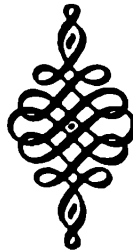


SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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LUCY BESTER AND THE NURSING OF BOER PRISONERS AT SIMON'S TOWN, 1900.

ARTHUR DAVEY

Lucy Lydia Bester, a Natal Afrikaner, was one of the sixteen children of W.A.C. Bester of "Fourieskraal", a farm close to Ladysmith. (1) In her early career she taught music in Vryheid which was then in the South African Republic and played the organ at the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) there. Shortly before the Anglo-Boer war began, she left for Paarl for further instruction in organ-playing.

During the war Lucy's father was removed from the Ladysmith area by jittery British military authorities and sent to Pietermaritzburg. So too was her brother-in-law, Ds. H.F. Schoon (2), the DRC minister in Ladysmith and his wife Mary (Maria). The changing fortunes of conflict, particularly after the battle of Paardeberg at the end of February 1900 resulted in many captured Boers being held in British prisoner-of-war camps at Green Point and Simon's Town. The insanitary conditions under which the beleaguered defenders had existed in the bed of the Modder River before General Cronje's surrender at Paardeberg were conducive to the spread of disease and it is likely that a resultant typhoid (enteric fever) outbreak was the main killer of 55 of the Boer prisoners who were buried at Seaforth (Simon's Town) during the period March-June 1900 (3). Compassion and an obvious sympathy with the Boer cause moved Lucy Bester to volunteer as a nurse with the sick and dying. The letter to her eldest sister Mary Schoon which follows shows her to have been a perceptive and well-educated young woman:

"Palace Hospital
Simon's Town
May 16th 1900

My dearest Mary,

I have just received your letter and I can never tell you how pleased I was, especially as I find you are all pleased about my nursing the prisoners. I am on Night Duty this month, together with Miss Botha and Sister Morris an English nurse but who is very kind: my wards are 1, 2, 3 & 4 in all, about 31 men: our head Doctor has put me in charge of these wards because he is so pleased with my work (Self Praise no recommendation eh!), but it is true all the same, and he badly wants to train me which of course if I go through the course I will only be finished in 3 yrs time, but the life is too shut up, for instance we have no earthly chance of going to church or going out etc unless you are on Night Duty, then if you do not have a rest during the day, you are not fit for your work at night. Although yesterday morning we went over to see Mr. van Lingen our minister (4) and they simply insisted upon us staying to dinner so we had 2 hours sleep instead of 8.

I have one very bad patient O'Kelly (5), consumption case and then I have one little van Zyl - rather bad, he has fever and (His) temperature is so uncertain, one hour 104 to next 100 (6). These cases generally just go off before you know where you are:

so far I have lost 4 patients: oh Mary, the one I shall never forget, he was too sweet a boy about 16 or 17. His eyes looked me full in the face till the end and after his death such a Heavenly Smile; oh may it be that the few short prayers and sayings I have said to them before the bedside bring them to that Eternal Glory. They all seemed so pleased to die and some offered beautiful prayers. I can never tell you how pleased I am that I have come to nurse them. Last night one of Sister Morris's patients died, du Toit (?); his sufferings were cruel, also of consumption; it is strange most of them get pneumonia and then (that) leads off to consumption; at present we have about 10 very bad patients, on the whole they are doing well considering we have 120 sick. One man we have here is Professor Baleveld (?); he is Professor in Latin & Greek in the Staats School Pretoria.

Fancy Mary, such a funny rumour (?) is going about town this last week. When General Cronje left for St Helena 300 prisoners remained behind in the camp here, so 70 of them made a plan to escape, so they built a tunnel from their tent right out to the outside ground of the "Death Line". Well, when this was completed and they were preparing to leave one of the men took ill so of course had to remain behind. They promised to send him a wire when arriving in Delagoa (sic) Bay. Well they went off to an out of the way place called Mulders Bay. There they had arranged beforehand with a French steamer to take them to Delagoa Bay. Well they arrived there safely, and then sent the following wire to the friend they left behind: "Arrived safely Catharina will be provided for". I think it simply splendid, the soldiers I hear were mostly all drunk the evening they escaped, and only found out the next day that the men were gone, so they were all called together and had to swear an oath that they would keep it quiet.

Dr Carré has furnished a little house for us for the nurses; I should say it is called the Sisters Quarters. Miss Botha and I occupy the same room, then two English nurses Sister Rogers (8) Sister Rae, Mrs van Willigh (who is) also a volunteer Dutch lady, daughter to old Professor de Villiers from Paarl, then Miss Mary Kingsley the lady who wrote that book on Africa, Sister Morris, one I mentioned before, Miss Wrench (who is) also a Dutch lady but inclined to be rather English and Sister Knight - so in all we are nine nurses; three on Night Duty and the rest on Day. Of course there is not so much work in the night than in the day, although it is a fearful rush from about 4.30 when the slops have to be emptied, temperatures taken and charted medicines given, feeds given, men washed, all beds made and breakfast served out to the convalescents. Our hours are from 8.30 at night until 8.30 a.m. when the day sisters come on much to our joy. I can assure you sometimes I am busy writing or reading, but before I know where I am I find myself in dreamland. Sometimes I go and sit on the stoep where we have a beautiful view of the sea, about 16 ships in the bay and all lit up. It really is a beautiful sight!

Today we had an invitation to lunch by Kolonel (sic) Brinckman (10): he is very good to the sisters but as I am an Africanker (sic) (11) and especially this time when politics are always

discussed, I gave my very kind regards and said I could not go.Fancy, I saw Harry Tatham (12) one day at lunch at the Hotel. I looked at him and he at me but I was not quite sure that I knew him. Well, later on he called on me, but I was on duty, so he asked Mrs Vince the manager's wife to give his compliments and was just going to leave his card, when he asked what I was doing here, so she said I was nursing the Boer prisoners; he looked very disgusted and quietly put the card back in his pocket. I am sure I was not all sorry not to meet him.

Your loving sister

Lucy "

Mary Kingsley, the celebrity among the volunteer nurses, contracted typhoid fever and died on 3 June 1900. A fortnight later Mr Bester received a telegram from the Chief Medical Officer advising him that Lucy too was seriously ill with typhoid. However, she gradually pulled through, having been delirious at times, and was able to write to her sister in mid-July to say that she was on the mend. It is not known whether she resumed nursing after her illness. Later on, Lucy Bester who never married, joined two of her sisters in the United States and settled there.

For the contents of this article I am much indebted to Mrs Eirene Wimbury of Craighall whose mother was a niece of Lucy Bester. Lucy's letters, telegrams etc were preserved with Ds Schoon's papers in the Natal Archives.

References:

1. "Bester's Farm" south of the Platrand, features on many of the maps illustrating the Ladysmith siege.
2. Ds Schoon (1851-1930) was a prominent figure in the NG Kerk in Natal. His voluminous diary kept during the Anglo-Boer War is in the Natal Archives. See Dictionary of S.A. Biography Vol. IV, pp. 543-4.
3. There were altogether 81 burials of Boer prisoners at Seaforth (1900-1902), most of them Transvaalers. Soon after the occupation of Bloemfontein in March 1900 there was a devastating outbreak of typhoid among the British soldiers encamped there, probably also in part attributable to their drinking polluted water of the Modder River at Paardeberg. (T. Pakenham. The Boer War, 1979, p. 382).
4. Ds Gabriel F.C. van Lingen (1864-1941)
5. O'Kelly seems to have survived.
6. G.J. van Zyl (Potchefstroom), aged 20, died 19 June 1900.
7. J.S.C. du Toit (Christiana), aged 20, died 15 May 1900.
8. H.J. Bijleveld was "dosent" (lecturer) at the Staatsgymnasium Pretoria according to the Staatsalmanak for 1899, p. 76.
9. It was indeed "a funny rumour". No such mass escape took place.
10. Lieut. Col. T.F. Brinckman, East Kent Regiment.

(from previous page)

11. "Africander" was clearly meant. It was a disheartening time for sympathisers with the Boer cause for Lord Roberts, advancing northwards, had occupied Kroonstad and the siege of Mafeking was lifted on 17 May 1900.
12. Member of a prominent Ladysmith family.

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BOER WAR HOSPITALS:

Information taken from the Annexures and Minutes of Evidence - the Royal Commission on South African Hospitals : HMSO 1901.

"Complaints having been made as to the care of the sick and wounded of the Boer prisoners at Simon's Town, we thought it right to visit that place and investigate the matter. As a result, after hearing the evidence of Dr. Carré, who was in medical charge of the Boer prison, and of other witnesses, we cannot speak too highly of the way in which the sick and wounded Boers were taken care of by the medical authorities there, as regards both the ships and camp first employed for the reception of the prisoners and the Boer hospital which was subsequently established. All the witnesses who had real experience on the subject, whether Dutch or English, spoke alike in high terms of the arrangements made for the care of the prisoners and their sick and wounded, and the way in which they were treated and attended to both by doctors and nurses. Although many of the men coming from the front suffered from a very severe type of enteric fever, the death-rate as a whole was low among them. As it has been stated by some persons that patients were improperly removed from the ships, we ought to observe there is no real foundation for this statement. Owing to the virulence of disease in March on these ships, it was found advisable in the interests of the patients that they should be removed to shore, and the ships should be disinfected. The removal was carried out with great care, and the patients did not suffer in any way. We should also perhaps add that there was no case of typhus among the Boers, as the late Miss Mary Kingsley seems to have thought. She probably mistook the appearance of haemorrhagic measles for the mulberry rash of typhus. "

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DR. HENRY CLARKE OF SIMON'S TOWN & HIS BRUSH WITH THE LAW.

The Late G. J. WILSON

In his book This Was a Man published by Howard Timmins (1958) the well known journalist specialising in famous criminal cases and author Benjamin Bennett, records two cases concerning events that occurred at Simon's Town and in which the eminent "Beau" Upington was involved.

Beauclerk Upington, Kings Council, was the son of the most brilliant Advocate of his generation, a fine orator and accomplished politician Sir Thomas Upington, formerly of County Cork in Ireland.

The first of these cases made legal history.

Old timers will remember that before the main road from Glencairn Quarry to Lower North Battery was upgraded and re-aligned, from the Glencairn station southwards, the old road traversed the area often below the present seaside retaining wall. When it reached the present day junction of Dido Valley road and the Main road, it carried on skirting the railway line and continued in front of, i.e. on the seaward side of, Klein Vishhoek homestead and then performed a sharp sweep alongside and round the metal railed fencing enclosing the North Battery. Today this area has been filled in and a double barrelled cannon mounted there as an extension to the Gunnery School, while the main road now runs behind the homestead, while the entrance to the Battery has been moved to a small approach road on the Simon's Town side.

On 7th. March 1903, Mr. Sidney Harry Adams, General Manager in South Africa of Rudge Whitworth & Co. Ltd had been travelling to Simon's Town with three passengers in his Lanchester car. He was at the wheel and because the road was muddy, potholed and wet, beyond Fish Hoek he slowed down to between six and eight miles an hour by adjustment of the governor and air valves.

As he approached North Battery, in passing Klein Vishhoek homestead, he reduced speed to dead slow and took the sharp swing around the railings of the battery. As he negotiated the turn he squeezed the rubber pouch hooter. Ahead of him near the main entrance to the battery (then situate opposite the centre of the battery debouching directly on to the Main road) was a horse and trap. Adams judged there was enough space to pass them. He hooted once more and as the horse showed no sign of restiveness, drove on. Then the man in the trap suddenly and unaccountably seized the reins. The horse reared in fright and leapt on to the front of the car, pinning Adams against the cushioned driver's seat while the car, now out of control, careered into the Battery railings.

The horse quickly disentangled itself and scampered back, snorting and injured. Had the car been travelling at high speed, averred Adams in response to his Counsel's questions, the car would have been wrecked and he and his passengers killed. As it was, the two front lamps were smashed, one of the side lamps

ripped off and the front tyres ruined. He estimated his damages at forty pounds.

