.284. His farm was Vlakfontein.
  - 17) Colonel W. Bellairs was the commander of the British garrison at Pretoria when this town was besieged by the Transvalers in 1880/81. He surrendered and left the town with his troops when the armistice had been signed in March 1881.

- 18) This is perhaps a reference to John Farrell Junior, son of John Farrell Senior. The lastmentioned was an inhabitant of Pretoria. John ("Jan") Farrell Junior settled on the farm Wilgekraal in the district of Lydenburg. The story goes that he assisted the British garrison at Lydenburg when it was besieged by the Transvalers in 1880/81. He was captured by the besiegers and shot as a traitor. He was then 27 years old and married. Mrs Devenish calls his kind "a loyal and defenceless British subject", but I wonder. Information regarding his death is very scarce.
- 19) Mrs Devenish refers to the second Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902, which raged while she was writing the memoirs of her marriage with Anthony Lennox Devenish.
- 20) The Afrikaner Bond was the political organization of the Afrikaners in the Cape Colony, founded in 1882 and soon led by the politician Jan Hendrik Hofmeyer. It had also members in the Boer republics. It was supported by Cecil Rhodes as a politician and it cooperated with him until the Jameson Raid into Transvaal in 1895/96. It was an influential political party in the Cape Colony.
- 21) The Reverend S. . du Toit was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, founded by Ds. Dirk Postma, and a member of the Afrikaner Bond and leader of the first movement for propagation of Afrikaans as a language. He became the superintendent of school education in Transvaal when Paul Kruger was State President of Transvaal and had to resign in 1890. He returned to the Cape Colony and became a grudge against Kruger and a supporter of Cecil Rhodes. See "Dictionary of South African Biography", volume one, HSRC, Pretoria, 1968, p.279-281.
- 22) The village of Schweizer-Reneke in Western Transvaal was first named Mamusa and then renamed after Captain Schweizer of the Transvaal State Artillery and Gert Reneke, who both fell in the campaign against Chief Massouw in 1885. Source: C. Beelaerts van Blokland, "Eenige aardrijkskundige en historische gegewens betreffende Zuid-Afrika", Zeist 1941, p.29.
- 23) Mrs. Devenish does not clarify whether the human bones in the veld dated from the Difaqane or the Great Migrations of black tribes in the first half of the 19th century, when the Matabele under Chief Msilkaats killed many blacks in Transvaal, or from the recent campaign of Transvaler Boers against black tribes in Bechuanaland.
- 24) Thomas Hugo became the first managing director of the "Nationale Bank van de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek" when it was founded in 1890 to serve inter alia the financial needs of the Transvaal treasury.
- 25) He was Commandant Adrianus Johannes Gerardus de la Rey, nicknamed Klein Adriaan, 1846-1938, elder brother of General Jacobus Herculaaas de la Rey. Mrs Devenish ~~finds it strange~~ that the General who triumphed over the British during the war in 1899-1902, is Jacobus H. de la Rey, nicknamed Oom Koos. Adriaan and other farmers from Western Transvaal founded the small republic of Stellaland in 1883. The death of Bethel, called murder by Mrs.

Devenish, on p.33 is an episode of the squabbles between blacks and Transvalers. Adriaan de la Rey became adjudant-officer of his brother the General in the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902. See on Adriaan de la Rey "Dictionary of South African Biography", volume 3, HSRC, Pretoria 1972, p.206.

In 1884 there was trouble in Goshen, one of the two dwarf republics, recently founded by farmers from Transvaal. Montsiwa, chief of a Bamangwato tribe in Bechuanaland, had attacked settlers at Rooigrond in Goshen and was defeated. Dr. J.F. van Oordt B.A. records in his biography "Paul Kruger en de opkomst der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek" (Hollandsch-Afrikaansche Uitgevers-Maatschappij, Amsterdam and Cape Town, 1898, p.434): "Montsiwa had attacked the Rooigronders in August 1884. His allies were a great number of (Chief) Gatzibi's people and also Englishmen, among them a certain Bethell, a man of a reputed family in England, but married to a daughter of Montsiwa in Kaffer manner. But Montsiwa had been defeated by the Rooigronders and volunteers (from Transvaal) and he was completely powerless to defend himself. Many of his followers and people of Gatzibi had fallen. Also Bethell was dead. People in England later made a hero of Bethell, but took care that his little son, born by his black spouse, did not share in his heritage" (translation from Dutch by C. de Jong).

- 26) Pietersburg was founded by Commandant-General Piet J. Joubert in 1886; promising mineral prospects of the village, inter alia gold discoveries in the Murchison Range have been largely disappointed. The miners' village Leydsdorp in the vicinity was founded in the same years and named after State Secretary W.J. Leyds. After some decades it became a ghost town, it was deserted.
- 27) Mrs. Devenish' opinion that President Paul Kruger was always averse to railways is nonsense. He was on the contrary an advocate of railway construction and exploitation, although on account and risk of private persons; he granted a concession to Dutch railway experts for the Eastern line between the Mozambique border and Pretoria and favoured the Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij (NZASM) which built that railway between 1890 and 95. Regarding Mrs. Devenish's remark on p.13 that Paul Kruger could not speak and understand English, other sources disagree. Piet Meiring, "Die Bosveld en sy mense", Perskor-Uitgewery, Johannesburg-Kaapstad 1980, p.108, states that President Kruger during his visit to the new town of Barberton speeched to the inhabitants in tolerable English. - Regarding Mrs. Devenish's remark on p.39 that President Kruger payed nothing to his host during his visits to Pietersburg for his expenses, Meiring loc. cit. p.110, states that President Kruger gave his host at Barberton, David MacKay Wilson, 7 sovereigns for his expenses, recorded by Wilson.
- 28) Carl Hanau was born at Freiberg in Germany in 1855 and died in London in 1930. He was a pioneer of the exploit-

ation of the Great Gold Reef and became a mining magnate of the Witwatersrand, but he went bankrupt in Transvaal, returned to Europe and died in poverty. See "Dictionary of South African Biography", volume 3, HSRC, Pretoria, 1979, p.37. He did not obtain the concession of the railway from Pretoria to Pietersburg, when this line was not coveted by the NZASM. The line was opened in 1899, a few months before the War.

- 29) Louis Changuion, "Pietersburg, die eerste eeu, 1886-1986", Pretoria, 1986, p.47, writes on schools at Pietersburg (translated from Afrikaans): "Another problem of school education in Zoutpansberg (the district of Pietersburg) was the scarcity of well qualified school teachers. . . The (only State) school had in the nineties only 3 pupils in Standard 4 which also was the highest standard in 1893. The language of instruction in this small school at Pietersburg was (High) Dutch. The parson of the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk), ds. M.P.A. Coetzee, however, was of the opinion that because half the inhabitants of Pietersburg was English speaking the school should be double medium (bilingual). However, he could not get the cooperation of the school committee under chairmanship of M. Jorissen (a son of judge E.J.P. Jorissen at Pretoria). With the support of English and Dutch speaking parents he (Ds. Coetzee) founded a double medium school in 1895 and applied to the (State) Department of Education for recognition and subsidy. Dr. N. Mansvelt who had become superintendent of Education in 1891, declined however and reprimanded Ds. Coetzee. The Reverend proposed in 1897 an amalgamation of his school with the existing school which was subsidized by the State. Mansvelt rejected also this proposal because the policy was separation of English and Dutch medium schools. Ds. Coetzee continued with his school which gained many adherents at Pietersburg." So Mr. and Mrs. Devenish had good reason to be dissatisfied with school education at Pietersburg.
- 30) During the rising of the Matabele against the British Chartered Company of Cecil Rhodes in Rhodesia in 1896 a patrol of the company troops, led by Major Wilson, was surrounded by Matabele warriors and killed after heroic resistance. This was the famous Last Stand of the Shangani patrol.
- 31) Changuion, "Pietersburg 1886-1986", loc. cit., p.37-38, gives particulars of Devenish as a land surveyor in Zoutpansberg. Together with Johann Rissik he surveyed a large terrain where the new village of Pietersburg was laid out. Changuion states on p.39 (in translation): "The landsurveyor (A.L. Devenish) liked the new village where he had such a large part in the laying-out thereof, so much that he decided to settle there. He built a house at the corners of Maré, Grobler and Market Streets and became a prominent and active member of the community." His wife and children joined him there.
- 32) Commandant-General Piet J. Joubert died at Pretoria on 27 March 1900. His friend Mrs. Devenish does not mention

- that he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Transvaal army which inflicted heavy defeats on the British army.
- 33) On 18 February 1896 a trainload of dynamite exploded on the station of the NZASM at Vrededorp in Johannesburg. This caused great loss of life, numerous wounded and mutilated men and enormous loss of property.
- 34) Mrs Devenish writes here Magato but she should mention the Bavenda Chief Mpofo, mentioned by her on the following pages as a rebellious, provoking Chief. Magato died in 1895 and was succeeded by Mpefu. Against him and the Bavenda the last native war was fought in 1898 by Transvaler burghers, led by General P.J. Joubert, and by auxiliary black troops.
- 35) The name of A.L. Devenish is kept in Devenish Street on Lucasrand in Pretoria and in Pietersburg between the parallel streets Rissik and Jorissen.



KMDT. SALMON PRINSLOO

Commandant Salomon Theodoor Prinsloo - Mrs.E.Devenish complains bitterly of his behaviour vis-a-vis her husband and his family during the Anglo-Boer War 1880-1881.  
 Source of S.T.Prinsloo's portrait is: H.M.Rex en andere, "Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Bronkhorstspuit 1869-1969", N.H.W. Pers, Krugersdorp 1969



**HULDIGING VAN ONS AFGETREDE VOORSITTER  
DR N.A. COETZEE**

Op die jongste jaarvergadering van lede van ons Vereniging op 25 Maart 1995 het Dr. N.A. Coetzee as voorsitter afgetree en is hy opgevolg deur mnr. "Lappe" Laubscher. Op 11 Augustus 1995 het omstreeks 40 lede van ons Vereniging, familielede en vriende vir 'n sjampanje-ontbyt saamgekom om Dr. Coetzee te huldig vir die groot werk wat hy vir ons Vereniging verrig het. Die ondervoorsitter, mnr. W.J. Punt, het 'n toespraak gelewer en 'n erediploma aan Dr. Coetzee oorhandig. Die nuwe voorsitter was ook aanwesig.

Dr. Nico Coetzee is gebore, te Platrand by Standerton op 11 September 1911. Sy vader was daar onderwyser. Hy het gestudeer aan die universiteite van Kaapstad, Pretoria en Suid-Afrika. Sy studievakke was handelwetenskappe, met name ekonomie, ekonomiese geskiedenis, boekhou en handelsrekenen, en opvoedkunde, met name die Hoër Onderwysdiploma.

Hy is 1937 getroud met Anna du Plessis. Hulle het twee dogters gekry.

Een van sy eerste poste was in die Hoërskool te Rustenburg in 1935-45. Een van sy kollegas was daar Jan Ploeger, ywerige navorser en historikus en lewenslange vriend van hom.

