

Notes and Queries

Filling in the 'Missing Decades': A letter from Elizabeth Chaundy

William Bizley's 'Missing Decades' article in the last issue of *Natalia* has aroused considerable interest, and indeed helped the present number of *Notes and Queries* to perform its proper function as a forum for responses, questions, and comment from readers. Elizabeth Chaundy, who was born at Willowfontain, was educated in Pietermaritzburg and lived there in the period 1920 to 1940, was reminded of several things which Dr Bizley might have found interesting.

She recalls how, during the locust invasion of the 'thirties, the tram on which she was travelling to write her Preparatory School Certificate examination slid off the rails at the corner of New England Road and King Edward Avenue. Trams also feature in her recollections of Mr Alexander the blacksmith, who was mentioned in the Bizley article:

He was a great scholar and could quote Milton's *Paradise Regained* at length, as well as the poems of Burns and lyrics of Walter Scott in that beautiful voice — he came from Inverness where it is reputed the best English is spoken. He and his beautiful wife were great friends of my parents and often visited us on Sunday afternoons — having walked up from the tram stop at the corner of King Edward Avenue and Durban Road to Ridge Road — Mr Alexander always elegant in a Fuji silk suit and panama hat. Their good looks were inherited by their beautiful daughter Mrs George Kirby, wife of the kind and expert optician and jeweller who expertly prescribed as well as dispensed glasses.

Then there were the orchard parties of dear old Mr Walter Shores at Woodside — or was it Woodlands? (on the corner of Ridge and Durban Roads) when he used to invite the children of his friends to help themselves to his fruit crop . . . And what about the dairies run by the Misses Stalker at New England, Miss Cundell of Ridge Road, and Mr D.A. Drummond at Vicdene?

Dr Bizley mentioned Prince Edward's visit, 'but not the great gathering of all the Zulu clans and dancers and impis for the demonstration of the various types of dancing when the Zulu chiefs gathered to be presented to him and do him homage.' Elizabeth Chaundy recalls, too, how black youths and men who had domestic employment in the town used to jog along Durban Road out to Table Mountain 'location' on Saturday afternoons, playing all manner of musical instruments as they went — concertinas, guitars, ukeleles, fiddles, jews' harps and fleetjies.

The Governors General regularly visited the capital at the time of the Royal Show before going down to Durban for the 'July'. 'Princess Alice loved the

Show and was an expert judge of Shorthorn cattle, and the Earl of Clarendon opened the “New” Hall at St John’s on one such visit’. And there were grand social events:

The Administrator’s Receptions and Balls in the Town Hall with dancing to Bobby Juul’s band, also the Old Collegians’ Ball and the Hilton-Michaelhouse Old Boys’ Balls — the men wore white ties and waistcoats and tails, and we wore beautiful dresses and white gloves and had programmes with attached gilt pencils. Preparations for these balls were the ballroom dancing classes of Miss Daphne Arbuckle. They were held in the Oddfellows’ Hall, or the Creamery, or Buchanan’s. Then there was also the annual South African Polo Championship Tournament, held near Bishopstowe, and the Polo Ball.

There were also tennis tournaments, both for the club players at Kershaw Park and for the amateurs who merely played garden party tennis. Elizabeth Chaundy wonders whether the schoolboys still go regularly every Saturday afternoon to watch their heroes perform at Woodburn, and she will be disappointed, perhaps, to learn that some of the great cricket clubs that she remembers — Marist Old Boys, Old Collegians, Zingari, and Wasp Wanderers — no longer contest the senior league championships.

In thanking Dr Bizley ‘for the nostalgic pleasure his collage has given me’, she suggests that the creation of the Bird Sanctuary and the establishment (on the initiative of Mr Allison) of the King George V and Queen Mary Homes to celebrate the king’s Jubilee were worthy of mention.

Marjorie Clark

Dr Bizley has himself supplied a supplement to his article: a further investigation of the remarkable athletic exploits of Marjorie Clark. He writes as follows:

In the article on Pietermaritzburg’s ‘missing decades’ which appeared in the last *Natalia*, I mentioned how Maritzburg was written onto the international map by the efforts of a young girl just out of school, Marjorie Clark. I have been prompted by the astounding nature of this story to enquire after Marjorie Clark, and — after a little detective work — was delighted to find myself chatting to a spry, twinkling-eyed Marjorie Smith (as she now is) who, in her seventy-ninth year, still knocks off a good game of tennis and can remember every detail of her amazing career.

Marjorie represented South Africa on three remarkable world trips, England, Amsterdam (Olympics) and Berlin in 1928, England, Los Angeles (Olympics) and San Francisco in 1932, and the British Empire Games in 1934, and on each occasion she either beat or equalled the world record in hurdles and high jump. From 1933 she held, for three years, the South African record in hurdles, high jump, and 100 yards and 220 yards sprint. In fact, if I might single out the most astonishing fact of her career in athletics, it was that when, as a girl of eighteen, she first arrived in Europe to represent South Africa, she had never run a hurdles event, had never trained for hurdles or even thought that she would ever compete in hurdles (which in any case did not at that stage feature in women’s athletics in South Africa). And yet, a few days later, she had broken the world record in women’s hurdles!

How did it happen? Marjorie had spent the long mailboat trip exercising for the high jump, for which she was entered in the 1928 British Amateur Athletics meeting, the 'curtain-raiser' to the Amsterdam Olympics. But when she got to London she found that, by sheer administrative error, she was entered for hurdles. But then, in a moment of inspiration, the girl who vaulted the barbed-wire fences on her father's farm begged not to be scratched from the event. The SA hurdler Sid Atkinson (from Durban) set up three hurdles for her to practise, little knowing that he was thereby promoting a stunning feat. A few days later in the heats, Marjorie broke both the world hurdling record and the world high jump record on the same day, and indeed went on to equal both records in the finals. Five foot three inches for the high jump has certainly been surpassed in contemporary records, but it must be remembered that high jump was then done in the 'scissors' style, where the head must clear the bar higher than the posterior, and not the modern 'cut-off' style, which, when it was eventually permitted, added several inches to international records.