That, at any rate was the story Adams told the Chief Justice who was hearing the case with Mr. Justice Kotze, when he sued the driver of the horse and trap, Dr Henry Clarke, District Surgeon of Simon's Town, for £40 on account of Dr Clarke's negligence. Adams' Counsel was the redoubtable Advocate Henry Burton. Dr. Clarke's attorneys briefed "Beau" Upington to represent Dr. Clarke. By now "Beau" had been practising at the Bar for nearly five years and had achieved a number of brilliant forensic successes.

Upington's version was that the horse was restive and the eerie sound of the pouch hooter had accentuated its fear. He claimed that Adams was responsible for the accident. So far from Dr Clarke having to pay damages for the wrecking of the Lanchester, Upington counter-claimed, on behalf of his client, for diminution in the value of the horse due to its injuries.

With his usual skill and in his most winning way, he coaxed the witnesses into agreeing that the horse moved its head up and down as though fretfully aware that something strange was approaching. He insinuated, too, that because of his speed, at least ten to twelve miles an hour, Adams did not, or could not, pull up after rounding the curve.

Dr Clarke's evidence was that the horse was panic-stricken at the weird sound from the car's rubber pouch hooter and bounded forward. The animal was blemished and had to be exchanged for another at a cost of fifty pounds.

When we consider that in 1903 cars were a rarity and horsedrawn traffic the norm whereas today the roles are reversed, the Chief Justice's judgement makes unique reading:

"I quite agree" he said "that a motor-car has as much right to be on a public road as any other vehicle. But this general statement must be taken with some qualification. It should not be forgotten that motoring is an entirely novel mode of locomotion and that there are many horses which have the greatest repugnance to passing a motor-car or being passed by one. It is, therefore, the duty of a person in charge of a motor car, when he observes he is about to pass an animal which shows signs of restiveness or fright, to do everything in his power to prevent an accident. If he sees, or has the opportunity of seeing, that a collision is likely, unless he slackens speed or stops altogether, he is clearly guilty of negligence. Now, the question is: Who must bear the loss that has resulted? In my opinion, Adams alone is responsible. The horse was worth forty-five to fifty pounds before the accident. To-day it is not worth twenty-five pounds. That, at all events, shows twenty pounds damages which will be awarded to Dr Clarke, with costs to suit."

Thus this case, one of the first in South Africa regarding accidents between motor cars and animal-drawn vehicles, helped Upington to make legal history by establishing the rights of animals and cars on public roads.

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THE RESIDENCY - ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

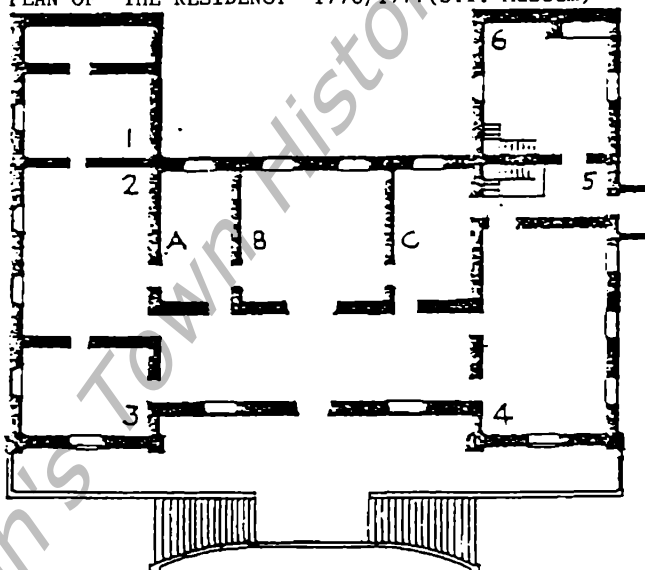
Extracted from UTE SEEMANN'S Report of June 1995.

[Enough has been written about the history of The Residency in previous articles by several earlier correspondents. We have also had a "dig" in the courtyard under the guidance of Nick Shepherd. See records in the Museum. Editor]

In February 1995 the Board of Trustees of the Simon's Town Museum commissioned Ute Seemann to carry out an archaeological investigation within the Museum to see inter alia whether there once existed a storage room below the three front rooms, behind the stoep of The Residency.

The formal areas of the building concerning the investigation are the front gallery on the first floor and the space below it on the ground floor level (see Fig.1 below).

PLAN OF "THE RESIDENCY" 1776/1777(S.T. Museum)



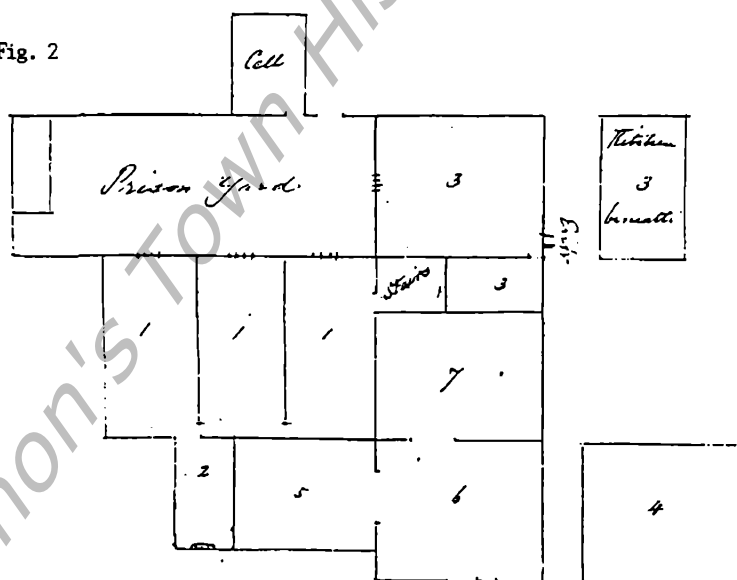
During the Dutch period and for some years thereafter the front gallery served as an entrance hall, a place of assembly or perhaps a waiting room. The voorkamer as it was known was entered through a central doorway which symmetrically bisected the building's facade. A window was positioned on each side. These features still appear on the plan of the "House and Premises of Mr. Brand in Simon's Town (sic)", probably dating to 1808 and updated in 1814.

In a plan dated 1856 (Fig.2) shows the front gallery, formerly voorkamer, divided into 3 rooms. Although hand drawn, the plan of the first floor seems accurate enough in that it details the arrangement of two of the front offices. No.2, the entrance hall (today the Just Nuisance room) is designated "Post Office", No. 5 one of the "Public Offices". What is evident is that the entrance door had been shifted off centre to the left. Room No. 5, part of the Magistrate's Court offices at the time (today's Naval Room) was closed off from the rooms at the back. A double opening connects room No. 5 to the offices in the right wing of the house.

A plan dated 28 March 1861 shows only the ground floor of the "Simonstown Gaol and Offices". In this the large central space behind the "Stoop" is filled with "Solid earth", the left and right wing rooms are designated as "store" and "Constable quarters" respectively.

An area 1500 by 1500 mm in the corner of the Naval Room was selected for exploration. It was decided to excavate an area at the junction of the inner stoep wall and the dividing wall of the Just Nuisance room, formerly entrance hall. Teak floorboards were carefully removed. It soon became apparent that the infill had been deposited during various periods. (see Fig. 3.). The team excavated till the appearance of a finely grained yellow clay floor and a point where the stoep wall tapered inwards. This was deemed to be the original platform on which the building was erected during 1776/77.

Fig. 2



1. Chief Constable quarters
2. Post Office
3. Gaolers' quarters
4. Single constable's room

The residency; Interior Plan of 1856

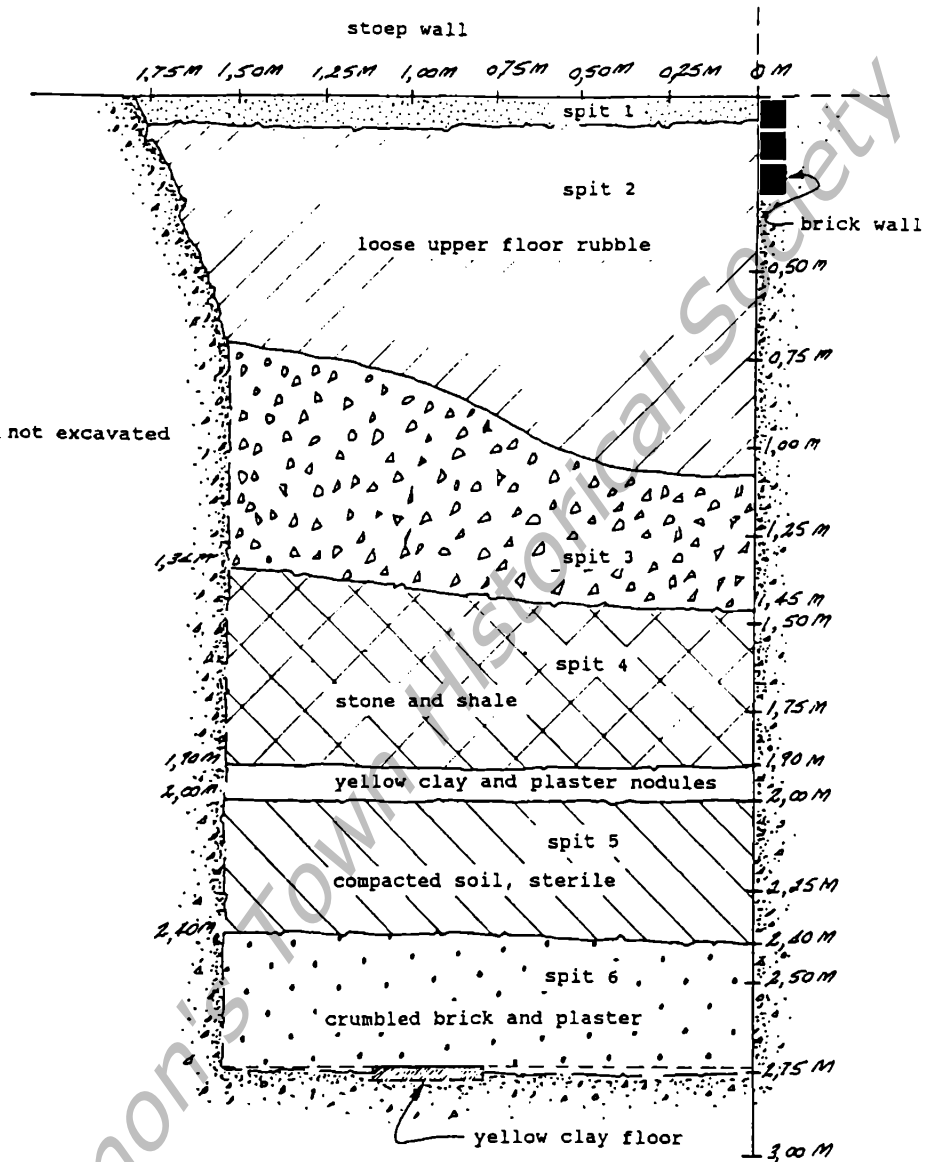


Fig. 3 Diagram of the excavation area 1 in the 'Naval Room'.

From the excavation the team deduced the following:

- a. The inner steep wall was built from dressed stone and reached past the ground floor level of the building. It had never been plastered.
- b. The brick wall separating the Naval Room from the Just Nuisance Room/entrance hall does not continue to the same level as the inner steep wall.
- c. No formal floor was found which would have indicated that the area the team had excavated below the Naval Room had been used in any formal way.
- d. Finally, the nature of the infill and the artefactual material retrieved from it indicated a time period of more than a hundred years in which it was deposited.

There still remained two questions to be answered

- (1) Is the teak and yellowwood floor in the Naval Room, which used to be part of the voorkamer, the original floor? and
- (2) did the wall on the other side of the Just Nuisance Room/entrance hall go down further than 500 mm?