Dr. Coetzee het uitgeblink as onderwyser, onderwysorganisasie, navorser, genealoog, publisist en kultuurman. Hy het in die Stadsaal te Pretoria op 10 Junie 1992 die onderskeiding "Uitblinker in voortreflikheid", bestem vir Pretorianers met groot verdienste, ontvang. By dié geleentheid is die hierna volgende "commendatio" voorgelees:

**Toekenning van "Uitblinker in voortreflikheid" aan Pretorianers wat besonder presteer het.**

**Dr. N.A. Coetzee - Gemeenskapsdiens**

Studeer in die onderwys aan die Universiteit van Kaapstad en verder aan die UP en Unisa.

Begin sy loopbaan as onderwyser en vorder mettertyd tot Registrateur, Pretoriase Kollege vir Gevorderde Tegnieese Onderwys - later Pretoria Technikon.

Was vir twee lang periodes - bykans drie dekades - Voorsitter van die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria, o.m. ook Raadslid van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum en skrywer van tientalle kultuurhistoriese boeke en artikels in verskillende boeke en tydskrifte.

Verskaf op versoek van die RGN die biografieë van 18 persone vir die S.A. Biografiese Woordeboek. Lewer ook bydraes vir die Ensiklopedie van Suider-Afrika en tydskrifte soos Familia, Historia, Africana Nuus. Redakteur van verskeie tydskrifte, o.m. van Pretoriana en 'n boek oor Boeresport - 'n lys van 97 speletjies, volledig beskryf in 400 bladsye.

Verskeie genealogiese boeke is deur Dr. Coetzee gepubliseer, o.a. die Coetzeestamouers en nageslagte (1679 - 1979) asook dié van die Du Plessis- en Heystek-families.

Letterkundige kinderverhale uit sy pen oor meer as vier dekades het gesorg vir opbouende kinder- en jeugliteratuur.

As lid van talle vakverenigings, o.a. die Suid-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir die Bevordering van die Wetenskap, Genealogiese Vereniging van Suider-Afrika, National Geographic Society (VSA), die Skrywerskring van S.A. ens., dien Dr Coetzee steeds die gemeenskap.

-o-

As toepaslike uitbreiding van Dr. Coetzee se lys van besondere verdienstes volg die teks van Mnr. W.J. Punt se toespraak op 11 Augustus 1995.

HULDIGING VIR DR N.A. COETZEE:  
11 AUGUSTUS 1995

Aftrede as voorsitter van: Genootskap Oud-Pretoria/Old Pretoria Society

Dr Nico Coetzee is 'n huishoudelike naam binne die kringe van die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria, ek hoef hom nie aan u voor te stel nie, maar wil tog iets oor hom en sy loopbane met u deel. There can't be many members of the Old Pretoria Society who can remember a time when he was not a member.

The Old Pretoria Society was established in 1948 as the first local history society in S.A. Dr Coetzee joined the society as a member in about 1959, 36 years ago! He soon became a member of the Committee where he has served as secretary, as editor of Pretoriana, as vice-chairman and twice as chairman, first from about 1960 - 1964 and again from 1979 to 1995.

Nico Coetzee is 'n onderwysman van beroep. Hy was verbonde aan die Rustenburgse Hoërskool vanaf 1935 tot 1945, toe wyle Frank (Pa) le Roux hom werf om by Afrikaans Hoër Seunskool aan te sluit waar hy vanaf 1945 tot 1959 diens doen. Ek was self vanaf 1947 - 1951 op AHS, maar het nie by Dr. Coetzee klas gehad nie, hoewel ek wel 'n keer in mev Coetzee se klas daar gesit het.

Tydens Nico Coetzee se werktyd in Rustenburg, was hy die stigter van aandklasse vir handelstudente daar. Dit lei tot wat vandag die Rustenburgse Hoër Handelsskool is.

Na sy AHS-loopbaan sluit hy aan by die Pretoriase Tegnieese Kollege (die Technikon vandag) waar hy dosent word in onderwysopleiding vir tegniese, handels-, huishoudkunde- en kunsrigtings en daarna tot sy aftrede 10 jaar as registrateur.

His extra-curricular teaching career included a stint as secretary of the High School Teachers' Association from 1945 - 1977. During that time he was

also the editor of *Onderwysblad vir Middelbare Onderwys*.

He served as vice-chairman and chairman of the NZASM-Gedenkhuis in Rissik Street. I took over from him as chairman of that local history society in 1982.

Nico Coetzee was actively involved in starting the Old Pretoria Society's commemorative plaques programme. On the 16th December 1966 he unveiled the plaque at the Raadsaal while the late Herman le Roux unveiled the plaque at the Palace of Justice.

Ons ken almal die herboude Kaya Rosa by die Universiteit van Pretoria. Die gedenkplaat is aangebring deur die Genootskap op inisiatief van Dr. Coetzee toe die huis nog in Skinnerstraat gestaan het. Die plaat is daar deur hom onthul op 21 Oktober 1968.

Dan moet ek wys op nog een van Dr. Coetzee se vele talente, dit is as genealoog. Uit sy navorsing en pen het verskyn drie baie verdienstelike boeke wat handel oor die Coetzee-, Du Plessis- en Heystek-families.

Ten slotte: Ons sien uit na die verskyning van Dr. N.A. Coetzee se volgende boek wat handel oor die geskiedenis van Rustenburg 1840 - 1940.



Dr.N.A.Coetzee en Mevrou Anna Coetzee-du Plessis met geskenke by die afskeid en huldiging van Dr.Coetzee as voorsitter van die genootskap Oud-Pretoria op 11 Augustus 1995

## AOSTA, ANOTHER PRETORIA

by C. de Jong

In September 1993 I visited the Valley of Aosta, la Vallée d'Aoste, in the northwestern corner of Italy. There I found another Pretoria in the city of Aosta. It was founded in 25 or 23 BC by command of Octavianus, who had adopted the title of Augustus. He was the first Roman emperor. The new town was named after him Augusta Praetoria Salassorum, that means the august place of the senior magistrate of the Salassians. The long name was abbreviated to Augusta, in the Middle Ages transformed to Aosta. The Praetor under the Roman republic was senior magistrate and deputy consul, so the highest official but one. European academics of the 16th to 18th centuries liked to latinize their family names. A Dutch-Reformed pastor at Ouddorp in the province of Holland adopted the stately Latin name Pretorius. His son Johannes arrived in 1666 in the Cape Colony and became the ancestor of the Pretorius family in South Africa. Our city has been named after one of its most illustrious members.<sup>1</sup>

The person in the gown on the coat of arms of the city of Pretoria represents a Roman praetor and refers to the origin of the founder's name. He holds a key in his left hand; this is the key which gives access to the city of Pretoria.

Salassorum refers to the local Celtic tribe the Salassians. The Celts hailed from Asia Minor where the Biblical town of Galata reminds us of them. The Celts were a people of warriors - some tell us that Celt means "warrior". Between the 10th and 5th centuries BC they spread over the Balkan peninsula, Central and Western Europe. They pillaged the Greek oracle temple of Delphi and also Rome before this city rose to greatness. They occupied the Po Valley, which the Romans called Gallia Cisalpina, i.e. Gaul (France) on this side of the Alps. Gallia (Gaul), Galicia and Wales (French: Pays de Galles) bear the name of the Celts.

The Celtic tribe of the Salassians<sup>2</sup> settled in the attractive Alpine Valley of Aosta. It is largely broad, flat and fertile. The climate is dry and sunny and the rainfall of 600 mm per year suffices for grains and grapes to ripen. It is also of old a valley of transit: from France the minor Saint Bernhard Pass and from Switzerland the Great Saint Bernhard Pass lead to Aosta. Both passes adjoin the giant Mont Blanc. Via the Minor Saint Bernhard Pass the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte and according to some also of Hannibal invaded Italy. Now two tunnels of respectively 11 and 6 km give access to the Valley.

Scientists during the Renaissance explained the name of the Salassians by deriving it from Salacia,

the spouse of the seagod Neptune. Later scientists derived the name from Celtic or Germanic "saal", i.e. hall, also improbable. We do not know the origin of the Celtic name. It lives on in the village of Salusola in the Valley.

The Salassians controlled the traffic through their valley and levied tolls from passing merchants and from convoys. As a result they clashed with the government in Rome who wished free passage for trade and military convoys. The Salassians defeated a Roman army, commanded by Appius Claudius, in 143 BC, but this general assembled another army and he defeated and subjected them some years later. They surrendered, but part of them waged a persistent guerrilla and sometimes pillaged merchants and convoys. When the civil wars in Rome were over, the new man in power, Octavianus, who called himself the Emperor Augustus, sent Terentius Varron with an army to end the turbulence of the Salassians. When Varron could not terminate their guerrilla warfare, he resorted to treachery, as the Romans had done previously against the rebellious leader of the Iberians, Sertorius, and the rebellious leader of the Lusitanians (the Portuguese), Vitriacus. Varron lulled the Salassian leaders with a pretended peace treaty and thereafter arrested them. Some of them were burnt alive, as the Celts used to do with their human sacrifices, i.e. Roman prisoners, some were sold as slaves. This was the end of the Salassian resistance.

Varron had laid out his camp in a strategic spot. In 25 or 23 BC the Emperor ordered the founding of a town in this place, which was called Augusta Praetoria Salassorum. The original Roman army camp was a quadrangle which is still visible within the townwall. This is partly intact and was during the Middle Ages fortified with towers such as Tour des Seigneurs de Quart, Tour de Fromage and Tour de Branafan.

#### Geography and political status

The Valley of Aosta is surrounded by mountains. It stretches from Mont Blanc in the West to Monte Rosa near the border of Piedmont in the east and from the Graies Alps on the border of Switzerland in the north to the mountains of the Gran Paradiso on the border of Piedmont in the south. The valley is not isolated, for several passes give access to neighbouring provinces and countries.

The town of Aosta lies 640 metres above sea-level. The centre of the Valley, where Aosta lies, has a rainfall of on the average 500 mm annually, which is moderate, and increases to 2000 mm at high altitudes. The climate of the centre is rather dry and sunny, so that the vine matures well and the region produces good wines. The pleasant climate and

the magnificent surrounding mountains make the Valley very attractive to tourists.

In 1945, just after World War II, the Valley obtained a special charter which granted administrative autonomy, just as Southern Tyrol and Sicily obtained. In the Valley the French and Italian languages have the same status, as French has always been in general use. But there are complaints that French is losing ground because of the influx of Italians from the South and of limited school education in French. The local dialect is a mixture of Italian and French.

#### The triumphal arch of Augustus

Together with the walling-in of the town the Emperor ordered the construction of a Triumphal Arch to commemorate the Roman victory over the Salassians. It is the landmark of Aosta. From the east the road leads in a straight line from the ancient Ponte Romano - now a dry bridge because the river Buthier has changed its course - to the Triumphal Arch, from there over the Rue d'Anselme to the Porta Pretoria and along the Rue Pretoria<sup>3</sup> to the Place de Chanoux in the city centre. The Arch is 11,5 metre high, lost its statues and ornaments during the barbarian invasions but is otherwise intact and a fine monument. It was restored in 1912.

#### The Porta Pretoria

This is the eastern gate in the town wall; the western gate, the Porta Decumana has been demolished. The Porta Pretoria is intact. It consists of two parallel curtains (cortinas), one on the east and one on the west side, each with a wide arch in the middle for the passing of carts and wagons, and with one wide arch in the middle for the passing of carts and wagons, and with two narrower arches for pedestrians. Adjoining the western curtain north of the Porta stands a tall square tower, constructed during the 12th century and after the owners in the Middle Ages named "la Torre dei Signori di Quart" (a Tour des Seigneurs de Quart, the Tower of the lords of Quart). In medieval Italy towerbuilding was a favourite activity of aristocrats to obtain a stronghold in time of trouble and social prestige.

