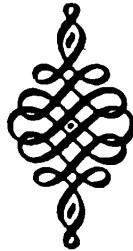




SIMON'S TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN



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Please note that from January 2007 the membership for single members (or 1st person of a family) will rise to R40 per person per annum and that for overseas members will rise to £ 15.00 sterling due to the increase in price of paper and of postage rates. The rate for Additional family members will not rise.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Sadly the Society announced the passing away of our President, Vice Admiral Glen Syndercombe on 18 July 2005, Mr Mike Munnik a Vice President on 15 August 2005, Mr Peter van Blommestein a long standing member and committee member. Peter passed away on 5 September 2005. Also Mr Albert Thomas a Society member and member of the Board of Trustees of the Museum.

GENERAL.

This has been our 46th year in existence and an interesting year it has been. However at times I thought we as a committee were not very busy. But when I began going through the Minutes of the past year, I soon realised that we were in fact quite active. I should remind you that it is not intended that your committee works its fingers to the bone all year round, but that we do address those issues that impact on matters that affect our town, its history and its people. Getting involved in matters of historical importance is what we do best. Some months we were busy, others not so. However I must once again thank my committee for the wonderful support they gave me, and the support we gave to each other when the need arose. Each and every one on this committee brings his or her special talents to the fore and this helps tremendously in achieving our goals.

Our Bulletins this year once again elicited many compliments from far and wide. For that we must thank Audrey who really works very hard as the Editor in producing this wonderful publication. I must also thank those who this year contributed by submitting articles. This is of course most welcome and a big help to Audrey. I encourage our members to continue contributing to the success of our Bulletin by submitting articles for publication.

MEMBERSHIP

Unfortunately our recruiting drive aimed at encouraging former residents of the town to join the Society did not achieve the desired effect. However overall a total of 414 members have paid their subs to date, considerably less than at this time last year. I do welcome all our new members. Please support the Society's activities whenever you are able and do bring your friends along as well.

A further recruiting drive took place in February this year when 700 leaflets explaining our aims and including a membership application form, was placed in every post box in town and surrounding area. Many new folk have moved into the area and it was hoped to attract many of these folk to apply for membership. It would appear that members who encourage friends to join the Society is a good way of recruiting new members..

TOURS

A very successful tour was arranged and conducted by Audrey to the Elgin region on 2 November 2005. Despite keeping the cost of the tour as low as possible, we only had 29 members join the tour, Therefore we made a slight loss but nevertheless it was considered a worthwhile public relations exercise for our members. Hopefully all future tours will once again be well supported. The annual members tour on 18 March

2006 realised a good turnout to Admiralty House and the gardens, and I thank the Flag Officer Commanding Naval Base Simon's Town – Admiral Pillay for giving permission for this tour. I thank both Audrey and Cherry for putting it all together. Lastly, Audrey has planned a tour to the Masonic Museum and then off to visit the Mouille Point lighthouse, one of the oldest on our coast. I urge our members to support these tours whenever possible. We will always endeavour to keep the costs as low as possible. A tour to the Fossil Park on the West Coast is also being considered for later in 2006.

PROJECTS

With regards to our projects this past year, I can report on the following. Negotiations with the Simon's Town Country Club to place a plaque on the site of the shell midden excavated in 1978, was successful and the plaque is now in place on the golf course. The committee was hoping that funding for the restoration of the Martello Tower would be forthcoming from Armscor, but alas that is no longer possible. Hopefully the SA Navy will now attempt to place funds on the budget for this urgent work, as I have written to Flag Officer in Command Simon's Town on this matter.

Our endeavours in wanting to re-introduce the Time Ball in town has not had the desired result as the plans for the building on which the Time Ball is to be erected, has not yet been approved by the City Council. However, Audrey and I have again met with officials at the Observatory to obtain additional documentation regarding Time Ball technology.

Still more vandalised graves in the Seaforth Old Burying Ground have been attended to, plus a large section of the surrounding stone wall has been rebuilt at great cost to the Society.

Capt Bill Rice continues his research for the 2010 Dockyard Centenary book. Eric Mawhinney is conducting a project with regards all ships badges on display in the Museum pub. When completed, badges will be more easily located by visitors.

Lastly, the state of Jubilee Square in our town centre is still of great concern to your committee as many outstanding items still have to receive attention. Hopefully the square will soon receive its much desired upgrade and attention.

OTHER MATTERS

Palace Barracks is at last being restored. Contractors are on site and it is hoped the complete restoration of this historic building will be completed by years end. Last year when I reported that restoration work had commenced, I was not to know that Public Works were only erecting scaffolding to hold back the buildings' front façade. The Society's monthly talks (to raise funds for the Museum Development Fund) was once again generally well attended and generated much needed funds. Again Cherry did sterling work in arranging all the speakers whose subjects were most interesting. I thank members who regularly support these talks and urge others to join us on the last Wednesday of each month at these social functions.

The Society has acquired a new projector which is compatible with a laptop computer which can now be available to our monthly speakers should they wish to make use of this type of projector. Much of the funds were donated to the Society for this purchase and my sincere thanks to those who were so very generous. Because the Society's book 'Our Simon's Town', printed in 1999 had sold out and many requests made by the public for a second edition, your committee requested Audrey to publish a new book. This she has done and is titled 'Simon's Town – it's History'. The book launch

will take place on 19th May 2006. My sincere thanks to Audrey for taking on this huge task.

I am pleased to see that the 'Dominion Textiles' building has been restored. Runciman Building has received a coat of paint, but sadly other buildings on the Historic Mile are very shabby and could also do with some urgent repairs and painting. They certainly elicit unfavourable comment from tourists, locals and your committee. Owners of shabby buildings are approached from time to time. Some will respond to our request, others not.

FINANCES

The Financial Report before you will indicate that our finances are sound. Our new book will require considerable funding from our resources. But I am certain we will recover these costs from the sales over a period of time. Please support us in this regard and purchase a copy from the Museum shop. My sincere thanks again to Haak, Fourie Attorneys for their generous donation which will be used to help finance the printing of the new book. However I will address the matter of subscriptions under Other Business.

VOLUNTEERS

I must again this year address the matter of volunteers. The Museum is constantly looking for new volunteers not only from the ranks of our members. Non members can also become volunteers. However I do urge new members to contact Cathy, the Museum Manager if you would like to volunteer your services in any way.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I think the Society had a successful year. Your committee worked well on various tasks, projects, reports and investigations and I believe we succeeded in achieving our goals and we enjoyed doing so. I particularly want to thank Vice Chairman Boet Dommissie who has taken on some really contentious property issues in our town on behalf of the Society. We need someone like Boet on issues like this to ensure inappropriate and insensitive development in the Urban Conservation Area does not take place including the disregarding of laid down rules and regulations. We supported and did what we could to promote this Museum. Your support to the Society and for our Museum is much appreciated.

Thank you.

TERRY KORSTEN
CHAIRMAN

EDWARD CAREY TYNDALE-BISCOE

DAVID TYNDALE-BISCOE

Edward Carey Tyndale-Biscoe joined the Royal Navy as a cadet in 1878. As a midshipman, he took part in three battles. The first was in amphibian landings in Egypt to save the Suez Canal from the depredations of Col. Arabi in 1882. The second two were on the Sudan/Red Sea littoral in 1884. They were designed to end the slave trade as well as to open a land route to Khartoum to save General Gordon. Edward jointly took command of the Naval Brigade after the Dervishes annihilated his senior officers. He was promoted to full Lieutenant in January 1886. A stammer acquired in action caused him to be invalided out of the Royal Navy in 1889.

In April 1890, when Major Frank Johnson led Cecil Rhodes' Pioneer Corps to Rhodesia, Edward was appointed 2nd in command of C troop, in charge of the Naval Brigade guns. He hoisted the Union Jack on 13 September 1890 at Fort Salisbury. After the corps disbanded Edward prospected for gold in the Mazoe valley until requested to reinforce the British South Africa Police on various sorties.

The spark for invasion of Matabeleland occurred in the Fort Victoria district in 1893. Matabele impis slaughtered the Mashona. Edward was appointed as an officer in the Salisbury Horse, despatched to help punish the Matabele and their King, Lobengula, in Bulawayo. Edward's prowess with a Maxim gun saved the expedition. The King escaped over the Shangani River during heavy rains. Alan Wilson's Patrol gave chase, but was isolated by flood waters and was butchered.

Dr Jameson's heady raid into the Transvaal in December 1895 played into President Kruger's hands. The Orange Free State became his ally in his rant against the British. Worse, the raid depleted the BSA Police Force and its horses. This and the advent of rinderpest and locust swarms, resulted in rebellion in Southern Rhodesia. Edward found himself as Captain in the Bulawayo Field Force in 1896. However, he was to return to Fort Salisbury with his force to help quash a Mashona rebellion. This lasted until after Cecil Rhodes' famous Matobo peace indabas.

In 1899 Edward volunteered for the Naval Brigade at the siege of Ladysmith early in the Anglo-Boer War. His knowledge of gunnery

contributed to the naval 4.7 inch guns neutralising the Boer Long Tom guns. He was subsequently promoted to the rank of Naval Commander.

NOTE :

Edward Carey Tyndale-Biscoe's wonderful array of medals are on display at the Simon's Town Museum and David's book on Edward Carey Tyndale-Biscoe is on sale in the Museum shop. It is entitled "SAILOR SOLDIER". (Editor)

MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS (a.k.a. Stormy Petrels)

Captain W.N.T. Beckett RN in his book on Naval Customs and Expressions gives the following story as the origin of the name Mother Carey's Chickens.

