

Notes and Queries

Keeping the past before us

In this regard we particularly welcome news from smaller towns and appeal to readers to keep us informed of important buildings and other historic sites and any local campaigns to preserve them. Part of our function is to spread information about noteworthy places and to lend any weight we can to moves to research, preserve and restore what remains of our heritage throughout Natal.

Overpark

We noted in the last issue of *Natalia* that Overpark, so long the mystery house of Pietermaritzburg, had been painstakingly and lovingly restored. In June and July this year it provided the ideal venue for an exhibition of photographs of historically and architecturally important buildings in Natal mounted by the Heritage Committee of the Natal Provincial Institute of Architects. This exhibition was well supported and the interest it aroused found practical expression in the re-formation of the Pietermaritzburg Society which aims to arouse public awareness and to campaign for the preservation, restoration and (if appropriate) recycling of worthy buildings. The Society is at present concentrating its efforts on securing the Supreme Court building for use as an art gallery. Further details of the aims and activities of the Pietermaritzburg Society may be obtained from Lorna Ferguson, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg who will also be glad to supply information on the Friends of the Tatham Art Gallery.

Further research into the origins of Overpark has established that the house was indeed built as the Presbyterian Manse. (See *Natalia* 10). We are grateful to the Rev. Charles Scott-Shaw for drawing our attention to the following passage in Barbara Buchanan's *Natal Memories* (1941).

The pretty little manse then erected [i.e. after Rev. William Campbell's money-raising tour of North America, the United Kingdom and Ireland from 1856-1858] was for many years the only building on the rise immediately above the loop in Loop Street. Considerably enlarged since those days, it still stands there.

Graves at Adams Mission

A reader at Shakaskraal, Mrs C. Cruickshank, has drawn our attention to the unkempt state of the graves and the cemetery at Adams Mission. It appears that the church there is a National Monument but that the graveyard is not and thus there is no provision for its care and maintenance. We have asked the South African National Society to look into the matter.

The veranda houses of Durban

Inspired by Brian Kearney's *Architecture in Natal*, Miss Janet Lee set out to enjoy some of old Durban's veranda houses. Her enthusiasm for these handsome buildings, cool and self-confident, is infectious, and we publish some of her photographs and comments in the hope that the more interest that can be generated in these unique and gracious homes, the greater the chances of saving them from the demolisher's insensitive and greedy bulldozer.



Balquhider, until recently the home of the British Consul, is quite splendid and still in good repair. It was built around 1895 and is set in a luxurious garden. There are two gracious, wide verandas which protect the walls of the house from the sun, while a third veranda, or look-out balcony, can just be seen in the picture. The verandas are floored with dark blue and ochre encaustic tiles which are characteristic of such verandas.

Sadly, the Nerina Hotel in Chelmsford Road which rejoiced in such fine cast iron work, has been demolished since this photograph was taken. Built around the turn of the century it had two quaint turrets on either side of the building, looking like the queen and a castle in a chess set.



295 Florida Road provides a very good example of wooden fretwork, in contrast to the intricate cast iron of the house in the previous photograph. There is a hint of decorative bargeboarding in the unusual gable. Another fine veranda house stands next door.



At 191 Chelmsford Road stands a particularly charming house erected in 1892 and designed by the architects, Street-Wilson and Paton. (Street-Wilson, incidentally, also designed the Emmanuel Cathedral.) It has a delightful pediment over the entrance with wooden tracery of an unusual design and very well-preserved floor tiles.



At the corner of South Ridge Road and Loudon Road a similarly handsome house still stands. Here there are no turrets but filigree cast iron of particular delicacy there is in abundance. This contrasts most pleasingly with the lush green of the garden. This veranda, too, is floored with encaustic tiles.



Photography in Durban

The Local History Museum in Durban, under the dynamic direction of Mrs Daphne Strutt, can always be relied upon to produce interesting notes for this column. In August and September this year a fascinating exhibition was mounted which displayed not only prints of people, places and events in Durban selected from the Museum's enormous and superbly organized collection, but also cameras and other photographic equipment. Of particular interest were some daguerrotypes and a table stereoscope holding about 40 cards which demonstrated this early form of three-dimensional photography.