#### Tour de Fromage

From the Porta Pretoria and the adjacent Torre dei signori di Quart the Roman townwall stretches northward past the Torre di Formaggio (Tour de Fromage) and the Roman theatre. This square and solid tower adjoins the townwall and was constructed during an uncertain century of the Middle Ages. It belonged for a long time to the Casei family. This surname also means cheese. Therefore the tower was called collo-

quially "la Torre di 'Formaggio", i.e. cheesetower, though it had nothing to do with cheese. It has recently been restored and serves now as a museum of contemporary pictorial art.

#### The Roman Theatre

After the Triumphal Arch and the Porta Pretoria the Roman Theatre is the most impressive Roman building in Aosta. It consists of a rectangular façade with four tiers of arches, 22 metres high, and a semi-circular amphitheatre which is now entirely excavated. The façade was in 1993 enveloped in scaffolds for restoration, a sad, but reassuring sight. The Romans liked their "panem et circenses" (bread and games) as much as modern man his rugby, soccer and cricket and gave a high priority to the construction of an open-air amphitheatre in their cities. The citizens of the fresh town of Aosta soon had a theatre constructed for their games and plays.

#### The Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall) <sup>4</sup>

From the Porta Pretoria the Rue Pretoria or Via Pretoria leads straightly to the Place de Chanoux in the centre of the town. There we arrive at the stately Hotel de Ville or City Hall, built in neoclassical style and completed in 1839. It arose on the site of a Franciscan monastery which had been badly damaged by French soldiers during the French Revolution 1789-1799, and therefore was demolished. The main entrance is flanked on the right hand by a statue of the seagod Neptune with trident, on the left hand by a statue of his spouse, the goddess Salacia. Their presence here far from the sea should be explained by the derivation by Renaissance scholars of the name Salassians of the local Celtic tribe from the name Salacia. Needless to say there is no relation between the names Salassians and Salacia.

In front of the Town Hall there is a monument dedicated to the soldiers of Val d'Aosta, who served Italy and lost their lives in two World Wars. The monument was designed by Pietro Canonica.

#### The diptych of the Emperor Honorius <sup>5</sup>

There are several Medieval and early-modern churches in Aosta, each with treasures of art. The main church is "la Catedrale dell' Assunta", the Cathedral of the Ascension. It has one precious object which should be mentioned here. This is a diptych of silver with two figures of the Emperor Honorius (395-423). His father Theodosius was the last great Roman emperor. He divided the empire in the East realm and the West realm and left them to his sons Arcadius and Honorius respectively. Honorius was a man without talents and character. During his unfortunate reign

the barbarians burst through the frontiers and flooded his empire while he most of his years resided at Ravenna instead of Rome, because Ravenna was surrounded by protecting marshes. But even a strong monarch would have been powerless to stop the barbarians. His able general and domineering minister, the Vandal Stilicho, vanquished the invading Visigoths under king Alaric at Verona in 403. It was a Phyrriic victory, but Honorius used it for a triumphal entry into Rome in 406. The diptych bears the date of 406 and it is presumed that Honorius ordered it be made in commemoration of his triumphal entry. It is unknown why and when it was brought from Rome or Ravenna to Aosta.

Honorius had Stilicho, his son and wife murdered in 408. Alaric and the Visigoths returned and they pillaged Rome mercilessly in 410 and captured the Emperor's sister Galla Placidia, to avenge Stilicho. Honorius was impotent, had no offspring and died young at Ravenna.

#### Saint Anselm<sup>6</sup>

Aosta has been the cradle of at least one man of international reputation, also well known in England. He is Saint Anselm, 1033-1109. He joined the Benedictine Order and became a monk in the abbey of Bec in Normandy in 1060, where he was made abbot in 1078. Normandy was part of the Kingdom of England. So it is explicable that king William II the Red (1087-1100), eldest son of William the Conqueror, appointed Anselm archbishop of Canterbury in 1093. If the king had thought Anselm to be a meek subject, he was mistaken. As early as 1094 they had their first heavy clash, then and later regarding financial contributions by the Church to the Throne. Anselm went into voluntary exile abroad. William's successor, Henry I, his brother, concluded a compromise with Anselm in 1105 and Anselm returned as archbishop to England in 1107. He died in 1109 and was declared a saint in 1404.

He was one of the greatest theologians of his time and one of the founders of Medieval scholasticism. In Aosta the Casa di Sant' Anselmo on the Via Sant' Anselmo which leads from the Arch of Augustus to the Porta Pretoria, retains the memory of this illustrious son of the town. A building on the Via C. Ollietti in Aosta lodges the Academia di Sant' Anselmo - this is the archaeological service of the valley, founded in 1855 -, the archives and the scientific library of the valley.

#### Protestantism in the Vallée d'Aoste

The Vallée d'Aoste and the adjacent province of Piedmont are originally the living place of the Waldenses, in French the Vaudois. They were the



adherents of the merchant Pierre Waldo, in Latin called Petrus Waldus, of Lyons in France. Around 1170 he gave away his possessions, became a preacher and founded one of the sects in Southern France. The Waldenses spread to Northern Italy during the late Middle Ages. They and other sects were relentlessly persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church and secular authorities, inter alia the Duke of Savoy who was also ruler of Aosta and Piedmont.

In the 16th century the Waldenses joined the Calvinists in France and Switzerland and adopted the dogmas and formularies of the Reformation.<sup>7</sup> When persecution by the Dukes of Savoy flared up in the 17th century, the Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell, intervened and brought some relief to the Protestants in the Duchy. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France in 1685 caused the flight of many Protestants (Huguenots) from that country. Protestants in the Duchy of Savoy, also in Aosta and Piedmont, joined this exodus.<sup>8</sup> Most Italian Protestants fled to Geneva and other places in Switzerland and went on to Germany, the Netherlands and Great Britain. From these countries several migrated to European colonies overseas, inter alia the Cape Colony. Professor Marcel Boucher traced the places from where Huguenot immigrants in the Cape Colony hailed and found that several came from Piedmont, but he did not find people from Aosta.\*<sup>1</sup> This does not exclude Protestants from the Valley of Aosta.<sup>9</sup> During the 18th century religious tolerance also spread to France and Italy, though sometimes persecution of Protestants and other non-Catholics flared up. Influenced by the French Revolution in 1789-1799 governments introduced complete religious tolerance. Thereafter the Huguenots in France and the Waldenses in Italy could live in peace and confess their religion publicly. There are several Protestant congregations in Piedmont and the Valley. The parson in the town of Aosta lives close to the "Croix de la Ville" which was once a symbol that Calvin and his followers had been driven out of the Valley.

#### Calvin in Aosta?

There is a story that John Calvin, the famous or notorious Reformer, visited Aosta in 1536. Several biographers of Calvin considered this visit as a historical fact, others deny it emphatically. This visit would have taken place in the uncertain episode of Calvin's life from 1534 to 1541 when he led a vagrant existence. He had several pseudonyms, i.a.

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\*) M. Boucher, "French speakers in the Cape in the first hundred years of Dutch East India Company rule, the European background", University of South Africa, Pretoria 1981.

Charles d'Espeville, in those years. One story tells that he visited under an adopted name the Duchess Renée de Ferrara in Northern Italy in 1536. She sympathized with the Reformation and received several Protestants, among them Calvin, so it is maintained. Her husband, the Duke, remained Roman-Catholic, but he left his spouse free in her religion. The Pope complained to the Emperor Charles V, who admonished his sister Renée to send away the Protestant guests. Renée had to obey and Calvin had to leave her court after a few weeks. Returning to Switzerland he travelled through the Valley of Aosta. The story tells that he preached there but had to leave in a hurry because of religious persecution in the Valley.

A few years later, in 1541, a monument was erected at Aosta to commemorate the flight of Calvin and implicitly the expulsion of the Protestants, then called "luterani" (Lutherans) from the Valley by the united clerical and secular authorities. The monument is called "la Croix de Ville" or "la Croce di Città". It was more or less completely renovated in 1741 and restored in 1841, again 100 years later. The Latin inscription is still readable and runs:

Hanc Calvini fuga  
erexit  
Anno MDXLI  
religionis constantiae  
reparavit  
Anno MDCCXLI  
civium pietas  
renovavit et adornavit  
Anno MDCCCXLI

That means freely translated:

This (monument) was erected  
because of Calvin's flight in the year 1541.  
The steadfastness of the religion  
has repaired it in the year 1741.  
The piety of the citizens  
has renovated and adorned it in the year 1841.

Calvin has never referred to his supposed visit to Aosta.<sup>10</sup>

B.J. van der Walt (Bennie van der Walt), Van Noyon na Genève, Reisindrukke van 'n Calvynpelgrim, uitgegee deur Calvyn-Jubileumboekefonds, Noordbrug Potchefstroom 1980, states on p.29-30 - 'In dieselfde jaar 1536 vertoef hy (Calvyn) 'n tyd lank onder die skuilnaam Charles d'Espeville in Ferrara in die noordoostelike hoek van Italië, nie ver van die groot Gardameer nie. Hier geniet hy die beskerming van die hervormingsgesinde hertogin Renée de France. Onder andere het Clément Marot, die bekende Franse digter, wat later die Psalms in Frans sou berym, ook hier vertoef. Dit het egter hier in die land waar die pous regeer, gou vir Calvyn te warm geword en hy vlug oor Aosta in die heel noordwestelike hoek van Italië terug noorde toe. In die omgewing sou hy ook vir die evangeliege-

sindes gepreek het. Daar bestaan ook die verhaal dat hy ternouernood aan gevangeneeming deur die Roomse inkwisisie ontsnap het. 'n Monument in Aosta herinner nog steeds aan sy vlug deur hierdie plek. Die datum 14 Mei 1541 op die monument is egter foutief, want toe was Calvyn in Straatsburg. Die korrekte tyd van sy verblyf hier in die Noorde van Italië was waarskynlik Mei of April 1536.

### The Duke of Aosta

Aosta is remembered in South Africa because the Duke of Aosta commanded the Italian army in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in World War II, when this Italian territory was conquered by South African and British-Indian troops. The origin of the title of Duke of Aosta is the following. When Savoy was annexed by France, the dukes of Savoy called themselves Duke of Sardinia and later King of Sardinia. King Charles Albert of Sardinia granted the title of duke of Aosta to his grandson, Amadeo (1845-1890). He was the second son of Victor Emmanuel II (1820-1878), who became the first king of United Italy in 1861. Amadeo was King of Spain in 1870-1873.

His eldest son, Emmanuel Philibert (1869-1931) was the second Duke of Aosta and a general in the Italian army during World War II in Udine. His elder son, Amadeo Umberto (1898-1942), was the third Duke of Aosta and cousin of King Victor Emmanuel III. When fascist Italy entered World War II in 1940, he was appointed commander-in-chief of the Italian army in Abyssinia. A South African-British-Indian army invaded Abyssinia and Amadeo and his army evacuated the capital Addis Abeba in April 1941. He capitulated with 18 000 soldiers on 16 May 1941. He was sent as a prisoner of war to Kenya, where he died at Nairobi in 1941. His younger brother, Ainone, born in 1900, inherited the title of Duke of Aosta. There is no special tie between the Dukes and the Valley of Aosta.<sup>11</sup>

The surrender of the Duke of Aosta and his army was the first victory of the Allied forces in World War II which brought a series of defeats to the Allies. The South African army shared in this victory and thousands of soldiers of the Italian army came as prisoners of war to South Africa.<sup>12</sup>

### Sources

Italo Cossard, "Histoire et géographie de la Vallée d'Aoste", 12th edition, Musumeci Editeur, Aosta, 1988, 129 pp.