" Captain Glasscock, writing in 1826 concerning sailors' superstitions, describes how the ship TIGER, an East Indiaman, eastward bound for the Cape, was persistently followed by bad weather, and when off the Cape nearly foundered. A passenger called Mother Carey, appeared to have a peculiar affinity to the birds and was concluded by the ship's company to be a witch. The sailors were debating the question of putting the good lady overboard, when she settled the matter by springing over the side of the ship and going down in a blue flame!. The birds, which had assumed monstrous proportions, vanished in a moment and left the TIGER to pursue her voyage in peace. The birds have been known as Mother Carey's Chickens ever since."

From the same source we have the explanation of "A Rogue's Salute or One Gun Salute" fired before a Court Martial in the Royal Navy.

"It is fired to denote that a Court Martial is about to assemble to try a case under the Naval Discipline Act. If the Court assembles on board one of H.M. ships, the Union Flag is flown at the peak halliards while the court is sitting. In olden times it was customary to fire this signal gun in order to muster the hands of all ships in company to witness a yard-arm execution. A yellow flag was hoisted at the same time and kept flying until the sentence had been carried out."

BOUVET ISLAND : A MOST ELUSIVE ISLAND

STEPHEN MUIR

There is only one spot on the earth's surface where there is no other land at all within a radius of over 1,000 miles, it is where three major tectonic plates converge and is a volcanic hot spot. It is small, 58.5 square kilometres, rising to 935 metres. Rocky ice cliffs surround the coast making landing difficult and it is swept by high seas and frequently enveloped in ice and fog.

It was discovered in 1739 by Francis Joseph Bouvet (1753-1832), later a French Admiral who commanded a division of ships at the battle of the First of June in 1794. He was a distinguished sailor against Hyder Ali in the East Indies. The island was explored by a German expedition in 1898 and again in 1927 and in 1928 a Norwegian expedition explored it but it was not until 1955 that a South African expedition visited it and accurately charted the island. It was in 1930 that its sovereignty was agreed.

The island lies in the southern ocean approximately in the Longitude of Lagos (in Nigeria) and the latitude of Cape Horn. Its nearest continental neighbours are Queen Maud Land in Antarctica and the Cape of Good Hope nearly 1500 miles to the north.

In 1503 a severe storm in the South Atlantic drove the French sailor, Binot de Paulmeyer of the de Gonville family, off course to such an extent that he did not know whether he had rounded the Cape of Good Hope or not. Eventually when he made landfall, he did not know where that was either. Furthermore, on his return voyage home pirates in the Azores deprived him of his ship's papers. Nevertheless, once back in France, he was able to make an affidavit in which he described his discovery – Gonvilleland - as it became known – in highly favourable terms. There was just enough fact to persuade the French authorities that Gonvilleland was indeed the fabled continent in the Southern Ocean for whose riches the leading European powers were contending. French cartographers moved Gonvilleland round the globe with facile ease according to whim, from Brazil to New Zealand. From the French point of view any land south of the Cape of Good Hope would serve as a staging post to the East Indies.

In the southern summer of 1738-39 the lure of Gonvilleland drove Bouvet to sail to the southern ocean where he found the ice was unusually

north for that time of the year. On the feast of the Circumcision 1st January 1739, there appeared out of the fog a high, rocky cape flanked by glaciers, surmounted by a massive ice-cap, the ice streaking away to the east. Sea ice, seaweed, seals and penguins testified to the existence of land and it is not surprising that he considered the cape was part of an expanse of land. His pilot, however, thought it was part of an island but bad weather prevented a closer inspection. Not daunted Bouvet coasted the cape for 400 leagues without sighting more rock or evidence of land, other than pack ice.

Bouvet gave his cape's position as 54° 15' S 11°20' E. This was known to be an approximation as longitude could only be estimated from distance run [8° east of its true longitude].

Next on the scene was Captain James Cook under orders from the Admiralty, prompted by the Royal Society, to determine once and for all whether an exploitable continent existed in the southern seas, in particular he was instructed to concentrate on finding Cape Circumcision to establish whether or not it was the tip of the southern continent. To assist him in his task Cook had on board a Harrison-Kendall watch chronometer which enabled him accurately to fix the position of even the smallest island, so long as the heavenly bodies could be observed. He also had with him a copy of Alexander Dalrymple's 1769 "Charts of the Ocean between South America and Africa" on which Bouvet's landfall was depicted. It provided an important clue, along with the newly discovered Kerguelen island roughly in the same latitude, to the existence of the fabulous continent in the southern ocean for which Dalrymple was a fervent protagonist.

At the very start of his second great voyage of exploration Cook headed the RESOLUTION, a 462 ton sloop, accompanied by the ADVENTURE, also a sloop, south from Table Bay to run down Bouvet's track as shown on Dalrymple's chart. Beginning the search for Cape Circumcision on 10 December 1772 he sailed among "ice islands" as high as the top gallant masthead which threatened to embay him among immense fields of ice, whales, penguins and other ice haunting birds. Cook believed that he had seen a speck of land between the ice and snow. Furthermore, the "islands" – composed of frozen fresh water – adduced as proof of nearby land as it was believed they must have recently broken free from the shore. Then Cook sailed south and east of Bouvet's co-ordinates till on 3 January 1773 he concluded that what Bouvet had seen was a mountain of ice surrounded by an ice field and not a cape and, if there were land, it could be of no great interest. Two years later, after passing

Cape Horn, his two great probes deep into the Antarctic completed, Cook sailed across Dalrymple's Gulf of Sebastian to the cape shown on the chart forming its eastern arm – it was his last chance of discovering the elusive continent – and he found only sea. Then, in February 1775, instead of setting a course directly for home, he steered eastwards again to search for Bouvet's cape. Running down the 13° of longitude in the same latitude the French captain had claimed his land lay on; Cook's only sighting was a fog bank, nevertheless he persevered circling south of where some of his crew thought they had previously seen land, for a week, until he persuaded himself once more that it was an iceberg that Bouvet had seen, adding that neither seals, penguins, nor other ocean birds were indubitable signs of the vicinity of land. Then it was to Table Bay again, where he dropped anchor on 21 March 1775 to rest his weary crew before sailing for England. Bouvet's cape had eluded him, as it had Captain Furneaux of the ADVENTURE, who, having become detached from the RESOLUTION, on his way home from New Zealand had run over its reported position the previous year.

Where Cook had failed, an American whaler, Captain Lindsay of the SWAN, accompanied by the OTTER, operating out of Enderby Land in Antarctica, re-discovered Bouvet's cape in 1808. It was clearly a small volcanic island but he too was unable to land. [It is sometimes thought that he may have come upon Thompson island which disappeared in a volcanic explosion in 1895]. In 1825 a sealer, Captain Norris achieved the first landing when he hoisted the British flag over the island. However, Bouvet's exact co-ordinates remained uncertain: two mid-19th century expeditions to the Antarctic failed to raise it. In 1839 James Clark Ross in the EREBUS and the TERROR led a four year expedition to fill in gaps in Antarctic exploration in the course of which he discovered Mount Erebus and the ice shelf named after him. He searched for but failed to find Bouvet island. The problem was that contemporary charts showed its position as 2½° - 3° east of its true longitude. This was an improvement of 5° on Bouvet's calculation but was still inaccurate. Two years later hard astern of Ross, Lieutenant Thomas Moore arrived in Simon's Town to lead a further expedition. The Commander-in-Chief, the Hon. Jocelyn Percy, requisitioned for Moore a new 362 ton barque the PAGODA, which was engaged in surveying False Bay. Bouvet island again proved elusive and Moore concluded that either it did not exist or it had sunk below the waves.

Being such a small speck set among tremendous seas, enveloped in ice and fog, Bouvet's exact co-ordinates remained undetermined until patient work in the archives by Lieutenant R.T.Gould, R.N. settled upon an

accurate reckoning of its position. Validation in the South Atlantic of Gould's finding had to wait till 1898 when the German Deep Sea Exploration Expedition in the VALDIVA established Bouvet island's true co-ordinates as 54° 26'S 3°24'E. Again no landing was possible.

In 1934 another sloop, the Sandwich class MILFORD, a new sloop, headed out of Simon's Bay on course for Bouvet Island. By this time the British had waived their claim to the island – no ship of the Royal Navy had approached it for over 100 years – and it had been under Norwegian sovereignty since 1930. On board the MILFORD was the Commander-in-Chief of the Cape, Evans of the Broke, Vice-Admiral Edward Evans – who had hoisted his flag for a voyage to check the position of Bouvet island in the course of making magnetic and other observations in the South Atlantic. By then the island's position did not need checking as it has been precisely determined (although it was not known at that time that the island was moving eastwards at a rate of 1.01 inches a year!). Some of MILFORD's officers disloyally suggested that the Admiral undertook the voyage to escape from pressures ashore with which as Commander-in-Chief, he had to deal as a stand-in for the British High Commissioner who was on leave. Whatever Evans' reasons – the most likely was a last chance to revisit the triumphs of his younger days as a polar explorer with Captain Scott, when he had been navigator then captain of the expedition ship TERRA NOVA – the MILFORD did sight Bouvet island, but only just, as she was buffeted by 40 foot waves in heavy weather. The conditions prevented a landing and the MILFORD was forced to return to Simon's Town before reaching the Antarctic itself through shortage of coal – she could only make 4 knots with engine revolutions for 10½; but with the consolation that Evans did see penguins and glacial ice in the sea.

By permission of Norway, South Africa now has a weather station on the island. This is serviced from S.A.S. AGULHAS and they land by helicopter.