Dr. Killie Campbell

The name of Dr. Margaret Roach (Killie) Campbell will always be synonymous with conservation. 1981 is the centenary of her birth and the University of Natal, the proud trustee of the various Campbell collections at Muckleneuk, celebrated the occasion with the opening of a new Ethnology Gallery on 17th September. On 6th August the South African National Society commemorated Killie's birth (and the 75th anniversary of its own inception) by holding a dinner at the Country Club to raise money for the Killie Campbell Bursary which will be awarded for the first time in 1982. (See *Natalia* 6).

National monuments

During the year a number of National Monuments in Natal were gazetted:

- (a) The Christian Science Church on the corner of Chapel and Loop Streets in Pietermaritzburg which was originally built in 1903/4 as a Congregational Church.
- (b) 219 East Street, Vryheid was erected in 1905. It is an elegant Edwardian dwelling house and it is still a private home.
- (c) Carnegie Library Building, Vryheid. Funds from the Carnegie Trust enabled this library to be built on land donated by the Vryheid Town Council. Vryheid now enjoys a spacious modern library and the handsome old library will be used to display the original library furniture.
- (d) Himeville Fort. Alarmed by the disturbances in East Griqualand in the 1890s (see Dower, *Early Annals of Kokstad and Griqualand East*, facsimile reprint, ed. by C.C. Saunders, University of Natal Press 1978, pp. 119-124) the inhabitants of the Underberg district applied for a laager to be built for their protection. Construction was started on a site, some distance from Underberg village, specially selected for its good field of fire and absence of cover. The laager, built to a standard plan, was later enlarged so that it could be used as a gaol and included cells and a warder's house. The National Monument includes the circuit wall (or laager proper), the cells, a large room formerly used as a magazine and weapon store, and the gaoler's house. The magistrate's offices, which form part of the complex and are still in use, are excluded.

Thanks to the interest and energy of the inhabitants of Himeville and Underberg a museum of local history has been established in the fort. The museum and the National Monument were officially opened in September.

- (e) 'Ryley's House', Karel Landman Street, Dundee, dates from the years 1902-1903 and is considered an excellent example of Natal colonial architecture. Edward Ryley, a Northern Natal businessman, was Minister of Agriculture in Sir Harry Escombe's cabinet and, incidentally, the great-grandfather of the compiler of these notes. The house is still used as a private dwelling.

Dundee

Also of interest in connection with Dundee is the town's forthcoming centenary in 1982. Donations of old photographs or other relics, or information relating to people and places, will be welcomed by Mrs Sheila Henderson, curator of the local museum.

One of the co-founders of Dundee and of the Dundee Coal Company was Peter Smith whose home still stands at the foot of Talana Hill, the site of the first battle of the Second Anglo-Boer War. Years before, one of Andries Pretorius's commandos had camped here on the way to battle at Blood River and it was he who first recorded burning coal here and who named the stream Steenkoolstroom. The earliest coal adits can still be seen on Talana Hill and the nearby Little Talana Hill.

The name Talana is also associated with two other major industries of this area — glass and bricks.

A wide-ranging plan to develop this site is under way and the next eight to ten years will see the completion of a number of related projects. A cultural museum in the original homestead which is being restored by the Smith family will house relics of the original founder families and cover the period 1890-1910. The National Monuments Commission is developing the battlefields of the wars of 1879 and 1899-1902. The Chamber of Mines, Consul Ltd., Corobrik, and Beechnut (S.A.) Ltd. are combining to develop an industrial museum, while the Natalse Landbou Ko-operasie and allied agricultural organizations are restoring the old stone milking shed which will eventually house an agricultural exhibit.

The Smith cottage will be opened during the centenary celebrations in May next year and there are plans to dedicate a pioneer graveyard and rose garden.

Spioenkop Museum

The Natal Parks Board is renowned for its work in wildlife conservation and its Nature Reserves are world famous. It is less well-known that the Board has recently extended its activities into the field of history. Mr Gilbert Torlage, the Board's Ranger Naturalist, is stationed at the Spioenkop Resort. He has spent the past two years establishing a museum illustrating the Second Anglo-Boer War, dealing mainly with the Natal phase of that conflict.

Approximately 200 photos taken at the time have been put on display, arranged in such a way as to focus attention on the major events of the war. These include events leading to the siege of Ladysmith, the siege itself and the attempts to relieve Ladysmith, which resulted in a number of epic battles between the forces of Generals Botha and Buller. The photographs are augmented by detailed maps of battles and a brief text. A number of artefacts donated to the museum are also on display. (Further donations would always be appreciated.)