A. Zanotto, "Histoire de la Vallée d'Aoste". Aoste 1968, Chapitre VI, "L'époque de la Réformation".

Pasteur Castellani, "Il Proetestantismo in Valle d'Aosta", uitgegee deur Chiesa Evangelica Valdose, 1988, 12 pp. (stencil)

E.J. van der Walt, "Van Noyon na Genève", Reisindrukke van 'n Calvynpelgrim, uitgegee deur Calvyn Jubileum-boekefonds, Noordbrug, Potchefstroom, 1980, o.m. p.29-30.

W.F. Dankbaar, "Calvijn, zijn weg en werk", Callenbach, Nijkerk 1957, p.39-41.

Williston Walker, "John Calvin", Schocken Books, New York 1969, p.156-157.

Aosta - Aoste, Guida ai monumenti", Aosta, no year, (1993), with maps and illustrations.

### Encyclopaedias

Aosta, article in "Enciclopedia Italiana", volume 3, Rome 1929, p.262.

Aosta, article in "Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada", tomo (volume) 5, Madrid and Barcelona, no year, p.818.

Aosta, Duke of, article in "New Universal Encyclopaedia", volume one, Caxton Publising Comp. London etc., no year, p.488-489.

Waldenses, article in "Encyclopaedia Britannica", volume 1963, London 1963, p.287-289.

There is another member of the ducal family of Aosta who is of some interest to South Africans. She is Helen of France, Duchess of Aosta and spouse of Emmanuel Filiberto (1869-1937), second duke of Aosta. Their eldest son was Amadeo Umberto (1889-1942), the hero of the battle of Amba Alagi, the last battle in Abyssinia in 1941, mentioned above. Helen of France visited many countries in 1907-1914, most of them in Africa. In 1909-1910 she was in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, Lourenço Marques and Beira; from there she travelled inland through Mozambique and South and North Rhodesia as far as the Victoria Falls, and proceeded to the Belgian Congo. She described her travels in her book "Viaggi in Africa" (Travels in Africa, published by Treves, Milano 1913.<sup>11</sup>)

### References

- 1) Some Latinists derive the name Augusta Praetoria from the "praetoriani" (pretorians), a special Roman army corps under the direct command of the emperor. They refer to the historians Dio Cassius and Strabo; one of these states that Augustus settled 8000 praetoriani in the new town of his name in 24 BC; see "Paulys Real-Encyclo-

- paedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft", Band 2, Stuttgart 1896. Column 2316. I owe this reference to Dr. M. Kleywegt of Unisa.
- 2) Italo Cossard, "Histoire et géographie de la Vallée d'Aoste", 2nd edition, Aosta 1988, p.9-14.
  - 3) There is also a Via Praetoria in the Roman town Eboracum, now York in England. It was a main street and led to a town gate, now called Stonegate.
  - 4) "Aosta, Guida i monumenti", published by Assessorato del Turismo, Aosta 1993, with a detailed map, photographs and concise descriptions.
  - 5) Photography and explanation in the Catalogue of the Musée du Trésor de la Cathédrale d'Aoste, received by me in 1993; the left part probably represents the emperor Honorius before his victory over the Visigoths in 405 or 406 AD, the right part him after this victory.
  - 6) In voce Saint Anselm in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, volume 2, London 1963.
  - 7) Marcel Boucher, "French speakers in the Cape in the first hundred years of the Dutch East Indian Company rule: The European background" published by the University of south Africa, Pretoria 1981.
  - 8) Pasteur Castellani, "Il Protestantismo del Val d'Aosta", stencilled brochure issued by Chiesa Evangelica Valdese, Aosta 1988, 12 pp.
  - 9) The Malan family in South Africa is said to hail from the Valley of Aosta in the 7th or 18th century. Dr. Gabriele Sani at Bologna states in his book "History of the Italians in South Africa, 1489-1989", published by Zonderwater Block South Africa, Johannesburg 1992, in a reference on p.20: "During a conversation with the Italian minister Frascati, the Prime Minister of the South African Union, D.F. Malan, talked of having originated from Val d'Aosta - Cfr telepresso no. 1121/252 dated 15 May 1951 of the Legazione Italiana a Città del Capo. Other sources mention the Malan family as originating from Val Chisone.

Dr. Sani continues in his reference 20: "It is curious to observe that today, the Valdesi, together with almost all the other Protestant churches around the world, harshly oppose the policies of racial segregation of the South African Government whose leaders often have surnames similar to theirs. After centuries, due to a strange historic irony, the descendants of those who contributed in giving birth to the white Christian South Africa, today wants its transformation into an atheist and probably

Marxist-Leninist State Republic." From this quotation it is clear that history does not always follow the course of human expectations. (C. de Jong)

- 10) Regarding John Calvin in Aosta the following authors have varying opinions:

F.J. van der Walt, "Van Noyon na Genève, Reisindrukke van 'n Calvyn-pelgrim", uitgegee deur Calvynjubileumboekefonds, Noordbrug, Potchefstroom, 1980, p.29-30.

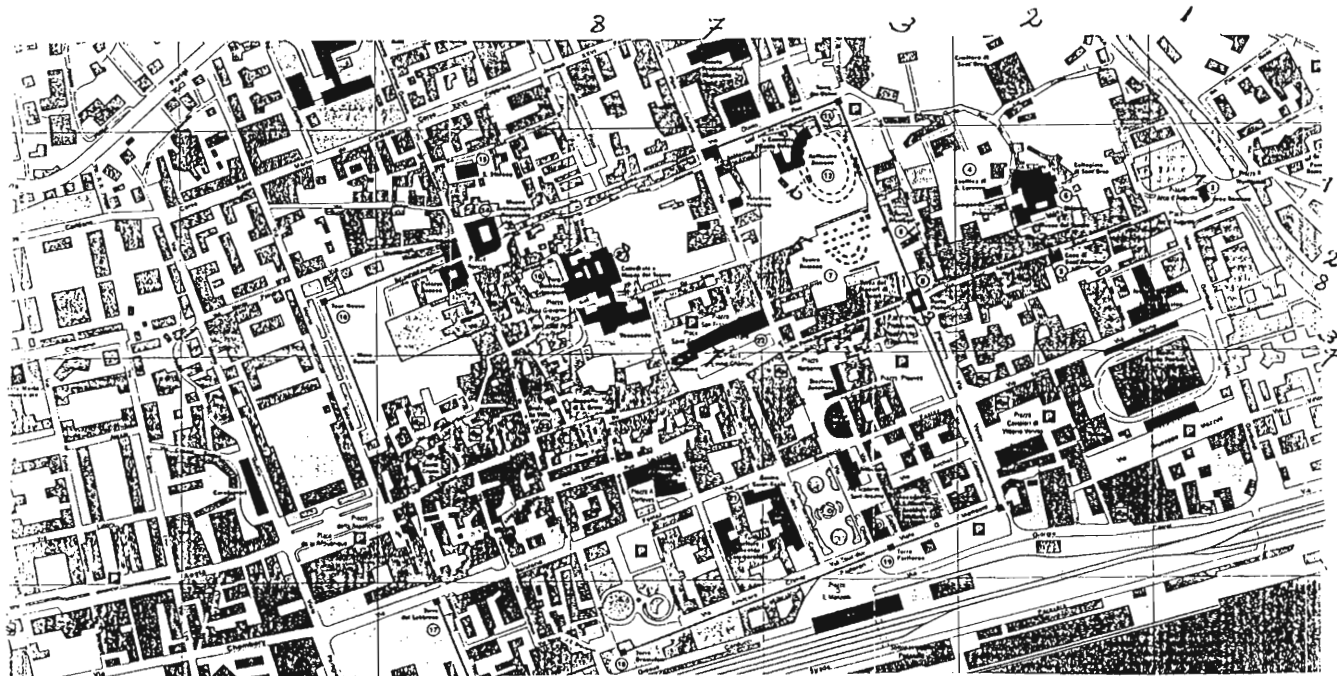
W.F. Dankbaar, "Calvijn, zijn weg en werk", Callenbach, Nijkwek, 1958, p.39-41.

Williston Walker, "John Calvin", Schocken Books, New York, 1969, p.156-157.

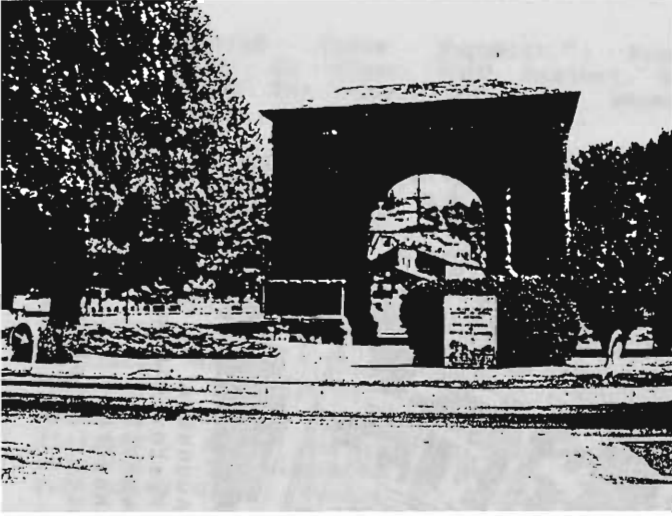
- 11) Articles on the Duke of Aosta in "Enciclopedia Italiana", Rome (no year), volume 2, and "New Universal Encyclopaedia", volume one, Caxton Publishing Group, London etc., no year, p.488-489.

- 12) Sani, "History of the Italians in South Africa", loc. cit., reference 9, p.184.

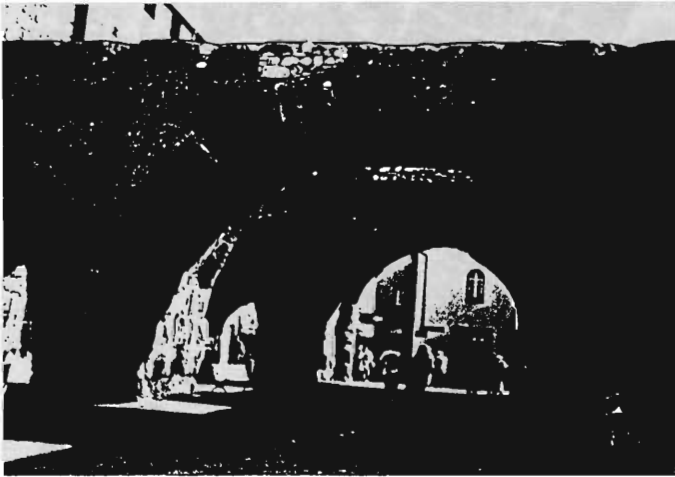
Dr. G. Sani, "History of the Italians in South Africa", loc. cit., p.21, states: "It is curious to note that 'biltong' (the typical dried meat of the Boers) probably originated from the nodsetta (pronounced nocetta) speciality of the Val d'Aosta and of the northwestern valleys of Piedmont. This generally consists of ibex and chamois thighs salted and dried in the crisp mountain air and then served out into strips like its possible South African derivative." Ibex is a species of wild goat inhabiting the Alps and Apennines. Chamois, Dutch gems, is a capri-form antelope, inhabiting the loftiest parts of the Alps, Pyrenees, Taurus, etc.