Works consulted:

French Exploration in the Pacific – John Dunmore, Oxford 1965
Journals of Captain James Cook
Encyclopaedia of Captain Cook – John Robson 2004
Dictionary of National Biography
Evans of the Broke, Reginald Pound, Oxford 1963
Admiralty charts (various)

From: www.anc.org.za/ancdocs

He is currently Minister of Welfare and Population Development, is a former Minister of Public Service and Administration, Member of the ANC National Executive Committee and Member of the ANC National Working Committee.

Dr Skweyiya was born in Luyolo, Simon's Town on 14 April 1942 and lived his childhood here. His family moved to Port Elizabeth where he attended primary school in New Brighton before they returned to the Cape, this time to Retreat. Here the Catholic Church organised activities such as tours of the Peninsula to keep the children out of mischief and these tours provided their only world beyond the poverty in which they lived, but Dr Skweyiya also expanded his world-view through reading books.

The family then moved back to Alice in the Eastern Cape and he went to Lovedale College. He participated in the school boycotts against the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953, aged 11 years. This experience convinced him of the need to foster unity among Africans and he joined the ANC in 1956 aged 14. The multi-racial make-up of the ANC leadership and their united stand after their arrest for treason deeply impressed him. After he matriculated from Lovedale in 1960 he met and worked with Govan Mbeki whose commitment to action and sound knowledge of rural politics strengthened his feeling that the ANC was on the right track, leading him to become an active member at Fort Hare.

When Nelson Mandela went abroad to seek military training facilities for the ANC, Dr Skweyiya was one of those who mobilised support among the people for Umkhonto we Sizwe. By 1963 he was in danger of being arrested. He then went to Tanzania and worked for the ANC until a move to the Lusaka office in 1965. The liberation of African countries from colonialism in the 1960s kindled and sustained his belief that one day South Africa would be free. Dr Skweyiya's intellectual abilities were soon recognised and in 1968 the movement arranged for him to study law as a guest of the German Democratic Republic. In 1978 he received an LLD at the University of Leipzig and he then went on to work for the ANC in various offices and capacities, travelling extensively throughout the world and publishing articles in many journals.

Dr Skweyiya returned from exile in June 1990. He believes unity among all blacks and especially among Africans should be strongly promoted. He feels that unity can only be achieved once the violence is stopped and blacks are given a feeling of belonging in a democratic system. This in turn demands that society be more conscious of its historical injustices and it ensures affirmative action. Special attention must be paid to economic and cultural advancement of rural areas; women must be ensured of equality and empowerment and the rights and needs of children must be cared for.

Since his return to South Africa Dr Skweyiya has directed the Department of Legal and Constitutional Affairs. He was elected to the NEC and is also a member of the NWC. He has helped to set up the Centre for Development Studies and the South African Legal Defence Fund, both at the University of the Western Cape. He also serves on the Board of Trustees of the National Commission for the Rights of Children.

GERMANS AT BAKOVEN IN WORLD WAR II ?

A.E. READ

It is said that U-Boats used to put people ashore at Bakoven. There was a bus terminus there then and they are alleged to have used the bus to get into Cape Town and to brush up their English by going to the cinema at Green Point. Geoffrey de Havilland, the aircraft manufacturer seemed to believe this was true - why, I do not know. We do know that one night Harry Lawrence the Member of Parliament received an urgent call from military quarters requesting his presence. They had found 2 German soldiers in uniform who had been washed up on the rocks at Bakoven and in their pocket were tickets to the Green Point cinema. Fact or Fiction ?? We'd like to know!

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“ATLANTIS” - GERMAN RAIDER 1939-45 WAR

She laid the first minefield off Cape Agulhas and for 18 months harried shipping rounding the Cape, destroying many vessels before she herself was destroyed.

During 1940 and 1941 the ATLANTIS became the “Will ‘o the Wisp” of the Southern Ocean, because of the way she appeared to flit back and forth around the Cape and to and fro in the Indian Ocean, being under a different disguise almost each time she pounced on a ship. Some times she had one funnel, others two, some times short masts, some times tall; other times she had an all-grey funnel and poop gun of an Allied merchantman, or the colourful funnel and hull-markings of well-known neutral liners. Sailors who escaped when she destroyed their ships reported that she went under different names – ATLANTIS, KAKI MARU, ALDESKERK and also only as a number. Finally in 1948 the British Admiralty revealed that her real name was GOLDENFELS.

She was commissioned in Germany in 1937, a single-screw motor cargo-liner of 7,862 tons gross, designed for the Hansa Line’s Indian service and officially credited with a speed of 16 knots. In fact, when chasing potential victims she is known to have reached 22 knots. She was one of more than 12 more or less similar ships built in Germany for the Hansa Line immediately preceding the war. After the war it became clear that they were built to the German Admiralty’s design for use as commercial raiders when war broke out.

She was fitted with powerful hidden armament, including torpedo tubes and a seaplane. Carrying supplies for two years she left Germany on 3 March 1940. On 3 May she sank the Harrison freighter SCIENTIST, homeward-bound from the Cape. On 10 May she laid her minefield off Cape Agulhas. Fortunately the next month one of the mines exploded for no known reason and aroused the suspicions of the Agulhas lighthouse keeper, before any victims were claimed.

In the Indian Ocean on 10 June she captured Wilhelmsen Line’s TIRRANNA; on 11 July Ellerman’s CITY OF BAGHDAD; on 13 July Henderson’s KEMMENDINE; on 2 August Wilhelmsen’s TALLYRAND; on 24 August Reardon Smith’s KING CITY; on 9 September United Molasses’ ATHELKING; on 10 September Ben

Line's BENARTY; on 17 September de Gaulle's COMMISSAIRE RAMEL and on 22 October Yugoslavia's DURMITOR.

She sent her first batch of prisoners to France on the TIRRANNA which was torpedoed and sunk by a British submarine within sight of the French coast with 86 of her prisoners and 1 crew member being lost. Her second batch of prisoners she placed on the neutral DURMITOR, which in trying to land them in Italian Somaliland, ran ashore. They were rescued and kept prisoner by the Italians at Mogadishu until released by South African troops who captured the seaport in February 1941.

The GOLDENFELS then went on to Japan for a refit, and it was on her second venture in the Southern Ocean that she was sunk by HMS DEVONSHIRE on 22 November 1941. A great relief to all.

From: The Cape Argus 14 August 1948.

OooooooooooooooooooooO

THE ROTARY CLUB AT GLENCAIRN

From The Cape Argus 20 September 1948.

{This camp is in frequent use to-day and little do we think of the first group of children to stay there in September 1948}

"A party of 16 children came over 500 miles, over bad roads and in antique buses to stay at the Rotary Club. {Remember that in those days our roads were not like those we use to-day, nor was the transport}. The party was organised by Mrs Isaak van der Merwe whose husband worked at the diamond diggings at Alexander Bay. She, as Miss van Heerden, had been a teacher at a school in the peninsula prior to her marriage. She persuaded two other women to accompany her to help out with the children.

This was the first time such a big party of children had left the diggings for a special holiday. Some of the parents, who had never been away from the diggings themselves, were reluctant to let their children travel so far. Fund-raising events were arranged to cover the expenses. They were also helped by Mr L.C. Bruwer, headmaster of Jan van Riebeeck High School in Cape Town, who arranged for the children to stay at the Rotary Camp. For many it was the first time they had been able to enjoy sea-bathing as the water near their home is too cold for this. They were also taken on excursions round the Peninsula and given an idea of what the world beyond the diggings looked like. {Nearly 60 years later the camp is still doing yeoman work providing a healthy holiday for under-privileged children.}

A.E. READ

Before beginning the main part of the story, a brief word about the beginnings of Freemasonry in South Africa. Formally organised Freemasonry as we know it to-day, began with the founding of the Grand lodge of England in 1717 and in the Hague in Holland in 1734.

There were a number of Freemasons living in the Cape by the this time and it was on 2 May 1772 that the Dutch formally introduced Freemasonry to South Africa and ten founding Brethren established the Lodge De Goede Hoop.

In 1879 it was hoped to start the Phoenix Lodge (under the English Constitution) but it was pointed out by the District Grand Secretary in Cape Town that before anything could be done, all the signatories must be Masons of the English Constitution. As a result Brethren Yairn, Twogood and Turner were elected members of the British Lodge. The British and Carnarvon Lodges sponsored the new Lodge in Simon's Town. There were 15 founder members who battled to get the Lodge on its way. Many members came from the Royal Alfred Lodge (Scottish Constitution) in Alfred Lane. We will give you what history we have of this in the accompanying article.

The first meetings in 1880 took place in a room above Brother Whyte's grocer shop and bakery – now Lewis Furnishers. They met there for 10 years.

In 1892 it was proposed to purchase for £750 the former Salvation Army hall, on land belonging to the late Alexander Nicholas Black. This building had been known in earlier times as "Smugglers Den" and also had at one time been used as the Customs House. It was below the main road behind Bay View House (now known as Amlay House). The Temple was built by the addition of another floor at street level. It cost £2,000 and was completely paid off by 1919. It was consecrated by the Right Worshipful District Grand Master Rev. C.W. Barnett Clarke in May 1900. It had 2 ft thick walls. In 1903 the building was one of the first in the town to be fitted with acetylene gas. The fittings and generator were installed by Mr. Rutter of Cape Town.

The original building with the Mason's crest on the outside was used until 1977 when a new, smaller and purpose-built building opened at

Glencairn. This was consecrated on 1 October 1977. The architect was L.I. Smith.

Founders of the original Lodge were: Thomas Barraball, Alex. N. Black, John R. Black, H.G. Crane, George F. de Stadler Snr., John Inglis, I.G. Mason, A.A. Moore, Robert Rayner, G.N. Richards, Lee Solomon, Edwin Turner, Henry Twogood, George Willet and I.S. Yairn.