To answer these questions a teak floorboard was loosened along the Naval Room. It was found that the joists were placed approx. 600 to 650 mm apart, too far apart to support a stone floor. The joists measurements approx. 160 x 70 mm, can support wooden floor beams but not flag stone. It was therefore concluded that most of the teak floor beams in the Naval Room are probably the original ones laid down when The Residency was built in 1776/77. The team then went on to expose a small area in the Just Nuisance Room/entrance hall corner of the inner steep. It was found that there was a foundation of a brick dividing wall, encased in concrete, most probably from the time of the last restoration in 1983. This concrete encasement to stabilise the dividing wall would not have been necessary had the wall reached as far down as the inner steep wall foundation at the original platform level.

ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE:

The majority of the artefacts unearthed were concentrated in Spits 1 and 2 (see again Fig.3). Apart from the builder's rubble, some larger bone fragments and one dark green glass bottle fragment, the artefacts could have fallen through the cracks between the teak and yellowwood floor beams and percolated - over time - into the lower spits. Mice collected articles and items from above and below the floor boards and deposited them amongst the rubble below. Wood cuts, shavings and charcoal which were found seemed to have been deposited during the infills and when repairs to the floor beams and joists were made. All the artefacts were very dry and well preserved.

There were coins, ink pen nibs, pins, hooks, thumbtacks, paper clips, nails, screws and a blob of sealing wax. Pieces of newspaper and printed paper were found, dated in one instance to 1883. Fragments of clay pipes and fragments of mid-19th century

blue/cream transfer printed British tableware were found. Food remains included peanut shells, a peach pip, pine cone seed, English walnut shell fragment and orange peel. Important evidence came from Spit 4 when a fragment of fine Chinese porcelain dated 1760 to 1780 was found - the Residency was built 1776/77.

It was very exciting to find out what was under the floor boards. The work was sponsored by the Simon's Town Museum and the Simon's Town Historical Society. Pat Riley, who some years ago was on the Museum staff, and was architect and supervisor during the renovation of the building in 1983 provided important clues to the structural and architectural aspects and made valuable professional recommendations to the team. Apart from Team leader Ute Seeman, the other members of the team were Jorge E'Silva, Ernest Lawrence, Sharma Saitowitz, Hennie Prince, Bernhard Greeves, Brenda Castle, Anita E'Silva, Lorraine Lithgow, Ethel Seidel.

A full report of the excavation submitted by Ute Seemann can be viewed by contacting the Curator. There are many more plans and photographs which we are unable to publish with this article. We have extracted the above from "A Room Without a View" by Ute Seemann, dated June 1995 - the original of which is housed with the Simon's Town Museum (36 pages).

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FLAG OFFICERS OF THE CAPE

VERNON WHITE

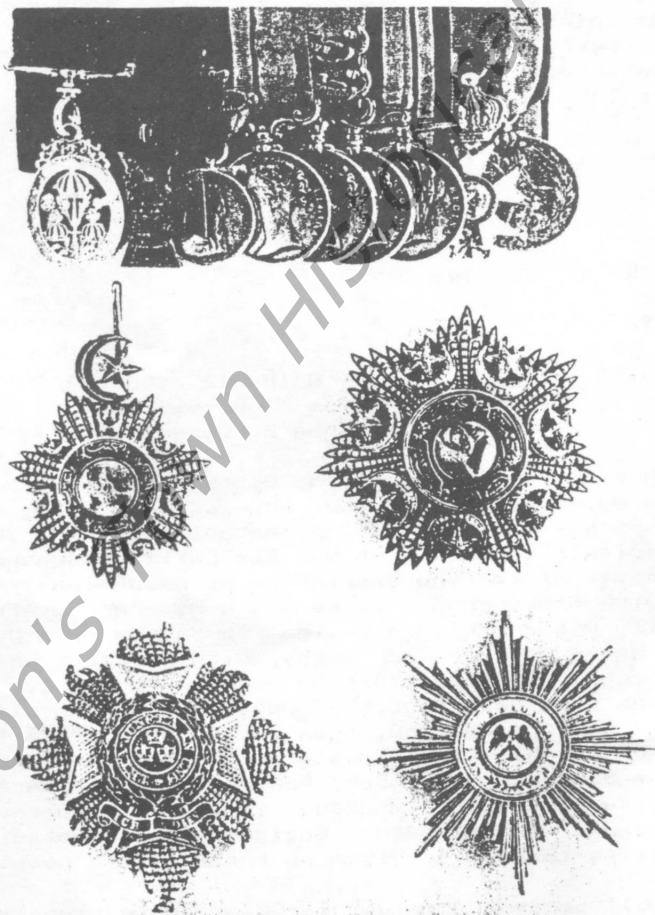
Part XIII Commodore Henry Caldwell 1866-1867
 Commodore William M. Dowell 1867-1871
 Commodore Sir John E. Commerell 1871-1873

On the 9th April 1866 Commodore Henry Caldwell CB RN became the Senior Naval Officer on the Cape of Good Hope station, in charge of Docks and Victualling establishments. The British High Commissioner at that time was Sir Philip Wodehouse, who was later instrumental in the annexation of Basutoland in 1868, in agreement with Moshweshwe. In London a Liberal Government under Earl Russell, was shortly to resign in favour of a Conservative Government under the Earl of Derby, with Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. In Europe the Prussians were to defeat the Austrians in the six weeks war between June and August 1866, thus excluding Austria from German affairs and establishing Prussia's pre-eminence amongst the north German States. HMS ALBERT became the first warship in the Royal Navy to have guns mounted in an iron turret, whilst Robert Whitehead a Manchester Engineer, constructed the first self-propelling torpedo at Fiume on the Adriatic coast.

Henry Caldwell became Commander-in-Chief Cape exactly forty-two years to the month from the date he joined the Royal Navy. His

naval career was uneventful having served in the ROYAL GEORGE, the gunnery ship HMS EXCELLENT and the INCONSTANT (36) under Captain Charles Fremantle RN in the Mediterranean. During his two year stay in Simon's Town Commodore Caldwell made marked improvements to the Town's water supply, having complained of the inefficiency in the water supply in a memorandum to the Governor.

In 1867 Commodore Caldwell was succeeded by **COMMODORE WILLIAM DOWELL CB RN** flying his broad pendant in HMS RATTLESNAKE, an RN Survey Ship which made notable voyages between 1847 and 1850 in the Torres Strait, and along the eastern shores of New Guinea. Born in 1825 William Dowell had a distinguished career in the Royal Navy, retiring as a full Admiral in August 1890, the year in which Rhodes's British South Africa Company founded Salisbury (Harare). He was honoured with the KCB in 1882, and after his retirement with the GCB in 1894. During his time as C-in-C Cape (1867-1871) Commodore Dowell placed Admiralty House in Simon's Town at the disposal of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cape Town, the Rev. Dr. Griffiths whenever the latter visited the town.



Photograph of Admiral Commerell's medals - Medal News September 1994.

In October 1867 the last convict ship sailed from England via the Cape of Good Hope for Australia marking the end of transportation as a form of punishment. In the same year Ship's Masters in the Royal Navy were substituted by Navigating Lieutenants. Of more local importance diamonds were discovered in Hopetown, and shortly afterwards on the Vaal River in 1867, when fortune hunters from all over the world converged on the area where Kimberley would eventually arise.

COMMODORE SIR JOHN EDWARD COMMERELL CB KCB VC RN was appointed C-in-C Cape of Good Hope and West Africa station in succession to Commodore Dowell, and also flew his broad pendant in HMS RATTLESNAKE from 1872 to 1873. Born in January 1829 John Commerell was the second son of W.J. Commerell and Sophia (nee Bosanquet) of Strand House in Horsham, Sussex. He entered the Royal Navy at the age of 13 years, in an era of events which captured the public's imagination. The P & O Steamship Company had started a mail service with paddle steamers from Falmouth to Alexandria in 1841, and the Cunard Line had started their steamer service from Liverpool to Boston, U.S.A. In the same year James Ross discovered and claimed Victoria Land in Antarctica for the British Crown.

A British naval landing party hoisted the Union Jack at Possession Point, Hong Kong in January 1841 whilst in May New Zealand was declared a British Colony. John Commerell was promoted to Lieutenant in 1843, and during 1845/6 he saw action in the South Atlantic. During the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856 He saw action in the Gulf of Bothnia under Rear Admiral R.S. Dundas, C-in-C Baltic, then at Sevastopol and in the Sea of Azov under Admiral Sir Edmund Lyon C-in-C and was twice mentioned in despatches. Whilst commanding HMS WESER in 1855 Commerell and two companions crossed the Isthmus of Arabat to get to the Crimean shore of the Putrid Sea to destroy enemy corn and forage. For this he was awarded the Victoria Cross. The other VC awarded to a naval officer at that time was to Lieutenant Charles Lucas of HMS HECLA, who threw a live shell overboard during an action with the Baltic Fleet off Finland.

Promoted to Commander in September 1885, and to post rank in July 1889 John Commerell saw action off the China coast when British ships and marines attacked the Taku forts on the Peiho River on the 25th June after the Chinese refused passage to British envoys to Peking. Commerell was again mentioned in despatches, and in the following year was present when an Anglo-French force occupied the Taku forts in the advance on Tientsin and Peking. The Treaty of Peking signed in October gave the British further commercial concessions and opened up eleven new ports to British ships.

During 1866 Captain Commerell was appointed to command HMS TERRIBLE, and made C-in-C Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa Station in 1871. He was obliged to resign his appointment as C-in-C Cape in 1873 having been badly wounded on the River Prae in the Ashanti War (April 1873-March 1874).

Appointed a Naval ADC to Queen Victoria between 1872 and 1877, he was made a Groom-in-Waiting to the Queen in 1874 until 1879,

and again in 1891. Honoured with the GCB in 1874 Commander Commerell was promoted to Rear Admiral in November 1876. From 1879 to 1880 he became a Lord of the Admiralty and was promoted a Vice-Admiral in January 1881, becoming C-in-C North America Station from 1882 to 1885. Between 1885 and 1888 he was Conservative M.P. for Southampton, returning to active service when he was appointed C-in-C Portsmouth as a full Admiral, which appointment he held until 1891.

In February 1892 Admiral Commerell was appointed Admiral of the Fleet, ahead of Admiral A.F.R. de Horsey who should have been promoted to this appointment. John Commerell retired from active service in January 1899 at the age of 70, and died at his home at 45 Rutland Gate, London in May 1901, five months after his Queen whom he had served so well and for so long.

During his 57 years service in the Royal Navy, Admiral Commerell saw many changes in the service to which he had devoted the greater part of his life. Gentlemen volunteers, of whom he was one when he joined the Royal Navy were renamed Naval Cadets. The first iron battleship HMS WARRIOR was constructed in 1860, whilst the training ship ILLUSTRIOUS, afterwards the BRITANNIA was substituted for the R.N. College, Portsmouth which subsequently became the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth in 1863. Ten years later saw the establishment of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. The Naval Defence Act of 1889 brought to an end the long period of transition in naval architecture which began in 1860.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Commerell's Victoria Cross, medals and decorations, and ceremonial sword were sold by Sotheby's of London at their auction of orders, decorations and medals at Summer Place, Billingshurst, Sussex, England in September 1944 for £41,100.



Commodore William M. Dowell

1869 - 1871



Commodore Sir Joseph E. Commerell

1871 - 1873

SALUTING AND MARKS OF RESPECT

E.A. BIGGS

Salutes and marks of respect are accorded in different ways, examples being: the hand salute, the blowing of bugles, the piping of the side, the parading of guards and bands, the playing of national anthems, the lowering or dipping of colours and the firing of guns. (Admiralty Manual 1964:367).

1. HAND SALUTE:

1. Naval Salute: This is a personal salute of officers and men. The traditional naval salute originated in Medieval times and represents the action taken in lifting the visor of a helmet to show the face using the weapon hand thus showing the opponent your face and the fact that you were unarmed; this action would be reciprocated. The action of turning the palm of the hand towards the face is said to have had its origin in an incident during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I when a sailor, for fear of disgracing himself before the Queen turned his dirty hand inwards while saluting.