SIGHTS OF THE CENTRE OF AOSTA: (1) Triumphal arch of Augustus -  
(2) House of Anselm on the Rue d'Anselme - (3) Porta Pretoriana and  
Tour de Quart - (4) Tour de "fromage" in the Roman townwall -  
(5) Roman Theatre with front gable - (6) Roman Amphitheatre -  
(7) Town Hall on the Place Charroux - (8) Cathedral with diptych  
of Honorius

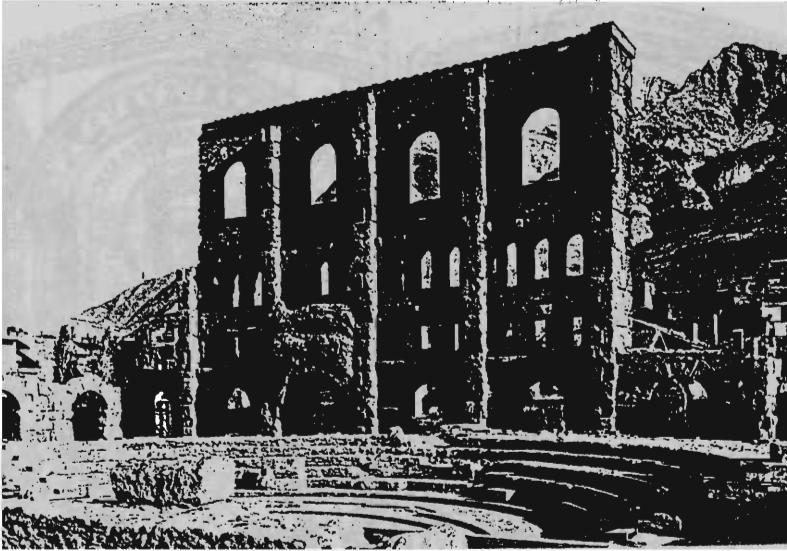


Triumphal arch at Aosta, erected on command of the Emperor Augustus about 24 B.C.  
Photo C.de Jong 1993

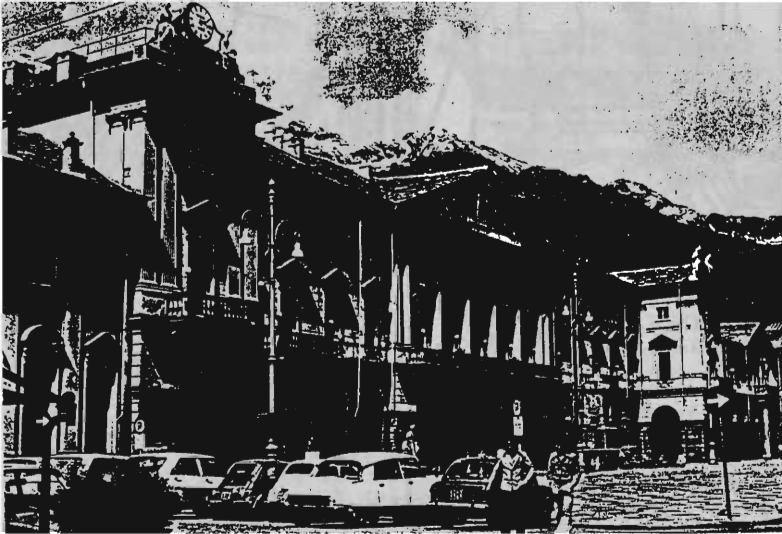


Porta Pretoria, leading to the Via Pretoria in Aosta: the middle arch for vehicles to pass the two parallel curtains of the gate; the two arches left and right are only for pedestrians.  
Photo C.de Jong, 1993

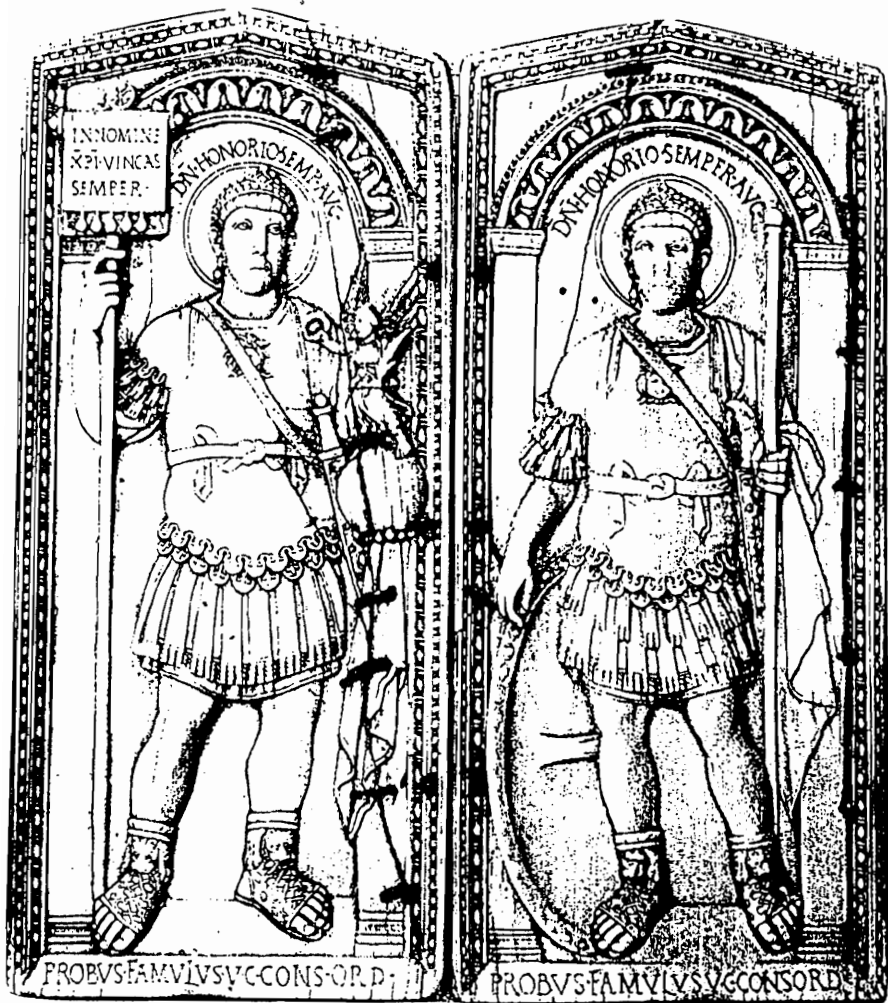




The front gable of the Roman Theatre at Aosta with 4 tiers of arches; in front of the gable part of the amphitheatre



The front of the neoclassic Town Hall of Aosta, with the Alps on the Swiss border in the background; to the left of the central entrance is the white statue of the goddess Salacia, spouse of Neptune.



Diptych, i.e. an altar piece with two hinged tablets, of 28 x 30 cm, of unmentioned material, in the Cathedral of Aosta. It bears the date 406. The two figures are the Roman emperor Honorius, born 384, died 423. He is shown before and after his victory over Alaric, king of the Visigoths, at Pollentia in 403 or Fiesole in 406. The diptych was probably a present by Honorius to thank for this victory. Thanks to Archives Historiques Régionales at Aosta



Monument to commemorate the flight of John Calvin from Aosta in 1536 and the expulsion of the Protestants, erected in 1541 and renovated in 1741 and 1841. Right of this caption is the socle with inscription in Latin.



THE QUEST FOR A ROUTE TO THE SEA AND THE  
OPENING OF THE DELAGOA BAY RAILWAY LINE  
NOW 100 YEARS AGO

by C. de Jong

Prelude

There are many national states in the world, but remarkably few without access to the sea and a seaport of their own. Most countries have succeeded in gaining this access. Among the states without a road to the sea and without ports in the 19th century were the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. They had been founded by the Voortrekkers who had left the Cape Colony in 1836 and following years because they were dissatisfied with the British Government and wished to found independent states. They occupied Natal in 1840 and settled there at a good harbour, Port Natal, now Durban. But Great Britain annexed this Boer republic in 1845 and the Voortrekkers moved again to the interior.

Great Britain recognized the independence of Transvaal in 1852 and after annexation and war again in 1881. She annexed the republic of Transorange in 1848 and restored its independence in 1854. But she impeded the Boer republic in opening a port of their own and kept them away from the sea-coast in order to keep them strategically and economically dependent on Great Britain. The republics strove as perseveringly for an outlet to the sea, because the British coastal colonies Natal and the Cape Colony levied import duties on goods destined for the republics and paid nothing of the duties to the republics, and because the British government interfered with imports of arms and ammunition by the republics.

Transvaal took the lead in the quest for a route to the sea. She attempted to annex Saint Lucia Bay, but Great Britain thwarted these attempts in 1854 and again in 1887. Thereafter the Transvalers directed their attention to the Portuguese harbours at Lourenço Marques and Inhambane. These ports are much closer to Transvaal, but before the construction of railways they could not be reached in summer because of the presence of two small insects in the Lowveld. They were the malaria mosquito which inflicted dangerous fever to whites, and the tsetse fly which killed the draft oxen, indispensable for transport, and other cattle. These insects were inactive during the winter months, but this time was too brief for the slow ox wagon transport to and from the harbours.<sup>1)</sup>

It is moving to read how the Transvalers defied the malaria and the tsetse fly and how Dutch sympathizers with the Voortrekkers defied malaria in ports and financial losses to meet in those ports and to open trade with each other. The Amsterdam

merchant Georgius Ohrig (1806-52) equipped in 1842 and '43 the brig 'Brazilië' to South Africa and loaded her with a thousand and one articles which would presumably be welcome to the Voortrekkers, paper, ink and bibles included. The 'Brazilië' visited Port Natal in 1842 and '43 with J.A. Smellekamp (1812-66) as supercargo. The first visit excited the Voortrekkers. At the second visit the British had just occupied Port Natal and they commanded the Dutch ship to depart immediately. It sailed to Delagoa Bay to trade there with the Transvalers, but both voyages were commercially unsuccessful,<sup>2)</sup> Ohrig lost f.35 000, went bankrupt, emigrated to South Africa, but did not proceed past Cape Town and died there in poverty. His name is preserved in the name of the village of Ohrigstad in Eastern Transvaal, which was founded by the Voortrekkers in 1845.<sup>3)</sup>

The active Mr. Smellekamp twice persuaded other Dutch merchants to equip a ship with schoolmasters, a parson and merchant goods to Delagoa Bay. He visited the Bay as supercargo in the ships 'Animo' in 1848 and 'Vasco de Gama' in 1852/53. Also these voyages brought financial loss, because contact with the Transvalers was difficult and because they could offer little produce, apart from ivory and other hunting products, so that they could not pay for imports. Thereafter the Dutch stopped their trade with Transvaal. Smellekamp became a high official in Transvaal and, after his banishment from there, in the Free State. He became involved in internal disputes and ended as a law agent in the Free State.<sup>4)</sup>

#### The switch from the draft ox to the fire ox

Because of the difficulties of ox wagon transport and of fever in the Lowveld people in Transvaal and the Free State routed their imports and exports mainly via Durban and Port Elizabeth, but the Transvalers did not abandon their quest of a route to the sea in Lourenço Marques. An enterprising Scotchman, A. McCorkindale, proposed the State President M.W. Pretorius the construction of a dock on the south shore of Delagoa Bay and to make the Maputo River to that Bay navigable for barges. For road transport steam traction would be used. Nothing came from this plan and this contributed to Pretorius' dismissal by his parliament in 1871.