In 1928 Marjorie was so fresh out of school that she had not yet attained her full height. When her mother heard (on one of the few functioning wirelesses in Maritzburg) that the 'little South African girl' had broken the world hurdling record, she confidently told fellow listeners that that couldn't be Marjorie, as she was not even entered for the event. The 'little South African' must have been a great favourite with the British Empire team, being chosen to lead the procession that was congratulated person by person by the Prince of Wales. After the Olympics in Amsterdam (where, because she was a Natal girl, the heat wave that Amsterdam suffered on 'high jump' day didn't affect her triumph) she continued in winning form in the 'Empire versus the rest of the World' athletics match in Berlin.

It seems that no one was more surprised than Marjorie herself when she returned to Pietermaritzburg, loaded with trophies. After all, she was entirely self-trained in high jump, and women's hurdles was, as we have seen, over here, a 'non-event'. (In fact, it was Marjorie's success that now brought it in as a standard item in the athletics 'menu'.) But more than that — athletics had always been a fourth or, at best, third string for the sport-loving Marjorie. Even the fact that the girl from the 'Commercial School' (now Russell High) had won her first athletics contest at the age of thirteen did not really change her sporting priorities. She was then so small that in the 3-mile race (from the Show Ground to the polo fields) supporters shouted out to her not to go so fast, else she would 'burn herself out' in a few hundred yards. Fortunately, the little figure in gym dress and school stockings took no notice. After all, she ran home from school to the farm at New England every day, and she well knew her capacity. (To the annoyance of brothers and sisters, Marjorie's early arrival back from school meant that they were often accused of dawdling!) It was an astonishing win, but athletics was not necessarily where the fun was — in fact Marjorie first represented Maritzburg at such unlikely sports as roller-skating and women's cricket — which seems to have been very prevalent in the 'twenties and 'thirties — before she represented it at competitive athletics. Then the bomb burst: at the age of 17 she calmly broke the

world's record for high jump in Durban with a height of 5 feet 1½ inches.

Marjorie obviously always had a very balanced view of a sporting career, and indeed she doubts that she would have been happy with the tortuous intensity that characterizes international athletics today. Firmly placed in the 'British Empire' team that went to the West Coast of America in 1932, she could watch the English squad being trained by Harold Abrahams, of 'Chariots of Fire' fame. Even under someone as committed as Abrahams, the 'drill' was not more than one hour a day training, and that for not more than five days a week. This was the era of all-rounders in sport: there was time in hand to see the sights, which Marjorie, with friends and relatives in England, was only too pleased to do.

The American tour was a highlight, even though she didn't book a win at the Olympics at Los Angeles. That was amply made up for in an Empire versus USA match in San Francisco, where Marjorie again took the honours. But the whole trip was memorable — the team crossed the Atlantic on the *Empress of Britain* and landed in Quebec. Training was always possible on ocean voyages, but not on the arduous eight day train trip across North America. Marjorie remembers to this day those welcome ice-creams that, station after station (the 'special' was stopped for every scheduled train) eased the ordeal. Athletes were given 3/9 a day pocket money in England, but had a raise to 7/6 a day for North America. But it was discovered that, in America, 7/6 only covered the cost of a bath on the train, and it was a delicate matter whether to opt for hygiene or for wealth.

Crossing the great wide world, one might well wonder how 'innocent' international athletes were in those days. 'No drugs!' says Marjorie, but it was an era when, before official sex-tests, gentlemanly protocol was sometimes strained by apparent aberrations. Marjorie remembers with a giggle a certain female athlete who subsequently made a very good father. And she recounts the notorious case of 'Stella Walsh', who continued under that appellation for forty years before her true sex was discovered on the mortuary table!

The Los Angeles Olympics was the scene for a mixture of hard work and relaxed enjoyment, and a memorable second place in the women's hurdles. Almost as memorable as the contest was an air flip over Hollywood at night, with Gary Cooper one of the six passengers! That was 1932 — in 1934 she again won hurdles and high jump for the Empire team, and it wasn't until 1936 that she forsook her globe-trotting life and settled down to marriage (with the Natal cricketer Frank Smith, now a sprightly 86. 'I always lost my matches' he sighs. 'She always won hers').

Marjorie is the last person to bemoan the advance in competitive techniques, but she did nevertheless discover, as the mother of a six-year old, that she could outpace the current South African hurdles champion (whom she was coaching) by using one of the new concrete starting-blocks to press against instead of the 'ash-hole' you dug for yourself when races were still held on ash tracks. She also feels, in retrospect, that the changed rule that permitted the 'cut-off' type of high jump might have given an inch or more to her record. And of course the modern light-weight hurdles would have taken some of the risk out of hurdling. It took two men to set up one of those old-fashioned hurdles used in the



Marjorie Smith (*née* Clark) as she is today.

(*Photograph: W.H. Bizley*)

'twenties and 'thirties: a misjudged leap could lead to a broken leg! No wonder it was a 'foul' to knock one during the race, as it isn't today.

But that by the way — Marjorie still takes a great interest in the progress of athletics, and I caught her just a few days before she was due to watch her granddaughter doing hurdles at a school sports meeting — 'the only one there', she told me with a wink, 'who has the proper hurdling style'. So Grandmother is still influential . . .

Maritzburg College

T.B.Frost has commented in his Editorial on the unusual number of arithmetically significant anniversaries marked during 1988, and he has himself provided a Note on the commemorative celebrations of one of Natal's best-known schools.

Maritzburg College was the first of Natal's government high schools to reach its centenary in 1963. A quarter of a century later it has celebrated the next milestone with a series of events spaced throughout the year: the unveiling of plaques commemorating its former homes in Longmarket and Loop Streets, a cocktail party for ex-members of staff, a garden party, a grand ball and a Service of Thanksgiving at which the Bishop of Natal, an Old Boy of 1951 vintage, officiated and preached. On that occasion Alan Paton, perhaps the school's most famous Old Boy read the lesson, taken from the Beatitudes, in a strong voice. Many were moved by an almost eerie feeling that he was well-nigh the embodiment

of the words he spoke. It was to be almost his last public appearance. Within six weeks he was dead.