In 1977 the Institute of Marine Technology took over the building on a temporary basis while their new building below the Naval Sports Field was being erected. In the 1980s the building was then divided, the lower half being used by the South African Navy for offices and the upper half (abutting the main street) became a club for Dockyard employees. This has since closed.

Information from:

The History of the Phoenix Lodge, S.T.Museum Library.

"Evening Express" 15 January 1880

Deeds Office, Cape Town, Transfer No. 2101 Vol.27, 21.4.1893

Seaside News 16 May 1903

S.T.Museum archives

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ROYAL ALFRED LODGE, ALFRED LANE, SIMON'S TOWN
(Scottish Constitution)

A.E. READ

This was founded on 5th May 1862 and most of the members were serving Royal Naval personnel. They met originally in hired premises.

In November 1876 the executors of the Estate of Anna Rosina Wikboom ceded and transferred to the then Trustees F.H.S. Hugo, J.G. Hodgson and H.P. Hablutzel, a double-storeyed building comprising 7 houses and rooms and a piece of garden ground in all measuring 38 sq.roods 143 sq.ft and 118 sq.ins. for the sum of £311.

The members then put up the new building themselves, not charging for their services.

In February 1940 Paul Fouché was installed as the Master but sadly the Lodge was forced to close in May 1940. War had broken out in 1939 (September) and Simon's Town was a closed area. Most of the Lodge members then came from outside Simon's Town and required a permit to enter the area. The authorities would not co-operate. The Lodge moved to the Claremont/Newlands area and then, when the new Masonic complex was built at Pinelands, it moved there and its insignia hang in the entrance hall.

The buildings were transferred to the Simon's Town Municipality on 25 February 1944 and the hall was then used by the coloured community until they were moved from Simon's Town under the Group Areas Act of 1967.

Information:

Cape Mercantile Adviser 28 December 1864

The Standard & Mail 17 October 1876

Deeds Office, Cape Town: Transfers T.61 1/11/1876 Folio 99

S.T. Museum Archives.

Erica Haleogenea

TMK

The Klawer Valley above Simon's Town is the last known habitat of Erica Haleogenea. It is found in the marshy ground in the valley below the extension to the Naval Armament Depot. It is an inconspicuous plant which bears a small white flower.

Source: History of Naval Armament Depot Simon's Town.

ALFRED ABDULLAH SONGELWA (1933 – 2004)

Alfred was part of the Simon's Town scene for 50 years. He was born in the Transkei in 1933 and moved to Simon's Town with his late mother. During the 1960s they were relocated to Gugulethu under the Group Areas Act. However Alfred continued working and living with the Dryden- Dymond family for many years before returning to Gugulethu in 2000 to "look after his mother's home".

He was a special character and everyone in Simon's Town knew him and greeted him. Alfred converted to Islam about 30 years ago and was known in the Muslim community as Abdullah. Ashraf Ganraker, who also knew him well, described him as a man of extreme humility and modesty, who embraced Islam in a quiet, unassuming way. He walked miles in his time, and could often be seen walking from Fish Hoek to Simon's Town or vice versa from one Dryden-Dymond family member to another.

Alfred Songelwa died on 18 August 2004 and a memorial service was held for him in the Simon's Town Town Hall on Wednesday 6 October.

ALFRED ABDULLAH SONGELWA **1933 -2004**



THE DUTCH GUNS AND THE BATTLE OF MUIZENBERG

(with thanks to the Canon Association of South Africa and Commander Gerry de Vries)

One of the earliest occasions when artillery was used in anger in South Africa was at Muizenberg on 7 August 1795 when the English attacked the Dutch defences there. The Dutch authorities had ordered the hasty construction of defence lines in the narrow gap between the coast and the mountains, after they had abandoned Simon's Bay to the invaders. Well aware that the English had landed in considerable numbers at Simon's Bay, the defenders believed that the threat to their positions was from an attack by land forces along the coast. Their defensive lines were thus at right angles to the coast road and to the shore line.

The authorities and military leaders at the Cape were divided in their loyalty, in that some supported the present regime in their land of origin, but others favoured the Prince of Orange who had been forced to seek asylum in England. Some of the Orangemen regarded the English as allies and not as an enemy. The result was that the defences of the Cape were not well organised, and the execution of the plans was undertaken without enthusiasm.

The Dutch had no spare guns in storage which could be sent to Muizenberg. The recent spate of defensive constructions closer to the settlement had in fact caused an acute shortage of these items. The first guns to arrive in Muizenberg were two large-wheeled 4 pounder field guns, which came from the Park of Artillery at the Castle. Next to arrive, a few days later, was a 13 inch mortar and a howitzer, both pieces of field ordnance designed for use against land forces. These possibly came from Chavonnes or Amsterdam Batteries, as these main batteries had the storage capacity for such weapons. With the howitzer came a portable powder magazine, a boxed wagon which was clad in thin iron or copper plate and had a steep sloping roof, off which explosive shells or incendiary devices, hopefully, would roll without igniting the contents of the magazine.

Two 24 pdr guns and carriages arrived at Muizenberg and were placed at the seaward extremity of the defensive line. All guns at the Cape were already deployed and standing on suitable carriages. It is highly unlikely that guns would have been transferred from one battery to another without their proper carriages. No ground platforms were supplied with the carriages and the gunners had to produce makeshift platforms which

would prevent the carriages from becoming embedded in the sand. Several contemporary and later reports refer to the fact that these guns were not properly mounted. Some students have interpreted this to mean that the guns were not on proper carriages, but a correctly mounted gun refers to the carriage and its platform, and it was the platforms which were not suitable.

Some earth and stone parapets were erected, between which there would have been embrasures through which the guns could fire. The makeshift platforms of wood or stone, would have been aligned with these embrasures and the platforms and embrasures together, would have defined the possible field of fire for each gun.

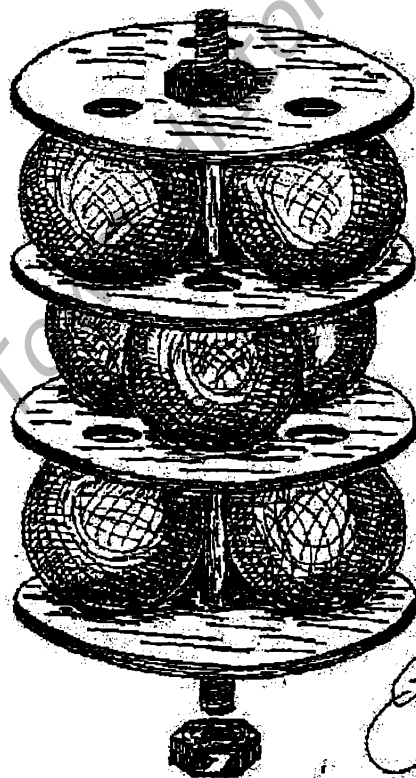
The last guns to arrive in Muizenberg were two more 4 pdr field guns, bringing the total artillery strength to two 24 pdr guns, a 13 inch mortar, a howitzer and four 4 pdr field guns. All were supplied from a single portable powder magazine. The field guns, mortar and howitzer were all land weapons, and if correctly handled, should have been able to drive back any infantry attack, which would have had to advance along the narrow stretch of land between the mountains and the sea. The belief that the attack would be along this narrow strip of land meant that the 24 pdr guns would have been supplied with solid and grape shot only.

The English had no draft animals so they used manpower to transport their guns from Simon's Town, first to Muizenberg and then on to Cape Town . To do this they used 420 sailors . (Ref. Theal, page 290 regarding a letter from General Craig to Rt.Hon. Henry Dundas on 27.12.1795). Admiral Elphinstone, in charge of the English fleet, undertook to provide the planned landward attack with artillery support from his ships. Elphinstone had sent a small boat to take soundings close to the shore off Muizenberg. He needed to know how close to the defence lines he could anchor his ships. The Dutch gunners were angry at their leader, who refused to allow them to fire at the boat taking the soundings.

Four ships and a gunboat arrived off Muizenberg at approximately 13h00 and set about laboriously anchoring forward and aft and winching themselves into a broadside firing attitude. The gunboat was the first to fire, but the larger ships soon joined in and poured shot and grape down on the Dutch positions. These positions were designed to repel an attack at right angles to the fire which was raining down on them, and they had no defensive barrier on their left flank.

The unprotected infantry and mounted units being at the mercy of this bombardment were unable to effectively return fire, so they retreated around the mountains to Sandvlei. Two young artillery officers and a handful of men turned the two 24 pdr guns and returned fire at the anchored ships. Admiral Elphinstone later wrote that two men were killed aboard the AMERICA and four wounded when one of her guns took a direct hit and was disabled. One man was wounded aboard the STATELY and several other shots passed through the ships without inflicting any serious damage.

Lieutenant Marnitz, one of the Dutch artillery officers involved, reported that their guns had to be repositioned after every shot and soon became embedded in the sand at an awkward angle. When all the ships had accurately established the range and began concentrating their fire on their position, the Dutch gunners were forced to spike their guns and retreat to Sandvlei. There were no reports of casualties among the Dutch.



ENGLISH 9 SHOT PLATED GRAPE
(CANVAS COVERED - WOODEN TAMPION)

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DUTCH PREDICAMENT AT MUIZENBERG

In view of the shoddy preparations by the military leaders and the lack of will to fight in certain quarters, the defences at Muizenberg appear to have been deliberately neglected. Lt Marnitz claimed that his seniors deliberately kept the stone masons, carpenters and other tradesmen busy upgrading batteries where there was no threat. This left glaring deficiencies at Muizenberg where the enemy was known to be preparing to attack. The fact that two 24 pdr guns were supplied to a sandy position without platforms may support his claim.

