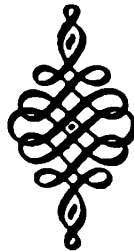


SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN



Price to
non-members
R8.00

Vol XXIV
No. 1
January
2006

CONTENTS

Vol. XXIV NO. 1

JANUARY 2006

Office Bearers & Subscriptions	162
Obituaries: Admiral Syndercombe.....	163
Mr M. Munnik	164
Mr. P. van Blommestein	165
First Tank in South Africa	166
Dr Peter E. Clarke.....	168
Africa Station Club	169
Tambora Volcano 1815	171
Fahrenheit & Celsius	172
Flu Epidemic 1918	172
Simon's Town – Its Revitalisation 1960-1990.....	173
The Longest and Shortest Mayoralty.....	175
Mason & Dixon's Cape Connection	176
The Herschel Family	177
HMS ARK ROYAL & "Oscar" the cat.....	178
The Brenton Family connections.....	179
Sir Jahleel Brenton Part II	180
Electric Harpoons	183
Joy Collier (Mrs M.H.J. Millar)	184
The Russian "Order of Victory"	185
Cape Garrison Artillery	187
Hospital Ships connected with the Cape	188
Sir Jahleel Brenton Part III	192
Edmund Halley (1656-1742)	197
Tristan & Gough Islands Plant Life	198
Nautical Sayings	199
Flogging a dead horse.....	200

LIST OF OFFICE BEARERS

President:

Vice-Presidents: Mrs N. Holderness
Mr N.K. Farquharson

Chairman: Captain T. Korsten SAN (Retd)

Vice-Chairman: Prof. Boet Dommissie

Hon. Secretary: Mrs C. Dilley

Hon. Treas: Mr. M. Leggatt

Membership: Mrs A.E. Read

Committee: Miss M. Cartwright, Mr. H. Clayton, Mr M.E. Mawhinney,
Capt. W.H. Rice SAN (Retd)

Friends Rep: Miss M. Cartwright

S.T.Museum: Mrs C. Salter-Jansen

Editorial Board: Mrs A.E. Read, Miss M.F. Cartwright, Miss J. Cartwright.

This publication is for free circulation to members of the Society. The approval of the CHAIRMAN must be obtained for the reproduction of the whole or any part of any article appearing herein and acknowledgement given in reproduction.

Exchange copies of other historical society publications will be welcome. SPARE COPIES of this Bulletin and copies of previous Bulletins may be obtained from the Society – price R8 plus postage. Articles dealing with matters of historical interest to Simon's Town and the surrounding area will be considered for publication.

Present subscription rates (due 1st January each year) are:

Single members (or 1st person of a family) R35 per person per annum

Additional family members R10 “ “ “ “

Overseas members £10 sterling per annum: Bank Particulars: Standard Bank, Fis Hoek, RSA.

Sort Code 036-009 Account No. 072078588 PLEASE FAX COPY OF DEPOSIT SLIP TO
021-786-1805. Address: P.O. Box 56, Simon's Town 7995

ISS: 0037-5470

OBITUARY

The sudden and untimely death of Vice-Admiral Syndercombe on Monday 18 July 2005 came as a great shock to his former Naval colleagues, family, friends, the many Associations, Organisations, Boards and Societies he belonged to and served on. He was President of the Simon's Town Historical Society, having been elected to this position at our Annual General Meeting in April 2000.

Glen Syndercombe, grew up in Sea Point. He loved to cycle down to the Docks to watch the ships and all the activities associated with shipping that took place in Cape Town Docks. He became a Cadet at the South African Nautical College General Botha where he matriculated in 1949. Ten years were then spent in the Merchant Service in Shell tankers, obtaining his Master Mariner's (Foreign Going) Certificate in 1960. Having met and married Carole, he decided to lead a more settled life, so he joined the S.A.Navy in 1960. After following the Royal Navy specialist course in Navigation and Direction, his Naval career blossomed. He commanded the WWII destroyer SAS JAN VAN RIEBEECK. Glen also led the project ADVOCAT team that brought about and commissioned the Maritime Command and Control complex. Some years later he was appointed the Project Officer for Project JAPONICA which led to the acquisition of a new class of vessel for the SA Navy, namely the Strike Craft. The knowledge gained from this project stood him in good stead when he was later appointed Director Naval Operations and subsequently Chief of Naval Staff Operations at Naval Headquarters in Pretoria. In 1985 Glen Syndercombe was appointed Chief of the SA Navy with the rank of Vice-Admiral.

Admiral Syndercombe had a sharp and enquiring mind. He understood people. He was always open to suggestions. His inner strength, honesty and integrity continued to be a source of great motivation to those who worked for him and with him. Admiral Syndercombe put to good use his energy and managerial skills after his retirement in 1989, to causes that benefited society. He was actively involved in a wide range of Organisations, notably the Master Mariners' Association, the NSRI, The Sailors Home in Cape Town, the Naval Cadets, the General Botha Old Boys' Association and Trust, The Simon's Town Museum, The Maritime Division of the Simon's Town High School and also Christ Church, Constantia where his Memorial Service took place on 18 July 2005.

Admiral Syndercombe was the recipient of the following awards: The Star of South Africa Silver, The Southern Cross Decoration, The S.A. Police Star for Outstanding Service, The Order of Resplendent Banner with Grand Cordon from the Republic of China and The Great Star of Military Merit from Chile.

To have served, worked and known this great man was an honour. He will be sorely missed as an officer and a gentleman.

TMK

MICHAEL HENRY REID MUNNIK 13.5.30 - 15.8.05

OBITUARY

Sadly on 15 August 2005 Mike died after a long and painful illness. Mike, a Vice-President of the Simon's Town Historical Society for a number of years was born in Paarl on 13 May 1930. He and his wife Ann settled in Simon's Town in the early 1970's. Mike founded the architectural firm Munnik, Back and Visser, Architects in Cape Town in 1959. However, he devoted much of his efforts to the conservation and regeneration of Simon's Town. He was a member of the Architectural Advisory Committee in Simon's Town for many years. He was also Chairman of the Boulders Heritage Association in addition to being a member of the Boulders Advisory Committee.

Mike designed and worked on a number of local and historical buildings, including the Simon's Town Waterfront, the Ricketts Terrace area, the proposed Simon's Town Station development, and the re-design of the British Hotel in Simon's Town. He was awarded two Conservation Awards by the South African Institute of Architects – the first in 1989 for his work on Jubilee Square, Simon's Town and the second in 1991 for the restoration of De Goede Hoop Estate in Noordhoek. Most recently he was very much involved in the re-development of the old Majestic Hotel in Kalk Bay.

In addition to his considerable professional contributions, Mike was a founder member of the Simon's Town Art Group and a keen artist, holding many solo and joint exhibitions. He participated in the Cape to Rio Yacht Race in 1984 and also

sailed from Cape Town to Nice in 1988. In 1987 he was Simon's Town Citizen of the Year. Three weeks before his death, he was awarded the Medal of Distinction by the South African Institute of Architects for his immense contribution to South Africa's architectural legacy. Mike is survived by his wife Ann, four children and 11 grandchildren.

TMK

PETER VAN BLOMMESTEIN (died 5 September 2005)

Peter worked for many years for De Beers Diamond Mines and therefore lived in many mining places, including Kimberley. This nurtured his love of the environment and astronomy. He had served in the Navy during World War II and saw service in Burma. On retirement he moved permanently to Simon's Town and he and Joan became very active members of the community. He joined the Historical Society in 1968 and was a very loyal supporter, attending lectures and participating in the Society's outings. For a short time he served on the Committee and after that represented the Society on the Simon's Town Environmental Advisory Committee up to the time of his passing.

Peter was a Churchwarden of St Francis Church. During his naval years he had worshipped at St George's Dockyard Church. He was a talented woodworker as well as a keen amateur astronomer and this was put to good use when he assisted Gerry Read to arrange the Society's visit to Beaufort West to view Halley's Comet. He made 30 stands for the members to rest their binoculars on and with the Chairman visited the local Old Age Home to tell them all about the Comet and this prompted many of the locals to join us at the old aerodrome to view it. We were particularly lucky as we had two clear cloudless nights and had a good view.

We will miss seeing him in the front row at lectures and also miss his walks around Seaforth with his dog. Our condolences to Joan and his daughters Mary and Jane.

AER

FIRST TANK IN S. AFRICA ARRIVES IN SIMON'S TOWN

A.E. READ

As you well know tanks are self-propelled combat vehicles embodying the military characteristics of fire power, mobility and crew protection. They may be used as part of larger infantry units, as a separate striking force or for reconnaissance.

Many ancient peoples made use of war chariots to carry an attack to an enemy with speed and with some degree of protection. The armoured elephants of Hannibal and Kublai Khan were variations of the same idea. However, despite Leonardo da Vinci envisioning his covered chariots being used in warfare, it was not until 1898 that F.R. Simms of Britain designed the first motor vehicle designed for combat purposes; it was a light four-wheeled motor-cycle with an armoured shield and mounted with a Maxim machine gun.