August 1988 was also the centenary of the occupation of Clark House. That occasion was marked by the unveiling of another plaque and the presentation of a *Son et Lumiere* production (scripted, incidentally, by a member of the *Natalia* editorial board). While the usual rugby matches against the school's traditional rivals continued, a game against Hermannsburg commemorated the first rugby match ever played by the former Pietermaritzburg High School in 1870.

The school was also honoured by the granting of the freedom of the city of Pietermaritzburg to its Cadet Detachment, while a splendid new History of the school not only brought that of Kent up to date, but set high standards in entertaining reading.

The 125th Anniversary Celebrations concluded with special Remembrance Day ceremonies which commemorated not only the many former pupils who gave their lives *pro patria* in various wars, but also two of the early Headmasters who lie buried in the old Commercial Road cemetery — James Forder and R.D. Clark.

Cinnabar in Natal and Zululand

A.R. Willcox, writing from Winterton, has put together an interesting collation of information regarding reports of cinnabar in Natal and Zululand. Cinnabar, or mercury sulphide, is the prime source of commercial mercury and is at once extremely rare and extraordinarily valuable. Because of its orange-red (vermillion) colour it has been used for a pigment in both paints and cosmetics, and during the eighteenth century it was widely used in theatrical make-up in Europe.

It is in both these forms that cinnabar has reportedly been found and used in Natal and Zululand. Mr Willcox quotes from a letter headed 'An old colonist's yarn' written by one S. Herring to the late Dr Killie Campbell in 1942:

About seventy years ago my brother was a very well-known big game hunter in Zululand, and was *persona grata* with the then chief of the Zulus. During one of his expeditions there he found the chief was in a very despondent frame of mind. His wives, who were many, were suffering, at least the younger ones were, of a mysterious illness which was causing amongst them deafness, loss of teeth, skin troubles and death. The *isanuzi* had been called in, and a large number of men, and women too, had been put to death as being the cause of the sickness; but it continued, and injury and death were still occurring amongst his wives, but amongst no one else. My brother made very exhaustive enquiries and discovered as follows:

About a year previously, after a heavy rainstorm, some natives discovered that an outcrop of a brilliant scarlet rock had been exposed by the storm. They had taken pieces of this rock to the chief, who showed it to his wives. They were very struck with the brilliant colour, and they decided that it should be powdered and used as a decorative pigment exclusively by the royal women. The chief at once gave instructions that the rock should be used by his wives only. My brother, no metallurgist, was curious about this pigment, and asked for a sample of it. He brought it to Durban, and had it assayed. It was found to be cinnabar, and very rich at that. A most poisonous substance to be

brought into contact with the bare skin; and one which would cause all the ills from which the royal women were suffering.

He returned to Zululand and reported the result of his investigations to the chief, who at once gave instructions for the use of the pigment to be discontinued. Further that the outcrop of rock was covered up with large quantities of stone, and that any person using it, or disclosing where it is to be found, should suffer a most painful death. No further illness occurred amongst the Chief's wives.

It is evident that mercury, today immensely valuable, is existent in Zululand, but the present chief Mayeso is as reluctant as his predecessors to disclose its position.

Mr Willcox suggests that the episode recounted by Herring in 1942 was possibly the source of a similar account recorded by A.T. Bryant in his 1948 publication *The Zulu People*, but he notes that Herring's incident would have occurred in about 1869, while Bryant has the cinnabar found during King Shaka's reign, and in a pit.

Pit or outcrop, the rumours of cinnabar deposits in Zululand, their exact location kept secret by royal decree, have been persistent. Mr Willcox pursued them, and discovered that they had been of sufficient interest to the Mining Corporation for a brief exploration to be conducted in river valleys to the north-west of the Ntumeni Sugar Mill in 1981. The romance of the colonials' camp fire was dampened by the industrialists' prosaic pronouncement that 'no mercury (Hg) mineralization was found'. Even so, some of the symptoms described by Herring's brother are amongst those typical of mercury poisoning.

The 'Great Drakensberg Cinnabar Rush'

Mr Willcox's interest in cinnabar dates from the 1940s, when he was doing fieldwork in the Natal Drakensberg to locate, photograph, and study Bushman paintings. Vermilion was found in a few, very rare, paintings, and there was a suggestion that cinnabar might be the source of the pigment. As he writes:

The rock paintings could theoretically have been used to locate approximately the cinnabar 'mine' by plotting all cases of the use of vermilion on a map, and noting where they were thickest. The use of Bushman paintings as a means of prospecting was a novel idea which appealed to me, but the vermilion paintings were too few, and too dispersed, to give a strong indication.

The rumours of cinnabar in the Drakensberg intrigued Mr Willcox just as the rumours of cinnabar in Zululand fascinated others, and he has collected a fund of information which is nearly as rare as the mineral itself. One of his informants was the late Albert van der Riet of the Cathedral Peak Hotel, who recalled an early expedition to find the fabled stuff.

At the time — around 1914 — Albert van der Riet was a boy of about 14. An African had told Otto Zunckel, another well-known hotelier, that he knew where a red pigment, greatly prized by the Zulus, was to be found in the Berg. Although it was known that the source of the red generally used by Bushman artists was haematite, an oxide of iron, it was assumed that the reported pigment must be cinnabar. A syndicate, including Zunckel, Phillip van der

Riet, and the medical doctor, A.L. Wilson of Underberg, was formed and given legal status by an Estcourt attorney, Mr Radcliffe.

The young Albert van der Riet accompanied the party which followed their African guide on horseback up the valley of the Nkosisana stream, a tributary of the Mshlwasi, about halfway between Cathedral Peak and Champagne Castle. A large area was searched, but no cinnabar was found. Undeterred, the syndicate arranged for a prospector to investigate further. A man named de Vries camped near the alleged cinnabar deposit for many months. He sank holes and claimed to have found particles of mercury.