If a landward attack only was expected, the 24 pdrs would have been issued with solid shot and grape shot only. Neither of these are the optimum ammunition for use against ships. Had they been expecting a sea borne attack, they would have been issued with bar and chain shot, which would have been far more effective against the ships. The ammunition alone would have made very little difference to the outcome, there being only two guns against many.

The 13 inch mortar was cumbersome piece which fired an explosive shell only. The mortar was fired using two linstocks, one to ignite the fuze in the shell, and the other to fire the mortar. This resulted in a high percentage of shots being badly timed and the shell was likely to explode seconds early or late. This made little difference against land targets, as the shell would either explode above the exposed infantry, or bounce once or twice and explode among support troops to the rear, causing injuries and consternation in either event. Against a ship the mortar was all but useless, as the gunners were mostly under a sturdy deck and high trajectory shells did not bounce on water. The mortar was a heavy fixed-position weapon and was abandoned when the Dutch retreated.

The howitzer also fired only explosive shells, but the fuse of the shell was ignited by the discharge of the piece, resulting in slightly better timing of the shell. Although highly effective against soft targets on land, the short range and high trajectory of the howitzer, coupled with a low velocity and lighter shell, make it relatively ineffective against stout ships. Should this speculation into the identity of the howitzer be accurate, then it constitutes another, possibly deliberate, sabotaging of the Muizenberg defences by sending only a secondary weapon and not one of the Dutch 7½ inch howitzers. The howitzer was taken with the retreating troops to Sandvlei.

The four 4 pdr field guns were too light to damage a ship and they were removed by the retreating troops. These guns were later used at Sandvlei but to little effect.

The 24 pdr guns were of the c.1780 Swedish design and weighed 6100 Amsterdam pounds each, or almost exactly three metric tons each, without their carriages. The dimensions of the makeshift ground platforms are not known, but if they followed the norm of the period, they would be trapezium shaped with the narrower end toward embrasure and the enemy. A platform for a 24 pdr gun had a length of approximately 16 ft (5 m) and was 10 ft (3 m) wide at the rear and somewhat less in the front. A 24 pdr gun of this weight firing a standard charge and shot on a level platform, could be expected to recoil by 12 ft (4 m)

The feat of turning the 3 ton guns and carriages through 90° of traverse using only handspikes, and with incomplete gun crews was remarkable in itself. When the guns were fired at this angle, the breeching ropes could not be used to limit the recoil, as the anchor points for these ropes were on either side of the embrasure, now at 90° to the line of fire. When firing at right angles to normal, the platforms were too narrow, and the guns would recoil off the side of the platforms and come to a halt with the rear trucks in the sand.

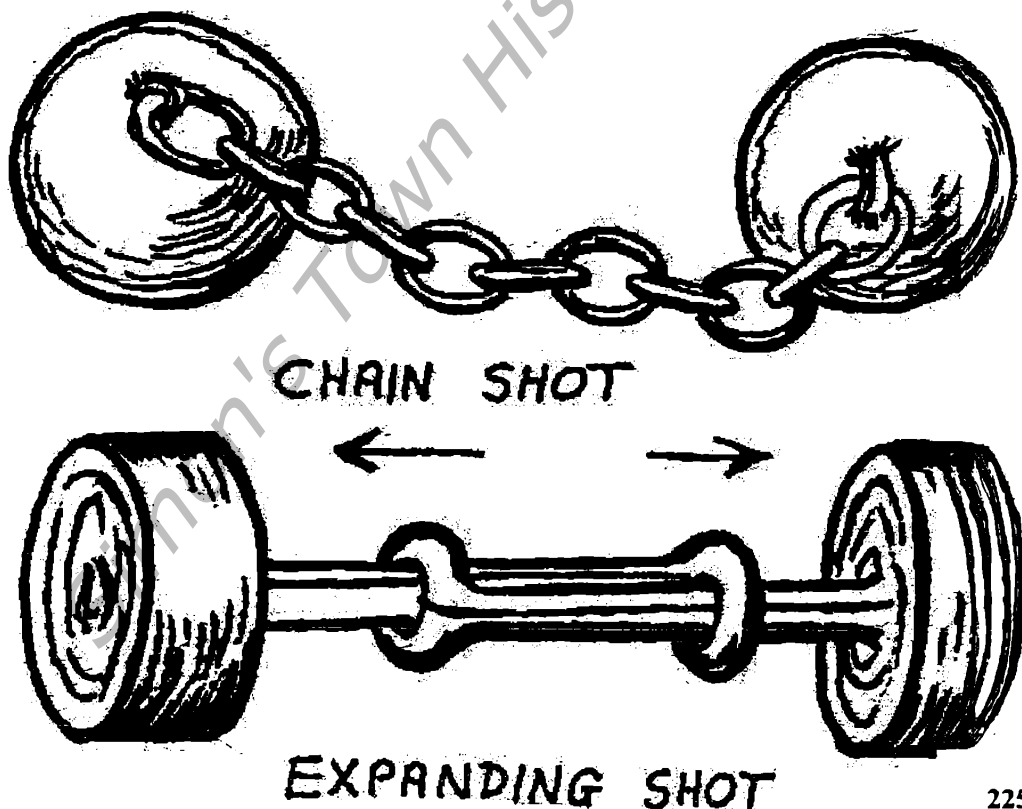
If the gunners managed to replace the heavy guns and carriages back on the platforms, this was another remarkable feat, in that the handspikes would have had no purchase in the sand. The planking of a platform was always laid at right angles to the direction in which the gun was expected to fire. The small gaps between planks offered a purchase for the lower end of the handspikes when running out or aiming the gun. The gunners at Muizenberg had lost even this minor convenience. In any event the rate of fire would have been greatly reduced due to the time required to re-align the guns after each firing.

If they were not able to return the carriages to the platforms, the gunners would have had to depress the muzzles further to compensate for the lowering of the rear of the carriages. This would have been done by inserting additional quoins under the breech. This situation would have been exacerbated by each successive shot, with the carriage rocking backwards under the recoil, instead of rolling back on the platform. Each successive shot would then have buried the rear trucks, and part of the carriage, deeper into the sand. This would have made the gun extremely difficult to aim.

The only advantage that the Muizenberg gunners had over the English, was that they were firing from a steady platform at relatively large ships which were stationary. The English were firing at a relatively small profile target from rolling ships which were anchored side-on to the prevailing swells. The English ships carried some 160 guns of all calibres. If 40 of these were chase, stern or other guns, and the remainder divided into port and starboard, it is possible that the English brought the fire of 50 or 60 guns down on Muizenberg.

Once the infantry lines, tented camp, paddocks and other positions had been vacated by the retreating Dutch, all ships were able to concentrate their fire on the two 24 pdr guns which were returning fire with some effect. With guns immobilised and standing at an awkward angle, and receiving the undivided attention of a greater number of English guns, the Dutch gunners eventually spiked their guns, burned their powder and retreated.

Given the difficult situation of the poorly mounted and aligned guns, the absence of defensive earthworks on the seaward flank, the fact that their commander had abandoned them when the first shots were fired, and the greater number of English guns, it would be unfair to blame these artillery men for the failure to defend Muizenberg.



AN AMERICAN VISITOR TO THE CAPE IN 1866.

In the summer of 1866 Mr Nicholas Pike was appointed United States Consul on the island of Mauritius. He sailed from the navy yard at Washington on 18 August in the U.S.S. MONOCACY (1,030 TONS captain S.P. Carter) and arrived at Port Louis on 12 January 1867. The experiences of his voyage and his first six years on the island are described in an entertaining book entitled "Sub-tropical rambles in the land of Aphanarteryx (i.e. the Dodo); personal experiences, adventures and wanderings in and around the island of Mauritius" published by Sampson Low, London 1873.

The MONOCACY reached the Cape on 15 December 1866 where she spent 10 days. Pike is not specific on this point. However, his description of Simon's Town and Cape Town which covers about 10 pages makes interesting reading.

"After passing Tristan d'Acunha, we began to see the pretty black and white Cape pigeons that swim round the ship like a flock of ducks and greedily pick up any scraps the sailors throw overboard. Every night from 27 November to 6 December meteors were seen, some very large, leaving their long tracks of light behind. I especially mention this to those who are studying meteorology, for I believe it is very uncommon for so many to be seen of such dimensions in so short a space of time. When about 600 miles from the Cape, we saw a whale breach and large quantities of sea-weed.

I made a barometer on board, which showed any disturbance in the atmosphere with such unerring certainty and indicated it as soon as either the aneroid or quicksilver barometer. That I give the way to make one of these chemical weather-glasses. (There then follows instructions Ed)

On 15 December land was descried ahead and soon after we could make out the celebrated Table Mountain, Devil's Rock and Lion's Head and the Rump at the Cape of Good Hope. We ran down the coast with the current, so as to make Simon's Bay before dark. The shore is high and bold and the waves dash madly against the rocks, throwing up the foam, so that it can be seen at a great distance.

Simon's Bay is about 12 miles by sea from Cape Point, near the N.E. corner of False Bay. It lies at the foot of Simon's Berg, one of a high ridge of mountains. Vessels that find it dangerous to anchor in Table Bay put into Simon's Bay, which is considered perfectly safe at all seasons of the year. Ships visiting this bay can always obtain refreshments from the well-furnished stores of the town and

excellent water from the tanks. There is also a patent slip, capable of taking vessel of 1,800 to 2,000 tons. A large square rock, called Noah's Ark, lies at the entrance of Simon's Bay, opposite is a lighthouse, and just beyond a fortification called the Blockhouse. This is mounted with a few guns "en barbette" and in the centre is a small circular loop-holed tower. Simon's Bay is noted for fish. Our men caught an abundance of silver-fish, mackarel, Cape salmon and snoek. The latter is peculiar to the Cape coasts and large quantities are salted and packed for the Mauritius market; the vessels bringing back supplies of sugar. The houses are well built; and from the Admiralty House, the residence of the Commodore of the Cape of Good Hope Station, a fine view is obtained of the shipping and harbour.