Prior to World War I several nations were experimenting but it was not until 1914 along the Aisne that serious attention was given to armoured, trench-spanning vehicles. The French and Belgians were quick to improvise armoured cars for fighting delaying tactics against the German advance cavalry. Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, quickly saw the natural affinity between aircraft and armoured vehicles. As a result, the Royal Naval Air Service under Captain Murray Sueter improvised armoured car squadrons for protecting advanced air bases and to rescue pilots who had crashed or were forced to bail out over enemy territory.

In October 1914 Col. Sir Ernest Swinton, having seen some American caterpillar tractors used as heavy artillery tractors was interested in introducing these to the army, but Churchill was the only member of the committee of imperial defence who was in favour of exploring this. In February 1915 the war office officially abandoned the Swinton proposals but Churchill immediately created a Landships committee under the chairmanship of Sir Eustace Tennyson-d'Eyncourt, a prominent naval designer. As a result of admiralty sponsorship, certain naval terms came into use and persisted. In fact the first tank to land in South Africa was officially HMS Land Ship *UNION*. The failure of the Dardanelles landing forced Churchill's resignation in July 1915 but the committee and Captain Murray Sueter kept interest alive in spite of army apathy.

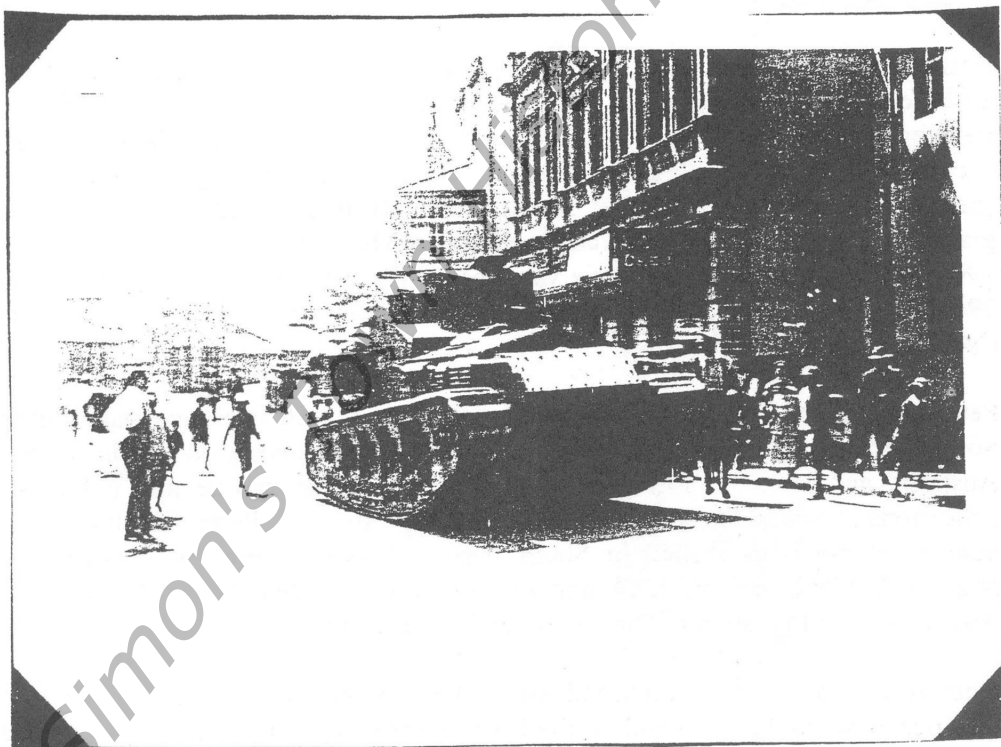
The first British tank, designated the Mark I weighed 31 tons and it was 26 ft 5 in. long, 13 ft 9 in. wide and 8 ft 1 in. high, powered with a 105 m.p.h. Daimler water-cooled engine. Maximum speed was 3.7 m.p.h. and it could span trenches 11½ ft

wide and climb a 22° slope. By April 1917 at the battle of Arras, they were superseded by the Mark II ending with the Mark V by the end of the war.

During World War I the British also built a Medium Mark A or Whippet tank weighing 15.7 tons which carried a crew of only 3 men as compared with 8 in heavy tanks and had greater speed and fuel distance than the heavy tanks. The first tank to arrive in South Africa was Whippet Tank No. A387. It arrived in Simon's Town aboard the s.s. UMVUMA of the Bullard King Line. The tank did trials in Simon's Town Dockyard and then made its way by road to Simon's Town station where it was loaded onto a railway truck on its way to Cape Town and then on to other points in South Africa.

INFORMATION:

Cdr. Bisset SAN (Retd), Museum Archives, Eric Rosenthal's Book of Southern African Records, Encyclopaedia Britannica and Nongqai Police Magazine Feb. 1919.



DR PETER E. CLARKE

CATHY SALTER-JANSEN

Peter Clarke was born on 2 June 1929 and lived in the Kloof area of Simon's Town prior to the forced removal of his family to Ocean View in 1973. As a small boy he attended Sunday School at St Francis Church and was a pupil from Sub A to Std 2 at the Anglican Church Boys Mission School in St George's Street. Thereafter he attended Arsenal Road Secondary School from Std 3 to Std 6. In 1944 Peter travelled by train to Livingstone High School in Claremont where he completed Std 7. At the end of the year, aged 15, he went to work in the Naval Dockyard where he performed various duties.

Peter's art training began with evening classes, firstly at St Philip's School in District Six in 1947 and then at Technical College, Cape Town in 1948. From 1950 – 1952 he was a member of a group of amateur artists who worked together on Saturday afternoons.

Frustrated, he left the Dockyard in 1956, intending to devote at least 3 months to art before looking for full-time employment again. Upon experiencing life as a freelance, he avoided full-time employment, but it was not easy. He improvised, occasionally modelling for life drawing classes and working as a part-time shepherd and as a display artist for Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary. Peter studied graphic art for 3 months under Katrine Harries at Michaelis School of Art, UCT, in 1961; studied at Rijks Academie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam during 1962 and 1963; and worked at a graphic art workshop, Atelier Nord, in Oslo (Norway) in 1978 and 1979.

Peter's work has been represented in many one-man as well as group exhibitions in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Europe, USA, South America, Israel, Japan and Australia and is to be found in numerous prestigious private and public art collections in South Africa and abroad. Through the years Peter has illustrated a number of books published in South Africa, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Nigeria, England and the USA and in 1965 was awarded the CP Hoogenhout Award for his illustration of "Snoet Alleen" by Freda Linde.

Peter is also known as a published South African poet with a number of public readings in South Africa as well as the USA, Norway, Germany and England to his credit. In 1955 he won the DRUM International Short Story Award and was elected Academic Onorario of Accademia Fiorentina delle Arti del Disegno

(Florence, Italy) in 1965 and an Honorary Fellow in writing of the University of Iowa in 1975. His prose and poetry have appeared in publications both in South Africa and overseas.

On 27 September 2005 he received the prestigious award of the Order of iKhamanga in silver from President Mbeki. As "The Echo" of 3 November 2005 put it: "It's official: Peter Clarke is a cultural treasure...".

AFRICA STATION CLUB

From an article in "The Sailor" November/December 1943 by Rev. W.Edgar Rea, R.N.

[Rev. Rea was at the time the padre of St George's Church, West Dockyard, and was also responsible for the welfare of sailors on the Africa station, therefore the Africa Station Club came under his care. There had been a severe fire and Rev. Rea was in need of funds to carry out rebuilding.]

The Africa Station Club was established in the 1880s so that sailors could spend a night sleeping ashore instead of returning to their ships at 9 p.m. It also had billiard tables, a bowling alley and a piano. There were two main buildings; one a two-storey stone building containing the Chief and Petty Officers' Bar and Recreation Rooms with dormitories upstairs. The other, a single-storey building of wood and iron construction (formerly a stable) contained a bar and a much larger Recreation Room for all other ratings. All this was built on the site of the cattle pen and "Kalk oond" (chalk oven), originally used by the Dutch East India Company and then by the Royal Navy, especially during the time when Napoleon was imprisoned on St Helena, for most of the food and victuals for him and the garrison left from Simon's Town.

The club was well placed on the main street at the corner next to the Prince Alfred Building, about half-way between the Dockyard and the Railway Station. On the way to and from Cape Town every sailor passed it, though for reasons easily discovered, few manage to do so without looking in! Indeed, there were times when those responsible for arranging entertainments "up the line" wished that the Club was not quite so strategically situated. More than once, men, who have gone ashore with the best intentions to attend some party specially arranged for them, have changed their minds whilst having a "quick drink" on the way to the station, and, on such occasions Welfare Officer had not always been successful in his efforts to placate some irate hostess.

The Club was always well patronised and had its Committee been less generously disposed in the past, it could quite easily have met the entire cost of reconstruction after the fire. Its Committee, however, had always been found eager to meet requests for assistance from outside sources. It had annually made grants to the Royal Naval Hospital for the welfare of patients and had, in the past, assisted on a lavish scale with the improvement of the Sports facilities in the town. Since war broke out in 1939 it had not only provided Sports Gear and other amenities for Naval units in isolated parts of the Station, but had contributed over £2,000 to the Africa Station Benevolent Fund.

