

## Notes and Queries

### *Retrospective Exhibition : Clément Sénèque*

During 1984 the Tatham Art Gallery in Pietermaritzburg was able to mount an exhibition of 82 works of the young artist and architect who spent the last five of his working years in Durban before his untimely death at the age of 32. Sénèque (1897-1930) was born in Mauritius and came to Natal at the age of eleven. After completing his schooling in Durban he was apprenticed to a firm of architects, and three years later in 1921 commenced studies in architecture, town planning and painting at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Already he was painting and exhibiting, both in Europe and South Africa, and in 1925 he returned to Durban to start an architectural practice. It was, however, his painting which occupied much of his attention in the five brief years remaining. Various factors influenced Sénèque against innovation and experimentation with newer art forms, and his work is characterised by 'uncanny ability at massing and simplifying forms and tones to bold, flat, highly structured patterns.' The Tatham Gallery's exhibition brochure contains essays discussing art in Natal during the artist's lifetime, and placing Sénèque in his European and South African context. Natal subjects figure prominently among the works, which were on loan from many individuals and galleries, the former including the Sénèque family. The exhibition, which was shown in Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Kimberley and Johannesburg (as well as Pietermaritzburg) served to throw light on a period of our art history, and an artist, that have been given less than their due attention by serious researchers.



### *Urban conservation in Pietermaritzburg*

When a firm of estate agents bought a derelict old cottage at 66 Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg, 'did it up' and proudly announced that their office would move there, they brought very severe criticism on themselves. The writer of one letter to the press spoke of 'enknitchment', defining the verb as 'delighting in and encouraging bad taste; decorating insensitively and inappropriately; modernising without regard for original materials or character; promoting ugliness and opulence.' Another wrote: 'What was once an unpretentious nineteenth-century house, of no great architectural distinction perhaps, but characterised by simple lines and pleasing proportions, sash windows, brick chimnēy and a veranda on to the street, has been naively prettified: false gables, phony ironwork and very

contemporary awnings have resulted in a meaningless mish-mash, entirely without any sense of style or period.' The letter ended: 'This disaster is in sad contrast to certain old houses in Boshoff Street which have recently been most carefully and lovingly restored.' It is doubtful whether the estate agents concerned had any understanding of what the fuss was about. All they could say was that the premises had been derelict, rat-infested and a health hazard. Perhaps the storm of protest brought to them some understanding of the aesthetics of restoration; perhaps they realised that they might have spent their money in another way, which would have brought them praise and appreciation. But the deed had been done, and it was too late.

It was too late, also, to do more than protest at and deplore the swift destruction (with municipal approval) of two attractive little brick porticos on a building in Change Lane, to make way for some large expanses of plate glass.

On the credit side, however, all praise to the owners of Buxton House who have renovated and restored it to its pristine attractiveness; and to the Standard Bank whose costly renovation of their main Church Street branch shows how much they value that architectural masterpiece.



*The life and death of Rev. Heinrich Schröder on the mission station at Tshoba-Hlobane, 1882-1883.*

*In Natalia no. 13 last year (p. 101) we noted the visit of Mrs H. Schütte to an almost forgotten grave. Our Dundee correspondent, Mrs Sheila Henderson, provides further information about Mrs Schütte and the last days of the missionary whose life she has been studying.*

"Eighty-year-old Mrs Hedwig Schütte of Dundee is the authoress of eight remarkable and rare books which record the genealogy, life and works of the great founders of the Hermannsburg missions in Northern Natal and their many descendants, the Klingenbergers, Dedekinds, Schroeders, Müllers and others. With the permission of the Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission Society she has sought out from its Archives, and translated into English, the diary, letters and reports relating to the murder of Rev. Heinrich Schröder at Tshoba on 6th June 1883.●

They present a vivid picture of the unruly times in a Zululand, torn apart by the civil war between Cetshwayo and Hamu, and of the perseverance and faithfulness of the young German pastor.

Heinrich Schröder had arrived in Zululand in 1880. Attached to the Rev. Mr Volker at Ekulengeni Mission, he worked with great diligence to restore the buildings, burnt out during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.

Timber for roofing was needed and they set off for Hlobane Mountain with a wagon and their axes on Tuesday 16th August 1880 — Rev. Mr Volker, his son Johannes and the energetic young Schröder. On Friday morning they started working in the bush, where they had to stand in water, chopping and sawing amongst wet branches, bushes and creepers. Their clothes were soaked through. Thorns tore their clothing and ripped their hands and faces. The second trip was an epic adventure. Days of rain turned to a howling blizzard and the missionaries and their workers spent a dismal

night imprisoned under their wagon, chilled to the marrow, wet through and terrified by the cracks and crashings of trees breaking under the weight of snow. Another day of cold rain drove them out to find shelter in a Zulu kraal, where in the warmth of a hut they lay down and slept. On the Sunday morning they began the search for their oxen, tramping through 18 inches of melting snow.