The discovery and exploitation of alluvial gold in Eastern Transvaal inspired the idea of laying a railway from Delagoa Bay to the fever-free Highveld. A certain G.P. Moodie obtained a government concession for such a line. When he achieved nothing, the successor of President M.W. Pretorius, the visionary Ds. T.F. Burgers, persuaded his parliament to have the railway constructed on state expense. He thought erroneously that development of his backward country would follow spontaneously the construction of the

railway and in 1875 he left for Europe without detailed plans and figures. The Portuguese government promised him the construction of the railway from Delagoa Bay to the Transvaal border. He did not obtain a loan in London and in Amsterdam he received only a third of the £300 000 which he wished. He rashly ordered railway material in Belgium. After lying some years in Lourenço Marques it was sold as scrap, for the construction was impeded by a native war. These mishaps led to Burgers' fall as president. In 1877 the British government annexed the virtually bankrupt Transvaal and Burgers resigned.

After the restoration of the republic in Transvaal in 1881 Burgers' successor President Paul Kruger returned to the plan to have a railway to Delagoa Bay. He tackled this great work more pragmatically than Burgers had done. The Portuguese officer J.J. Machado had surveyed the terrain for a railway from the Bay to the Transvaal border. Thereafter President Kruger invited him to survey the terrain for a line from the Transvaal border at Komatipoort to Pretoria, the Eastern line. Machado completed the survey in only eight months and very ably. After the completion of the railway in 1895 one of the stations was named Machadodorp as a token of appreciation.

During his visit to the Netherlands in 1883/84 Kruger granted a concession for the construction of the Eastern line to J. Groll and D. Maarschalk, experts in railway construction and exploitation in the Dutch East Indies. They died soon thereafter and the concession was taken over by R.W.J.C. van den Wall Bake, another Dutch railway expert. European capitalists lacked confidence in the development of the backward Transvaal, and Bake could not find sufficient capital, until the Great Gold Reef on the Witwatersrand was discovered in 1886. Then suddenly economic prospects in Transvaal brightened and capital for the Eastern line soon became available in the Netherlands and Germany. British capital was excluded and French capitalists followed the trails of the British. On 21 June 1887 the Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij (NZASM, i.e. Dutch - South African Railway Company) was founded at Amsterdam.

Owing to the discovery of the Great Gold Reef the quest of the Afrikaners in the republics for a road to the sea was suddenly followed by a race in railway construction from the five ports in Southern Africa to the Witwatersrand as the newest, most promising development area, and by ready transfer of received import duties by the Cape Colony and Natal to the two republics.

The Netherlands was a latecomer in the field of railways because they had many efficient water routes. The Dutch railways were laid in a flat country. The Dutch learned to construct excellent railways in the mountain regions of the East Indies and this

experience benefited them very much in South Africa. Several NZASM employees had built railways in Java and Sumatra. Most NZASM employees in high and low ranks were Dutch. They formed a society of their own in Transvaal. but the NZASM also employed many people of numerous other nations. Of the 3075 white employees in its service in 1899 1777 were of Dutch birth and 1298 others.

The construction of the Eastern line lasted from 1890 up to 1895 and was delayed by many difficulties. Therefore the Transvaal cartoonist William Schröder drew in 1892 the NZASM in a cartoon in the shape of a snail, hurried on by President Kruger. The criticism of the NZASM's slow speed was unfounded. It struggled with the following problems:

- (1) Diplomatic problems - The Portuguese government granted in 1884 an ill-considered concession for railway construction and exploitation from Delagoa Bay to the Transvaal border to the North American E. McMurdo. He collected capital in London and announced that he would fix his tariffs for the line independently of the NZASM, which would be at his mercy. Therefore the Transvaal government prohibited the NZASM to start the construction of the Eastern line. McMurdo hastily completed the line in Mozambique, but the Portuguese government was dissatisfied with his work and disappropriated the railway. It came to terms with the NZASM on railway tariffs. Then the Transvaal government allowed the NZASM to start work on the Eastern line; the delay in this work had been three years. Meanwhile the NZASM constructed the very useful Rand Tram Line in 1890 for transport of coal from coal pits on the Witwatersrand to gold mines.
- (2) Financial difficulties - In 1892 the NZASM needed additional capital, but there was an international depression in money and capital markets in Europe and borrowing money on long term at a reasonable rate of interest was virtually impossible. One of the reasons was that the important merchant bank house Baring Bros. in London had landed into a liquidity crisis in 1890, just as 1995.<sup>5)</sup> The prime minister of the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, came to the rescue. He persuaded the banker Rothschild in London to lend money at a reasonable interest to the Transvaal Government, which lent the money to the NZASM. In return the Cape Colony Government got permission of the Transvaal Government to construct a railway line across the Vaal River to the Witwatersrand, so that Cape Town would be linked to the Rand. Trains left Cape Town for the Rand from 1892 on, three years before the Rand was linked to Delagoa Bay.

- (3) Technical difficulties - These turned up in the wild mountain region of Eastern Transvaal with steep gradients and torrents. The engineers and subcontractors of the NZASM solved these problems very successfully, inter alia by boring a tunnel and constructing a cogwheel track between Waterval Onder and Waterval Boven, after the example of the railway in the Padang Highlands in Central Sumatra.
- (4) Health difficulties - In Mozambique and the Transvaal Lowveld in the summer months anopheles mosquitos spread malaria fever which affected many whites and caused illness and death. The popular saga tells that a dead white man has been buried under every sleeper of the Eastern line. This story is very much exaggerated, for the NZASM had a good health service with physicians and hospitals, and on the Highveld the health situation was much better, because fever was absent there. There was much illness owing to fever and several deaths, also due to accidents.
- (5) Political problems - There was a persistent propaganda against the NZASM waged by English speakers and by Afrikaner opponents to Kruger's government, supported by several periodicals. The NZASM was seen as an instrument and ally of the corrupt Transvaal government. Moreover, the NZASM had a concession, i.e. a legal monopoly, of railway transport in Transvaal and the Dutch had a privileged position under Kruger's government. As an answer to the press campaign in "The Star" and "Land en Volk" (edited by Eugène Marais) and others, the Government and NZASM subsidized "De Volksstem" (edited by F.V. Engelenburg) and "The Press" (edited by Leo Weinthal) to obtain their support.

The NZASM was criticized because of its pretended high tariffs and poor service. There were reasons for complaints. In the first years the NZASM used a great deal of light matériel (locomotives, goods vans and coaches) because it was short of capital, and the directors paid more attention to goods transport than to passenger transport. But after a few years it ordered heavier matériel, improved its services and lowered its tariffs.

- (6) Port difficulties - Since the visits of Voortrekkers and Dutchmen to Delagoa Bay the Portuguese authorities usually promised their full support, but this often was absent. The means of the Portuguese were very limited and as members of a poor, weak nation, which was threatened by foreign powers, they were often mistrustful to foreigners, more than before, in 1880-1914. Therefore the NZASM had many problems with clearance and transport of imports of heavy



material, until it received permission to install its own loading and unloading facilities in Lourenço Marques.

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At the end of 1894 the iron road to the sea, over which speedy fire oxen moved, as the natives expressed what they saw, was largely completed. President Kruger put in the last screw on 2 November 1894 during a special ceremony at Brugspruit.<sup>6)</sup> From January 1895 trains ran regularly on the Eastern line. The official opening was joyously celebrated in July 1895 in winter when the Lowveld was malaria free. At last a long fostered desire of many Transvalers was fulfilled, now they had an iron road to a non-British harbour, shorter than all other railways to the coast. The Government gave at the opening to all citizens of Transvaal a free return ticket between Pretoria and Lourenço Marques.<sup>7)</sup>

In the same memorable year 1895 the South Eastern line was opened. As Kruger had permitted the Cape Colony Government to complete a line from Cape ports to the Rand in 1892, he could not refuse Natal the completion of her railway from the Natal-Transvaal border to Johannesburg. The last rail was fixed at Heidelberg Station on 10 October 1895, President Kruger's birthday. Then a Natal and a NZASM locomotive were drawn up opposite each other and the point of junction was marked with a simple triumphal arch beflagged with the Vierkleur (the Transvaal flag) and the Union Jack. Sir John Robertson of the Natal Government was present; so was Dr. W.J. Leyds, the ZAR State Secretary (not President Kruger).<sup>8)</sup> With this railway Transvaal obtained a second line of communication with a large port, a fact of great importance.

#### Brief prosperity

The NZASM has left many constructions, not only railway stations, bridges, culverts and tunnels but also houses. They are solid structures and many are still used. Many of its station buildings are more stylish than stations built in the same years in the East Indies, the uncompleted stations of Johannesburg and Pretoria excepted. Its station buildings, bridges and several houses have been declared national monuments.

It attempted to be a model enterprise by paying good salaries and pensions and providing houses, health services, schools and recreation for its numerous personnel, of whom many did pioneer work in lonely, sometimes dangerous places.<sup>9)</sup> The NZASM aimed at keeping a high reputation of the Dutch. Its top managers were all experienced, expert and tactful men, for example R.W.J.C. van den Wall Bake, J.L. Cluysenaer, G.A.A. Middelberg and J.A. Kretschmar van Veen.<sup>10)</sup>

After the completion of the Rand Tram Line and the Eastern, South Eastern and Southern Western lines the NZASM constructed one line, the South Western line, from Krugersdorp to Klerksdorp, an abortive goldfield. The company made good profits and had a brief spell of prosperity. Then war with Great Britain broke out on 11 October 1899, which added the last chapter to its epic history. When the Transvaal Government mobilised in September 1899, it put the NZASM entirely into military service, as it had done during the Jameson raid in 1895/96. By virtue of the concession granted to the NZASM in 1887. The NZASM personnel rendered outstanding services to the republican forces.<sup>11)</sup> The NZASM went down as heroically as the Boer republics which it assisted so loyally. After the occupation of Pretoria (5 June 1900) the British authorities seized and disappropriated the properties of the NZASM and banned its personnel from South Africa, except very few who entered British service. This was the end of the largest and most ambitious Dutch enterprise in South Africa.

After the war a long lawsuit of the NZASM against the British Government ensued. This Government paid a reasonable sum to the shareholders to indemnify them in 1908. Then the NZASM was liquidated. Its managers published in 1909 its proud memoirs "In memoriam NZASM".<sup>12)</sup>

It left a deserving heir. One fund of the NZASM was kept secret and stayed out of the liquidation and of claims by the British Government and its personnel. It became the founding capital of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Stichting Moederland, founded in 1909 with the same initials as the NZASM. It always stayed in the background, while it used affiliated institutions, such as the Nederlands-Zuid-Afrikaanse Vereniging, to canalize its considerable donations to projects in South Africa, intended to further the cultural, linguistic and economic relations with the Afrikaners. The ZASM remained virtually unknown in South Africa in accordance with its wishes. Only very recently, in 1993, a book was published which describes in details its history up to 1930.<sup>13)</sup> Its further story has still to be written.