Rev. Rea had no other funds available and had to provide accommodation for the many extra sailors on the Station due to the war. He was desperate and then one Monday morning, Mr. Hervey Jones, arrived from Johannesburg. He was the Chairman of the Navy War Fund. He produced a cheque for £8,200 which enabled Rev. Rea to proceed immediately with the reconstruction work. On the old site at the rear of the stone building, which was untouched by the fire, a large handsome two-storey brick building was erected. It was 75 feet long and a large Recreation Room was equipped with a Bar and three Billiard tables, while upstairs sleeping room for 100 would be provided, together with locker-rooms, shower, bathroom etc.

To record the gratitude of the Royal Navy to the Navy War Fund the Club's Committee decided to name the new building NAVY WAR FUND BLOCK.

Our thanks to Cdr Bisset for bringing this to our attention.

TAMBORA VOLCANO IN 1815

A.E. READ

In 1815 on the island of Sumbawa in Indonesia, a handsome and long quiescent mountain named Tambora exploded spectacularly killing 100,000 people with its blast and associated tsunamis.

It was the biggest volcanic explosion in 10,000 years equivalent to 60,000 Hiroshima-sized atom bombs. The resultant 240 cu.kilometres of smoky ash, dust and grit had diffused through the atmosphere, obscuring the sun's rays and causing the earth to cool. Sunsets were unusually but bleakly colourful and were captured by the famous artist J.M.W. Turner. The sky prompted Byron to write:

"I had a dream which was not all a dream
The bright sun was extinguished and the stars did wander"
(from Byron's "Darkness")

Spring never came and summer never warmed. 1816 was a year without summer. Crops everywhere failed to grow. Ireland had its potato famine and associated typhoid epidemics and in these 65,000 people died. In New England crops would not grow and cattle had no feed. There it was known as "Eighteen hundred and Froze to Death". Remember that in England there were at that time Frost Fairs on the Thames where whole oxen were roasted on spits.

Fortunately this had no effect on the Cape as the table below shows. This information comes from returns made to the Government by the farmers:

Year	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Rye	Sown/Reaped (Muids)
1815	2,849	817	3287	64	sown
	27,066	16,844	10,572	726	reaped
1816	2849	929	3014	104	sown
	28,850	18,579	13,229	695	reaped
1817	3257	941	3615	123	sown
	31,415	18,131	16,675	839	reaped

DANIEL FAHRENHEIT & ANDRIES CELSIUS

AUDREY READ

The term meteorology itself has been around since 1626 when it was coined by T. Granger. However, meteorology did not get going as a science till shortly before the beginning of the 19th century. Successful meteorology requires the precise measurement of temperatures, and thermometers for a long time proved more difficult to make than one might expect. The first person to solve the problem of getting a very even bore in a glass tube was Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit, a Dutch maker of instruments who produced an accurate thermometer in 1717. He decided to put freezing at 32 ° and boiling at 212 °. This bothered some people and in 1742 Anders Celsius, a Swedish astronomer came up with a competing scale. He was a professor of Astronomy at Upsala University from 1730-1744. He, when inventing the centigrade thermometer in 1742, marked the boiling point of water 0° and the freezing point at 100°. A colleague, Martin Stromer, 8 years later inverted the scale.

Ooooooooo00000ooooooooO

THE FLU EPIDEMIC OF 1918

AUDREY READ

This is sometimes called the Great Swine Flu epidemic and sometimes the Great Spanish Flu epidemic. The 1st World War killed 21 million people in 4 years – the flu did the same in 4 months. No-one knows the global toll, as records in the 3rd world were often poor. Some records put the global total as high as 100,000,000 (100 million). It appeared in Madrid, Bombay and Philadelphia all in the same week. No wonder there is world-wide concern about the spread of Avian flu from the Far East to the western world.

SIMON'S TOWN – IT'S REVITALISATION 1960 – 1990

NORMAN WISE

The article written by Bill Rice in the July 2005 Bulletin, whereby he refers to the Admiralty assisting the town of Simon's Town financially during the 1st World War to compensate for the loss of revenue from other sources due to expanded Admiralty activity, reminds me of the valuable contribution that our M.P. John Wiley and others made when Simon's Town faced a similar dilemma after World War II.

Simon's Town, like all naval ports, faced a slump in naval activities at the end of World War II and this had a profound effect on the communities in which they were situated. Simon's Town suffered more than most, since this slump coincided with the Admiralty decision to permanently reduce its overseas commitments. With this came the Simon's Town Agreement whereby the Simon's Town Dockyard was handed over to the S.A. Navy. By this stage in 1957, Simon's Town had experienced twelve years of being run-down and it was starting to show, with for example most of the hotels closing, vacant shop premises the norm, and the town taking a dying look. It was realised that it would take some time for the fledgling S.A. Navy to find its feet and hopefully bring the town back to life.

It was at that stage that the small hard core of local citizens realised that Simon's Town may never again be able to rely entirely on the Navy for its bread and butter and that a new image was needed and with it new long term goals. This hard core of citizens in getting their heads together found the staggering fact that the State at 52% was by far the biggest ratepayer, but did not pay rates like the townsfolk but instead the Treasury gave the town a fixed grant. However with inflation it was soon realised that in effect, the citizen ratepayers were increasingly subsidising services given to the navy by the town.

John Wiley the M.P. for Simon's Town started a long battle with the Treasury and Public Works Dept. for the State to pay rates for their property similar to the private citizens, which would be adjusted annually in terms of the town's budget. When John Wiley eventually achieved this I do not know, but it was a milestone in the town's history. I say this because when I was a Councillor charged with the finance portfolio, I will never forget seeing the Town Treasurer's face on the day he received the State's annual rates contribution in full. This act enabled the town's officials to plan the revitalisation of the town with a degree of comfort.

The effort of John Wiley I believe gave the town's hard core the spirit and assurance that any effort to revitalise the town would have a good chance of success. Things moved steadily thereafter, with the Navy agreeing to tidy up their part of the town. General Magnus Malan visited the town and decreed that the Navy should stop expanding its activities above the Main Road and launch a long-term project to reduce its activities above the Main Road and hand back those areas to the townsfolk.

The Historic Mile was born out of this era with a view to preserving the historic buildings in the Main Street and adjacent areas. Getting this proclaimed in the Provincial Gazette was not easy but the hard core persevered and what we have today is the answer to their efforts. The townsfolk joined in this rejuvenation and although there have always been doubts as to why the Architectural Advisory Committee should have so much power, and that sometimes it was misdirected, on the whole everyone seems to agree the end result has been to the benefit of the town.

Following on from the efforts of the Architectural Advisory Committee, the town's officials pushed forward to rejuvenate the town. I remember our long-standing Town Clerk, Charles Chevalier, who many regarded as too pedantic, continually postulating that the town had to grow by an annual 2.2% to survive and even pressed for the Council to sell Council land at low prices to achieve this despite severe criticism. History has shown him to be right. The efforts of Councillors and Officials brought about the rejuvenation of Jubilee Square and the creation of the Waterfront complex, which all must agree was the cherry on the top of the Town's rejuvenation; despite the parking and other traffic problems it has brought in its wake.

In this new millennium one can look back and see the new Magistrates Court, the removal of the Post Office eyesore, which never fitted in the architecture of the town, the modern tourist business fitting into the old historic buildings, with the old General Dealers and other businesses still there to serve the town as they did more than 50 years ago.

Simon's Town being jammed between a steep mountainside and the sea has virtually utilised all the space available to it and all that remains for the future is to keep it looking smart and avoid it falling into decline as it did in the 1950s. We thus owe a debt of gratitude to that hard core who hauled Simon's Town out of its decline at the critical moment. I cannot remember them all and to avoid doing a disservice to someone I may fail to mention and what part they played in

rejuvenating the town, I will not mention names, however, many of them have passed on and valuable information may have died with them. This bothers me. But I feel in tribute to this hard core an investigation is probably justified and something published to record for posterity in the Historical Society records, information that is still available in their archives or in the heads of those who are thankfully still alive, of what they did to save the town in that 30 year period.

As a tailpiece, how many of you know that the spelling of the name of Simon's Town to-day is largely due to the efforts of one man, namely Gordon Wilson, who insisted to the highest level that this was SIMON'S TOWN and NOT Simonstown, despite the language translation difficulties of having Simonstad or Simon se Stad.

THIS IS PART OF THE CORE OF WHAT HAD MADE SIMON'S TOWN THE HISTORICAL TOWN IT IS AND WHAT WE MUST AT ALL COSTS RETAIN.

THE LONGEST AND SHORTEST MAYORALTY

While William Runciman was by far the Councillor with the longest service as Mayor of Simon's Town (25 ¼ years) he must surely hold an all-time record for the shortest period as Mayor ; something under one minute.