So began the Great Drakensberg Cinnabar Rush. Mr van der Riet's memory of the details had faded by the time he spoke to Mr Willcox in 1986, but a report of the Department of Mines and Industries for the year 1920 stated:

Wild tales were spread of a spring of mercury in the Drakensberg in the vicinity of Bergville, and a large number of claims were pegged on the strength of the rumours. No cinnabar was found and, needless to say, nothing came out of the reported discovery.

The late Dr Wilson himself told Mr Willcox that his own interest in the syndicate had waned after he had been taken far into the Berg to be shown the 'mercury mine'. He was told to put his ear to a bank so as to 'hear the mercury dripping', but he was a keen enough amateur archaeologist to know that this was an impossibility, and lost all confidence in the report. In 1932, however, excitement was rekindled when an African brought a small piece of reddish material to Rex Stockil. It was sent to the Natal Museum, where E.C. Chubb is said to have identified it as cinnabar, and a second 'rush' ensued. In its Annual Report for 1936, the Office of Natal's Inspector of Mines noted:

Scarcely a year passes without some claims being pegged for cinnabar and last year was no exception . . . Twenty four claims are noted near the foot of the Drakensberg about 7 miles South East of Cathkin Peak.

The first expedition to the new site, consisting of Arthur Stockil, B.J. van Zuydam, Garret Mortimer and Neville Barrow, was clearly hoaxed when one of the party (never identified) took some mercury along with him and planted it as a practical joke. Nonetheless, a syndicate was again formed to exploit the find, and the African and European Investment Company took an option on the property. It was said that some 20 lbs of cinnabar had been extracted from three different places, but the sources were unreliable and no trace of a 'mother vein' was found. Samples of the 'mineral' were sent to the Government Mineralogist and to a manufacturing chemist in England, and were found to be similar to the synthetic variety readily available from druggists in Natal. It was some time, however, before the optimistic prospectors gave up hope.

Albert van der Riet, together with others, was meanwhile led on another expedition, this time to a site near Empangeni. His guide was perhaps the same African, a traditional healer described then as a 'witch doctor', who had brought the sample to Stockil. The small quantity of 'cinnabar' which they recovered again proved to be synthetic, and they also found a pointed stick which they guessed had been used to make holes for the 'salting'.

Thus ended the 'Great Drakensberg Cinnabar Rush' — a flurry of activity that was never on the scale of the gold rushes that have excited prospectors

elsewhere, but which left its mark in claims pegs that according to Mr Willcox were still to be seen quite recently. Cinnabar has been mined in South Africa, with the Murchison Range in the Transvaal yielding small quantities, but it seems highly unlikely that it ever did occur naturally in Natal or Zululand. Perhaps the Zulu women of Mr Herring's tale had got hold of a quantity of imported cinnabar, or perhaps there is some other explanation for their strange sickness.

It is perhaps as well that the region has not proved rich in cinnabar. The effects of mercury poisoning are, as Dr Joy Brain has confirmed for us, particularly nasty: dyspepsia, anaemia, wasting, looseness of teeth, foulness of breath, tenderness of gums, colitis, skin rashes, tremor, drowsiness, loss of memory, and madness. Mr Willcox adds a final interesting note: those symptoms were familiar to Victorian Britons. Mercury was widely used in the making of felt, and felt in the making of hats. Hence the extraordinary behaviour of the Hatter whom young Alice encountered in her wanderings through Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland*.

The Natal Midlands Bird Club

The Natal Bird Club has long had a sizeable membership in the Midlands. In recent times the Pietermaritzburg section of the Club has found itself functioning independently of the Durban group, and early in 1988 it decided to establish its separate identity. The Natal Midlands Bird Club was therefore instituted as, in the words of Mr Gordon Bennet's editorial to the club's first newsletter, 'a fully-fledged branch' of the SA Ornithological Society. The proverbial tendency of feathered things to seek the company of their own kind applies also to their human admirers. Membership of the two Natal clubs is not circumscribed by geographical boundaries: Midlands people may still choose to join the Durban-based club, just as coast-dwellers may join the Midlanders. Indeed, members can maintain links with both branches, which work collaboratively. The new branch may be contacted at Box 10502, Scottsville, 3209.

An interesting comment in that same first issue of the *NMBC Newsletter* is that while bird clubs know no boundaries, birds themselves apparently do. Writing about differences in the bird life between one Pietermaritzburg suburb and another, Jeff Huntly remarks that 'they seem to stick to certain areas almost as though confined there by invisible barriers although the habitat does not appear all that different'. Mr Huntly's observations seem to have been casual rather than a matter of scientific research, and it would be interesting to know whether the same is true of other Natal towns, and whether suburban cliquishness is indeed a characteristic of birds.

Trains: The Alfred County Railway

The time has not yet come (thankfully) when precocious infants inform their doting parents that 'choo-choo' is not an appropriate synonym for 'train', but that evil day cannot be far off. Trains today do not chuff. They whine, or hum, or howl, or chug, or just make a deafening diesel-fumed racket. In fact, at the rate that SATS are doing away with train services, the word that one most readily associates with 'train' will soon be ghost. During 1988, the last passenger train to run from Pietermaritzburg as a terminus pulled out of the station and rumbled away into oblivion.

Fortunately for the rising generation, the steam locomotive is too resilient a

beast to be altogether obliterated by dull-spirited officialdom, and the government's new readiness to privatize services hitherto run by the state has provided opportunities for entrepreneurs to capitalize on the seemingly endless appeal of steam power. After SATS closed the Port Shepstone to Harding narrow gauge branch line in October 1986, the line was leased to the Port Shepstone and Alfred County Railway Company Limited, which began regular operations as the country's first privatized railway on 4 December 1987. *Natalia's* editor is a shareholder in the ACR, and the company's souvenir booklet contains a concise synopsis of the history and present activities of the railway.