#### Homages

The NZASM was never popular during its active life, the war time included. None of the numerous publications by non-Dutch on the war in 1899-1902 refers to anything other than its ambulance trains services. Official and public appreciation was shown in 1936 when a group of ex-NZASM employees unveiled a very simple monument at Waterval Boven. Its centenary in 1987 ushered in a series of celebrations, in 1987 at Johannesburg and Pretoria, in 1990 at Germiston, in 1992 at Vereeniging and in 1995, the centenary of the Eastern line and of the South Eastern line, again in Johannesburg and

Pretoria, as well as Maputo, once named Lourenço Marques. For the NZASM the optimistic saying applies: In history nothing goes lost.<sup>14)</sup>

#### References

- 1) The quest for a route to the sea and a non-British seaport has been extensively described up to 1877 by D.W. Kruger, "Die weg na die see of die oopskus in die Boerebeleid voor 1877, met besondere verwysing na die verhouding tot die Portugese", in "Archive Year Book", vol. 1, no. 1 Government Printer, Pretoria, 1938, p.311-392 (The road to the sea or the east coast in Boer policy before 1877, with special reference to relations with the Portuguese).
- 2) B.J. Liebenberg, "Nederland en die Voortrekkers in Natal, Mededelings van die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika", no. C 51, Pretoria 1964, 60 pp.
- 3) Article on G.G. Ohrig in "Dictionary of South African Biography", vol 1, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria 1968, p.638-639.
- 4) Article on J.A. Smellekamp in "Dictionary of south African Biography", vol. 1, HSRC, Pretoria 1968, p.759-760.
- 5) Baring Bros. survived their financial crisis in 1890 thanks to the help of the central bank, the Bank of England, (see P.J. van Winter, "Onder Krugers Hollanders", vol. 2, Amsterdam, 1938, p. ), their financial crisis in 1995 thanks to the take-over by a Dutch financial group IMG, which forestalled the largest Dutch bank, ABN-AMRO.
- 6) R.C. de Jong, G.M. van de Waal and D.H. Heydenrych, "NZASM 100", Chris van Rensburg Publications, Pretoria 1989, p.116.
- 7) In 1895 three publications appeared to celebrate the opening of the Eastern line; the first one was the book issued by the NZASM which had a good feeling for public relations, furthered by the press campaign against this company; the title is "Gedenkboek uitgegeven ter gelegenheid der feestelijke opening van den Delagoabaai-spoorweg 1895", J.H. de Bussy, Amsterdam 1895. The other two are: F.V. Engelenburg, "De Delagoabaai Spoorweg, Een terugblik", - published by "De Volksstem", Pretoria 1895, reprinted in 1987 with a foreword by C. de Jong; this paper also appeared in the Dutch journal "De Gids", nr. 59, 4th series, vol. 13, vol. 1, p.44-71 Amsterdam 1895; Leo Weinthal, "The Press - De Pers Gedenkboek uitgegeven ter gelegenheid der feestelijke opening van den Delagoabaai - Pretoria Spoorweg, Juli 1895", Pretoria, 1895, reprinted in 1995

- with a foreword by C. de Jong, Pretoria, 10 + 110 pp.
- 8) R.C. de Jong, a.o., "NZASM 100", loc. cit. p. 183.
  - 9) R.C. de Jong, "Die lewensomstandighede en kulturele bydrae van die Nederlandse NZASM-werknemers, 1887-1909", doctoral thesis University of Pretoria, November 1989, 276 pp.
  - 10) The history of the NZASM and of contemporaneous immigration of Dutchmen into Transvaal has been described in details by P.J. van Winter, "Onder Krugers Hollanders", 2 volumes, J.H. de Bussy, Amsterdam 1937-38.
  - 11) A contemporaneous report on the war activities of the NZASM up to April 1900 was published in the Netherlands by a NZASM head engineer, Th. Steinmetz; a translation in Afrikaans was published by C. de Jong in "Pretoriana" no. 99, August 1991, pp.12-30.
  - 12) Anonymous, "In memoriam NZASM", J.H. de Bussy, Amsterdam 1910, 177 + 50 pp.
  - 13) B.J.H. de Graaff, "De muythe van de stamverwantschap, Nederland en de Afrikaners, 1902-1930", published by Suid-Afrikaanse Instituut, Amsterdam 1993, 406 pp.; it is a doctoral thesis, submitted in the Vrije Universiteit at Amsterdam, promotor G.J. Schutte.
  - 14) Articles on the NZASM by Dr. J. Ploeger, Dr. Kenneth Wilburn, Dr. R.C. de Jong and Dr. C. de Jong appeared in the following numbers of "Pretoriana": 90, November 1986 - 91, April 1987 - 92, November 1987 - 93, April 1988 - 94, November 1988 - 95, April 1989 - 96, November 1989 - 97, November 1990 - 99, August 1991 - 100, April 1992 - 104, March 1994.

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**ALPHABETICAL REGISTER ON "PRETORIANA" AND  
"NEWSLETTER" ON SALE**

Mr T.E. Andrews, a member of the committee of our Society and editor of the monthly "Newsletter", has composed an Index and Alphabetical Register on issues nos. 74 to 100 of "Pretoriana" and on the issues numbers 31-65, 66-92 and 93-115 respectively of the "Newsletter". He has done a time-consuming and very deserving work. Fifty copies of his Index have been photostated and bound in a paper cover. It is an extensive book of 168 pages, size A4. It is on sale at only R15,00 plus R3,00 postage. The book was financed by a special grant of one of the sponsors of our Society. It is to be ordered from the Secretary of our Society, P.O. Box 4063, Pretoria 0001.

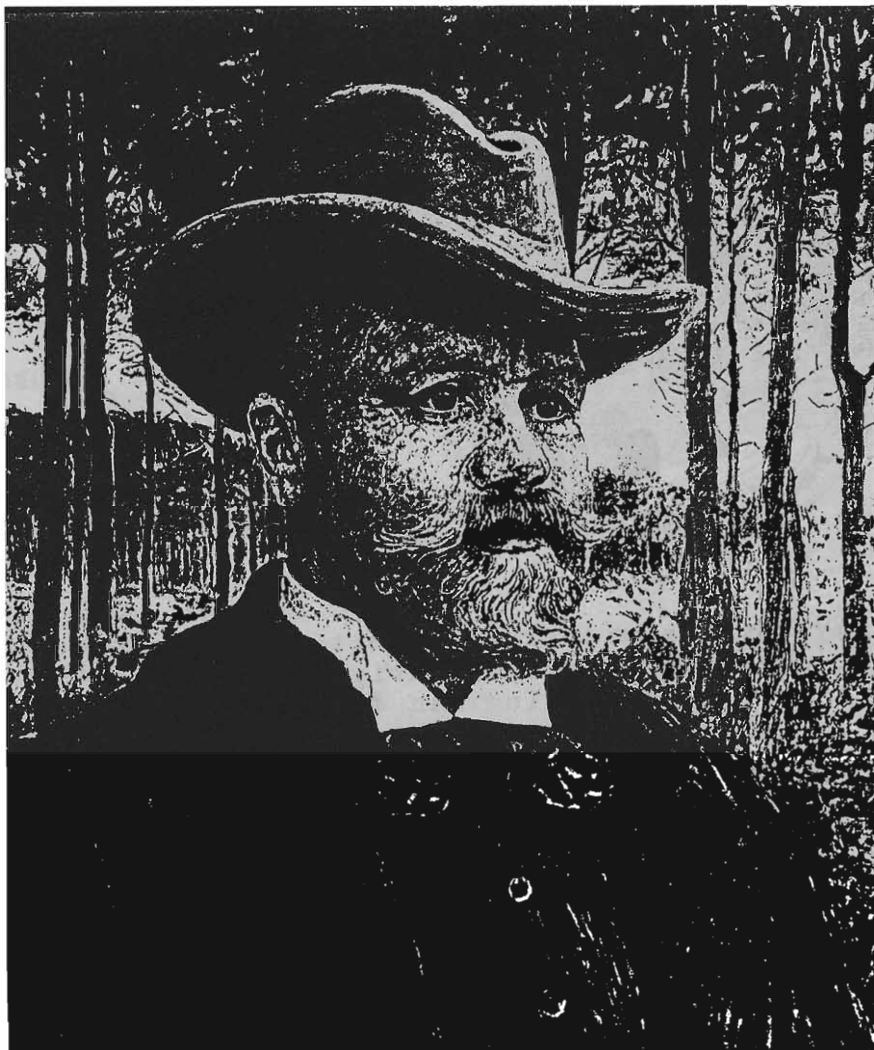
The Editor



Voorsy van die silwergedenkmunt in 1995 uitgegee deur die Staatsmuntinrigting te Pretoria by die herdenking van die opening van die Oosterlyn in 1895. Die waarde is nominaal een Rand, maar die munt is nie in omloop nie. Die beeldenaar toon 'n NZASM-lokomotief wat uit 'n tunnel (Waterval Boven) kom en oor 'n boogbrug (eweneens by Waterval Boven) stoom. Op die voorgrond is die tandradspoor na die tunnel.

Keersy van die gedenkmunt in 1995 uitgegee by die herdenking van die opening van die Oosterlyn in 1895. Die keersy toon 'n koningsprotea.





Olieverfportret van Ir. Jacob Adriaan Van Kretschmar van Veen, geskilder deur Jan Veth, afmetings 49 x 63 cm. J.A. van K. van Veen, 1857-1931, was onder andere besturende direkteur van die NZASM en bekwame opvolger van Ir. G.A.A. Middelberg in die funksie in Transvaal 1899-1900. Hy het die NZASM volledig in diens van die oorlogvoering deur die republieke gestel. Daarom het die Britse bezetter van Transvaal in Augustus 1900 die eiendomme van die NZASM in beslag geneem en Van Veen en die orige NZASM-personeel uit Zuid-Afrika verban. Die portret is in familiebesit. 'n Kopie is in die Nederlandse Spoorwegmuseum te Utrecht. Foto van Mev. M.A. Asselbergh te Utrecht.

## DIE SKERMVERENIGING "DE VRIJE WAPENBROEDERS"

deur Kol. dr. Jan Ploeger

Hierdie Pretoriase vereniging, waarvan die meeste werkende en kunsliewende lede Nederlandse immigrante was, het - volgens 'n mededeling op die vaandel - op 5.2.1898 tot stand gekom. Tot die uitbreek van die vyandelikhede in 1899 het die V.W. 'n bloeiende tydperk in sy bestaan belewe.

Die oorlog het o.m. meegebring dat die lid W. van Wermeskerken met sy ouers in die burgerkamp by Howick beland het, terwyl die meeste ander lede in krygsgevangenskap geraak het. Onder hulle was die latere dr. J.A. Valks, wat sy vryheid na die slag van Elandslaagte tydelik verloor het.