Mr Watson, in recording the Minutes of the 1st meeting of the new mayoral year held on 5 August 1887, in his inimitable fashion paints the scene:

"It was proposed that Cllr James E. Storrier take the Chair pro tem for the election. Councillor Runciman was proposed as Chairman by Cllr Fred Hugo and seconded by Cllr A.N. Black. Councillor A.N. Black was proposed by Cllr G.R. Budge and seconded by Cllr Runciman. Cllr Runciman rose and begged the Councillors to be allowed to decline the honour, but his proposer was inexorable. The ballot then proceeded with Councillor Runciman being declared elected. Thereupon Cllr Runciman rose again and thanked the Councillors for the great honour accorded him and then tendered his resignation as he had no time to devote to such an important office. Councillor Black, still being in the field, was thereupon elected as the third Mayor of Simon's Town."

OooooooooO

MASON and DIXON & THEIR CAPE CONNECTION

AUDREY READ

Among the nearly 100 people despatched by various nations round the world to observe the Transit of Venus in June 1769 were Mason and Jeremiah Dixon (a surveyor), two of Britain's 18 observers. The two got on well and formed a lasting friendship. Their instructions were to travel to Sumatra and chart the transit there, but one night out from England their ship was attacked by a French frigate. Mason and Dixon sent a note to the Royal Society in London observing that it seemed awfully dangerous on the high seas and wondering if perhaps the whole thing might not be called off!

In a swift reply they received a chilly rebuke, noting that they had already been paid, that the nation and the scientific community were counting on them and that their failure to proceed would result in the irretrievable loss of their reputations. Chastened they sailed on but en route heard that Sumatra had fallen to the French so they observed the transit inconclusively from the Cape of Good Hope.

On the way back to England they stopped off at St Helena where they met Maskelyne, another of Britain's observers whose observations there had been thwarted by cloud cover. The hillock where he had set up his observatory was however named after Halley.

Mason and Maskelyne formed a solid friendship and spent several useful weeks charting tidal flows. On their return to England Mason and Dixon – now more seasoned! – set off for 4½ years surveying their way through 244 miles of dangerous American wilderness in order to settle a boundary dispute between the estates of William Penn and Lord Baltimore and their respective colonies of Pennsylvania and Maryland. The result was the famous Mason/Dixon line which later took on a symbolic importance as the dividing line between the slave and free states.

While in America they carried out the century's most accurate measurements of a degree of meridian – an achievement that brought them far more acclaim in England than the settling of a boundary dispute. They dissolved their partnership on their return to England. Dixon died in Durham in 1777.

In 1772 Mason was asked by Maskelyne to find a suitable mountain for a gravitational deflection experiment. He selected Schiehallion near Loch Tay in

Scotland, but nothing would induce him to spend the summer surveying it. He never returned again to field work and little was heard of him till 1786 when he mysteriously turned up in Philadelphia with a wife and 8 children – almost destitute. A few weeks later he had died.

THE HERSCHEL FAMILY

A.E. READ

SIR WILLIAM (1738-1822) was born in Hanover in Germany. He was educated as a professional musician and when he came to England in 1757 he taught music in Leeds, Halifax and other northern towns. In 1766 he was appointed organist at the Octagon Chapel Bath. At Bath he turned his attention to astronomy and with the aid of his sister CAROLINE LUCRETIA HERSCHEL (1750-1848) and a new telescope which he constructed for himself, began his survey of the heavens in 1780. He had received help with the telescope from John Michell who lived in a lonely Yorkshire village but was one of the great scientific thinkers of the 18th century and much esteemed for it. In 1781 Herschel became the first person in the modern era to discover a planet. He wanted to call it George after the British monarch but was overruled – it became Uranus.

SIR JOHN FREDERICK WILLIAM (1792-1871) was the astronomer son of Sir William, born in Slough, Bucks. He graduated as senior wrangler and Smith's prizeman in 1813. From 1825-1833 he was engaged with Sir James South in reviewing the nebulae and star clusters of his father's catalogues. In 1834 he came to the Cape. This we have written up previously in our Bulletin. He made several inventions, such as the use of hyposulphite of soda for fixing in photography and wrote and published two important works. He was Astronomer Royal at the Cape for 4 years and was often to be found visiting Admiralty House at Simon's Town.

According to Janes she was built in 1937 and was capable of 30 knots. She was an aircraft carrier armed with 4.5 inch guns, had a complement of 1,575 men, a length of 685 feet as well as having many other guns. She carried 60 aircraft.

Her hangars were arranged on 2 decks, very roomy, had elaborate fire-fighting arrangements and had 3 lifts for hoisting aircraft to the flight deck. She also had 2 hinged cranes for hoisting and lowering sea planes. There were also innovative features for storing her ship's boats. The total cost of the ship was £3,215,639 – a large amount of money in those days. She was built by Cammel Laird and was completed on 16 November 1938. She had her fair share of Battle Honours from Norway to the Mediterranean, where she escorted Malta convoys during 1941. However she also escorted Convoy WS 6 to the Cape during this time. This was one of the Winston Special convoys which came via the Cape with men and supplies for the Army in North Africa. Sadly she was sunk by a U-boat in the Mediterranean on 14 November 1941.

On board when she was sunk was OSCAR a beautiful black cat with a white bib who himself was a cat with a wonderful service record!! He was originally the mascot of the BISMARCK, survived her sinking in 1941 and was rescued by HMS COSSACK. She was in turn sunk in October 1941 when after she was torpedoed OSCAR was once again rescued, picked up from a floating plank and spent the rest of his nine lives in a Sailors Home.

Liza Verity has written a charming little book ANIMALS AT SEA, published by the National Maritime Museum, London and very reasonably priced at £9.99.

Here we show OSCAR, painted by Georgina Shaw Baker, who painted many animals who distinguished themselves in both world wars.



SELECTED NOTES ON BRENTON FAMILY TREE (Boet Dommissie)

- 1. William Brenton** Landowner in Hammersmith. Emigrated to America In 1634 in reign Charles I. Settled in Rhode Island on estate named Hammersmith. Was Governor of Rhode Island. Brenton State Park on original Hammersmith estate
- 2. Jahleel Brenton** "*Hoping in God*". Grandson of William
- 3. Jahleel Brenton** Became Lieut. In Royal Navy. Married Henrietta Cowley. Left America in 1778 . Family to England
- 4. Elizabeth Brenton** Was companion to Earl Vincent (Sir John Jervis)
- 5. Mary Brenton** Talented artist. Stayed in Simon's Town with Jahleel
- 6. Jahleel Brenton** Born 1770. Distinguished Naval career. Baronet. KCB. Naval Commissioner-Simon's Town 1815-1821 Married Isabella Stewart (12).
- 7. Edward Pelham Brenton** Brother of Jahleel. Naval Captain and author
- 8. Edward Pelham Brenton von Donop** Adopted son of Edward Pelham Brenton (7) (son of Baron von Donop, Westphalia) Married daughter of Frances and John Brenton
- 9. James Wallace Brenton** Brother of Jahleel. Died in battle off Gibraltar
- 10. Frances Brenton** Younger sister of Jahleel, married her cousin John Brenton They looked after Jahleel's two sons in England while Sir Jahleel Brenton was Commissioner in Simon's Town. John Jervis (13), the elder boy died of an acute illness in 1817 Their daughter, Louise married Edward Brenton von Donop (8)
- 11. Dacres Brenton von Donop** Infant son of Louise and Edward. Died age 8 months when parents visiting Cape. Buried in OBG, Simon's Town, alongside Isabella (12). He was named after Rear Admiral James Richard Dacres who was CinC, Simon's Town 1844 - 1845
- 12. Isabella Stewart** First wife of Jahleel Brenton
- 13. John Jervis Brenton** Died age 14 in England. Named after Sir John Jervis
- 14. Lancelot Lee Brenton** Younger son of Jahleel. Classical scholar. Baronetcy lapsed after his death in 1862
- 15. Jahleel Brenton Carey** Grandson of Jahleel Brenton (by his second marriage - to Harriet Brenton, his cousin) Involved in the tragic death of Louis Napoleon in Zululand in 1879.
- 16. Richard Brenton Sinker** Grandson of Jahleel Brenton Carey. Has generously donated to Admiralty House research.

PART II - A DISTINGUISHED NAVAL CAREER

BOET DOMMISSE

Young Jahleel grew up in Rhode Island near Newport and must often have visited the harbour where his father held a commission in the Royal Navy. No doubt this influenced his future choice of career. When the family moved to England during the American War of Independence, Jahleel, then aged 11, joined his father's ship, HMS QUEEN as a midshipman. He later transferred to HMS TARRAGANT.

After two years he returned to study at the Chelsea Maritime School, but his studies were interrupted when the family moved to France, as his father thought it important for the children to be fluent in French. Young Jahleel was evidently not very well at this time and as he had shown considerable artistic talent, his father considered sending him to Italy to study further. Both he and his sister Mary were talented watercolour artists and must have received formal instruction at some stage.

While he was serving as a midshipman in Nova Scotia in 1787 he met Isabella Stewart. She was 17 and he was 18. He felt, however, that she was way above his status and for eleven years the only contact he had was by way of letters from his cousin! He wrote his first letter to Isabella in 1800 but did not send it for almost a year! To his great joy his feelings were reciprocated, and he later wrote to his children as follows: "at length after a separation of 14 years I met your beloved mother, and found her all that my most sanguine imagination had painted." They married the following year on 19 April 1802 in St Georges, Hanover Square, London.