The line was originally known as the Alfred County Railway Extension. The broad gauge railway from Durban reached the north bank of the Umzimkulu River in 1901 and was taken across to Port Shepstone in 1907. It was soon realized that an extension into the interior was needed, and in 1909 the decision was taken to push a narrow gauge line through the 122km of rugged countryside to Harding. The first section, to Murchison Flats, was opened in 1911, with the first train arriving at the farm *The Paddock* at noon on November 7th. Izingolweni was reached in 1915 and Harding in 1917. Izotsha, which was close to the main road, became a major staging point for passengers heading further south. Having come down from Durban on the broad gauge, they would take the branch line to Izotsha and there meet bus transport to Margate and Port Edward. The line's main source of revenue, however, was freight: timber, wattle bark, and mixed farm produce — which included bananas — and, later, sugar cane. By the mid-1980s the Alfred County Extension was, like many of South Africa's other branch lines, deemed to be uneconomical and closed. At this point concerned and interested individuals in Harding set about saving the railway. A public share issue launched early in 1988 attracted considerable support, and the Port Shepstone and Alfred County Railway now runs regular services.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the 'flagship' of the revived line has been named the 'Banana Express'. Two schedules operate: a two-and-a-half hour round trip to Izotsha and a six hour round trip for a picnic lunch at Paddock. Originally the line was worked by 4-6-2 tank engines, but the 'Banana Express' is hauled by an NG G16 class Garratt. Constructed by Hunslet-Taylor in Germiston in 1968, Number 156 was the last Garratt to be built in the world and the last steam engine to be acquired by the SAR. Rolling stock includes three Natal Government Railways coaches dating from 1907 and a sleeping car built in 1937 for the Tsumeb line in the then South West Africa. In addition to carrying passengers, the ACR operates freight services through to the Harding area, and the company observes proudly that it can handle the standard modern shipping container on its historic little train. The ACR has plans to acquire more engines and enlarge its rolling stock, as well as to develop Paddock Station, already a national monument, as a lively museum of narrow gauge railways in the region.

More Trains: The Shongweni Dam Railway

A second small railway to attract attention during the past year has been the narrow gauge line built in the 1920s to transport materials to the site of the new Vernon Hooper (or Shongweni) Dam. After a very brief working life, the line was abandoned, and, were it not for the determined investigations of members of the Railway Society of South Africa, might have become food for



No. 16129 at work on the Shongweni Line.

(Photograph: Local History Museum)

archaeology rather than history. Mr Terry Hutson, editor of the Society's journal, has kindly given us permission to reproduce paraphrased extracts and photographs from his own article in the March-April 1988 issue of *SA Rail* (Volume 28, number 2), and has supplied some additional material and corrections to that article.

By the end of the First World War, Durban had outgrown its water supply, and a new dam was planned. The site chosen for the new dam was at the confluence of the Umlaas and Sterkspruit Rivers and the smaller Ngede Stream (this latter provides that very beautiful waterfall between Shongweni and Delville Wood tunnels). At the time when earthworks were started, the deviation (still referred to today as the 'new' main line) between Rosburgh and Cato Ridge via Mariannahill and Shongweni had not yet been opened, and a farmer named Fregona was contracted to cart materials for the dam from Hillcrest by ox-wagon. Once the main line was in operation, goods could be brought by rail to Delville Wood station, and the narrow gauge branch line took them down to the dam site.

The surrounding countryside can only be described as rough, and access to the site was one of the more difficult problems which faced the construction crew... A $4\frac{1}{4}$ mile (7 km) track of 2 ft. gauge was cut between Delville Wood station and the dam site, following contours cut into the mountainside. Although it hasn't been possible to obtain gradient figures, it seems likely that 1 in 30 was the norm in places... A 2 ft. gauge siding was built at Delville Wood station, with the track entering the station from the south-east side. A shed was constructed for storing materials [alum] brought to Delville Wood by the SAR, whilst a similar shed constructed at the dam site accepted the materials brought

down by the narrow gauge. Beyond this shed a corrugated iron shed was built to house the loco and for effecting repairs where necessary.

In 1923 an order was placed with John Fowler & Co for supply of a steam locomotive, with wheel arrangement of 0-4-0WT. The locomotive, which cost £747.17.5, arrived at Shongweni in February 1924, but before its arrival a few trucks had been hauled by a Ford Model T car, converted to run on rails. At least nine flatbed trucks were built, seven of them apparently using cocopan bogies and fitted with handbrakes. Official records list the trucks as being intended to carry cement, but photographs show that they were used also to transport the Larner Johnson valves and most other materials for the dam. With driver and fireman and brakemen on the trucks, the train crew would sometimes have been as large as eight. The driver was one D. Houston (who, Mr Hutson notes, was incorrectly identified in the original article as 'Mr Thomson').

Since writing the *S.A. Rail* article, Mr Hutson has been in contact with a Mr Herbert Leslie Dawson, who worked on the site and produced a regular newsletter there. In it, the roadway to the dam was referred to as 'Bona Vista Terrace'. Each Sunday evening construction staff would be brought up by the Johannesburg mail train to Delville Wood station, and taken down to the dam site by the narrow gauge train. At the end of the week they would travel back to Durban in the guard's van of any convenient passing train, or possibly by car. Mr Dawson was himself married at Shongweni Dam on New Year's Day, 1925.

The resident engineer responsible for the dam construction was Herbert Serridge, and on one occasion he entertained General Jan Smuts, then Leader of the Opposition together with senior members of the Borough Engineer's department. The locomotive provided a proud background for photographs of the visitors, and show that Smuts, in his



General Smuts (centre) on a visit to the construction site of the Shongweni Dam.

(Photograph: Local History Museum)

favourite khaki garb, was a deal more sensibly attired for the excursion into the hot and humid valley than were his hosts. The visit was probably made in 1926, and the following year the dam was completed and the railway fell into disuse. Most of the track and rolling stock were variously disposed of, although the Umgeni Water Board still has two rails, a set of points, and a truck which it intends to put on show at its historical display. Apart from the overgrown remains of trackbed, virtually nothing is left on the site of the line.