Bent on seeing all there was to be seen I left the ship, with my vasculum and a long strong stick, such as the Boers use when on a journey. I landed at the pier, and set off on foot along a fine road by the shore, towards Belvidere. (This was probably the inn which then existed at the corner of what is now Bellevue Road Ed). Before arriving at the inn, I met a large drove of Cape sheep led by an old ram. They came prancing down the road, their great tails swinging and bobbing about in so droll a manner that I was puzzled to know what they were, never having seen such queer animals. Instead of the ordinary caudal appendages, they have a mass of fat, sometimes over a foot square, terminated by a pointed tip, turned up. The upper side only of the tail has hair. The true Cape sheep has coarse long hair, which however becomes woolly on crossing the breed. They are rarely seen now, the farmers finding it more profitable to keep good woolled sheep. As the breed improves, the tail gradually disappears. When killed, the tip is cut off and the tail split in two, salted, and dried in the wide chimneys, and makes a very good substitute for bacon; or it is melted, and supplies the place of butter in cookery. The tip is carefully rendered down, and strained, when it is clear as crystal, and can be applied to any purpose for which neat's foot oil is used.

I laid in a stock of refreshments at the inn, which is kept by an Italian and his English wife. He is an old Crimean soldier, pensioned by the British Government, having been through the whole war. He gave me all the information he could respecting the natural history of the place, and accompanied me some distance, giving me advice as to taking care of myself etc.

I passed along a pretty road still skirting the bay and came to an open grassy spot, apparently the site of a former dwelling. There were long rows of aloes in full blossom, looking like a file of soldiers in the distance, with their bright scarlet and yellow flowers. Hovering over them were a number of long-tailed delicate birds. The bill is very long and curved, which they insert into the bells of the aloe, each

one containing a large drop of delicious honey. They are never seen to alight, but circle round the plant uttering a rapid twittering note. They are called sugar birds and have the most brilliant plumage. The body is excessively small, but covered with feathers of the richest scarlet, purple, and green or yellow tints, often overlaid with a golden sheen that flashes in the sun till they look like winged jewels.

Aloes are common all over the country and form an article of commerce. The long large leaves, deeply serrated and bearing a sharp spine at the point, are cut on a bright clear day. A hole is dug near the plant and lined with maize leaves, in which the cut aloe leaves are placed. They bleed freely and the viscous matter that flows from them very soon coagulates, when it is collected for sale. It is said to be equal to the finest socotrine aloes. From the network of the leaves I have seen very fair paper made, and the heart of the plant is as sweet as a nut, if care can be taken in cutting off the leaves, which are bitter as gall.

Two huge ribs of a whale were placed at each side of the road, forming an archway. Many other bones were scattered about, this having been once a whale fishery, but now abandoned. (This is presumably Millers Point - Ed) As I ascended a little elevation I could see a number of small houses, but only two or three were occupied.

As I approached, I saw a Hottentot woman washing clothes. If it be rude to stare at the fair sex, I certainly was guilty of rudeness to the last degree. I found all the descriptions I had ever heard of the Hottentot Venus beaten to fits by the reality. Cape sheep are nothing to it! She was dressed in a skin of some animal, made very soft, and tightly drawn round her person from the waist to the knee, so that of course a perfect outline of her figure was visible. Her nude baby was lying under a tree near her, and when I questioned her about the place, she rose to show me the way to the principal house. She coolly shook her vestment straight, and snatched up the child, placing it on the seat nature had provided for it on its mother's haunches. As it was restless, to quiet it she lifted up her breast, which the child clutched over her shoulder, and thus took his breakfast as we went along. I never witnessed such a sight and wished for my camera to take off the picture. She told me the principal person there was an old Scotchman, called Captain John Miller, who was the pilot of the port. This place is called Allen's Point.

I found the old man busy salting snoek in the little outhouse. I at once told him who I was, and where from, when he quitted his work and entered into conversation about America. I found him intelligent and he led the way to his house, where I partook of his hospitality. He showed me all over his place, and

said that, with the exception of a coloured boy he was trying to bring up respectably, and teaching to read and write, there was no one else near but the Hottentot woman and her husband.

He had a nice patch of vegetables near the house, but he told me the baboons were so troublesome, they robbed him of nearly all his crops. He was determined to put a stop to their depredations, and he built a little thatched hut so as to overlook the garden, and placed a man there with a loaded gun. But they were too clever to be caught so easily. They watched the time when the man went to his dinner and down they would come, doing endless mischief in his absence. These animals are very crafty, and when out marauding, one party is sent thieving while others are despatched to the different points commanding the situation, as scouts. The thieves devour all they can and fill their cheek pouches and carry off as much as possible if all goes well. On the slightest appearance of danger, or the approach of any one, a peculiar cry is given as a warning signal, when away they scurry. They make for the nearest bush or kranz, where they grin down in triumphant security.

To go back to my old man, who knew their cunning ways: one day when the guardian left for dinner, down they came as usual, grown bold by continued success; but whilst they were devouring the pumpkins the man cautiously crept back and soon succeeded in mortally wounding a large fellow about 4 ft high. The scene that followed was so painful, that Captain Miller declared he would never shoot another if they eat up all his vegetables. He describes it as exactly like a human being in the death agony. The poor thing looked up in his face so pitifully whilst its plaintive cries asked for help as plainly as could a human voice, that he felt as if he had committed a murder.

Near to his house was an eminence where he kept a sharp look-out for vessels entering the bay. At the foot of this hill were two solitary graves; one bore the inscription on the headstone: RUTH SANTI 25 October 1865. The poor woman had arrived here in an emigrant vessel bound to Australia, which was obliged to put in for help, having so much sickness on board. Ruth was taken on shore, but too late, and fell a victim to the dire disease, dysentery, and was buried in this lonely place.

The old man warned me against the snakes, which were numerous, but told me that a long black serpent from six to eight feet long was considered harmless, and that they were never killed, as they preyed upon other snakes and were capital rat hunters. We went through the bush to a high bluff about three miles distant, and here we can upon a whole family party of baboons at play. The young ones were

sliding down a grassy slope, rolling over like great fur balls, chattering and gambolling like so many boys at play; which in the distance they so greatly resembled, that I could have sworn they were children. One of the old ones was leaning on a stick watching the others. I wished for one of their thick skins to send home but could not find the heart to shoot a baboon

The captain accompanied me some distance on my way back, but when he left me, instead of going to Simon's Town, I determined to pass the night in the mountains and branched off up one of them. I reached an elevation of about 2,000 feet just in time to witness a beautiful sunset. A long bank of heavy black clouds in the west was illuminated, as the sun sank below the horizon, till it appeared as if lined with silver and radiating all the spectral colours from its edges, which changed every moment. The top of the ridge is flat table land, as smooth and grassy as a well kept lawn. It was now nearly dark and, descending a little, I found a nice nook under a shelving rock, which I beat well with my stick to be sure there were no snake tenants, then took off my big coat and rolled it up for a pillow, lighted my pipe and was fixed for the night.

I awoke about one o'clock much confused, either dreaming or hearing human voices. I sprang up, revolver in hand, and sallied forth. About 20 ft from me I saw some very suspicious looking people silently crossing the path: I called to them but got no answer, so fired, when a loud screeching was set up, and away they all scampered into the bush. I then found that I had appropriated the bedroom of some baboon family, out for a spree, and on their return they had discovered me, and I suppose it was their vocal objections to my presence that had awakened me. It was a glorious moonlight night so I pushed on for Simon's Bay, soliloquising as I went.

I reached the Royal Hotel at daybreak and had a sound sleep while they prepared me a capital breakfast. When I called upon our consul Mr. Graham, he had gone to Cape Town, but a few days after he came on board and gave Captain Carter and myself an invitation to spend Christmas Day with him at Wynberg. On the 25th we left the ship and found our consul waiting with a carriage for us. The morning was clear and bracing, and we soon reached the sands of the beach, when lo, our noble steed protested against proceeding further. With difficulty he was coaxed on and we were obliged to walk along the heavy sand till we got to Kalk Bay where the road is smooth and level and winds round the base of a mountain. Near this, on a lovely spot, stands the country house of our vice-consul Mr. Martin. We stopped there a short time and he showed me some curious geological formations on the beach near his house.

After a delightful drive, we arrived at Wynberg and had a good day of it, and a regular Christmas dinner, and returned well pleased to the inn. I was so taken with the road, which is macadamised with stone containing iron ore in excess, and that makes it literally an iron road, that I determined to go to Cape Town and up Table Mountain. (This he did the next day, starting out before daylight and had his breakfast when he reached the top. Ed)

OooooooooooooooooO

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.

HMS MIMI & TOUTOU ON LAKE TANGANYIKA

A.E. READ

These 2 little ships, probably the smallest ever to bear the title HMS, translate into English as "miaow" and "woof-woof"! These names were chosen instead of the suggested HMS CAT & HMS DOG suggested by some wag at the Admiralty!!