In sy oorlogsdagboek, wat in 1950 onder die titel "Boere op St. Helena" (Kaapstad, verwerk deur prof. P.J. Nienaber) die lig gesien het, het H. de Graaf o.m. aangeteken dat "De Vrije Wapenbroeders" onder die krygsgevangenes as "De Wapenbroeders Schermvereniging" herlewe het. Die stigtingsdatum was 21.8.1901 en o.m. is die name De Haas, Valks, Hoogland en Saris (moet wees: Schallies) genoem. Weens 'n tekort aan skermbenodigdhede kon die vereniging nie meer as 35 lede tel nie. Die bestuur het uit J.H. van Zuylen (voorsitter), W.C. van Gheel (sekretaris), J.A. Schallies (penningmeester), H.A. de Haas (instrukteur), J.A. Schallies en S. Hoogland bestaan (pp.189-190).

Teen die einde van 1902 het "De Vrije Wapenbroeders", met W. van Wermeskerken as sekretaris, herry's en vermoedelik is vroeg in 1903 met oefeninge onder leiding van J.A. Valks begin. Volgens Van Wermeskerken was die tydperk tot 1910-1911 'n periode van bloei. Aan dié tydperk herinner name soos dié van Valks (voorsitter), Van Wermeskerken en Herman A. de Haas ('n swaer van N. van Malsen, voorsitter van die Pretoria Gymnastiek Vereeniging (PGV)).

Later was lede van die "V.W." die grootste ondersteuners van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Scherm Bond, ook bekend as die South African Fencing Association.

Tewens het daar 'n goeie gees van samewerking tussen die lede van die PGV en die VW bestaan. Volgens mnr. Van Wermeskerken is die laaste uitvoering van die VW in 1910 gehou, terwyl die eerste na-oorlogse uitvoering van 1905 dateer. By albei geleenthede is foto's geneem.

Op die foto van 1905, wat voor, die Oost Eind School geneem is, kom die volgende kunsliewende of werkende lede voor: W.P. Gate (Engelsman), E. van Wermeskerken (kunsliewende lid), J. Barendrecht (konsul-generaal van Nederland, ere-voorsitter), Cornelis de Roy (kunsliewende lid - een van die oprigters), Connie A.L. Wabeke, Jan Mokken, J.A. Valks (instrukteur), G en ? Sachse, Willem van Wermeskerken (sekretaris), Roelof Schallies, Herman de Haas en Henk Bakker.

Van Mokken is die volgende gedig in verband met "De Vrije Wapenbroeders" afkomstig:

1. Vrije Wapenbroeders zijn  
Flink van lijf, vlug van lēen  
Op 't appèl bij 't eerste sein

Blijft er achter niet een.  
 Wij hanteeren het geweer  
 Sabel, degen, stok, met eer,  
 Oefnend ons steeds meer en meer.

Refrein: Wij zijn vroolijke kornuiten maken pret. Ha, ha!  
 Waar de V.W. zich bevindt is dit wet. O, Ja!  
 "Leve de Vrije Wapenbroeders!"  
 Hiep, hiep, hiep! Hiep, hiep, hiep! Hoera!

2. Flink marcheeren w'in den pas  
 Schrijden voort, zij aan zij;  
 Onze uniform jas  
 Staat zoo kranig daarbij  
 Met het vaandel<sup>1)</sup> in het front  
 Vormen wij een sterken bond,  
 Steunend op een hechten grond.

Refrein:

3. Daarom sluit U bij ons aan,  
 Neem de wapens ter hand;  
 Laat voor 't schermen alles staan;  
 Vorm met ons een' Broederband,  
 Die van God de glorie wacht.  
 Eert het Wapen, niet de kracht,  
 Meesters steeds Eerbied'gend acht.

Refrein.

Verwysing

- 1) Deur bemiddeling van dr. J.A. Valks is die vaandel (met medaljes) van die V.W. tydens die Tweede Wêreldoorlog vir veilige bewaring na die Nederlands Cultuurhistorisch Instituut, Universiteit van Pretoria, oorgebring.

-o-

ALFABETIESE REGISTER OP "PRETORIANA" EN  
 DIE "NUUSBRIEF" TE KOOP

Mnr. T.E. Andrews, bestuurslid van ons Vereniging en redakteur van die maandelikse "Nuusbrief", het 'n Indeks en Alfabetiese Register op die uitgawes nos. 74 tot en met 100 van "Pretoriana" en op die uitgawes nos. 31-65, 66-92 en 93-115 onderskeidelik van die "Nuusbrief" saamgestel. Hy het daarmee 'n veel tydeisende en verdienstelike werk verrig. Van hierdie Indeks is 50 eksemplare gefotokopieer en in 'n slap band ingebind. Dit is 'n lywige boek met A4 formaat en 168 bladsye. Dit is verkrygbaar vir slegs R15,00 plus R3,00 posgeld. Die boek is gefinansier met 'n besondere skenking van 'n begunstiger van ons Vereniging. Dit is te bestel by die Sekretaris van ons Vereniging, Posbus 4063, Pretoria, 0001.

Die redakteur





Sewe lede van die Pretoriase skermvereniging "De Vrije Wapenbroeders", gestig in 1898, met hul verenigingsvaandel. Helaas is op die oorspronklike foto die lede se name en die datum nie vermeld nie. Op die foto van die lede in 1905 gemaak en deur Dr. Ploeger vermeld, staan naamlik 13 persone, dus dit is 'n ander foto.

## BOEKAANKONDIGING: TUSSEN MUSIEKNOTE EN FOSSIELE

Anna Bender, "Note van herinnering", eie uitgawe, Johannesburg 1995, 292 pp., prys R49,50

deur C. de Jong

Daar is verskeie Suid-Afrikaanse dames wat sterre is op kultuurterreine. Anna Bender vermeld van hulle in haar boek: Anna Neethling Pohl op toneelgebied, Cecile de Ridder vir volksdanse en Mimi Coertze en Nellie du Toit as sangeresse.

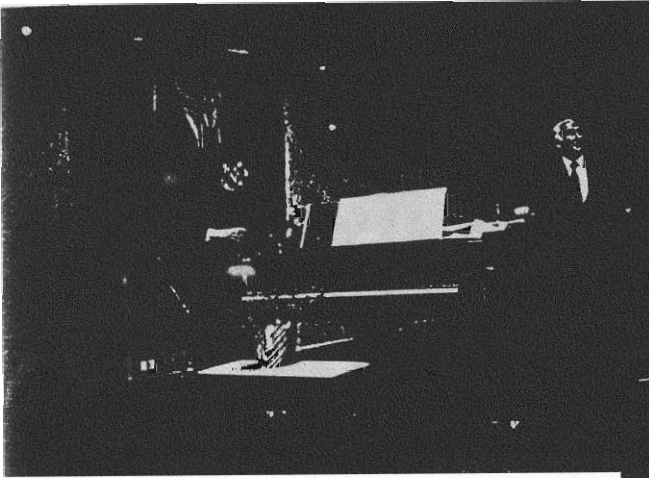
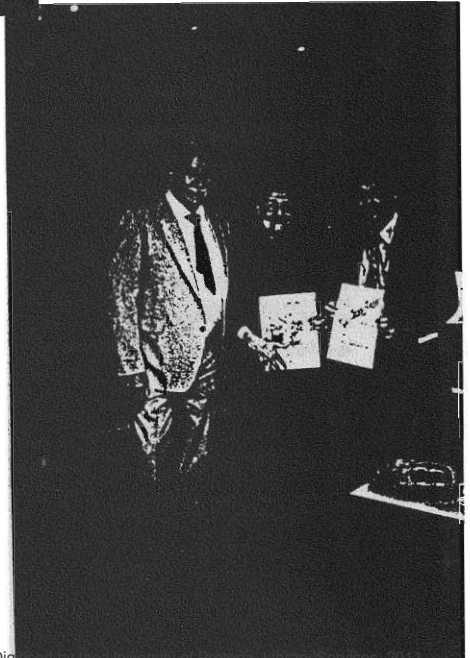


Foto links: Mevrou Anna Bender en Dr. A. Jooste, oudvoorsitter G.O.P., na die musiekuitvoering in Pretoriase Kunsmuseum op 22 Oktober 1994



## Foto regs:

Van links na regs: bassanger Louis Baumgarten, Mevrou Anna Bender, klavier, en Mnr. W. du Plessis, bestuurslid G.O.P., na die musiekuitvoering in Pretoriase Kunsmuseum op 22 Oktober 1994

Anna Bender self het uitgeblink as bewaarder van ou musiek en liedere in Suid-Afrika. Sy het in 1995 haar outobiografie gepubliseer. Dit word hier bespreek. Ons lees daarin dat sy gebore is te Amsterdam in Oos-Transvaal as dogter van 'n polisie-offisier en 'n musikale moeder. Die gesin het spoedig na Pretoria verhuis. Sy het daar die Hoër Meisieskool in 1932-36, die Normaalkollege en die Universiteit van Pretoria besoek en bykomende lesse in klavierspel ontvang, onder andere van Isador Epstein in Johannesburg.

Na 9 jaar as musiekonderwyseres in middelbare skole te Pretoria en 'n vakansiereis na Europa word sy talentvolle begeleidster op die klavier van orkeste en soloïste by die Suid-Afrikaanse Uitsaaikorporasie in Johannesburg van 1949 tot 69. In die volgende vyf jaar was sy musiekkonsultante van klavierfirma's en redaktrise van die musiektydskrif "OPUS". Daarna word sy lektrise en seniorlektrise vir liedkunde by die Operaskool in die Technikon te Pretoria. Sy doseer tot haar pensioenering.

'n Lang stoet van Suid-Afrikaanse en buitelandse musici en sangers wat sy begelei het, trek deur haar boek. Dit is 'n waardevolle kroniek van musikale gebeurtenisse in Transvaal in 1930-90. Onder hulle is internasionale beroemdhedes soos Malcolm Sargent, Gaspar Casado en Igor Strawinski, ook Nederlanders, naamlik die musiekdosente in Pretoria Willem Geerke, Halbe Wissema, prof Gerrit Bon en Willem van Warmelo, en die sangers Laurens Bogtman en Hermann Schey. Voorts kry die Vlaamse letterkundige prof. Marcel Breyne en die Russiese sanger en kunsskilder Victor Ivanoff haar besondere aandag.

Sy is getroud met die paleontoloog Dr. A. Smuts Brink. Hulle het twee musikale dogters, beide harpspeelsters, gekry. Weens Anna se belangstelling vir begraaftplase as geskiedenisboek - wat ek deel - het haar eggenoot opgemerk: Anna, kan jy die dooies nooit met rus laat nie? Maar sy merk op dat hyself altyd besig was met dooie diere.

Sy vertel uitvoerig oor die reis van haar en haar eggenoot as ontvanger van 'n Carnegiebeurs in 1955 deur die VSA tussen New York en San Francisco in die winter vol sneeu en ys, en oor haar toer met 'n orkes van 7 musici deur heel Suidwes-Afrika. Dit was groot belewenisse weens die avontuur, die grootse Natuur en die mense.

Anna Bender het besondere verdienste verwerf deur haar versamel van ou melodieë en liedertekste in Suid-Afrika en daarvoor onderskeidings ontvang. Sy het veel goed teen vergetelheid behoed en verskeie uitvoerings van die ou musiek gegee. Ek het die genoeë gehad om van haar uitvoerings te Pretoria in 1980, 1994 en 1995 by te woon. Verdienstelik is die indeks met alfabetiese lys van persoonsname in haar boek.

Sy het 'n besonder vlot, onderhoudende en humorvolle outobiografie geskryf. Die boek kan by haar bestel word op telefoon nommer 011-646-4952 in Johannesburg.

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