At a distance they saw two oxen grazing in the snow, but hope faded when they saw how the poor animals trembled and how thin they were. Fifty paces on another terrible sight met their eyes. Twelve oxen lay huddled together, dead from cold and want.

So, half dead from cold and want themselves, they had no choice but to tramp back to the Mission. Schröder's boots began to disintegrate on the descent of the mountain. At the Black Umfolozi the river was flowing breast high, 30-40 feet wide. Stripping and commending themselves to God, they attempted the crossing. In midstream, Schröder almost lost his footing but eventually struggled through. Grateful for nothing worse than wet clothes and a streaming cold, the young missionary tramped on for another 1½ hours, to reach the mission at dusk.

Such were the physical hardships which the early missionaries faced with undaunted faith. Having learnt Zulu in his spare time, young Schröder by August 1882 felt prepared to launch his own mission and undertook the task of establishing it beside the Tshoba stream beneath Hlobane Mountain.

Schröder was to spend some nine months on his station, energetically developing an irrigated garden and orchard, building a small cottage, a stable, a cowshed, a pig sty and a fowl house, encouraged through times of want, loneliness and danger by the thought of his fiancée Isa Elise Lütkemüller, who was to take ship in May to join and marry him. By lamplight in the lonely evenings, he fashioned a sewing table and a footstool for her and a writing table for himself.

On 13th May 1883 he wrote to the Missionary Society in Germany:

'For ten weeks I have been sitting here all alone and have no human soul with me, since all my Zulu workers have disappeared and also all the other heathens have fled, as there is again war all over Zululand, also here around us. Some tribes want Cetshwayo back as King, others follow his brother Hamu, who is opposing him, and the worst was that each tribe thought I was siding with the opposing tribe. In the beginning they all were very hostile to me, but nowadays I am told by both parties that I may live quietly, they won't molest me. They have stolen many of my possessions or begged for them most aggressively and if I did not give the desired things to them, they threatened to take them all. When I work out the value of what they took, I find it worth 100 Taler at least.

That the Lord still gives me so much courage, must be because so many are praying so faithfully and sincerely for me. That I also ask of you, for I badly need your prayers of intercession. My life is presently harder than anyone else's, having to start up here in such riotous times.

Besides the heavy work I do myself, I am often in want of food and clothes. For six whole weeks I had scarcely any meat or fat in the house and lived on coffee and dry mealie bread alone. I asked God to

let me please have a little meat for Pentecost, and what do you think? On Thursday two wild peacocks settled at about 300 paces from the house. I thought probably God has sent them: I aimed and killed one of them. Oh how pleased I was — like a king! I knelt down and thanked God for this. The bird weighed 13 lbs and was so fat that I could scoop off a lot of fat for later use. Nearly every time, when I had had no meat for a long time, God provided for me.'

Stolidly enduring such privations, cheered by the knowledge that his fiancée's ship was due to dock any day in Durban, on the evening of 6th June 1883 Rev. Heinrich Schröder sat at his table reading his Bible. A band of Abaquluzi, led by the 'terror of the region' Mapela, burst in at the door.

They stabbed the missionary repeatedly and mutilated the body. Then they ransacked the cottage and looted his poor possessions, but the bloodstained Bible remained where it had fallen.

Two days later, alerted by Zulus, Rev. Mr Weber, Schröder's supervisor, hurried over from Enyati Mission and sent an account of the scene to the Society.

'I saw him again yesterday. The terrible thing had happened, but he had triumphed. His dead body presented a terrible sight, but his features were peaceful and not distorted. He had wrestled with the cruel enemy like a hero. Now he can rejoice in heaven, arrayed in heavenly glory.'

Weber hastily knocked together a wooden box and buried him beside the cottage, laying a heap of stones on his grave.

Fifty years later the Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission Society marked the grave with a cross and protected it with a cement slab and wrought-iron railings.

The face of the cross bears the words:

HIER RUHT  
 IN GOTT  
 MISSIONAR H. SCHROEDER  
 GEB. DEN 1 OKTOBER 1850 IN REINSTORF  
 GEST. DEN 6 JUNI 1883 AUF EHLOBANE  
 ZULULAND  
 DU HAST MICH ERLÖST  
 HERR DU  
 TREUER GOTT  
 Ps. 31.6

On the reverse is the same inscription in Zulu but the scripture reads:

KUTAZELA  
 UZE UFE  
 NGOKUNIKA  
 UMOELE  
 WOKUPILA

Schröder's diary runs from Wednesday 16th August 1882 to Friday 27th April 1883. It is a moving record of privation, loneliness, toil, tribulation and unflinching faith. It has a history of its own.