Jahleel Brenton completed his maritime studies at Chelsea Maritime School and graduated as a lieutenant in March 1790, but as there was no chance of employment in the Royal Navy, he with other English naval officers, went to serve with the Swedish Navy in the war against the Russians. Returning to England, he received his commission in the Royal Navy, and until 1799 served as a lieutenant or acting commander in HMS SYBIL. He served under Sir John Jervis, later Earl St Vincent. He was a great admirer of Sir John and named his first son after him. (John Jervis Brenton was born in 1803 and died at the young age of 14). Jahleel served in HMS BARFLEUR in the historic battle against the Spanish off Cape St

Vincent. Nelson was also present at that engagement. The Spanish fleet was defeated and Sir John Jervis received his title, Earl St Vincent.

In 1799 Brenton, as Captain of HMS SPEEDY, saw action off the Straits of Gibraltar. In September that year his brother James Wallace died of wounds while serving off Barcelona. Jahleel wrote a very sincere and comforting letter to his father from SPEEDY.

On 3 October 1799, under the command of Jahleel Brenton, SPEEDY attacked a convoy of eight merchantmen and two escorts. Though none were taken, six were forced ashore near Cape Trafalgar and destroyed. On 6 November SPEEDY fought off a flotilla of 12 Spanish gunboats while escorting a transport bound for Livorno (Leghorn) in Italy, with wine for the fleet. Although the Spaniards were driven off, SPEEDY suffered extensive damage to her hull and rigging. Shortly thereafter Brenton was assigned to command the recently captured GENEREUX. Brenton was highly commended and received a personal letter from Nelson.

In 1800 he reached the rank of post-captain and served as flag-captain to Sir James Saumarez in action at Algericas and in the Straits in 1801. He was in command of HMS CAESAR for a short while. Four large aquatints by J.C. Stadler, based on drawings by Brenton of scenes of the action off Algericas, were published in 1802 and were sold for the relief of men wounded in battle.

On 8 July 1803 his ship HMS MINERVE ran aground off Cherbourg in dense fog and he was forced to surrender to the French. Eleven men were killed and 16 wounded in the encounter. The captives were then marched some 500 miles to Epinal, which they reached on 12 August. Brenton showed great concern for his men, refusing to ride when they were forced to walk, and obtained a carriage to carry the wounded. From Epinal they were transferred to Verdun, where he generously hired a house for his men and gave his parole for the prisoners not attempting to escape!

Brenton seems to have been well treated by his captors, but early arrangements for his exchange failed and he was detained in France for three and a half years. In the final year his wife, Isabella, his son, and his sister Mary joined him. They moved to Tours where they hired an apartment. Their youngest daughter, Isabella, was born in France in 1806. Eventually Brenton was exchanged for Captain L'Infemet and returned to England. Here he faced a court-martial concerning the loss of his ship, but was acquitted, and later assumed command of HMS SPARTAN.

The following is a description, which accompanies two paintings by Thomas Whitcombe in the National Maritime Museum London; Greenwich Hospital Collection, titled "The SPARTAN'S engagement with a Neapolitan squadron 3 May 1810. End of Action."

"The second pair of paintings showing an action between the British ship SPARTAN and Neapolitan and French squadron in the Bay of Naples. On 1 May 1810, the British frigates SPARTAN 38 guns and SUCCESS 32 guns, while cruising off Ischia, chased a Neapolitan squadron almost inside Naples. This squadron consisted of the frigates CERERE 40 guns, under Captain Ramatuelle, the FAMA 30 guns, Captain Guisepppe de Cosa, the 8 gun brig PARVIERO and 8 gun cutter ACHILLE.

"SPARTAN's commander, Captain Jahleel Brenton, assumed that the Neapolitan ships would not come out to fight two British frigates and so, on 2 May, he sent the SUCCESS off to a rendezvous south of Capri. However, the enemy had decided to fight and had embarked 400 Swiss troops into the CERERE, and the FARMA. When SPARTAN approached Naples early on 3 May the enemy squadron sailed out to meet him, supported by 7 gunboats, each with a long 18 pounder. In the two-hour action that followed, the CERERE and FAMA both hauled off, the latter badly damaged, while the SPARVIERO under Commander Raffaele de Cosa, was forced to strike. Captain Brenton conducted the fight standing on the capstan and was badly wounded when he was hit in the hip by a piece of grapeshot. His 1st lieutenant, George Willes, then assumed command and was also wounded together with 20 others. Ten more British were killed. The Neapolitans fought with gallantry, having 131 killed or wounded, but the outcome was none the less a remarkable British success. SPARTAN alone, with a crew of 259 and 46 guns (including subsidiary armament) had defeated a squadron headed by two frigates and armed in total with 95 guns and a complement of 1400 men. Brenton, whose injury ended his active career, received a Baronetcy in December 1813. The SPARTAN is shown here in port broadside on the left, after the action. Men are visible in the rigging attending to the damaged sails. There is a small ship's boat alongside with other figures on board. The vessel astern in the centre, with the broken mast, is the captured Neapolitan brig SPARVIERO, 8 guns, and now flies the British flag. Other ships of the defeated Neapolitan squadron can be seen in the background on the right, with Naples beyond."

Brenton's wound was serious. He was carried below and "the shot cut out". However, he never recovered full use of that leg and suffered greatly from recurrent episodes of pain. He also suffered from gout!

Captain Jahleel Brenton received the Order of St Ferdinand and of Merit from the King of the two Sicilies. He was created a Baronet by the Sovereign in November 1813 and was awarded the KCB in 1815. The Patriotic Society voted him a sword of honour for £100. Unfortunately his injury made it impossible for him to continue active naval service and in 1813 he was sent as Dockyard Commissioner to Port Mahon and the Balearic Islands.

In 1814 he was appointed Naval Commissioner to the Cape of Good Hope Station and arrived in Simon's Bay in HMS NIGER on 12 March 1815, where he remained until 6 November 1821. His time as Naval Commissioner in Simon's Bay will be dealt with in Part III.

In 1830 Brenton was made a Rear Admiral and for a short while commanded the Royal Yacht. He was knighted on 8 August 1830. From 1830-40 he was Lt Governor of Greenwich Hospital. He retired as Vice-Admiral of the White in 1840 and died in Leamington, England, on 21 April 1844 at the age of 73.

ELECTRIC HARPOONS

It was the 1948/49 whaling season which saw British whaling expeditions setting out for the Antarctic season equipped with two new-fangled articles which they hoped would result in better catches in the future. The British expeditions would be equipped with electric harpoons and with radar. The first to use these was the Balaena expedition. Radar was also used on an extensive scale by the Salveson ships. The Salveson whale-oil-transport SOUTHERN GARDEN arrived at South Georgia carrying on her foredeck 16 complete turret-enclosed radar sets for the Salveson catchers.

The SOUTHERN GARDEN had just completed an 8-month modification on the Mersey in England which included fitting accommodation for 180 whale process workers whom she would transport each season between Britain and the shore station in South Georgia. The SOUTHERN GARDEN of 8,923 tons gross, was captured from the Germans in northern waters in 1941 when she was acting as a supply ship to German raiders. She had been launched at Kiel as the tanker GEDANIA in 1919. Little did they realise then that the catching of whales in the southern ocean was soon to come to an end.

From: The Cape Argus 17.8.1948

MINA HENRIETTA JOY MILLAR (nee COLLIER) 1911-2005

From a letter to the Cape Times by Jeremy Lawrence

Joy passed away on 7th May 2005 at 94 years of age. She is remembered as a woman of great character. In Simon's Town she will ever be remembered for the fine artwork on the wall of the Dockyard Church. She worked for quite a long period on this mural but one of the stories often told about those days is that she was behind hand with her painting and decided to work at night in order to finish on time. At about 9 p.m. she heard the plodding of boots up the staircase to the church and went on working, then suddenly realised that no one had arrived. She had thought it was a kindly Dockyard policeman coming to see how she was. She packed up and never worked after dark again!

She was not only the author of nine books, each with her own illustrations, but from the early 1960s was for many years secretary of the South African PEN, the writers' association. Joy and her husband Anthony Kendall Millar, emigrated to South Africa in 1947. Her first book *Algerian Adventure* was published in 1944 and earned her a fan letter from Winston Churchill. Between 1959 and 1965 there followed four books about South African cities. There were also later, two illustrated books about the Western Cape and its winelands. Of a quite different order was a book about ancient Egypt, *The Heroic Pharaoh* and a children's book in Afrikaans *Vlug na Vryheid*.