The traditional navy salute was altered when it was decided in 1988 to introduce a uniform salute into all branches of the South African Defence Force. The new salute does not differ much from the traditional naval salute except that the hand is now held flat and not tilted towards the face and that the elbow is dropped forward 45 degrees. This change represents a move away from the British-style salute and is similar to that used by the armed forces of the United States of America. (Slogrove 1989:11).

2. Saluting the Quarterdeck: There is a general belief that the salute to the quarterdeck is derived from the early sea-going custom of respect and obeisance that all paid to the pagan altar on board the ship which was later replaced by the crucifix and shrine. Another version traces the custom back to the early days of the Royal Navy when all officers who were present on the quarterdeck returned the first salute of a person by uncovering (the original personal salute consisted of uncovering the head). The main opinion is that it was a salute to the seat of authority, the quarterdeck, the place nearest to the colours.

It has been established that obeisances were made to pagan shrines on board ships in the days of Greek, Roman and Carthaginian sea-power as the gods of the sea had to be propitiated. With the advent of Christianity, the same respect was shown to the shrine of the Virgin. The flags of the suzerain or sovereign became, in time, the symbol of the religion of the state and emblems of the royal or imperial house of the ruler. Subsequently, the colours had a two-fold significance, that of religion and of state.

The custom of obeisance or mark of respect survived after the shrines had moved from on deck and the colours now became the dominant symbol to respect. Writing in 1831 while a Midshipman

Captain Basil Hall RN remarked:

"Every person not excepting the captain, when he puts his foot on this sacred spot, touches his hat; and as this salutation is supposed to be paid to the privileged region itself, all those who at the moment have the honour to be upon it are bound to acknowledge the compliment. Thus even when a midshipman comes up and takes off his hat, all the officers on deck (the admiral included, if he happens to be of the number), return the salute. So completely does this form grow into habit, that in the darkest night, and when there may not be a single person near the hatchway, it is, invariably attended to with the same precision."

Saluting the quarterdeck is an old and impressive tradition - a short, dignified, personal recognition of the colours, the symbol of the states, the seat of authority. (Navy News VIII - 1989:9)

2. GUN SALUTES:

All sword and gun salutes originate from the friendly gesture of one who saluted first thus rendering himself or his ship powerless while saluting. Guns were kept loaded and after firing, an appreciable time was required before the guns could be fired again. Salutes to vessels flying the English flag started when the seas from the coast of Norway to Cape Finisterre were claimed to be the "English seas"; before Norman times, the sails of foreign vessels were lowered thus rendering the vessel powerless for a time as a ship cannot manoeuvre with lowered sails and a deck littered with rigging. From this custom comes the practise of "tossing oars", "lying on the oars", "Stopping engines" and, on sailing vessels, "letting fly the sheets" on rendering honours to superiors or to the colours (Navy News VIII Sept 1988:10).

Salutes were fired on entering a foreign port thus unloading the guns and providing proof that the ship came to the port on a friendly visit. (Talbot Booth 1941:964).

3. SALUTES AT SEA:

Warships when passing each other in harbour exchange salutes, the nature of the salute depends on the nationality of the ship and the rank of the Captain or Flag Officer on board. These salutes, in harbour, take the form of parading guards and hands, sounding the Alert on the bugle or piping the Still. At sea the salutes are made and returned by the pipe only. (Admiralty Manual 1964:368).

Courtesies paid while at sea to warships of all nations originally took the form of either firing guns or the striking of the topsails by the ship in the territorial waters of the warship being saluted. As sail was gradually replaced by steam a new method of saluting was devised, that of dipping the ensign by lowering it half way down the ensign staff and not rehoisting it until the salute was returned. (Kemp 1976:747).

During the salute, the Officer of the Watch calls all members on

the upper deck to face the ship being saluted and stand to attention. On passing the ship the "still" is piped. The senior ship being saluted will then pipe the "still" followed by "carry on". The officer of the watch on the junior ship, having taken the salute then orders "carry on" to be piped.

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21 GUN SALUTES:

It is said that Naval gun salutes are fired in uneven numbers of five or seven on account of an old naval regulation which stipulated that a ship must fire seven guns and a battery on land three shots for each of the seven. In this way the 21 gun salute developed and later became the international convention for the highest national sign of honour. The Queen's Regulations stipulate that all royal salutes comprise 21 gun salutes.

The gun salute when celebrating a victory or very important occasion is said to have originated in the early 15th century in Europe when King Maximilian I returned to Germany after a victorious campaign and the citizens of Augsburg wished to pay him an honorary gun salute or 100 mortar shots and 101 shots were fired by mistake. This number was then retained.

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ROMAN ROCK LIGHTHOUSE FACE-LIFT

From PORTLINK of December 1991: An article by L. Nieuwoudt.

Roman Rock lighthouse, the only lighthouse in South Africa built on a rock, is being extensively upgraded. The South African Navy agreed to fit a 2,5 km long underwater cable from Simon's Town harbour to the lighthouse. A stronger light is needed because the present one is overshadowed by the bright lights of the town. This makes Roman Rock the first lighthouse in Southern Africa to be electrified in this manner, although this method of electrification is used extensively overseas. A back up generator set is installed to ensure that the light and other equipment is always operational.

A rotating optic is being fitted to improve the intensity of the light from 5 000 to about 150 000 candlepower. This will increase the range of light from 13 - 21 nautical miles. A beacon will also be provided to ensure that ships can plot the position of the lighthouse accurately, especially when visibility is poor. The equipment will be monitored via telemetry and radio from Cape Point lighthouse. Certain control functions will also be performed from this lighthouse.

The top section of the lantern house will be replaced to accommodate the increase of intensity. The metal lantern house is being replaced by a glass fibre structure. The design of the

lantern house has been developed to prevent seabirds from sitting on the structure and fouling the glass with droppings that will impede the visibility of the light.

In earlier years the lighthouse was manned by two lightkeepers one of whom alternated on a regular basis with a third lightkeeper. They were transported to the lighthouse by boat. The lighthouse has been automatic and unmanned since 1919. Currently a maintenance team visits the lighthouse every six months and is airlifted to the lighthouse by helicopter (from a point near Glencairn railway station - ED). After the improvements to the lighthouse, which will be completed before the end of the year, a maintenance team will have to visit the structure every six weeks. The lighthouse is also due for an internal clean-up which includes fumigation, washing and painting. Maintenance staff are constantly plagued by seabird lice.

The original construction of the Roman Rock lighthouse began in 1857 and was completed by 16 September 1861. Work could only be carried out for seven days each month due to gale-force winds and high tides which made the rock accessible at irregular intervals. The lighthouse was found to be unsafe and had to be reinforced from 1864 to 1867 before it was put into operation. The same structure has been servicing naval and fishing vessels for more than 120 years." (Photograph on p.21)

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NOTE:

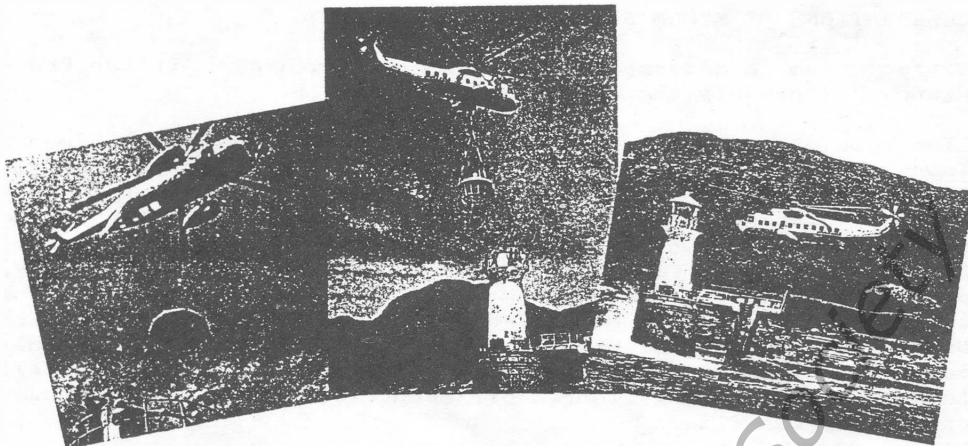
The story of the lighthouse has been written up in earlier Bulletins if you are interested in reading the full story. Part of the old optic can be found on display on the verandah of the Simon's Town Museum. It is believed that the lantern house has found a home at the V & A Waterfront at the Maritime Museum. Since the accompanying photograph by Steven Geldenhuys has been taken another stainless steel landing (or jetty) has been built out to the left of the existing one so that helicopters can land right next to the lighthouse. This means that the helicopters no longer have to hover while men and supplies are dropped to the lighthouse - quite a hazardous undertaking. While the face-lift was being carried out the crew lived "on board". The new top was taken out on 4 March 1992 and the light commenced working on 5 March 1992. The outside of the lighthouse was repainted during the winter of 1995.

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"SPITHEAD PHEASANT" - Naval term for a kippered herring.

"SPITHEAD NIGHTINGALES" - bo'sun's mates and call boys.

"SHOW A LEG" - In the days when women used to be allowed to sleep on board they were allowed to "lie in" and the call "Show a leg" was made to see that it really was a woman who was enjoying the privilege.



The helicopter dropping the new "cap" and then taking a last look to see all was well. (We are told by Hydrographic Survey that instead of the word "candlepower" one should use "candela").

Photographs from Portnet magazine.

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EDWIN & SARAH TURNER

A. E. READ

Edwin Turner (1835-1912) was the son of Thomas Turner (a moulder) and followed the same calling. He was employed at Woolwich Arsenal at the time of his marriage. On 28 March 1864 he married Sarah Ann Ray (1846-1925) daughter of Francis Ray, a Lime Master of Edgbaston, Warwickshire, England, in Edgbaston. They came to South Africa in 1866 where Edwin worked in the Naval Dockyard and Sarah set up a shop at London House (opposite the Post Office) where she ran a Bookshop "with its oil lamps and small windows". She kept all the usual stationery and the English newspapers.

Edwin was a Founder Member of the Phoenix Lodge c. 1879 and was Worshipful Master in 1881. He was a Town Councillor in 1884, by then possibly having retired from the Dockyard, although in those days Council Meetings were usually held after working hours. He also served on many committees in the Town over the years e.g. Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, and Sarah helped organise children's fancy dress dances etc and at one of these their daughter Marjorie went dressed as a butterfly so we can imagine what a good seamstress Sarah was. Marjorie attended the Ursuline Convent. There was also a nephew who was unofficially adopted by Sarah and Edwin. He settled at Wynberg in 1920.

Edwin's son (presumably the ex-nephew) was a keen photographer and the Museum own a large number of his glass plate negatives. When Edwin sold his business and returned to England, the business was bought by Mrs. E. Hollyer.

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CELEBRATIONS AT SIMON'S TOWN - ARMISTICE 1918.

Extract from a newspaper report by Reuter South African Press Agency. (Probably the Cape Times - ED)

"The news of the signing of the armistice was heralded in Simon's Town yesterday afternoon about 1.30 by the firing of one of the flagship's guns, which had been placed on the breakwater for the purpose. Three shots were fired, which was the signal for the cessation of all work and the closing of all shops. Instantly the streets were filled with a rejoicing crowd of sailors, soldiers and civilians. The cruisers HYACINTH and TALBOT and the Japanese cruiser NIITAKI dressed ship and were gay with bunting. The official celebration of the event took place this morning in front of the Municipal Building. The rain which fell in the early morning cleared off about 10.30 and the remainder of the day was fine.