In 1915 a German "navy" of 3 gunboats commanded the waters of Lake Tanganyika and the British Admiralty decided to send these launches, broken down into sections, to launch an "offensive" to exert Britain's supremacy on the Lake. It was decided to ship the launches from the Thames to the Belgian Congo and from there they would go overland from the railhead. This was not to be easy as in some places the launches had to be hauled on ox-wagons while the sweating seamen hacked a path through the forest of central Africa. Heat, mosquitoes and malaria added to the sailors' suffering. The whole journey from the Thames to Lake Tanganyika took 7 months.

The launches were 42 ft long. They were armed with a maxim gun, and with a 3-pounder which stood in the bows. They had a shallow draft and their motors gave them a speed of 15 knots.

To lead the British Naval Expedition someone called Geoffrey Spicer-Simson, posted safely behind a London desk, was chosen. His detractors laughingly referred to him as the oldest Lt Commander in the Royal Navy. He was a tattooed fantasist, addicted to tall tales and apt to believe his own mythology. He smoked personalised monogrammed cigarettes and inspired little more than contempt from his fellow officers.

He readily accepted as he saw a last chance of glory in leading what he hoped would be a successful foray. Under him were 28 officers and ratings known as the British Lake Tanganyika Squadron.

On 6 December 1915 the German gunboat KINGANI, a large wooden steamer with a Hotchkiss gun steamed past the British at their base, on her patrol, at a full speed of 6 knots. The 2 launches took her by surprise as astonishingly the Germans had not heard of their arrival. They opened fire on the KINGANI at 2,000 yards and scored many direct hits and finally the KINGANI hauled down her

flag as she was sinking. The resourceful Royal Navy raised the KINGANI, cleaned her up and mounted a 10 pounder gun and re-named her FI-FI.

On 9 February 1916 the German gunboat HEDWIG VON WISSMANN steamed into the range of the MIMI & TOUTOU. She too was set on fire and after a very short time she too was abandoned and her crew picked up from the crocodile infested waters. The next vessel to fall victim was the motor launch WAMI, filled with troops. She was beached and blown up by the Germans. This left only the 3rd gunboat GRAF VON GOTSON. She had 4-inch guns. The Germans panicked and blew her up knowing how useful she would be as a transport for British troops if she was captured.

After the war was over the VON GOTSON was raised and towed to Kigoma where she was abandoned. Tanganyika Railways, who ran the lake steamers in peace time, bought her for £4,000 in 1922. a Royal Naval salvage team with divers, wire hawsers and special tanks pumped compressed air into the ship and she surfaced like a submarine on 16 March 1924. She sailed the lake for many years in the service of the Railways having been re-named LIEMBA on 16 May 1927. In Livingstone's time the lake was known as Lake Liemba. The LIEMBA was 1575 tons, 232 ft long, 33ft wide with a draught of 9 feet. She carried 20 1st Class passengers, 8 2nd class and 300 deck passengers.

The war over the TOUTOU came back in triumph to Table Bay Docks where she served out the rest of her life and so no one would forget, a brass plate was affixed to her stating: "This launch served in the East African campaign as an armed cruiser. She captured and sank 3 German gunboats with the assistance of her sister launch MIMI".

This bizarre battle inspired C.S. Forester to write "The African Queen".

We first wrote of this event in earlier bulletins Nos. XIV Nos 2 & 3 in 1986 & 1987.

OoooooooooooooooooooooO

BELMONT HOUSE & L'ESPERANCE – 2 HANDSOME VICTORIAN HOUSES.

AUDREY READ

BELMONT HOUSE:

When Bill Rice was searching for information on the building of the East Dockyard, he decided to search through the Works Books (Admiralty Civil Engineer Files) No.32 and there he found the story of the building of Belmont House. A few years ago the Museum had been given the plans of the house, so now we have the complete story.

An Admiralty Letter dated 2 December 1899 advised the Commander-in-Chief, Simon's Town, that funds would be available during the financial year 1900/01 for the construction of a residence "suitable for a Superintending Civil Engineer". The construction of what we know to-day as the East Dockyard was about to begin in earnest. The C-in-C was directed to select possible sites and submit dimensioned site plans, showing levels. Sketch plans for a house would then be prepared by the Admiralty Civil Engineers, based at Avenue House, Northumberland Avenue, London. Three possible sites were selected and an Admiralty Letter dated 27 April 1900 approved the construction of a residence on "Site A" between Simon's Town School and the then Naval Hospital (now known as Old Hospital Terrace).

The estimated cost of the house was £4,800 with a considerable proportion of the work being undertaken by the Admiralty. The tender submitted by Barraball & Squire (a Simon's Town firm) for work to the value of £2,700 to be completed within 7 months, was accepted by letter dated 5 February 1901. According to the Bill of Materials, work to be undertaken at Admiralty cost included all excavation and foundations, stone basement wall of the stoep to the underside of the cornice, retaining walls at the S.E. and S.W. ends of the building, installation of earthenware drains, fitting of main water supply tank, supply and erection of entrance gates and making good the boundary walls, erecting a boundary fence and laying paths and roads. The Admiralty was also responsible for the supply of some of the building materials, fixtures and fittings and on 24 October 1901, over a month after the building should have been completed, a telegram was sent to London stating that the "ironmongery" on order from Messrs Colledge & Bridgen and fireplaces from Messrs Deane were urgently required.

Belmont House is officially Residence No.25 and was probably named for the Battle of Belmont in the Boer War in which the Naval Brigade from Simon's Town was involved. It comprises 3976 ft in area. It is a brick and stone 9-roomed house with a slate roof and has several wonderful Victorian fireplaces, two of which have marble mantelpieces. There is also a magnificent staircase leading from the ground floor to the upper floor. There is a single garage on the south of the house but this was not built until 1926.

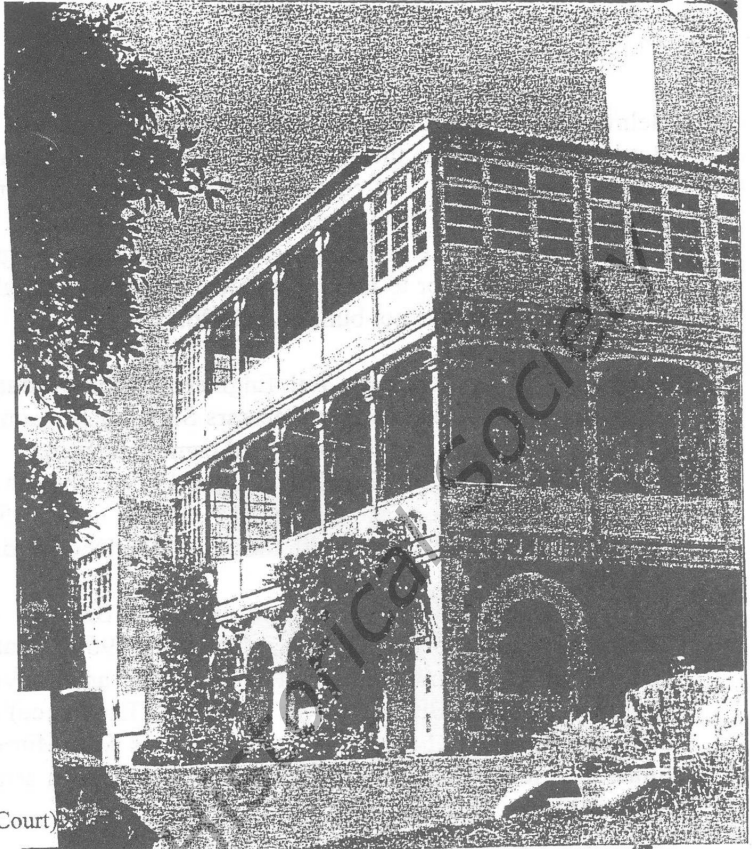
When the Superintending Civil Engineer's tour of duty was complete on the handover from the constructors Messrs Sir John Jackson Ltd of London, the post of Captain-in-Charge of the Dockyard came into being. The first incumbent was Captain J.U. Fairlie, appointed on 15 June 1919. The last Royal Naval Captain-in-Charge to live there was Captain H.F. Bone, until 1957, when the house was handed over to South Africa with the rest of the Dockyard.

Commodore Paul Dryden-Dymond lived in Belmont until his retirement as Captain-in-Charge of the Dockyard in early 1969. Later in 1969 Stanley Peel arrived on secondment as Chief Constructor and moved into Belmont. He succeeded Alan K. Bull (who was living in L'Esperance) and was here until 1974, being succeeded by Eric Hepden who with his wife Muriel also lived in Belmont. Since then it has been the home of many well-known senior officers of the South African Navy.

L'ESPERANCE:

This gracious house was built by Mr Alfred Langdon Blagden Blackburn probably around 1890, on the site of a smaller cottage. It was officially Residence No. 19. In February 1883 an advertisement appeared in the Wynberg Times as follows: "Mrs S.J. Little, having secured that most eligible dwelling house L'Esperance Villa, is anxious to receive a limited number of young ladies to be educated with her own daughters (a most favourable opportunity for delicate children)." We know nothing more about Mrs Little at this time.