Joy is survived by her two sons James and Alastair, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

OooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooO

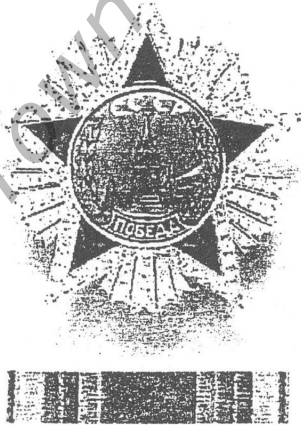
THE RUSSIAN "ORDER OF VICTORY "

TERRY KORSTEN

During the South African Navy's 75th Anniversary in 1997, many foreign naval vessels arrived in Simon's Town to take part in the celebrations. Amongst them was the Russian Destroyer NASTOYCHIVY. It was during their visit that the ships company were told that a number of Russian graves exist in the Old Burial Ground at Seaforth. Very soon a contingent of sailors and officers marched to the Old Burial Ground to lay a wreath on one of the graves.

Members of the Historical Society Committee soon after became involved with members of the Russian Consulate in Cape Town, concerning a proposed memorial the Russians wanted to erect in the vicinity of the graves in the Burial Ground. Committee and Consulate members met a number of times to discuss the design of the memorial and other matters of mutual interest. Regular invitations were extended to Committee members to attend yearly functions at a well known restaurant in the V & A Waterfront in Cape Town. A very friendly atmosphere existed with Consulate members.

Because of the cordial relations established between the Consulate and members of the Society's Committee, the Consul General very kindly decided to present the Historical Society with a replica of a hologram of the 'Order of Victory'. The background and history of this very unique Order is explained below.



This is the rarest, most valuable and the highest military award of the Soviet Union. Only being awarded on 20 occasions and only to top military leaders. It was given twice to G. Zhukov, A Vasilevsky and I. Stalin and not only to Soviet personnel but to several foreigners as well, including D. Eisenhower and B. Montgomery. Nineteen were issued to men during the Second World War. The twentieth was bestowed on L. Brezhnev in 1978. Many considered this an undeserved honour as

he never had a notable military career. One reason given for its award was for his outstanding services in fortifying the country and his conduct of foreign policy.

The statute is very brief when the Order of Victory is awarded "...For a successful operation within the framework of one or several fronts resulting in a radical change of the situation in favour of the Red Army."

The order was originally proposed by Colonel N.S. Neyelov, who served in the headquarters of the Rear of the Soviet Army in July 1943. Initially to be called the Order for Faithfulness to the Homeland but in October this was changed to Victory.

The badge's principle designer was A.I. Kuznetsov and went through 15 drafts until a final design was selected by Stalin on 25 October.

The badge is a 72mm five-pointed ruby star on a platinum frame. The star being bordered by 170 diamonds (16 carats in total). In the centre is a blue enamel circle with portrayals of the wall of the Kremlin, Mausoleum of Lenin and Spasskaya tower. Above this is the inscription "USSR" in white enamel and the word "Victory" below. It is to be worn on the left side of the tunic 12-14 cm above the belt. In 1945 it had an estimated value of 23,750 US dollars.

BEARERS OF THE ORDER OF VICTORY

ZHUKOV Georgy Konstantinovich, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded twice: 10 April 1944 and 30 March 1945.

VASILEVSKY Alexander Michailovich, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded twice: 10 April 1944 and 19 April 1945.

STALIN Joseph Vissarionovich. Awarded twice: 10 April 1944 and 26 June 1945.

ROKOSSEVSKY Konstantin Konstantinovich, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 30 March 1945.

KONEV Ivan Stepanovich, Commander of Troops, 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 30 March 1945.

TOLBUKHIN Fedor Ivanovich, Commander of Troops, 3rd Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 26 April 1945.

MALINOVSKY Rodion Yakovlevich, Commander of Troops, 2nd Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 26 April 1945.

GOVOROV Leonid Alexandrovich, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 30 March 1945.

TIMOSHENKO Semen Konstantinovich, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 4 June 1945.

ANTONOV Alexey Innokentevich, Commander of General Staff of the Red Army, General of Army. Awarded 4 June 1945.

MERETSKOV Kirill Afanasevich, Commander 1st Far Eastern Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union. Awarded 8 September 1945.

BREZHNEV Leonid Ilyich, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and General Secretary of the Communist Party. Awarded 20 February 1978.
EISENHOWER Dwight D, General of the US Army. Awarded 5 June 1945.
MONTGOMERY Bernard Law, Field Marshal. Awarded 5 June 1945.
MICHAEL I, King of Romania. Awarded 6 July 1945.
ROLA Zymierski, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, General. Awarded 9 August 1945.
TITO Josip Broz, Commander of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army, Marshal. Awarded 9 September 1945.

The Order of Victory replica is displayed in the Society's Committee Room at the Museum. Evidently not many replicas have been presented to organisations so we are rightly very proud of ours.

The Russian memorial, now completed, has recently been unveiled in the Old Burial Ground at Seaforth and the surrounding area beautifully paved. It's worth a visit.

THE CAPE GARRISON ARTILLERY

Originally they were raised as The Cape Engineers (Volunteers) in 1859 by Lt Col. J. Scott being Cape Sappers and Miners. Two years later in 1861 the name was changed to Cape Engineers and it is on record at this date the Unit had a strength of 85. At one stage 102 members of the unit were on active service in the Transkei while in 1889 a torpedo company was formed. In 1891 the Cape Engineers merged with the Cape Garrison Artillery.

HOSPITAL SHIPS CONNECTED WITH THE CAPE (FROM 1899 ONWARDS)

A.E. READ

Hospital ships have been in use in the Navy from the very early days. It is said that the Spanish Armada of 1588 included 15 in their fleet but it is probable that they were only introduced into the Royal Navy from 1608, being the ship GOODWILL. The British Army seems to have used them from 1683. Sometimes they were converted from store ships, with extra openings being made in their sides for improved ventilation. The Navy hospital ships were referred to as HMHS (His/Her Majesty's Hospital Ship).

During the Boer War 1899-1902 the sister ships SPARTAN (3,487 tons & built in 1881) and TROJAN (3,555 tons built in 1880) of the Union-Castle Steamship Company were requisitioned in 1899 and converted to hospital ships and ran between Durban and Cape Town where the base hospital was situated. The AVOCA of the British India Steam Navigation Company (often referred to as B.I.) of 5,324 tons and built in 1891, was chartered in 1899 as a transport, and after two voyages in that role, was employed as a hospital ship between Southampton and Cape Town during 1900 and 1902, making four voyages altogether. In addition there was the hospital ship MAINE, of which more details later in the article.

It was during the Boer War that hospital ships first appeared in a distinctive livery, including red crosses on their hull. The Geneva Convention of 1864, the first international conference on the care of the wounded, drew up rules and in 1868 another Diplomatic Conference was held in Geneva, at which principles applying to maritime warfare were promulgated. The Geneva Convention came into being as a result of the work of Jean-Henri Dunant, a Swiss humanitarian, who had at the Battle of Solferino in 1859, organised emergency aid services for the Austrian and French wounded. He was the founder of the Red Cross organisation. The symbol chosen was a red cross on a white background, the reversal of the Swiss flag.

A Peace Convention was held at The Hague in 1907 which adapted the Geneva Convention and laid down the conditions under which hospital ships were entitled to immunity from attack in time of war. The ships were to be painted white overall, with a broad horizontal green band round the hull interrupted by 3 red crosses, forward, mid-ships and aft. They would fly their national flag as well as the Red Cross flag. At night they must steam with navigation lights and internal lights in full brilliance, with the Red Cross marking on the hull illuminated and with a row of green lights right round the hull. The practice of marking the funnel with a red cross did not come into general use till during the 2nd World War. With the growth of aerial warfare, Red Crosses were also applied horizontally to decks and deckhouse tops.

Despite these precautions 11 ships were sunk by enemy action during the 1st World War. More than 90 hospital ships were employed between 1914 – 1918. Ships like the BRITANNIC of 48,158 grt, a near sister of the TITANIC, could take 3,300 casualties. She was the largest British merchant ship ever to have been lost in action. The Union-Castle Company provided 16 hospital ships and of these four were sunk and four seriously damaged. They were employed in many theatres, including the Mediterranean, Dardanelles, and East Africa with the BRAEMAR CASTLE being sent to Murmansk in Russia in 1918, where she was used as a base hospital. She was there for 1 year and then went to Archangel and was the last ship to leave there when it was evacuated.

The GALEKA struck a mine on 28 October off Le Havre. She had no patients on board, but 19 Royal Army Medical Corps personnel were lost. She was beached and was a total loss. The DOVER CASTLE was torpedoed by UC-67 in the Mediterranean on 6 May 1917, north of Bone. All her 832 patients and crew were saved. Most of the patients were taken to Gibraltar on the B.I. hospital ship KARAPARA. The GLENART CASTLE survived being mined on 1 March 1917 off the Owers Lightship whilst carrying 520 patients; all on board were saved. She was towed to Portsmouth and repaired. On 26 February 1918 she was torpedoed by UC-56 in the Bristol Channel off Lundy Island en route to Brest. She sank in 5 minutes and of her 95 crew and 73 medical staff, only 38 survived.