At 11.30 there was a large gathering on the ground, including contingents of sailors and soldiers. School children lined up under the platform, on which were assembled the Mayor (Mr. W. Runciman) and Town Councillors, Rear Admiral the Hon. E.S. Fitzherbert CB, Commander-in-Chief; Rear Admiral Marcus Rowley Hill, Senior Naval Officer, Simon's Town; Lieut-Col. Hart R.G.A., Officer Commanding the Troops, Simon's Town; Capt. T. Nagoya of the Japanese Navy; Mr. Murray Bisset, the local member of Parliament; the captains and officers of His Majesty's ships, clergy and the heads of the several departments of the Dockyard. The 100th Psalm was sung to the accompaniment of the band of the flagship, after which the Mayor referred to the good news, and expressed the hope that the armistice would be the forerunner of a lasting and honourable peace. The Mayor proceeded to outline some of the phases of the great struggle and paid a tribute to the memory of those who had made the supreme sacrifice.

Mr. M. Bisset moved the following resolution: "That the Mayor be requested to cable to His Majesty the King an expression of loyal congratulations from the people of Simon's Town upon the armistice accepted by Germany, and of heartfelt gratitude to our brave sailors and soldiers and the Allies for the great sacrifices made and endured on behalf of civilisation and liberty." In moving the resolution Mr. Bisset referred to the splendid deeds of the British Navy, its sailors and those of the mercantile marine; also to the soldiers and to the great and magnificent army which had been built up from the very small one which existed at the commencement of hostilities. Referring to the good work of our Allies, he made particular mention of our alliance and friendship with Japan, which nation was represented on the platform that day.
Flags were immediately hoisted on public and private buildings, hooters and fog signals were sounded and bells rung."

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THE ALABAMA, TUSCALOOSA AND THE SAXON

J.A.S. ABECASAIS-PHILIPS

Everybody knows the story about the Confederate steamer ALABAMA (1) which illegally slipped her moorings in Liverpool on 29 July 1862 and entered the American Civil War causing havoc among Union shipping. The ALABAMA'S buccaneering antics under her Captain Raphael Semmes off the South African coast in August 1863 have become part of the country's folklore and immortalised in song. What is less known is the story of Commander Charles K. Baldwin of the Union steamer VANDERBILT and his unsuccessful attempt to find the ALABAMA and his success in retrieving part of the cargo of the TUSCALOOSA (formerly the 500 ton CONRAD of Philadelphia) which Semmes had captured off South America on 21 June 1863. This story ended in tragedy and murder, but it should be told all the same.

Originally Semmes captured a Union ship, the SEA BRIDE just off Green Point, Cape Town, but the Union Consul Walter Graham, claimed this occurred within the 3-mile limit. Furthermore Semmes allowed the prize to drift within 2 miles of shore thus violating British neutrality. Wodehouse was called upon to adjudicate and decided after considering the evidence that the capture had occurred outside the 3-mile limit and was thus permissible. The Union Consul argued that modern artillery made a nonsense of even a 3-mile limit, but Wodehouse pointed out in his report to the Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, that there were no guns at the Cape with a longer range. Accordingly he decided in Semmes' favour.

Semmes, having won the Governor round once, now applied to bring in a second prize for repairs and provisions (the TUSCALOOSA), and all would have gone well had Rear-Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker, Commander-in-Chief at the Cape, not discovered the original cargo of wool from the CONRAD still on board the re-named ship. Admiral Baldwin Walker now asked Wodehouse for guidance. Semmes claimed that he had converted the former CONRAD into a tender to the ALABAMA as a ship of war by placing guns on deck and a crew in charge under Lt John Low. Wodehouse after consulting the Acting Attorney General, who in turn poured over Wheaton's book on Mercantile Law, agreed to Semmes' request. The Union Consul protested yet again and with increased vigour.

Wodehouse's request to London for guidance for future occasions brought down a reproof on his head for accepting Semmes' violating of neutrality by allowing the SEA BRIDE to drift within 2 miles of shore. Furthermore he was informed that he should have seized the TUSCALOOSA as an uncondemned prize but the Duke of Newcastle's advisers prevaricated on the question as to the status of the ship, merely stating that Wheaton in their opinion had no bearing upon the question.

The net result of all this was that when Low brought in the TUSCALOOSA again for refitting and provisioning, Wodehouse instructed Admiral Walker to seize it. Union Consul Graham had at last got what he wanted, but not for long, though long enough

to deprive the Confederate navy of the TUSCALOOSA. Protests against the seizure of the ship resulted in the Duke of Newcastle, after taking legal advice, ordering Wodehouse in March 1863 to restore the TUSCALOOSA to the Confederates which could not be done immediately, and in fact never was, because Low had already left the Cape and the ALABAMA was sunk by the Union ship KEARSAGE off Cherbourg in July 1864. By that stage it was becoming clear that the Confederates were losing the war.

Wodehouse must have been more confused than ever, but in the meantime he had to deal with an even trickier and decidedly more unpleasant problem. Hard on the heels of Captain Semmes came the wrathful Commander Baldwin in the Union steamer VANDERBILT. He just missed Semmes at the Cape but heard that Semmes had arranged to sell the cargo of wool from the TUSCALOOSA up the coast, to a Cape Town firm. By taking delivery at Angra Pequena (now called Luderitz) in South West Africa (now Namibia) and not within the jurisdiction of the Cape Colony it was no doubt hoped to circumvent legal difficulties. Baldwin located the wool on the SAXON anchored off Angra Pequena. He subsequently sent the SAXON as a prize to New York, but before this something worse happened. The VANDERBILT put a Lt Donoghon in charge of the SAXON. Donoghon was of an excitable and suspicious nature and resented the Master of the ship, Stephen Shepherd, still giving orders to his men. Shepherd was a courageous but not a tactful man. He told Donoghon that he had not acted in a gentlemanly manner. Later on the 1st Mate, James Gray, was slow to obey an order by Donoghon, who was standing above him on the poop. Donoghon pushed Gray, who was climbing up a ladder towards him. Gray lost his balance, tried to steady himself, which action might just conceivably have been misconstrued by Donoghon, who shot him. Death was almost instantaneous (2).

Shock and revulsion were felt by all and vigorous protests were made to the Cape and from there to London. Wodehouse's protest to Newcastle also included mention of Walker having helped himself to coal on Penguin Island, which coal had been intended for the SAXON. Having protested mightily Wodehouse then discovered that Angra Pequena and Penguin Island were not British territory. Angra Pequena belonged by private treaty to the Cape Town firm of de Pass, Spence & Co. since 1863 and Penguin Island had been annexed by the former Governor Sir George Grey in 1861 in the Queen's name but without Her Majesty's approval. The Governor's annexation was thus disallowed and all responsibility in the matter disavowed. The British Foreign Minister, Earl Russell, protested to the Union Government about Grey's murder but Donoghon was later acquitted by a federal court. Mary Jane Grey buried her husband with due ceremony on 19 April 1864.

Finally the nagging question remains: was it really murder and if it was, was it first degree? As Wodehouse put it in his report dated 18 December 1863 "whether the act was the result of wanton ferocity or whether it was perpetrated under the influence of unfounded apprehension, it seems hard to say"(3). We shall never know!

(For Footnotes see next page)

FOOTNOTES:

1. For an excellent account of the ALABAMA story, see Edna and Frank Bradlow: Here comes the Alabama. The Career of a Confederate Raider. Cape Town and Amsterdam 1958. See also Mariaschal Murray: Ships and South Africa. A Maritime Chronicle of the Cape OUP 1933. Admiral Raphael Semmes: My Adventures Afloat: A Personal Memoir of my Cruises and Services in the SUMTER and ALABAMA. Part 1 & 2 London 1869. Arthur Sinclair: Two Years on the Alabama London 1896.
2. There are several accounts by witnesses of what happened and this one is based on the one submitted by the "Agents" of Gray's widow to Rawson W. Rawson, Secretary to the Government at the Cape, dated 16 December 1863 (Cape Archives).
3. Cape Archives GH 23/29 NR 139 folio 353.

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HMS SNAKE, THE ALABAMA AND THE KEARSAGE

A. E. Read

HMS SNAKE built in 1854 of 477 tons 169 h.p. 4 guns, was a steam screw sloop which had been on the China station for 4 years until 1864 when she came to Simon's Bay en route to Ascension and England. She was commanded by Commander Moresby son of the famous Fairfax Moresby who was Senior Naval Officer at The Cape in 1820 and was at Algoa Bay to oversee the arrival of the 1820 Settlers at that port.

At St Vincent on 30 April 1864 HMS SNAKE observed a large American man-of-war paddler which she mistook for an English mail-steamer, whilst the Americans mistook the SNAKE for the ALABAMA. The two ships looked very similar but the ALABAMA was slightly larger. Thinking the paddler was the mail steamer Cdr. Moresby sent a boat over for letters and news and to the amazement of the officer sent, on reaching the deck he was immediately surrounded by armed men, though both sides were hugely amused when the double mistake was cleared up. A few days later Moresby had another American encounter this time with a large American corvette at St Michaels and she turned out to be the KEARSAGE which eventually in July 1864 sank the ALABAMA off Cherbourg, France.

In closing it would be appropriate to mention that in 1994 the body of Simeon W. Cummings, Asst. Engineer of the ALABAMA, who died in a shooting accident while hunting at Saldanha on 3 August 1863, was returned to the United States. His body had been interred on the farm of P. J. Pienaar between Saldanha and Vredenburg.

References:

O'Byrne - Naval Biographical Dictionary 1846
Moresby - Two Admirals p.152, 176-178.

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SIMON'S TOWN'S WAR EFFORT 1939-45 WAR

A letter from the records of the Simon's Town Museum.

"Admiralty House
Simon's Town
January 1942

Dear Mrs. Earp,

As you know Mrs. Crawley, much to our regret, has left Simon's Town, and I am afraid that during the Seaside Splash and the holidays I have had no time to arrange for someone to take on the knitting circle. However, Mrs. Rea (the wife of Rev. Rea - ED) has very kindly offered to do this and will give out wool and receive finished garments at her house 1 Old Hospital Terrace, every Monday afternoon between 2 o'clock and 5 p.m. This is the third winter of the war and our sailors badly need warm garments, so may I ask you to start knitting again so that we may produce as many garments as possible? To raise funds for the purchase of wool the Naval and Dockyard Women's Guild will continue their monthly produce Market, held on the first Saturday in every month, in the Phoenix Hall, starting on 7th March. Please give this your full support both by sending produce and bringing your friends to buy. To those of you who belong to the Guild, we resume our monthly Meetings on 4th March at Admiralty House and every succeeding first Wednesday in the month at Mrs Rea's house. We hope to make these afternoons really busy knitting parties and from time to time we shall play Tombola in order to raise funds. To those of you who are not members, wont you join? If you are connected with the Navy or the Dockyard please come to the first Meeting where you will be very welcome.

Yours sincerely
AUDREY N. BUDGEN
BRANCH COMMANDANT, S.A.W.A.S.
President, Naval and Dockyard
Women's Guild

P.S. There will be an extra Market in Jubilee Square on Saturday 7 February. "

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PIRATES: DID THEY USE SIMON'S BAY AND FALSE BAY?

A. E. READ

In Bulletin No. 2 Volume XV p.64 we wrote about the possibility of Necho and the Phoenicians using False Bay. There is distinct evidence that they used Saldanha Bay so

There have been many books written such as "Pirates' Who's Who"; "History of Pirates"; "A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates" by Daniel Defoe under the pen name of Captain Charles Johnson; "Cape Records of the South Sea Pirates" which C. Graham Botha reprinted from "The Critic" Vol.I No.4 June 1933; "Pirates of the Eastern Seas" 1933 by Charles Grey; "Islands in a forgotten sea"1959 (author unknown); and "Cutlass and Yardarm"by Eric Rosenthal.