On 20th July 1883 a Mr T. de Groot, the son of the Rev. C.P. de Groot of Gulpen in the Province of Limburg in Holland, then trading from the farm

“Spruitfontein” of a Mr Klopper in Utrecht, rode alone and unarmed to deserted Tshoba, having met the arrogant presumed murderer Mapela on a neighbouring farm. In the small dwelling-house with its living room, bedroom and kitchen he picked up ‘some books and manuscripts sprinkled with blood’, among them parts of Schröder’s diary. He tied them in a bundle, using his shirt tied together top and bottom as a bag, and rode back to Utrecht where he sent them to his father in Holland who forwarded them to Rev. Mr van Wyk, a Lutheran Missionary, who in turn sent them to the Hermansburg Society in Germany.”



#### *Parish Register Indexes and Cemetery Lists*

Members of the Natal Midlands branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa have been particularly active in the last year. Two of them, Mr C.O. Holness (who is also the Honorary Secretary), and Mrs J.G. Duckworth, have produced indexes to the registers of Pietermaritzburg churches. Mr Holness has indexed the Presbyterian baptismal and marriage registers from 1850 to 1900, and the burial register from 1865 to 1900 (a burial register was not previously kept). Both the registers of the First Presbyterian Church and St John’s Presbyterian Church are covered. Mrs Duckworth had completed the first two baptismal and marriage registers of St Mary’s Catholic Church, 1850-1879 and 1879-1888, and is working on the third volume, 1888-1902. Only one other such index to registers of a South African church is known to the writer, that of Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Port Elizabeth for the years 1858 to 1898, compiled by Mrs A.S. Troughton and published in 1970 by the Historical Society of Port Elizabeth and Walmer. The indexes of Mr Holness and Mrs Duckworth are more comprehensive in that, in the cases of baptisms, the names of the parents are given, as are the dates of birth as well as the date of baptism.

As for cemeteries — so far Mrs Duckworth has listed the gravestones in the Catholic section of Pietermaritzburg’s Commercial Road cemetery, while work parties of members have completed the Grey’s Hospital side and half of the Anglican section on the other side of the road. Country members have been busy as well, and inscriptions in cemeteries at St Anne’s Church at Ravensworth, Noodsberg, Riet Vlei, Greytown, the Howick Concentration Camp, St Andrew’s Church in the Dargle, Curry’s Post, Caversham, Nottingham Road, St John’s Church at Weston near Mooi River, Baynesfield, Richmond, Highbury, Donnybrook, Lufafa Road, Creighton, Gluckstadt, and the Ekuhlangeni mission station on the Vryheid-Gluckstadt road have been copied. Cemeteries on the farms *Mount Park*, *Parkside* (both in the Dargle district) *Donnybrook*, *Becklea Estate*, *Avonmore*, *Craigie Lea*, *Highbury*, *Loch Buighe*, *Seven Fountains* (in the Donnybrook-Eastwolds-Lufafa Road-Ixopo area), *Naauwpoort*, and *Pamania* (in the Vryheid district) have also been recorded.

### *Proclaimed National Monuments in Natal*

The Report of the National Monuments Council for the year ending 31st March 1983 records the proclamation of the following buildings and sites:

1. *The historic Buffalo River Bridge, between Newcastle and Utrecht:*  
This bridge was erected jointly by the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek and the Colony of Natal for an amount of £12 600. It was officially opened by F.A.R. Johnstone, Minister of Agriculture for Natal, and S.W. Burger, member of the Executive Committee of the Z.A.R., on 1 October 1898.
2. *The property with the house known as Sans Souci thereon, at 65 Trelawney Road, Pietermaritzburg:*  
San Souci, formerly the Harwin house, was designed by the German architect Albert Halder and erected in 1883. This Victorian house, as well as its beautiful landscaped garden, reflects the affluence of the then owner.
3. *The Umgeni Water Board building in Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg:*  
This double-storeyed building, with its wood and cast-iron decorated verandah, dates from the 1890s. The building forms an integral part of the facade of Longmarket Street.
4. *The Hermannsburg Lutheran Church (formerly known as the Peter-Pauls-Kirche) at Hermannsburg, Greytown district:*  
This church is closely associated with the history and founding of the Hermannsburg Missionary Society and also with the colonisation of these and other parts of South Africa by German settlers.
5. *The property with the memorial to the Dutch Corps thereon, at Elandsplaagte, Klip River district:*  
This memorial, which was designed by G. Moerdyk of Pretoria, was built by the firm Barker and Nel of Volksrust and was erected by the citizens of the Netherlands in memory of members of the Dutch Corps who died during the battle of Elandsplaagte on 21 October 1899.
6. *The site with the Talana Battlefield thereon, in the Dundee district:*  
The Battle of Talana, which took place on 20 October 1899, was the first large battle of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). It was in several other respects also a most important battle from the point of view of military history.
7. *The historic Paddock Station complex, Port Shepstone district:*  
This late Edwardian railway station with its wood and iron buildings, water tank and platform, together with the siding, is an excellent example of the rural stations that were common at the turn of the century.