In addition to this museum, guided tours to Spioenkop and other Anglo-Boer War battlefields are offered. Recently the Natal Parks Board published a booklet on the battle of Spioenkop written by Gilbert Torlage and entitled *The Battle of Spioenkop*.



Senior Ranger Gilbert Torlage points to the map of the world in 1899 which begins the display in the Spioenkop Museum.



One of the telling photographs reproduced in the Spioenkop Museum.

Natal trees: root and branch in family history

We suspect that compilers of family history are too modest and that they believe that their work will only be of interest to their own families. But all libraries and many researchers are always keen to acquire works on Natal history at any level. Family historians are therefore urged to make copies of their works available for sale to the public, or at least to the specialised sector of it, and to provide their books with that most indispensable of bibliographic aids — an index. Professional librarians are always ready to provide guidance and books on the presentation of material collected in research and on the compilation of an index. Those who publish privately are also reminded that they are required by law to deposit one copy of the publication in each of the country's five legal deposit libraries, of which the Natal Society Library is one.

During 1981 two noteworthy family histories have been privately published. The authors are to be congratulated on the detailed combing of records through which much information has been unearthed.

The Adams Story

Maggie Mikula has put together an attractive history of the Adams family which is particularly well-known in Zululand. Her mother, Gladys Adams (later Suttie) was the daughter of Charles Adams and the grand-daughter of Alfred Adams who founded the family business A. Adams and Co., Eshowe, which celebrated its centenary this year. Although Alfred Adams began his career as a missionary assistant he was not associated in any way with Newton Adams, founder of Adams Mission. (See also *Natalia* 5.)

Mrs Constance Norenus (née Christensen) has compiled *Bestemor Schramm: her story and her descendants, 1843-1979*. 'Bestemor' was the affectionate nickname bestowed by a loving family on Annie Sophie Schramm (born Faye in Bergen, Norway). When she lost her husband in 1883, she sought a secure future for herself and nine children and decided to emigrate to Natal. With the assistance of her two eldest sons the farm 'Highland' in the Kearsney/Stanger area was purchased and the family settled there in 1889. She returned to Norway in 1916 leaving her family well established in Natal. As many of her descendants are well-known personalities in this Province some of the related surnames are listed here. These are taken from the excellent family trees which comprise more than half of this small book: Christensen, Frolich, Hulett, Johanson, Lundie, Meyer, Rodseth, Roering, Solberg and Werndle.

Betsy Gelder's York Diary (1870 - 1879)

This is a significant item of local history — the sort of document which provides incomparable raw material for the family researcher. Mrs Shelagh Spencer provides the following note:

Betsy Gelder (c. 1824 - 1896) and her husband Richard (1828 - 1872) kept the store at York, while her sister Miss Mary Greaves (c. 1833 - 1903), who lived with them, ran a small school. One could thus describe the Gelder household as the hub of the daily life of the district. Betsy noted the comings, goings and doings of the residents of York, Broughton, Albert (now Albert Falls), New Hanover and places further afield such as Riet Vlei, the Karkloof and Noodsberg. She also

sometimes related Pietermaritzburg news she had either been told or had read in the press. Just about all the births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials of local residents are recorded. While many entries are commonplace, e.g. 'Miss Richards . . . came and bought a skirt', one gets a vivid picture of the community. Here one learns how events such as the diamond rush, the Langalibalele Rebellion and the Anglo-Zulu War touched the lives of this farming area with its scattered population.

There is much family information too. Betsy Gelder did not have any children but through her sisters' marriages was related to the Liddell family from the Greytown district, afterwards of the O.F.S., the Catteralls of Tongaat, and Samuel Cordukes of York. Richard Gelder on his part was related to the Johnsons of Byrne (Archdeacon Charles Johnson was a nephew, while Richard's niece, Annie Johnson, married one of the Mcleods of Byrne), and the Frudds of Durban. A widowed sister with a large family, Harriett Frudd, came to Natal in 1861 on the *Leila*. William Johnson and his family were also on board.

From 1870 to 1873 entries were made daily, except for the period when her husband was dying. In 1874 and 1875 there are a few gaps between entries, while in 1877 the sequence is even more broken. For the years 1878 and 1879 the entries are fragmentary.

The diary is crammed into a little notebook with cross-writing (i.e. up and down a page as well as from left to right), and with consecutive entries often scattered in the volume. The book was lent to Mr Kinsey Geekie of *Benvie* near York by Mr P.J.D. Smith, Haslemere, Dalton, Noodsberg, a descendant of Robert Smith (c. 1805 - 1881) of York. Mr Geekie has painstakingly transcribed it, filling five notebooks — 244 pages in all.