Bristol, England was the home of Britain's slave fleet. Slaves provided cargo in one direction while piracy was a very rewarding past-time on the other leg of the voyage. Bristol was the home of two noted pirates - Blackbeard (real name Edward Teach) and Bartholomew Roberts. The pirates who roamed the southern seas had their headquarters mostly on Madagascar where up in the north were several large bays and their main bases were Johanna Island and Antongil. They also used Mohilla Island off the Comores and the remote islands in the Seychelles group. The Royal Navy was always on the lookout for pirate ships and the sight of Royal Navy sails near their bases had them fleeing into the security of the adjoining jungle. 1722 saw the last great mass hanging of pirates.

Pirates had been about since very early days in the approaches to the Persian Gulf between Qatar and the Oman plundering shipping returning from the Far East with silks and spices in the days when the overland route to Europe was still in use. Other rich pickings were off North Africa and to a lesser degree the West African coast and in fact the Irish settlers coming to Simon's Bay on the EAST INDIAN and the FANNY in the first half of 1820 were accosted by pirates north of the equator.

There are many references in the Cape Archives where pirates have chased or captured richly laden Dutch and English East Indiamen on their way from the East. These sea-robbers respected no nationality and any vessel large or small was good enough prey for them. The pirates were a real menace to trade, and consequently each ship was fitted out as an armed merchant-man, ready to defend herself against any piratical attack. In fact ships of the English East India company were painted to resemble Royal Naval ships and had false gun emplacements.

In 1713 a group of English pirates who had had no success in trying to interest their Government in aiding them with their settlement in Madagascar, petitioned the Swedish Government for help. There were 1400 Madagascar pirates involved in this attempt. They requested protection from the Swedish King in exchange for certain services and payments. They also asked if they could become Swedish citizens. They stated that they were wealthy but wanted to settle down in peace and no longer carry

on as pirates. They mentioned that they owned between them 25 vessels. This will give you some idea of how piracy had succeeded. One of their wishes was to carry out trade with the East Indies "on behalf of Sweden".

However, the King of Sweden was away in Turkey when their petition arrived so no decision was made in his absence. At this time Norway and Denmark were united under King Frederik IV and they carried out their own raids on their Swedish neighbour's shipping. The King of Sweden obviously thought that the pirates' help could assist him to alleviate some of his expenses incurred in his latest military adventure and counteract the depredations suffered in the attacks on Swedish shipping by Norway and Denmark. Many of his captains showed interest but also began to attack the shipping of the French and the Dutch which action greatly upset these two nations.

Well known among those who wished to help Sweden was John Norcross of Liverpool, a Jacobite sympathiser, who had escaped to France and then on to Sweden. After a very eventful life he spent his last 32 years in a Danish prison. Another was Jasper William Morgan. He was sent as an emissary from the Madagascar pirates all the way from the Cape of Good Hope to Strömstad on the north-west coast of Sweden to deal directly with the King. Morgan claimed to be of Royal Irish blood and a descendant of O'Morugh. In August 1720 he was accepted as a Swedish nobleman. The King promised Morgan and his men protection and made Morgan the Swedish Governor of the Island of St Marie off the Madagascar coast where they had another stronghold. He was to set up the Swedish flag and establish a colony on the Island of Madagascar. In 1720 the Swedes were also planning to set up the Swedish East India Company and plans for this were discussed by the Swedish minister in London and some well known English merchants and it was actually considered that Madagascar would be a staging post on the route to the Far East. However Charles XII died in 1718 and nothing came of this and by 1727 it had petered out although Tsar Peter became interested when he heard of it.

One of the pirate settlements - I think Johanna Island - was at one time known as the colony of "Libertatia". It was run on strictly socialistic lines. It was here that the famous Captain Kidd had his headquarters and we find mention of him in the Cape records. He operated over a wide area and also had quarters at New Providence in the Bahamas. They frequently called at the Cape as innocent trading vessels with paper and passports in apparently good order. Others who appear in Cape records are Captain George Dew and Captain Thomas Tew.

Hubert Hugo, at one time also in the employ of the VOC in Surat, turned to piracy. He had a ship called the BLACK EAGLE and amongst the many ships he harrassed was the GEORGE AND MARTHA 36 guns which put into Table Bay on 12 March 1663 and reported that she had been attacked near St Helena. It was piracy which caused the Dutch and the English to use the convoy system for their fleets returning from the East.

In 1693 Captains Dew and Tew had received a commission from the

Governor of Barbados to join the Royal West Africa Company on the West Coast of Africa in an attack on a French factory (the name given to a trading settlement) at Goree in Gambia. Tew and his crew instead of going to West Africa, turned pirates and sailed for the Red Sea via the Cape. Dew had been commissioned by Isaac Richier (Lt. Governor and Vice-Admiral of the Bermudas) to a ship called the AMY and Tew to a ship called the AMITY. AMY was a two-master constructed in Bermuda, 72 feet long and 18 feet in the beam. She was a fast sailer and could carry 16 guns. Dew sailed for Saldanha Bay with his prize. He had sustained much damage - to his main mast and to the side of his ship - and he obviously hoped to carry out repairs there. His arrival was immediately observed by the military post (near the present day farm "Geelbek") and a runner was sent to Cape Town to report the matter. An English ship SUCCESS recently arrived from Surat, confirmed that he was a pirate ship. The Council of Policy met at the Castle and decided to send an armed vessel to demand her papers and to bring her to Table Bay. The Captain was instructed that if she resisted he should open fire.

Dew when he was ashore obtaining refreshments was warned that in all probability a vessel would shortly arrive from Table Bay. He decided not to wait but sail straight away. Too late! The AMY's anchor was weighed and her sails had begun to fill when the look-out reported a sail making for them. On being hailed Dew gave no reply and two shots were fired across his bows. The Dutch ship sent a boat across with an armed party and boarded the AMY, making an easy capture. The pirates were driven below and the ship sailed for Cape Town. Dew and three of his chief men being taken on board the Dutch ship for safety, in case they decided to make a run for it. Dew stated in Cape Town that he was bound for Madagascar to buy slaves and handed over his papers containing his instructions and two commissions, one appointing him to the ASSURANCE in 1691 and the other to the AMY eighteen months later. However on searching the ship papers were found in a secret place which incriminated him. It was decided to ship the whole lot to Holland to be dealt with there by the Directors of the Dutch East India Company.

Strangely enough on 8 May 1699 there is a report of an English ship, the AMY, being boldly plundered by English pirates in Saldanha Bay and on 9 May 1699 two Dutch ships PETER AND PAUL and GENDT likewise. Communications being what they were it was 2 days before the Governor in Table Bay heard and by then the pirates had sailed away.

To revert to Captain Kidd - not much is known about his early life but it is thought he was born at Greenock in Scotland around 1645. It is thought he went to sea as a boy and probably emigrated to America at around 20 years of age. By the 1690s he was a man of some substance with a lovely house in Manhattan at the corner of Pearl and Hanover Streets, right on the waters edge. He was married to a wealthy girl much younger than himself and enjoyed the friendship of the Governor of New York, one Col. Benjamin Fletcher. This friendship led Kidd into trouble. Fletcher and other wealthy friends had a grandiose scheme for controlling the pirates, Kidd seemed the ideal tool. The men approached acquaintances in England with their scheme

and even the King promised to put up £3000 to outfit the expedition, though his money was never forthcoming. Kidd's ship was the ADVENTURE GALLEY. On his first voyage he fell in with the Navy Squadron off the Cape. This was commanded by Commodore Warren and Kidd had the effrontery to demand some new sails from the Commodore to replace ones he had lost in a storm. Warren refused and Kidd then told him his commission entitled him to aid and if the Navy refused he would seize the sails from the first merchant ship he encountered. Angry words were exchanged and Commodore Warren threatened to press 30 of Kidd's men the next morning. Kidd, in the calm of the night, sneaked away with the aid of his galley's 23 pairs of oars. This incident made him think better of venturing into Table Bay where he would probably have been arrested. After many profitable adventures he arrived back in New York to find that the new Governor was not a friend. Kidd was arrested and all his goods confiscated, amongst which were 2,353 oz silver, more than 1 lb of precious stones, 57 bags of sugar and 41 bales of merchandise. All this was shipped under close scrutiny to the Treasury in England. In January 1700 he was taken back to England to stand trial - travelling in HMS ADVICE. He lay in close confinement in prison from their arrival on 11 April 1700 till 31 March 1701. He was too ill by then to plead properly, it was an unfair trial and made worse by the fact that two of his crew turned against him. Soon after 8 May he was hanged, and his body bound with chains and encased in an iron framework and hung up as a grisly object lesson at Tilbury Point as a warning lesson to others. From the sale of his valuables which had been forfeited to the Crown £6,472 was raised and one of the buildings which now houses the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich was bought with part of Kidd's money.

Kidd's family survived the trauma of his imprisonment and death. For another two years following his arrest, they lived in seclusion in New York but 18 months after his execution his widow married a prominent politician and lived another 43 years in comfortable circumstances in New Jersey while his daughters grew up, married and had families.

While Kidd was languishing in Newgate prison awaiting his trial, a Royal Naval squadron of four warships had arrived off St Mary's, Madagascar and cruised round Madagascar for a year. In the face of this force the pirates had either surrendered or fled. In 1710 1 English and 1 Irish pirate from Madagascar had been pardoned and allowed to settle at the Cape. The Governor of New York (Bellamont) had forced pirates out of his area and the same happened in Virginia. When the War of the Spanish Succession broke out many pirates flocked to join the British irregular navy. For almost a decade piracy was seldom heard of, but in 1713 the war came to an end. Unemployment forced the seamen on the privateers to the illegal plundering of all shipping, mostly in the Caribbean. They made their base in the Bahamas, an ideal base to prey on the shipping which passed through the Gulf of Florida.

It is appropriate that we should record some of the pirates escapades which took place around our shores and on the lanes which affected Cape shipping. On 23 June 1669 in Table Bay

anchorage the East India Company's flute LEPELAER was anchored when she was taken over by 3 men named Veen and Teunissen of Rotterdam and Hendriks of Oudewater. This was by pre-arrangement with three members of her crew Claassen, de Ruyter and Christiaanse. The ship was sailed out under cover of darkness and while the Captain was ashore. Nothing more was ever heard of the ship so the men could not be brought to trial.

On 17 April 1669 the DELFSHAVEN reached Table Bay having been attacked by a group of pirates near Madeira when her Captain Michiel Jansen was killed. Indiamen were occasionally issued with Turkish passports to be used if needed when attacked by pirates. The Indiaman RITTHEM in 1779 had Turkish Passport No. 477 "to be kept on the ship, to be used in case of need" and in 1780 a similar document No. 582 (!) was forwarded to HUIS TE KROOSWIJK by their Honours the Admiralty in Amsterdam "for the defence of the ship".

Piracy even touched the van der Stel family. Simon's younger son Cornelius, set off as Junior Merchant, in January 1694 in the RIDDELSCHAP for Batavia. The ship was either lured ashore or captured by pirates near Antandon, Madagascar, an area under Chief Andan Maits. Van der Stel sent an expedition to try and find what had happened and they returned to say he had been "adopted" by one of the Malagasy Kings together with Jacobus Couper (Honourable Councillor Extraordinary of India) - probably they were the only survivors as the others had succumbed either to their wounds or to malaria. For "adopted" I would read "protective custody"! Be that as it may nothing more was heard for several years until a member of the Mauritius garrison arrived at the Cape and asked to see Willem Adriaan van der Stel. This was in 1705. He told Willem Adriaan that he had met a Madagascar pirate who told him that Cornelius had died on Madagascar in 1701.

In 1662 on 28 February a British ship the ORANGE arrived without hindrance in False Bay. The Company were informed and sent a wagon and 30 men with supplies to the Bay with a request that she sail immediately for Table Bay. Remember Simon's Bay was only a winter anchorage. The ORANGE failed to arrive there until 3 October. Where had she been in the meantime?