Fortunately, however, the locomotive itself has survived, and stands outside the James Hall Transport Museum in Johannesburg on a plinth that gives little clue to its origins and history. Otherwise anonymous, Fowler Engine No. 16129 aroused the curiosity of the young son of Bennet Smith, a Transvaal member of the RSSA, and persistent enquiries eventually led the Society to the Durban City Engineer's Department, which, fortuitously, had recently passed its record of the railway over to the Durban Local History Museum. Coincidentally, Natal member Des Eatwell, who had some time previously come upon the old trackbed, was shown photographs of the engine, and Mr Hutson acquired a list of Fowler locomotives which helped to trace No. 16129. The history of the pretty little locomotive is by no means complete. From the closure of the Shongweni line in 1927 until the Durban Corporation offered it for sale in 1938 the record is blank. The Natal Steel and Cast Company bought it — for £50 — in July 1940, and sold it to Metal Smelter and Machinery Merchants in Johannesburg in 1941. In 1943 Pioneer Crushers bought it, apparently for a narrow gauge line that was never built, and it seems to have stayed in storage until it was made over to the Transport Museum. The full account of the line and its rediscovery makes fascinating reading, and Mr Hutson speculates that there may be yet other 'forgotten' railways waiting to be found.

Still More Trains . . .

At about the time that the last edition of *Natalia* was being passed to the printers, Natal was overwhelmed by the terrible 1987 floods. In scouring the banks of the Umgeni River at Durban, the floodwaters exposed two pieces of colonial rolling stock — a Natal Government Railways wagon of about 1906 and a Cape Government Railways vehicle of about 1900 — as well as a set of wooden bridge supports which seemed much older. Mr G. Miller noted the find in his editorial to the October/November 1987 issue of the Railway Society's *Natal Newsletter*, and it would be interesting to discover more about both the origins and the destiny of the two trucks.

. . . and a Station

Provided, of course, that subscribers to *Natalia* are not lured away, *Notes and Queries* hopes that readers have now been alerted to the interest of the material that lies within the pages of the journals put out by the Railway Society of South Africa. The May-June 1988 edition of *SA Rail/SA Spoor* carries a concise but detailed account, again written by Terry Hutson, of the development of Durban's old station. Ever since the Durban—Point railway was first mooted publicly in January 1859, the station has been a subject of dispute. The original 'station' was no more than a simple timber platform on piles, but a good deal of acrimonious and confused debate within and between the Natal Railway Company, the Legislative Council, the Town Council and

the townsfolk preceded its erection. The point at issue was whether the station should be on the Market Square (where the Company and Legislative Council wanted it but the townsmen would not have it) or on Pine Terrace adjacent to St Paul's Church. In the end, the Company put its platform on Pine Terrace, and later erected a wood-and-iron building before being taken over by the NGR. Town and Colonial governments clashed again over the building of the, iron-roofed Platform Building that came in 1893, and when the double-storeyed Head Office Building (first planned in 1886) had been completed in 1898, it was immediately found to be too small. When it was finally complete in 1904, the building known as Durban Station was four storeys tall, and architecturally controversial.

These are the bare bones of a comprehensive and very readable article which can be found in Volume 28 Number 3 of *SA Rail* (May-June 1988), and *Natalia* readers might well be able to supplement the information uncovered by the Railway Society on a variety of matters relating to Natal.

Honour to the Portuguese Explorers

The photographs of the Natal Museum elsewhere in this edition of *Natalia* will doubtless remind many readers of childhood visits to that place. Returning visitors today would find quite remarkable changes. Not least of these might be that the capital's major museum must be almost unique in that it has been able to couple extended hours, and more informative and personal guidance through the exhibits, with a reduction — to nothing! — of its admission charges. Most impressive, however, would be the extraordinary vitality and verisimilitude of the new, very accessible, exhibits. J.M.Deane, who serves both *Natalia* and the Museum, has provided this Note on an important new display.

To coincide with the national Dias Festival in March 1988, the Natal Museum opened a new permanent exhibition on the Portuguese discoveries and shipwrecks of the 15th and 16th centuries. It consists of a very striking series of displays providing the visitor with a multi-sensory experience. One stands in the dim 'tween decks of a galleon, or in the brilliant light of a Zanzibari courtyard. There are replicas of old navigational instruments — cross-staff, quadrant and astrolabe — to be picked up and tried out. A model of the Dias caravel pitches realistically on a choppy sea. A diorama shows the plight of the 500 castaways from the *São João*. Splintered timbers, frayed ropes, and a jagged intruding rock illustrate graphically and tangibly how fragile those craft were. Silver coins from the *Santiago* are seen — behind glass, these! — fused into the shape of the bag that held them. And behind it all, the smell of timber, pitch, rope and spices. Two original works of art were created specially for this exhibition. At the entrance are three panels of hand-painted tiles illustrating the voyage of Vasco da Gama. These are the work, and the gift to the Museum, of traditional Portuguese ceramicist Mr Gilberto Leal of Johannesburg. In another part of the exhibition is the commissioned life-size bronze bust of Da Gama, by the Port Elizabeth sculptor Philip Kolbe.

The 'Portuguese Discoveries and Shipwrecks' will ultimately form part of an ambitious series of exhibitions to depict the history of man in south-east Africa. Judging by the quality of this newly completed

section, the project will add further lustre to the Natal Museum and to *Terra de Natale* itself.

MACS House – An Exercise in Conservation

MACS — the Midlands Arts and Crafts Society — is a relatively new organization whose title is descriptive of its activities. The Society presently occupies a small house on Prince Alfred Street in the capital. Prince Alfred Street is split by the Umsindusi River as it runs through Alexandra Park, and the house, number 28, is on the lower side of the southern section, overlooking Camps Drift Park. The property is owned by the city, and leased to MACS in terms of an arrangement whereby unoccupied buildings that are worthy of conservation are leased, for a low rental, to community organizations that can maintain and make constructive use of them.