### *Talana Museum*

In 1982 the centenary of the establishment of Dundee coincided with the opening of the cottage of its founder, Peter Smith, on the slopes of Talana Hill as a Museum.

The intervening two years have seen much progress. The grounds have been beautified. The larger house below the original cottage has been

rescued from use as a mining office and now houses exhibits of Zulu life and the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer Wars. Further plans include the construction of agricultural and industrial displays.

This year the eighty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Talana, the first engagement of the Anglo-Boer War, fell on a Saturday and was made the occasion for a tour of the battlefield, a civic reception, a memorial service commemorating the fallen on both sides, and the official opening of the Anglo-Boer War room of the museum.

Mrs Sheila Henderson, the moving spirit behind the whole project, is to be commended on her vision and achievements to date. We await developments in this admirable project of historical conservation with interest.



### *Medical landmark*

For more than 120 years situated on the banks of the Umsindusi in central Pietermaritzburg, Grey's Hospital moved in July 1984 into its new multi-million rand buildings on the Town Hill. The old site on Prince Alfred Street, with pleasant views down to the river and across Alexandra Park, may have been ideal in the early days of the little cottage hospital, but as Grey's grew, steep covered ways extended down the sloping ground, and it became obvious that sooner or later the hospital would have to be rebuilt completely or moved to another place. The provincial authorities chose the latter alternative, and the city now has a fine modern facility whose setting, with panoramic view of hills, plantations and natural bush, is no less pleasing than the one it replaces. The old complex of buildings and streets, once so busy at all times of the day, now stands eerily quiet and deserted until various other provincial departments move in to take up the extensive accommodation left vacant. Elsewhere in this issue the obituary to Dr R.E. Stevenson includes more incidental information about the history of Grey's Hospital.



### *Cedara Agricultural Resources Exhibit*

Cedara, with its College, is synonymous with agricultural education in Natal. The Natal Regional Headquarters of the Department of Agriculture is also situated on the College estate, and plans to use the old Principal's Residence to house a permanent exhibition of agricultural resources — soil, indigenous flora and fauna, crops and farm animals, and water. A start has been made, and the rooms of the house have been imaginatively planned, making use of the very effective type of visual display which has been a feature of the Cedara exhibits at the Royal Agricultural Show in recent years. When complete, this will be a valuable educational facility, especially for the hundreds of Natal primary school pupils who spend time at the Cedara Land Service Camp each year.

*Victoriana*

Though there are enclaves where the harmony of late nineteenth century townscape is undisturbed, Pietermaritzburg's glib claim to be, architecturally, 'a surviving Victorian city', is questioned by urban geographers. That we can, however, still assemble significant movable property of that era was demonstrated by an exhibition of Victoriana seen in Durban and Pietermaritzburg during August 1984. Arranged by the Durban Art Gallery, it consisted of domestic items — cutlery, crockery, furniture — memorabilia, and period paintings on loan from the Tatham Gallery and other sources.

*The Midmar Historical Village*

The Natal Parks Board open air museum was opened to the public during the past year, and although it is not yet complete, already it provides a fascinating few hours for the visitor. Having entered through the old Durban tollkeeper's lodge, one can stroll about to view reconstructions of an old railway station, with train standing at the platform, a bank, a library, a smithy, a watermill and a dwelling house. A Zulu kraal is also planned. For the more mechanically-minded there are large sheds containing a great variety of agricultural machinery and vehicles, both horse-drawn and motorised. Green lawns, gravel paths and shady trees make this a most attractive addition to the Midmar pleasure resort, and one which should make cultural history more of a reality to many people.

*Information sought*

Perhaps some of our readers could answer a query received from Rev K.W. Kühne of P.O. Box 79, Bloemfontein 9300. He asks: "Have you come across any information on two disreputable characters of the late 19th century, Du Pont and MacNab, who 'ruled' over a large part of Eastern Zululand roughly 100 years ago? If you have, I would be very interested to hear from you. The only information I have is a brief mention in Deneys Reitz's *No Outspan*, which gives very few details. I am keen to research the history of these two rogues and will be grateful for any assistance."

Compiled by JOHN DEANE