Several Dutch East Indiamen fell prey to Captain Condon, another pirate. One was the CROWN PRINCE OF PRUSSIA (Captain Jacob van der Stolk) in the latter half of 1717. She was sailing from Rotterdam to the Cape. Another was the UNO (Captain Pieter de Vlamingh) en route from Texel to the Cape in July 1718. After taking the UNO Condon spent a month at the Island of Ferdinando while his crew ransacked the ship and looked for money and valuables in the sea chests of the passengers and crew. After taking all they fancied they actually handed the ship back to the Captain. Some of his crew deserted to the pirates but 2 Englishmen, 1 Irishman and a Venetian asked to be taken into Dutch service and they finally arrived here on 14 October 1718. Another Dutch ship the ASSENBURG managed to shake off Condon's ship and arrived safely in Table Bay on 22 February 1720. She had been chased within sight of Table Mountain.

It was on 18 August 1725 that something happened in Simon's Bay which really alarmed the Castle. Frederick Rossouw a retired member of the Burgher Council reported to the Governor that he had found a ship anchored in the Bay between Simon's Bay and Fish Hoek. She had arrived in the night and anchored quite easily and safely. It was wondered if she had done this before. She was a 26 gun ship the GREAT ALEXANDER and her master was Captain Peter Dun(n). She had a crew of 60 men and it was not known if she was a pirate ship or from the English East India Company. The Wharfmaster rode over to investigate from his office in Simon's Bay. A man stationed at the whale fishery at Fish Hoek said the ship had put a party ashore who had asked for meat and vegetables, and had tried to bribe him with wine and rum gifts. Rhenius was sent down from the Castle with 50 soldiers on 22 August only to find that just as quietly and mysteriously as she had arrived so she had slipped away. However the next day 2 of her crew were found who confirmed she was a pirate and that her crew were mostly Dutch from Amsterdam. Altogether 13 of her crew were rounded up.

It was the ease with which the GREAT ALEXANDER sailed in and out of False Bay which made the Company realise they should do something about having a presence at the Bay. After all there were many nice sandy beaches where pirate ships could be careened and they could easily pick up provisions from the farms on the eastern shore of the Bay in the vicinity of Stellenbosch. Also how easy it would be for an invading force to land on the False Bay coast and march overland to take the Castle.

Henry Solomon (older brother of Saul Solomon the Member of the Legislative Assembly and Cape Town printer) was born on St Helena on 18 April 1816. He recalled the Naval Squadron under Commodore Collier of HMS SYBILLE that patrolled the Atlantic between Simon's Bay and St Helena. Henry did his schooling in England and travelled back from England in 1827 in the LORD WALSHINGHAM when she was attacked by Benito de Soto, known as the last of the notorious pirates when hung in 1832, off the Guinea Coast. He was sailing in the BLACK JOKE under the flag of a South American country!

A Captain Harrington (not of Simon's Town) traded for a while in an ex-privateer called "LALA ROOKH" and later moved to the PHOENIX, another ex-Privateer launched on the Clyde in 1842. The PHOENIX was the first steamer to reach Durban but did not actually cross the bar.

Another Cape Town family who suffered at the hands of the pirates were the Boyes family after whom Boyes Drive is named. Grandfather (William Boyes) was bringing the cutter LIGONIER from London to St Helena with his wife, his family and their maid. Just as they were accosted by the pirates a Russian corvette, the KROTSKI, hove into sight and the pirateer made off.

It was Captain Henry Dundas Trotter of the Royal Navy who probably had the most bizarre encounter with pirates. He was captain of HMS CURLEW between 1830 - 1834 on the Coast of Africa Station and was at Simon's Town when he was informed of the

antics of a pirate ship called the PENDA. He was ordered to sail for West Africa. Off Principe in June 1833 he received the latest news of the PENDA. She was 12 miles up the Nazareth River when he arrived. The pirate crew set fire to a trail of gunpowder but the navy threw the barrel over the side just as the pirates set off for the shore in a ship's boat. The local king King Passal would not give them up to the Navy so CURLEW lay in wait at the river mouth, while the pirates were on shore. A young boy in the CURLEW inadvertently dropped a lighted fuse near a barrel of gun powder and in the resulting explosion Captain Trotter was injured in the leg. Many of his crew were killed and maimed. The ship sank rapidly and the survivors took to a long-boat only to be fired upon from the shore by swarms of natives. They made for the deserted PENDA and boarded this ramshackle and evil-smelling haven and managed to sail her to Principe Island where the Royal Navy had a Depot.

At Principe the PENDA was refitted and Captain Trotter was determined not to be bested by a pirate! He sailed for the Nazareth River under a Portuguese flag! The son of King Passal came out to greet them. He and his boats crew were seized. Trotter then attacked King Passal's village and the pirates were captured with the help of the villagers who by this time had tired of their company and the unwelcome attention it was receiving from the Royal Navy. The pirates were taken to Principe and lodged there while Trotter returned to "clean up" the area. He sent ashore a boat with 4 officers, 6 white seamen and 10 Kroomen. The situation did not go too well for them but the situation was saved by the arrival of the cruiser FAIR ROSAMUND. Trotter then set sail with his captives in the PENDA for England where they were brought to justice and all hanged.

Captain Trotter returned to the Cape to be Commander-in-Chief at Simon's Town from 1854 - 57.

These days there is piracy of a different kind. This time connected with drugs. Over 200 ships, mostly yachts or cabin cruisers, disappear annually round the area known as the Bermuda Triangle and the West Indies. Their crews are often infiltrated by volunteers who are in reality employed by the drug runners. They murder the crew/owners of the boats and sail them to rendezvous with a large ship which then trans-ships the drugs to the smaller boats for onward transmission to the United States. The small boats are then scuttled. It is easier for the smaller boats to evade the American Coast Guard surveillance vessels.

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ROYAL NAVAL FLEET AIR ARM OSPREY K5747 OF HMS AMPHION
(SQUADRON 716)

MAUREEN LLOYD

K5747 was a seaplane originally, an Osprey from the Hawker stable, forerunner of the Fury and the more famous and revered Hurricane. It first flew in 1935; one of an order of 26 ranging between 5742 to 5767, and it was later fitted with wheels for use as a trainer for reserve pilots.

Shortly before 11 a.m. on 20 January 1938, Lt. John Price of HMS NEPTUNE took off from the bumpy Youngsfield airfield in the Hawker Osprey with instructions to fly for half an hour in a northerly direction. In the other seat was Able Seaman L.V. Hammond of HMS AMPHION who, anxious to gain air experience, had been granted permission to accompany Price. At this time AMPHION was being relieved by NEPTUNE as flagship of the South Atlantic Squadron. Some few minutes after their take off they were seen by a man on the bowling green at Somerset West coming in over Sir Lowry's Pass and heading straight for the mist-shrouded Helderberg Mountain above the town.

A labourer working on a farm high on the slopes of the mountain saw the plane pass directly over his head, seconds later to strike, at high speed, with engines running, causing it to somersault. Both men were killed instantly. Ten minutes later the mist had cleared. Later in the day investigations were made and the bodies were brought down to Somerset West in the evening.

In trying to reconstruct the cause of the accident the authorities seem to have concluded that Lt Price thought he would by-pass the mountain on his course for the north. Instruments then were not quick to react and fliers often had to rely on their own judgement and even a skilled pilot, as Lt Price undoubtedly was, might easily lose a sense of direction when suddenly enveloped in fog. Instead of flying directly north on taking off from Youngsfield, they must have made a sweep over False Bay, to have come in from the direction described.

Lt Price was buried at sea from HMS NEPTUNE at 10 a.m. the next day. Able Seaman Hammond's burial arrangements were not reported.

Over the years more mists came down and lifted, with many seasons of summer heat and winter rain which covered the wreckage with bush and shrub. In September 1978 municipal workers, clearing alien vegetation on the slopes of the mountain came upon a crater in the ground surrounded by pieces of metal, parts of what had obviously been an aeroplane.

Speculation on its identification - ranging from Fairy Swordfish to Seafox - was finally resolved by the letter and number on the tail and officials of the South African Air Force Museum recovered the pieces of this extinct aircraft for possible reconstruction at the Museum's workshops. They were overjoyed with the find because, as far as it is known, there are no parts of any other Hawker Osprey left in the world.

References:

Cape Argus: Jan 1938, September 1978, February 1979.

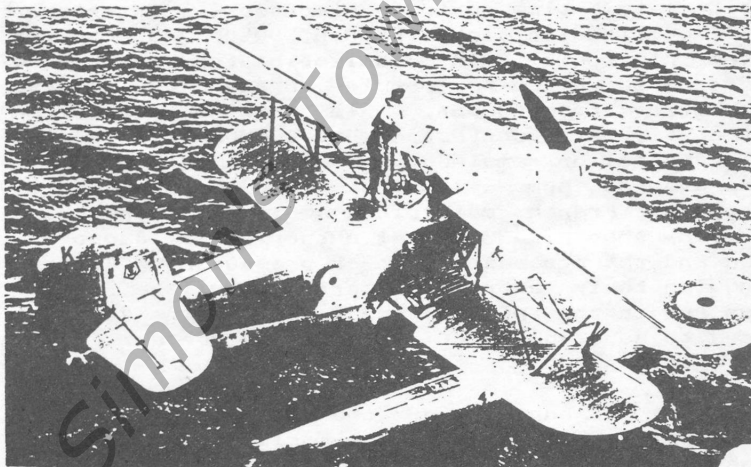
"Wingfield": Gerry de Vries - photograph of K5755 text p. 105

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Notes: Squadron 716 (Catapult) to which this plane belonged was formed on 15 July 1936 for ships of the 6th Cruiser Squadron in the South Africa Station. Initially equipped with Ospreys for use in HMS AMPHION, these began to be replaced by Seafoxes in October 1937 when HMS NEPTUNE arrived. By the outbreak of war the unit had achieved squadron status and was using Simon's Town as a shore base, but on 21 January 1940 it was absorbed into No. 700 Squadron. The Navy List January 1938 gives J.J.E. Farnol as the Flight Commander (HMS AMPHION). He was succeeded by Lt A.J.T. Roe. The hangar was in the West Dockyard Simon's Town at the head of the patent slipway.

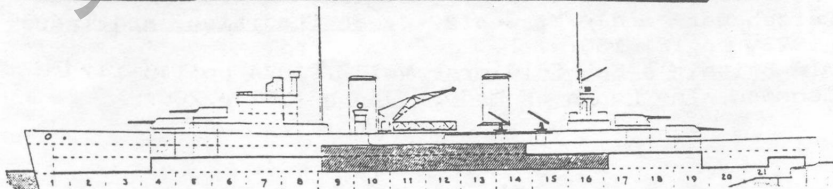
In February 1938 Simon's Town received 4 Fairy Seafox seaplanes off THE CITY OF FLORENCE. The aircraft supplemented the detachment of 716 Squadron stationed at Simon's Town in July 1936. The Seafox were assembled and stored in Simon's Town as replacements for the Hawker Ospreys aboard HMS AMPHION and the 2 Seafox carried by HMS NEPTUNE. Both of these aircraft types were occasionally seen flying over Cape Town or towing drogues for live gunnery practice for RN ships in False Bay. The seaplanes stationed in Simon's Town were maintained by RAF mechanics on detachment to the RN.

We approached the SAAF Museum at Wingfield and Major Bacon put us in touch with Major Becker of SAAF Museum, Swartkop, Pretoria but we have failed to establish what became of the pieces recovered from the crash site. We also received much help and information from the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton, England and have furnished them with copies of the photographs and the text for their records. They identified the badge on the tail plane as being that of HMS AMPHION.



Left: Osprey K5747

Below: Silhouette of
HMS AMPHION
showing the hoists
mid-ship, used to
bring the planes
back on board.



ROYAL MARINES: DESTINATION JAPAN IN 1864 - HMS CONQUEROR

THE SEAFORTH SERIES PART I

A. M. D.

Lieutenant Edward Richards of the Royal Marines died in the naval hospital at Simon's Town on 28 February 1864. (1). A prominent sandstone cross, now somewhat weathered, which was erected to his memory, is situated close to the Runciman Drive entrance (Row 17) to the Garden of Remembrance, Seaforth. The inscription tells us that he was with a battalion of marines en route to Japan. It is a reminder of some historical interest. Why was such a strong force bound for an unlikely destination?