Interested to discover the history of the house and its unkempt formal garden, MACS president, Jutta Faulds, asked Mr Graham Harrison to search the Deeds Office for information. He discovered that lot 222 of the Town Lands, a substantial property of some 24 acres fronting on Prince Alfred Street and bounded on the east by the river, had in 1875 been transferred by the City Council to one James Napoleon Wheeler for £182.16.3. Wheeler also acquired the adjoining lot 218, which carried the street frontage down to West Street, and in the same year (1875) sold both properties to Theophilus Shepstone Jun. for £245.18.9. What Mr Wheeler paid for lot 218 is not recorded by Mr Harrison, but the land was little more than an acre in extent, and Wheeler must have been quite content to get back £63 and the odd half-crown more than he had paid for lot 222 in the first place.

Theophilus Shepstone Jun. held the property for fourteen years, and Mr Harrison speculates that it was he who built the house, since it seems unlikely that Shepstone would have kept it for so long without improving it. Unfortunately, however, the Deeds Office records do not indicate whether a property has been improved, and the only indication of a change is the selling price. In the case of Mr Shepstone, the eventual sale seems to have been an unhappy affair. He was an advocate, and possibly in financial difficulties, for in 1889 a Mrs G.M. Peters from the Orange Free State went to court to compel him to transfer the property to her. Mrs Peters acquired both lots for £750, and in the same year sold them to the Postmaster, Henry Sullivan, for £800.

From 1889 until 1944 the property remained in the Sullivan family. Henry Sullivan appears to have lived in the house until his death in 1927, by which time the value of lots 218 and 222, together with a third five-acre property, had increased to £1 950. His widow, Amelia, passed it to her son when she died three years later, and Reginald Sullivan finally sold it to one R.D. Turner. At this point, the property seems to have been sub-divided, for in 1945 Mr Karl Magni (a respected educationalist who was then Science Master at Maritzburg College) bought Sub 1 of lot 222, a little over an acre in extent, with the house upon it.

Mr Magni subdivided the property further, then in 1959 disposed of it altogether. In the ensuing years, 28 Prince Alfred Street ceased to be occupied as a residence, and when the City Council re-purchased it in 1986 — one hundred and eleven years after lot 222 passed into private hands — the property was derelict and decaying.

Since taking possession, the Midlands Arts and Crafts Society has cleared the garden and refurbished the house. The whole property is in daily use as a

studio for art and crafts classes, and serves as both a gallery for exhibitions and a venue for entertainments. A crafts 'winter school' was held there during July 1988. The complete renovation of the house would be beyond the means of anything less than a wealthy corporation, but as an exercise in constructive urban conservation, MACS house must be counted a success.

'Listings' in Pietermaritzburg

During the year, the 'listing' of two sets of buildings in the capital aroused considerable interest. Mr Rob Haswell of the Geography department at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) has provided this note for *Natalia*.

The listing of architecturally and historically important buildings in central Pietermaritzburg began in earnest during 1988. Some two hundred buildings are earmarked for listing. Listing means that demolitions, alterations or additions to listed buildings or properties require the special consent of the City Council. The Special Consent procedure, as prescribed in the Town Planning Ordinance, requires the advertisement of plans and allows interested parties to make representations or raise objections to them. The City Council then makes a decision, and both the applicants and the objectors have the right of appeal to the Town Planning Appeals Board. Clearly, then, both the conservation and development lobbies have avenues open to them. The City Council is, however, committed to obtaining an owner's permission prior to listing, and so far this has been forthcoming. In particular, the owners of properties in two of the city's oldest lanes, Leighton Street and Deanery Lane, applied virtually *en bloc* to be listed, and the listing procedure has commenced in both cases. Once the formalities have been completed, the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Section, in consultation with the residents, will be able to suggest improvements to these lanes by, for example, unifying signage and paving, and providing for street furniture. Appropriate alterations, renovations and restorations will also be suggested. Once these have been completed, owners will be in a position to apply for a rates rebate, which forms an important part of a fiscal and non-fiscal incentives package available to the owners of listed properties and buildings.

The city's pre-eminence in conservation planning has certainly been enhanced by these developments, and the public-spiritedness of the Leighton Streeters and Deanery Laners is to be highly commended.

The Lady Usher Award

We are grateful to Mrs Shona Wallis, Director of the Natal Society Library, for again providing a note on the Lady Usher Literary Award.

The award is available to a South African author and/or illustrator and/or compiler of any original book in the English language first published in South Africa. The purpose of the award is to promote the use of the English language, and the administration of the award is controlled by the Council of the Natal Society. Initially the award was made for books that were specifically works of literature, but the Council has latterly decided to make it more general in scope.

To date, five awards have been made, the first in 1985 to R.O.Pearse for his book *Joseph Baynes, Pioneer*, published by Shuter & Shooter in

Pietermaritzburg in 1983. The second was granted in 1986 to W.Steenkamp for his book *Horse Thief*, published by Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, in 1985.

The 1987 award was divided into three and presented firstly to Gordon Maclean for his book *Ducks of Sub-Saharan Africa*, secondly to Gail Darroll for her illustrations for that same work, and thirdly to Auriol Batten for her book *Flowers of Southern Africa*.

'Mashea and The Barnacle'

In recent years malaria has made an unwelcome return to Zululand, but fortunately the tsetse fly seems to have gone for good. Its eradication was always a controversial matter, with one school of thought urging the wiping out of the game on which it found its host, while others preferred less extreme methods involving the use of R.H.T.P. Harris's huge fly traps, clearing of breeding grounds, erection of game fences, and — later — spraying with DDT.

At times tempers ran very high, but it seems that there were less serious moments too. The following light-hearted look at the war against *Glossina* was found among Selwyn Moberly's papers and was probably written by him. In 1920 he took part in one of the massive game-clearing operations — to his later shame — but it is probable that these verses were written rather later: a pencilled note on the typescript identifies 'the Doctor' in verse 11 as J.S. Henkel who, with Adolf Bayer, was involved in tsetse research in the 1930s.

There are no clues to the identity of Mashea and the Barnacle. Perhaps readers of *Natalia* can suggest who they were. And perhaps there are other comments on, and reminiscences of, this period of Zululand's history tucked away in diaries, letters, and other family papers. Margery Moberly, 431 Loop Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201, would be glad to receive such information.

