

In Memoriam

IN MEMORY OF DR PETER HENRY BUNTON

(02 March 1922 - 19 February 2023)



*Dr Peter Bunton, 99 years of age, at
Formosa Garden Frail care Centre in 2021
[photo from St Andrews School' Old
Andreans' web page]*

Peter Henry Bunton was born on 2 March 1922, possibly in Port Elizabeth, where his parents Henry Arthur Bunton and his mother, Grace Isabel Gilfillan were living at that time and managing the family's Bunton's Grand Hotel.

Peter's father, Henry Arthur (Harry) Bunton, had been severely gassed during WWI and decided to sell the hotel and, with Grace Isabel, bought the farm 'Elim' in the Selborne district of Uitenhage

in 1923, where they started farming citrus. Harry died in 1927 when Peter was five years old. Peter's mother, Grace, continued the citrus farming, and her sons John and Peter attended St Andrew's College in Grahamstown. Peter's elder brother, John Gilfillan Bunton, was killed in 1942 during WW2, and Peter inherited the farm.

Peter Bunton matriculated from Espin House, St Andrews College in Grahamstown, at the end of 1939. During his high school years, he was awarded colours for rugby and boxing and was a school prefect and corporal in the Cadet Corps. He was also a keen polo player and represented South Africa in this sport.

He was accepted into the Onderstepoort Veterinary Faculty in 1939, and his student number (40005420) indicates that he started his first year in 1940. He interrupted his studies during WW2, and after being wounded during the war and discharged, he returned to Onderstepoort and completed his degree, qualifying in 1950.

He returned to the family farm 'Elim' in the Addo area, where he practised as a veterinarian, managed the large farm and played polo. He also promoted the development of game ranching in the 1970s and put it into practice on his extensive farm, becoming one of the leaders of this new form of farming.

Peter worked as a wildlife veterinary specialist and an honorary veterinarian for the Addo Elephant Park for many years. He was active in the Addo area all his working life, getting deeply involved in conservation and the development of the Addo Elephant Park.

Peter is part of the Addo Park's history, and he was reluctant to have lions introduced into the Addo Park in late 2003 since the Addo Park animals had never previously had any large predators amongst them. The first year the lions were resident in the park confirmed his fears as the entire disease-free Buffalo calf herd was wiped out. Thankfully the animals quickly learnt to live with these predators and to defend their calves.

Dr Peter Bunton became a resident of the Formosa Garden Frail Care Centre near Plettenberg Bay in 2018, and SAVA, represented by Prof Brough Coubrough, celebrated his centenary birthday there with him in 2022. Sadly Peter died there on 19 February 2023, just ten days before his 101st birthday, a bachelor and the last of the Bunton family in South Africa.

Anne Bath