When it was decided to build the East Dockyard all the property along the seashore between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Martello Tower was required to be expropriated. In terms of Section 17 of Act 25 of 1898 (The Simon's Town Naval Defence Act of 1898), the Colonial Government expropriated the land and transferred it to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. At that time it was described as "house and grounds plus cottage" and was acquired for £5,750 – a large sum of money in those days. Mr Blackburn then went on to build at The



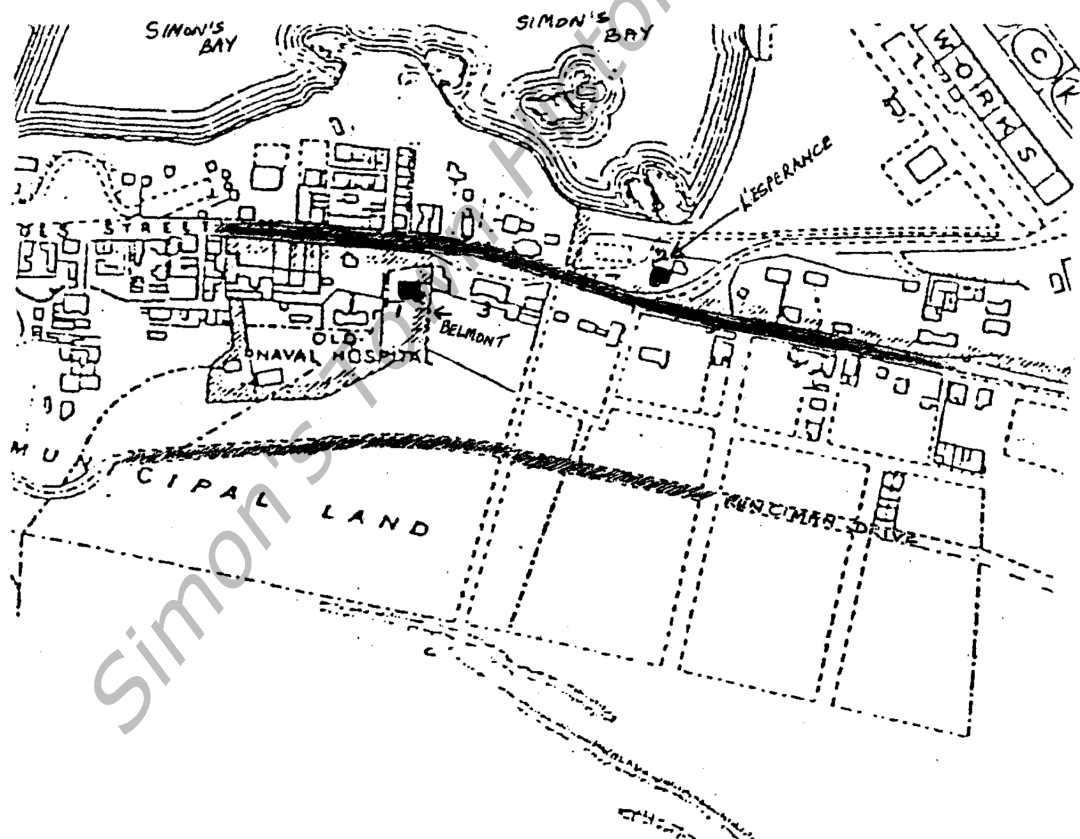
Below: L'Esperance
(now no longer)
Right: Belmont House
(opp. Magistrate's Court)



Boulders. Many well-known Simon's Town names owned the properties which were expropriated, e.g. Stegman, Black, several members of the Hugo family, Robertson, Thompson, Korte and the Miller/Bull families. Altogether the acquisition of this land cost £24,540.18.10d.

After the establishment of the East Dockyard L'Esperance became the official residence of the Chief Constructor of the Yard. Alan K. Bull who had been seconded to the S.A. Navy left here in August 1969, after living in L'Esperance. It was then earmarked as the future site of the submarine base S.A.S. HUGO BIERMANN and was due to be pulled down so building of the base could commence. Its entrance was from the main road through a pair of attractive wooden gates, down a long drive and it had nearly an acre of ground with it. It was a tragedy that it was pulled down as it was such a splendid example of Victoriana but its fault lay in the fact that it stood on some very desirable fairly level ground bordering the Dockyard.

In a separate article there are the memories of Jill Revans (nee Hepden) who lived in the house from April 1960 – 1963.



MEMORIES OF "L'ESPERANCE"

JILL REVANS (nee HEPDEN)

A wall, a short piece of wall that is built at an odd angle to the old dockyard wall, is now the only reminder of the solid wooden gates that were at the top of the long drive to that lovely old house called L'Esperance. The gates were dismantled in 1969/70 when the submarine base was built. Anyway they had become a rather dangerous entry and exit with the build-up of traffic over the years. I had the privilege to call that house my home from April 1960 to 1963. On the left of the drive were the loquat trees, an exciting new fruit to a 13 year old from England. The mimosa trees, again on the left, came between the tennis court and any visitor who walked down the drive. On the right were a series of terraced lawns with hibiscus and a fig tree providing colour and fruit. Nearer the house was a raised arbour with a vine growing over it. This vine produced lovely Hanepoort grapes which I ate by the bunch.

The house itself had style and charm. It was double storey, with what I initially thought were balconies at both ground and first floor level. However, I was quickly informed that these were "stoeps". They were built on the front and left hand side of the house and painted in bright white and green. The stoeps on the left, both at ground and first floor were glassed in. The lower stoep providing an excellent home for kittens produced by the resident dockyard cats and later the pedigreed corgi pups that were bred from our own much loved pet Sherry. Set back and to the left of the house was the garage which housed our brand new yellow and white Ford Zephyr. This same car which took us to what was then Northern Rhodesia, over the strip and red dirt roads, for our holiday. It's interior always had a red tinge to it even after we returned to England.!

To my eyes, a 13 year old having just stepped off the R.M.S. CAERNARVON CASTLE, the house was HUGE. Downstairs we had three reception rooms, one of which my mother later divided into a sitting and dining room, with a table that we could at least reach across to each other. The formal dining room in L'Esperance was colourless, vast and had a table that was so big we had to roll the salt and pepper to each other. This caused much laughter when we ate our first meal together. My other memory of that room is of my sister Mary practising the piano and of birthday parties where that large table came into its own.

Upstairs there were four good sized bedrooms, one of which was later divided into a bedroom with sitting room facilities. There were two bathrooms, with plumbing from the Edwardian era. The bath was one of the cast iron variety, on claw and ball legs and had a shower head that Queen Victoria would have been familiar with. I well remember the brown water that came out of those taps as water levels got lower in the local dam. The mosquito nets around the beds were straight out of history books, however, if you really did not want to get bitten they were very efficient. The view from my bedroom was of Simon's Bay. I used to watch the train at night, looking like a glow worm as it wound its way along the coast, the lights of Glencairn and Muizenberg also being visible.

During school holidays there would often be gunnery practice at the battery below Marine Oil Refiners and you would see the puff of white smoke across the bay and then a second or two later you would hear the bang.

Halfway between the ground floor and the bedrooms was what to-day we would call a mezzanine floor, off which was a maid's room. We had Ethel and all her family troubles, then Ruth. Ruth, my lovely soft-hearted mother soon discovered had a baby which as far as she understood had been fed on bread and sugar water. As a result this child of two could neither stand nor walk. The babe came to live with Ruth, sleeping in one of the huge drawers of the Victorian chest. My mother oiled his legs, wrapped them in bandages to straighten them and filled the poor child with good food, every vitamin and mineral that could help bones to grow. Within months he was walking. Ruth was followed by "Pom" an African lady, committed Christian and teetotaler. My most vivid memory is of her walking down the driveway in all her glorious red and black, with a heavy sewing machine being carried safely on her head.

At the back of the house was a 30ft wall which was part of the main entrance of the East Dockyard. Every day except Sundays the siren would go off at 6.45, 6.55 and 7 a.m. telling all of Simon's Town that every worker should now be in his place. That siren was within yards of our bedrooms, however, it is an example of how a teenager can learn to sleep through anything on Saturday morning and during school holidays.

The back garden was originally a patch of grey soil/sand. Our predecessors had kept chickens. My mother set to with vigour to turn this unprepossessing part of the garden into a rockery, rose bed and lawn. She started with a few pieces of kikuyu grass and aided by the manure of the departed chickens we soon had quite a presentable lawn. There were also trees in this area to which my father fixed a

long rope, added a pulley with attached handles and lo and behold his two daughters plus friends had all the fun of a “fuffy” slide.

Our predecessors were not tennis fans and they had let the court fall into disrepair. For a short time it became a jousting area for myself and sister to play medieval knights and their ladies. However, my father decided he would like to play serious tennis and he had the net repaired and the clay court rolled and watered regularly. I can well remember several lovely occasions when friends were invited to come for a braai and play tennis. I would help my mother prepare the salads and she would often buy one of those great big water melons and it was then I was introduced to the fun and to my rather prim eyes, the disreputable pastime of water melon seed spitting!

My parents enjoyed entertaining and I have lovely memories of many parties held in L’Esperance. My mother often worried about what she could serve that was new and interesting. A lemon meringue pie was one of her specialities. This was long before the days of coffee table recipe books. Recipes were closely guarded secrets and a Mrs Ada Robertson only gave my mother the chocolate fridge cake recipe when we were about to depart and only on condition that she used it in England. I have to confess that I did take it back to Johannesburg in the 1980s and it is still very much in use to-day.

Of an evening I would take the dog for a walk in the dockyard. I would slip through our own private corrugated-iron gate which was set in a barbed-wire topped corrugated-iron fence into the dockyard. My most precious memory of those walks was occasionally on a balmy evening I would see a seal swim and dive in the phosphorescent water around the Bullnose – it was magic. Or there was the wonderful sight of the S.A.S. TRANSVAAL or NATAL all lit up for Christmas. This private gate also led to a private beach that all residents and their friends could use. It was protected by an old torpedo net so no sharks could threaten us; though I think I was more at risk from sharks of the sailor type than the marine variety.

I came to South Africa as a 13 year old child and left as a 16 year old adult. My family had a wonderful time for those three years and all the fun and family dramas were played out against the lovely backdrop of L’Esperance. A gracious house built in a style now long forgotten and part of Simon’s Town’s history. (This was written in December 2003).