MASHEA AND THE BARNACLE

Mashea and the Barnacle

Were studying their maps:
They wept like anything to see
So many empty traps!

'If ten score boys and umpteen traps
Sweated for many a year,
Do you suppose,' Mashea said,
'The fly would disappear?'
'I doubt it,' said the Barnacle,
Shedding a bitter tear.

'The time has come,' Mashea cried,
'To talk of many things:
Of densities and Garbage heaps —
Hluhluwe happenings —
And why the *Brevipalpis* there
Still stays outside and stings.'

'The Harristraps,' our tsetses say,
'Are really very nice —

The only 'scuse the '*Palpis* has
 Is that of cowardice;
 What's good enough to capture us
 Ought surely to suffice?'

The game all gathered at a pool
 The matter to discuss,
 The Rhino shook his horn and cried
 'Why all this blasted fuss?'
 The Wildebeesten groaned aloud
 'Oh Lord! 'Twas ever thus!'

'These Fly Boys always were our foes
 And thirsty for our blood —
 And now we're butchered day by day
 To keep them all in food:
 They say, (we're told) that when we're fat
 Our flesh is very good.'

'Are we included in this game?'
 Came from the Cane Rat's lips;
 'Or are the lesser fly exempt
 From these obnoxious *tryps*?'
 'We'll swipe you,' said the Barnacle,
 Cracking his noisy whips.

'But strafe us not,' the Settler cried,
 Now seething with alarm;
 'I only want the Government
 To buy my lovely farm.'
 'Don't worry!' said the Barnacle,
 'I'll free you from all harm.'

'The trap is our salvation sure
 A heaven sent implement;
 So hang on to your holdings
 You never will repent.'
 So some remained but others sold,
 They knew not what he meant.

'And what of us?' the Game Guard wailed,
 'We surely count, at least,
 In all this tangled policy
 And at the weekly feast.'
 'Oh! Tula,' snapped the Barnacle
 'Shoot us another beast.'

'The time has come,' the Doctor said,
 'To study all these things,
 And to destroy the baby fly
 Before it gets its wings.'
 'Oh! Spare me,' sobbed the Barnacle
 'From all these pin-prickings.'

Mashea and the Barnacle
 Walked sadly hand in hand,
 They wept like anything to find
 A most efficient band
 Of Rabid Game Protectionists
 All powerful in the land.

National Monuments in Natal

In its Annual Report Number 18, the National Monuments Council lists seven premises in Natal as having been declared national monuments during the year ending 31 March 1987. We quote from the report:

1. *Little Chelsea at 18 Windermere Road, Durban*
 This Victorian double-storeyed building with its cast-iron verandahs was designed by the architects Reid and Hurst in 1897 and built for L. Evans.
2. *The Main Post Office in Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg*
 The corner-stone of this four-storeyed sandstone building was laid on 14 February 1903. The building, which was designed by the architect William Lucas, is predominantly in the late Renaissance style. It is one of the most prominent buildings in Longmarket Street and is situated opposite the old Natal Legislative Assembly building and the old Natal Legislative Council building.
3. *The so-called Reid's Cabinet Works building at 214 Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg*
 Reid's Cabinet Works, the oldest furniture manufacturing company in Pietermaritzburg, was established by John Reid, who arrived in Pietermaritzburg in 1881. He started his business in the present building at the turn of the century. Reid was an outstanding artisan and in 1898 he became the only wood-carver in Natal to receive the Sir Donald Currie medal for his furniture. Hereafter Reid regularly won medals at the Pietermaritzburg Show with his exhibitions. After Reid's retirement his son, Walter, followed in his father's footsteps until he sold the business in 1969. The building is at present being used for offices and has interesting neoclassical and Victorian features.
4. *The Old Residency, Eshowe*
 This building was established in 1894 by Messrs Ogen and Schmidtman of the department of Public Works as housing for the local Commissioner and Chief Magistrate, Sir Melmoth Osborne. This was after the annexation of Zululand as part of Natal and the designation of Eshowe as the administrative seat of the Chief Commissioner and local magistrate. Osborne was succeeded in this post by Sir Charles Saunders. After Union in 1910, the Residency housed various local magistrates. After this it was also used for a while as a malaria research centre.
 On the occasion of the British royal visit to South Africa in 1947 this Victorian verandah house with its 13 bedrooms was renovated and used by the royal family as a recreation place during their visit to Eshowe and the surrounding country. It is at present again being used as a residence by the local magistrate.

5. *The portion of Consolidated Erf 997 with the present tennis courts thereon, situated between the old Carnegie Library and the Nieuwe Republiek Museum, at Vryheid*

This land forms an integral part of the historic block with the Old Raadsaal (already declared a monument and now known as the Nieuwe Republiek Museum), the Old Fort and the Carnegie Library thereon. It was donated to the Municipality of Vryheid by the Department of Public Works and Land Affairs for the establishment of an open-air museum.

6. *The so-called Helen Bridge over the Mooi River near the Weston Agricultural College, Mooi River*

This steel bridge, which rests on concrete buttresses, was opened on 19 November 1866 by Col. J.J. Bissett, Administrator of the Colonial Government of Natal. The bridge was named after his second daughter Helen, who designated it as such on the day it was opened. The construction of this bridge at the place where the Voortrekkers and Natal pioneers crossed the Mooi River is regarded as an important milestone since it was the first bridge over a large river north of Pietermaritzburg that was built by the Colonial Government. The bridge also played an important role in the economic development of this area, as well as in communication with Northern Natal and the Transvaal.

7. *The so-called Rothman House in Church Street, Utrecht*

This dwelling was erected in 1909 by J.J. Rothman, a prominent businessman from Utrecht. It is a good example of a Natal colonial dwelling in the late Victorian style. Together with two adjoining houses, Shaw house and Dirk Uys house, which have also been declared, it forms a note-worthy late-Victorian group of buildings.

In addition to these permanent monuments, the property known as Mõrewag, at 14 Nuttall Gardens, Durban, was provisionally declared a monument for a period of five years, during which time it is subject to the same safeguards as a permanent monument.

Compiled by MORAY COMRIE