It is well-known that Commodore Perry of the United States forced Japan to open a few ports to foreign trade in 1854. The Western powers then exacted treaties that gave them favoured enclaves in the treaty ports. Intrusive foreigners were not always welcome in Japan in the troubled early 1860s. Strong central rule was absent whilst some of the provincial overlords were mighty potentates. In 1861 there was a civil war during which the British legation at Edo (Tokyo) was attacked and an Englishman travelling to Kyoto was murdered in an incident involving the daimyo of Satsuma. A British squadron bombarded the Satsuma capital in 1863 in a punitive action (2).

It was thought necessary to protect British interests, especially at Yokohama, so a battalion of eight companies was assembled in England and sailed from Plymouth in an old line of battleship HMS CONQUEROR. The guns had been removed from her main deck so that she could provide sufficient space for the contingent. Lieutenant Richards was invalided from CONQUEROR at Simon's Town. On arrival in Japan the battalion encamped at Yokohama until it was re-embarked to take part in another punitive expedition, this time against Shimonoseki, in another large fiefdom. A combined British, French, Dutch and American squadron assaulted this position in retaliation for cannon fire which had been directed at ships passing through the straits that separate Korea from Japan. The marine battalion participated in a fiercely contested but successful landing operation (3). The battalion remained in camp at Yokohama until 1868 when it was ordered home - to be replaced by another in 1870. The British and French maintained small garrisons there until 1875 (4). By that time central authority in Japan had been consolidated and the process began of pressurising foreign powers to relinquish their extra-territorial privileges. It was the end of an era in that part of the Orient as the Japanese islands had ceased to be a sphere of colonial influence..

References:

1. See also register of burials of the sexton, St Francis Church, 29 Feb. 1864. He belonged to the Woolwich Division of the Royal Marines (Navy List 1864).
2. E.O. Reischauer and A.M. Craig, Japan, Tradition and Transformation 1973, pp.121-130.
3. C. Field Britain's Sea-Soldiers, Vol.2, 1924 pp.146-147
4. J-P. Lehmann, The Roots of Modern Japan 1982,p.290.

THE ROYAL NAVY RESCUES CAPTAIN MADORE

A. E. READ

Commodore Caldwell received a message from the Government in Cape Town over the new telegraph which had recently been opened in Cape Town to connect it with Simon's Town. This was to ask him if he had any news of the SUVOROV of His Imperial Majesty's Russian Navy. The message was sent in Morse Code to ensure secrecy. The telegraph wires to Simon's Town were laid by Wednesday 25 April 1860 and the first message received by the Simon's Town telegraph was "Communication is now perfect throughout the line. Mr. J.D. Thomson M.P. has reached here. No vessels arrived today". It was sent at 4 p.m. 25 words and under cost 2s.6d. and 75 words to under 100 cost 7s.6d.

The recipient of Commodore Caldwell's message was Captain C.C. Forsyth of HMS VALOROUS. She was of 1257 tons 16 guns 400 hp engines and the fastest vessel on the Cape station. It appears that the SUVOROV had hurriedly set sail from Cape Town without filling in the usual forms and reporting to the Port office. The reason for this was at first not apparent but fairly early in the morning it was discovered that one Captain Madore was missing from his rooms adjoining his business close to the new Alfred Basin of Cape Town Docks.

It appears that Madore as a young sailor had gone to Russia and joined the Russian Navy. Then he lived for a while in a Black Sea port as a ships' chandler till the Crimean War of 1853. The Allies were thrilled when Madore appeared in their camp near Sebastopol as he had much knowledge of the port area and the approaches to it. He led the Allied fleet into Sebastopol harbour. The port fell in 1855. Madore now had to find a new home for he could never return to Russia - he was a wanted person. He was whisked away to England and South Africa was chosen as his new home where he could escape the Tsar's secret police. He arrived in Cape Town towards the end of 1858 and the only persons who knew his story were the Governor Sir George Grey and the Admiral at Simon's Town.

HMS VALOROUS apprehended the SUVOROV and recovered Captain Madore safe and sound except for a few minor head injuries which had resulted from his capture. His business in Cape Town was put up for sale and he disappeared for some years. He turned up in Kimberley in 1868 where he had a store. All went well until 1873 when another Russian ship arrived - a survey ship. It was probably en route to the Kamchatka peninsula in the Far East. They asked the Government if they could send specialists up country "for scientific reasons". Madore heard of their coming and wisely took off on horseback for the Transvaal for most likely the "scientific reasons" were to catch Madore. Madore set up a trading post at the Woodbrush Hotel in Houtbosberg near Magoebaskloof where he lived out the end of his life ever fearful that he might be discovered.

Sources:

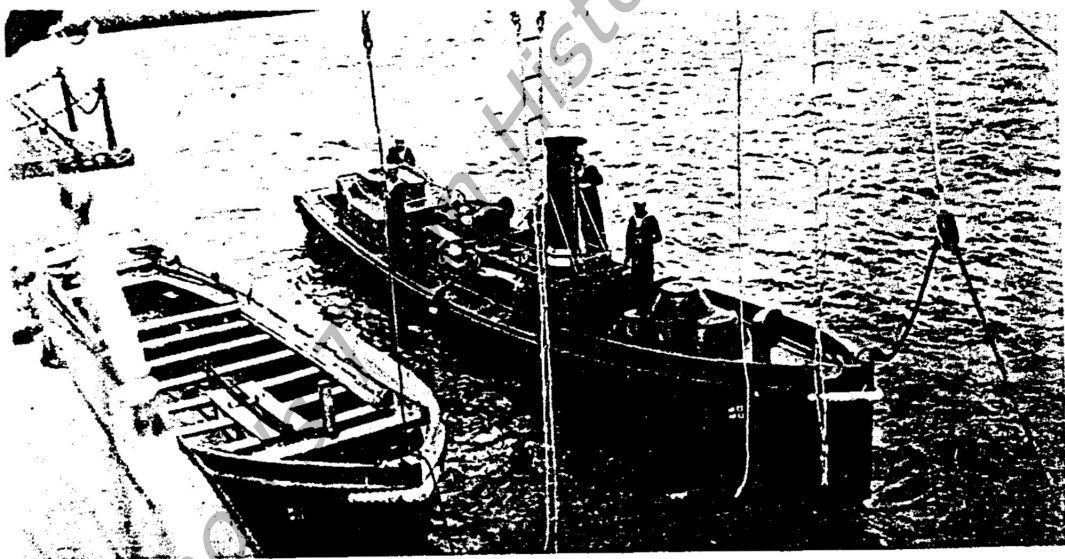
"Cutlass and Yardarm" Eric Rosenthal
Cape Argus: Government Gazette.

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STEAM PICKET BOATS

At certain intervals, depending upon the number of ships in company, ships would be detailed to provide a Duty Steam Boat for collecting Official Mail from all ships present for delivery to the Flagship. When at anchor in port all boats were secured to their ship's lower booms which extended out from the side of the ship as shown in the accompanying photograph.

Even in fine weather boarding a boat from the lower boom had its dramatic moments, as in the case of Midshipman E.S.W. Maclure RN whilst serving in HMS LOWESTOFT at Simon's Town. He was dressed in the correct uniform of round jacket, waistcoat with brass buttons, blue trousers and cap, together with his dirk in a scabbard attached to a dirk belt. As he descended the Jacob's ladder his belt twisted and his dirk slipped out and fell to the bottom. He was now "improperly dressed"! By an amazing coincidence some months later while fishing, someone hooked the missing dirk, traced the owner and returned it. The shipwright's shop filed off the rusted tip and repointed it!



Photograph of a steam picket boat secured to the ship's lower boom

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THE RANK OF FIELD CORNET

Paul Grobbelaar.

The rank of Field Cornet started out as a military rank in the Commando system which evolved in South Africa. All members of the Burgher Militia, especially in the outlying areas, were also required to serve in the Commandos sent out from time to time to punish the Bushmen for stock theft and to get back the missing stock. The person in charge of the Commando was at that stage called a Veldwagmeester. To give them status they were given the rank of Cornet. Cornet comes from the Spanish "Cornetta", which describes the Colours of the unit. The junior officer was called a Cornet and he had to carry the Colours. Also, this was a rank in the Cavalry and not in the Infantry. At the time of the British arrival at the Cape the terminology used to describe this person was the Veldwagmeester, Cornet van der Merwe. The British, during the second occupation adopted the Commando system, apparently because the system was so versatile and the ideal way of drawing the farmers into a local defence system. Only after 1819 the title/rank Field Cornet (Veldkornet) was first mentioned as an official designation. My deduction is that it became too cumbersome to the rank and file to speak of "Veldwagmeester, Cornet van der Merwe". The result was that in the mouth of the burghers it became condensed to "Veldkornet (Field Cornet)". I have no proof. What appeals is the logic of such a conclusion.

The Commando system was initially put under the authority of the Burgerkrygsraad (Burgher Council of War). The Chairman of this council was the Landdrost, who had at his disposal the above mentioned Veldwagmeesters to put in charge of a Commando when it was sent out on a mission. Later on a Commandant was appointed who had to run the affairs of the Commando from the offices of the Burgerkrygsraad. At first the Commandant was not a field officer, whereas the Veldwagmeesters were. Under the British the Commandant became the Officer Commanding of a Commando and as such had to lead his Commando in action. At that stage the Commando was divided into Field Cornetcies under the command of the Field Cornet. Because the country was then so sparsely populated certain civilian duties were also awarded to the Field Cornet, such as being the Justice of Peace in his district. In this respect he reported and heard cases under the authority of the District Magistrate. Eventually when the Voortrekkers left the Cape they took along with them the British derivative of the Commando system and not the Dutch. This is especially borne out by their appointment of a Commandant General, mention of which was first made at the Cape to describe the regular officer appointed to handle the Commando system.

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DR. JAMES WALTON OBE

In our January 1995 Bulletin (pages 90 and 120) we mentioned drawings done by James Walton. For our new members we thought it appropriate to draw your attention to what James Walton has contributed to research in South Africa over the years. James has been a member of this Society for some years and has always been very free with help and assistance for which we have been very grateful.

James Walton retired from Lesotho where he was Deputy Director of Education, for which services he received the OBE. He is a founder member of the Vernacular Architecture Group and Hon. Life President of the South African Vernacular Architecture Society. He has written over 300 papers on vernacular architecture and allied subjects. He is also the author of many books on vernacular architecture, including a book on Lime Kilns from which the above drawings came.

For his services to the study of vernacular architecture he has received many awards and Gold Medals and in 1987 the University of Natal conferred on him an honorary doctorate. His latest book is "Cape Cottages" recording the different types of dwellings built and/or occupied by the Khoikhoi and Coloured peoples of the Western Cape.

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OUR AUTHORS:

A.M. DAVEY: Retired academic historian with a particular interest in the Old Burying Ground, Seaforth. Lives in Simon's Town and is a Vice-President of the Simon's Town Historical Society.

VERNON WHITE: Former Royal Naval officer and merchant shipping executive. Now living in England but still a member of the Simon's Town Historical Society. He has a keen interest in the history of the Royal Navy.

JOHN ABECASAIS-PHILIPS: Member of the Simon's Town Historical Society. At present lives in Japan. His forebear de Pass was responsible for introducing the idea of the Patent Slipway to Simon's Town.

THE LATE G.J. WILSON: Formerly Chairman of the Simon's Town Historical Society and also of the Board of Trustees, Simon's Town Museum. He had a keen interest in Simon's Town's history.

UTE SEEMANN: Archaeologist who gives unstintingly of her knowledge to the Simon's Town Museum.

A.E. READ: Produces the Bulletin with the help of contributors. Friends' Representative on the Board of Trustees of the Simon's Town Museum and also member of the Simon's Town Historical Society. Specially keen on Naval History.

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