The worst loss of the 1st World War was the LLANDOVERY CASTLE. It was the Company's last loss but it was the most callous sinking. She was on passage from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Liverpool and was torpedoed at 9 p.m. on 27 June 1918 while 118 miles west of Fastnet by U-86. She was fully illuminated at the time and sank in ten minutes. Luckily she had no patients on board, and her lifeboats got away safely; the submarine then surfaced and her commander Lt Helmut Patzig demanded that 8 American airmen whom he thought to be on board, be handed over. When the hospital ship's captain insisted that there were none on board, only 7 Canadian doctors, Patzig smashed every lifeboat with his submarine, then shot the survivors in the water, leaving only the captain's boat undamaged. The submarine then submerged leaving behind 234 dead, including 88 medical staff. By the time HMS LYSANDER arrived there were only 24 survivors to collect. Another source "World Ship Society" Supplement No. 1 February 1966 gives different figures. After the war Patzig and two of his officers were charged with war crimes. Patzig had, however, disappeared. The two officers managed to escape shortly after the trial.

The GLOUCESTER CASTLE was torpedoed and badly damaged in March 1917 but did not sink. The GOORKHA was mined in 1917 but survived, as did the BRAEMAR CASTLE when mined in November 1916. Other Union-Castle ships which served were CARISBROOKE CASTLE, DUNVEGAN CASTLE, GASCON, GLENGORM CASTLE, GRANTULLY CASTLE and KILDONAN CASTLE. The GLENGORM CASTLE was the longest serving of their ships, being employed from September 1914 to January 1920.

For a period the GASCON was used for short periods as a naval hospital ship but from November 1914 – December 1918 she was a military hospital ship and then became an Ambulance Transport until April 1919 being broken up in 1928. The GARTH CASTLE and GUILDFORD CASTLE were used as troopships between South Africa and UK/France till June 1915, then as Military hospitals until April 1917, then as Cross-Channel ambulances. The DOVER CASTLE and DUNLUCE CASTLE were also involved in trooping.

The s.s. MAINE (ex SWANSEA, built 1887) was specially fitted out as a hospital ship for service in the Boer War. She was sponsored by a committee of American women (led by Lady Randolph Churchill, mother of Sir Winston) and Mr. B. Baker of Baltimore, President of the Atlantic Transport Line. He paid for her crew for six months and also paid a large amount towards her conversion from a cargo ship. Because of the Boxer Rebellion she was diverted to service in China. On returning from China in 1901 she was presented to the Admiralty and became the Royal Navy's first permanently fitted hospital ship. She was the first ship employed as a Royal Navy Hospital ship to carry the name of MAINE. The name lasted for 67 years. The last MAINE (V) was to be built in 1952 but her construction was abandoned, probably because the Royal Yacht BRITANNIA was to carry out these duties should the need arise.

Books consulted: The Review Vol.17.2 (NHC & R Asscn)

Archives, Simon's Town Museum

The History of Naval Supply Services 1600-1968 by Captain

E.E. Sigwart (359.0942 SIG, Museum Library)

MONEY FOR OLD ROPE

In the days of sail it was customary for ships to sell old and redundant ropes to shoreside traders and traditionally this money was shared amongst the crew. Since it was a bonus and something they did not have to work for it, it became the term for easy money.

SIR JAHLEEL BRENTON

PART THREE: NAVAL COMMISSIONER , SIMON'S TOWN

BOET DOMMISSE

Captain Jahleel Brenton (later Vice-Admiral) was appointed Naval Commissioner at the Cape of Good Hope Station in 1814. Prior to his departure from England he wrote to the Admiralty concerning his accommodation in Simon's Town. The reply, which he received, was that he would be accommodated in Admiralty House, which would be vacated by the Flag Officer. It would seem that the Commander-in-Chief was more concerned with guarding Napoleon Bonaparte on St Helena than residing at the Simon's Bay Naval Base.

Brenton, his wife Isabella, his daughter (also Isabella) and his sister Mary Brenton, arrived in Simon's Bay on HMS NIGER on 12 March 1815. He wrote that he was happy to be there and agreed with the Admiralty that Simon's Bay was a safer and better anchorage than Table Bay. It would appear that his predecessor George Dundas would have preferred to stay in Cape Town!

During the Brenton's stay in Simon's Town, Admiralty House was known as "The Commissioner's House" and is labelled as such on an early watercolour by Mary Brenton. Several alterations and repairs were made to the house and Brenton purchased adjacent additional ground which was used as a cattle kraal. He remained in Simon's Town until 1821 when, after the death of Napoleon, the size of the Station was considerably reduced and he was recalled. No further Naval Commissioners were appointed to the Cape of Good Hope Station.

One of the main responsibilities of the Commissioner was to supply Napoleon, his entourage and the British contingent on St Helena with provisions and other supplies. Most of the supplies from the Cape were transported by boat from Kalk Bay to Simon's Bay and then shipped to St Helena. Cattle and sheep were kept in Simon's Town to provide fresh meat. It seems that Brenton might have visited St Helena, as he painted a picture of the island.

Jahleel Brenton certainly took his responsibilities seriously and undertook several development projects in Simon's Town. These included the building of the Mast House (the Clocktower was added later) and Sail Loft, the Dockyard Wall and the completion of the Naval Hospital (Old Hospital Terrace). At one stage he allowed

the Mast House to be used for services by the Anglican Church, but added..."not for too long". This I believe was because he was encouraging the congregation to rebuild St George's Church (now Criterion Building) which had collapsed after heavy rains.

He remained concerned about the welfare of the slaves and corresponded with Wilberforce. In a letter to his friend Lt Col Warre he writes "I have been writing to Mr Wilberforce – don't tell anyone here!" He ensured that the freed slave in Simon's Bay received a fair wage and established Blacktown where a limited number were given houses (but not land) and encouraged to establish gardens in order to feed themselves. This was on the site of Belmont House and the old School building. He wrote to the Navy Board on 24 September 1817 as follows: "...and part beyond the Naval Hospital at the south of the town...should be laid out in small lots, say 20 feet by 60...upon each a small house should be built by the black artificers themselves". In a summarised biography of Brenton in SESA Vol. 2, D.H. Varley writes "He was a lifelong philanthropist of great piety, he drew up a scheme for land settlement while at the Cape, and took particular interest in the welfare of the prize Negroes."

The year 1817 brought great sadness to Jahleel Brenton. His beloved wife Isabella developed lung disease, almost certainly tuberculosis, and deteriorated rapidly. They moved to Constantia, probably to the home of Lt Col Warre who owned San Souci. Here Brenton consulted Dr James Barry for whom he had a very high regard. He writes of Barry "this extraordinary young man, at the age of 14, had undergone a most rigid examination before the College of Physicians... and obtained his Diploma!" Unfortunately Barry found Isabella's case hopeless and she died shortly thereafter on 29 July 1817.

Brenton erected a handsome tombstone, sculpted by Sir Francis Chantrey in the Old Burying Ground. The inscription reads"

"Sacred to the memory of Isabella
The wife of Sir Jahleel Brenton
Commissioner of H.M. Navy
Cape of Good Hope.
O.B 29 July 1817 aged 46 years
She was to her beloved husband
the richest treasure of indulgent heaven."

Alongside this tombstone is a smaller one:

“Sacred to the memory of Dacres Brenton, who departed this world at Newlands, 21 January 1845, aged 8 months.”

Dacres was the infant son of Brenton’s niece Louisa Mary Diana who was married to Edward Pelham Brenton von Donop. They visited Simon’s Town aboard HMS PRESIDENT in 1845.

Tragically Brenton’s eldest son, John Jervis Brenton, who had been left in Winchester to complete his schooling, died of an acute illness on 27 August 1817, only one month after the death of his mother.

The South African Public Library has a collection of letters written by Brenton to Sir William Warre who was Lt Col Deputy Quartermaster at the Cape. He resided at Sans Souci, Constantia. The letters close:

“Believe me to be, My dear Warre

Very sincerely Yours

Jah Brenton”

In these letters he discusses scriptures and Divine Providence, and discloses some personal matters, such as “I fear Rex will be angry with me” and later “still problems with Rex and Knysna”. In another he expresses his anger with Bird, the Colonial Secretary, for whom he had no high regard.

He was very concerned about the health of Mrs Warre, no doubt because of his recent loss of his wife Isabella, and urges Warre to consult Dr. Barry. There were lighter moments when he writes of the children. He called the Warre’s son John Dumbles, and when Mrs Warre was safely delivered of another baby writes “Bella (his daughter) wishes to see the new dumble”.

Brenton was very proud of his carriage (or Phaeton) and in one letter offers to fetch the Warre family, writing as follows: “Will send carriage 2 hours before to Muizenberg, so that horses are fresh – 3 o’clock best time to cross the beach as it will be low water nearly at that time.”

He was also laid up at times due to “pain in the hip and cannot move”. To add to this he also suffered from gout! He writes “the new pastor improves with acquaintance” and in another letter he proposes to go to Cape Point to fix beacons there for the Whittle Buoy.

It seems that Brenton was comfortable in Admiralty House and refers to rooms where visitors could stay and of having dignitaries to dine. However, he does

write in his memoirs that “as our house required considerable alteration to make it comfortable, General Baird kindly lent us the Government quarters, which was a most valuable acquisition, as it kept your mother from the noise and confusion, which necessarily attended the fitting up and furnishing of our own house”. A familiar story to-day. Writing to Warre about the Commissioner’s House he says: “I had no idea the state of it being so very bad - the roofs were repaired last year, I fear there has been some neglect.”

Jahleel Brenton was an accomplished artist. He produced a few pencil sketches and some excellent watercolours. There are two paintings of Simon’s Town including Admiralty House, one of the Blockhouse (Martello Tower) and an unfinished panorama of Simon’s Bay. He did several watercolour paintings on his overland visit to Knysna. As mentioned previously four large aquatints by J.C. Stadler were based on drawings by Brenton of scenes of the action off Algericas in 1801.

Brenton’s visit to Knysna.

Brenton wished to assess for himself the suitability of the Knysna lagoon as a harbour and also whether the timber was suitable for establishing a shipbuilding industry. He had previously sent an expedition led by Captain Robert Wauchope in HMS EURYDICE which landed at Plettenberg Bay and travelled overland to Knysna.

Col. Warre and Col. Graham accompanied Brenton on his journey. They left Sans Souci on 24 November 1817, travelling on horseback with accompanying wagons. They visited Gordon’s Bay, which Brenton thought could be a useful port for loading goods from that area. After crossing the Hottentots Holland Mountains and visiting the warm baths at Caledon, and the Moravian Mission at Genadendal, they continued to the mouth of the Breede River. Brenton was of the opinion that the river could be used for small vessels to transport wheat by sea. (For many years the KADIE and other small vessels plied this route).

They arrived at Mossel Bay on 10 December. Brenton took soundings and commented on an excellent harbour and safe anchorage. They spent a few days in George and reached Knysna on 17 December, where they stayed on the farm of George Rex. Time was spent visiting the forests in the vicinity and seeing the woodcutters at work. Brenton decided to establish a shipyard and also to lay out a village, which he named Mellville-on-Knysna in honour to Lord Melville, First

Lord of the Admiralty. He also considered growing hemp for the manufacture of rope.

Brenton painted several watercolour painting along the way, including a fine picture of the schooner CORNELIA ARNOLDINA entering the lagoon. The journey back seems to have been uneventful and they arrived in Simon's Bay on 2 January 1818.

The samples of timber which he sent to England were considered unsuitable for shipbuilding or repairs. However, Brenton established a shipyard, which was unfortunately destroyed by two fires. The village of Mellville-on-Knyusna, which was intended for "meritous seamen" was exchanged with the Colonial Government for *certain land in Simon's Bay on which lay the town jetty and its attachments*. Brenton's contribution to the development of Knysna is remembered in naming Brenton-on-Lake, Brenton-on-Sea and Brenton Blue Butterfly. Gordon's Bay, the Breede River mouth, Mossel Bay and Knysna lagoon became established harbours.

Departure from the Cape

Napoleon died on St Helena on 5 May 1821 and the Admiralty radically reduced the size of the Naval Base at Simon's Town. Brenton was recalled and no further Naval Commissioners were appointed to the station. Before leaving Brenton sold his furniture, which included a Broadwood piano. He also advertised a cattle kraal for hire, which suggests that he had purchased land for himself in Simon's Town. The family departed in HMS VIGO on 6 November 1821.

At some stage Brenton, as a philanthropic gesture, had taken temporary adoption of a young San ("bushman") that Dr James Barry had "bought". The boy was named Hermes and evidently accompanied the Brenton's on their return to England.

Brenton moved to Bath for health reasons, and married his cousin Harriet Brenton, daughter of Judge James Brenton of Halifax, Nova Scotia on 8 October 1822. They had one daughter. In 1830 he was made a Rear Admiral and for a short while commanded the Royal Yacht. He was knighted on 8 August 1830 and from 1831 – 1840 was Lt Governor of Greenwich Hospital. He retired as Vice-Admiral of the Blue in 1840 and died in Leamington on 21 April 1844 aged 73.

Note: A splendid reproduction of a portrait of Sir Jahleel Brenton and copies of 2 watercolour paintings of Simon's Town have recently been presented to Admiralty House by his great x 3 grandson, Richard Brenton Sinker. Photographs of these have been lodged in the Simon's Town Museum archives, as has a copy of the Brenton Family Tree assembled by Boet Dommisie.

EDMUND HALLEY (1656-1742)

AUDREY READ

Many of our members will remember our very successful visit to Beaufort West to view the comet in the 1980's but we have never written much about the man himself.

Halley was once a sea captain, a cartographer, a professor of geometry at Oxford, deputy controller of the Royal Mint, Astronomer Royal and inventor of the deep-sea diving bell. He wrote authoritatively on magnetism, tides and the motions of planets, and fondly on the effects of opium. He invented the weather map and actuarial table, proposed methods for working out the age of the Earth and its distance from the sun, even devised a practical method for keeping fish fresh out of season. The one thing he did not do was discover the comet which bears his name. He merely recognised the comet he saw in 1682 was the same one that had been seen by others in 1456, 1531 and 1607. It became Halley's comet in 1758 - 16 years after his death!

He was a great friend of Sir Christopher Wren, who himself was actually an astronomer first and architect secondly, rarely so now remembered. Halley was also a friend of the Cambridge University's Lucasian Professor of Mathematics Isaac Newton.

TRISTAN DA CUNHA ISLAND AND GOUGH ISLAND PLANT LIFE

A.E. READ

The first botanical expedition to Tristan only took place in 1955 under the leadership of John Heaney and Martin Holdgate. Along with them was Nigel Wace a botanist who was to become the leading expert on the islands' flora. The group actually carried out a study of the geography, geology, biology and meteorology and stayed on the islands for six months, including a visit to Gough Island. On Gough Island Wace actually identified 12 plant species found nowhere else in the world. Their base on the island was finally handed over to the South Africans when they began to maintain a weather station there. There was a total of seven in the party.

The party soon became aware of the huge number of wild house mice on the island – an introduced species. They discovered they were the largest house mice in the world. The mice were a real nuisance and even nibbled people's hair when they were asleep in the camp on the mountains. It soon became apparent that these rodents were killing baby albatrosses

Wace produced the first detailed description of Gough Island's vegetation and this later earned him a PhD from Queen's University, Belfast. After the volcanic eruption on Tristan, Wace collaborated with Jim Dickson to prepare what is still the most authoritative overview of the flora of the island group. For 6 weeks in 1968 Wace and Holdgate returned to Gough and Tristan in order to produce a monograph on the interaction of man and nature since the islands' discovery by Portuguese navigators in the early 16th century. Wace was particularly indignant that the discoverer of Gough Island, Goncalo Alvarez, was nowhere commemorated on the map and campaigned successfully to have the second highest summit renamed Goncalo Alvarez Peak.

Wace made further visits in 1976, 1984 and 1995 when he drew up proposals for the prevention and elimination of invasive plants and urged that action be taken against the mice. He also vigorously campaigned for Gough Island to be declared a world heritage site.

Nigel Wace, who was born in India in January 1929, when his father was Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of the Punjab, claimed descent from Wace, the 12th century Jerseyman and chronicler of the House of Normandy. For some years Wace was also in the Geography Department of Adelaide

University, before he moved to the National University at Canberra. In retirement Wace became a guide and lecturer on cruise ships going to the Antarctic. Like Darwin he was always interested in the distribution of seeds around the world and often encouraged passengers to drop bottles with messages inside them into the sea. After one of these occasions in the Drake Passage, he was delighted when one was recovered in New Zealand and another on Easter Island off the coast of Chile. This confirmed the pattern of circumpolar drift first demonstrated by Sir James Clark Ross in 1842. Wace died in July 2005.

NAUTICAL SAYINGS IN EVERYDAY USE

BY AND LARGE means “for the most part” but it originated as a nautical term. A ship was once considered seaworthy if it could sail both “by” (close to the wind) and “large” (broad or before the wind).

THE DEVIL – In wooden ships, the longest seam of the ship was called the devil. It ran from the bow to the stern. Caulking this seam, or making it watertight with pitch (a variety of tar) was a most unpopular job. A sailor would sit in a bosun’s chair, which was a board and rope, and be suspended between the devil and the deep blue sea – a very precarious position, especially when the ship was underway.

THERE’LL BE THE DEVIL TO PAY – means there will be an unpleasant result from some action. It had nothing to do with giving money to Satan. The caulking was done with pitch or “pay”. The task of squatting in the bilges was despised by every seaman, and was sometimes a punishment.

THE BITTER END – the post on the ship’s deck is the bitt, and a line of rope around the bitt is called a bitter. The last line of rope secured to the bitt is called the bitter end. Nowadays, sticking it out to the bitter end means adhering to a course of action without regard for the consequences.

"FLOGGING A DEAD HORSE"

Merchant seamen shipping aboard a sailing ship in the 19th century were often allowed one month's wages in advance for clothes and gear. For the first month of the voyage they were, therefore, "flogging a dead horse" and at the end of that time the passing of the Dead Horse could be celebrated. The photograph below is on board the ship JOHN O' GAUNT (1869) and shows the unfortaunte "horse" shortly before its ritual disposal overboard. (Photograph from the Collection: Nautical Photo Agency, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich collection Neg. No. P7263).