Early records of baptisms, marriages and burials in Natal

Also from Mrs Spencer (whose *British settlers in Natal 1824 - 1858: a biographical register Vol I* is due to appear at about the same time as this issue of *Natalia*) comes a note in answer to Mr C.O. Holness's query in *Natalia* 10.

The American Board Mission's registers must have contained records of the white population because in domestic notices in the Natal press in the 1850s and 1860s one finds occasional references to marriages solemnized at American Board stations.

The American Board missionaries were Congregationalists and I have noticed gaps in baptismal records of the children of some of Natal's prominent Congregationalists, especially in Pietermaritzburg where only in 1859 did the Congregational community get a pastor. This suggests that these children were baptized by visiting American missionaries. Cases in point are David Dale Buchanan, Thomas Phipson and Paul Anstie, three of the founders of the Pietermaritzburg Congregational community in 1849. No trace has been found of the baptisms of their children.

German settlers in Natal

From settlers and missionaries British, Norwegian and American, we turn to the German community in Natal, where two centres of German life and culture have celebrated significant anniversaries this year. Hermannsburg is 125 years old, and its daughter-community, Wartburg-Kirchdorf, has

celebrated its centenary. Mr John Deane has supplied notes on each of these congregations.

In 1854 the vessel *Kandaze* brought to Durban a party of sixteen Free Evangelical Lutheran missionaries bound for Abyssinia. There were difficulties which prevented their proceeding to their original destination, and in consultation with the Rev. Mr Posselt and the New Germany congregation they decided to remain in Natal and work among the Zulus. After spending more than a month at New Germany, during which the purchase of 6 000 acres in Umvoti county was negotiated, the party travelled inland and the settlement of Hermannsburg was founded. (The original Hermannsburg is a North German town situated between Hamburg and Hanover, and it is interesting to note that Christian Eggers, one of the later arrivals (1894) at the Natal Hermannsburg, had spent ten years as a missionary in another Hermannsburg in the remote Northern Territory of Australia).

In due course a German farming community growing up around New Hanover formed its own congregation and school, and in 1881 another was established at Kirchdorf. Only in 1915 was a rail link provided, and the station, after being known as Noodsberg Road and later Sandymount, was in 1925 named Wartburg. A commemorative centenary booklet *Christusgemeinde Kirchdorf - 100 Jahrfeier* by H.G. Hillermann contains much interesting information about the hundred year history of the community as it shared the growing prosperity of the Colony and Province of Natal. Above all, however, this is the record of a Christian congregation, with a strong and continuing evangelical and missionary tradition. For the English reader with some knowledge of German, Mr Hillermann's booklet provides many insights into the life, values and ideals of people whose talents and achievements have earned great respect in Natal.

A curiosity in print

Mrs. Muriel Macey, Africana Librarian at the Kimberley Public Library, has sent us this entertaining note on one of the earliest printing enterprises in Natal.

Lt. Frederick Watkins Barlow of the XX Regiment 2nd Battalion, singlehandedly ran the Minden Press, at Pietermaritzburg and the Kimberley Public Library has a copy of one of the products, a curious little book, *Orders, memoirs, anecdotes etc. connected with the XX Regiment*.

It appeared in 1868 and the proud printer tallied the letters (70 209) and sheets (3 700) used during the 48 days he laboured to print the 100 copies and added these facts by means of a prettily-printed label to the end paper. He showed great inventiveness in the get-up as can be seen from the title page of which the names of battlefields of the Regiment are decoratively arranged. The Battle of Minden was fought and won on 1st August 1759 in Hanover on the River Weser against the French and the name was used for the Press.

His printed programmes for the weekly Military Band concerts in Maritzburg caught the eye of the *Natal Mercury* in May 1869 and they were highly praised for their ingenuity and the skill displayed by the

printer. They came out in fancy shapes, squares, hearts, stars or rings with neat borders and, said the *Mercury*, “they need to be seen . . . for the varied results produced by the arrangement of type in almost every possible manner, to be thoroughly appreciated.”

Among our collection of Natal pamphlets are three programmes for Amateur theatricals put on by the 2nd Batt XX Regiment in Maritzburg on 8 and 10 April 1869 which could have been printed by Barlow but which have no imprint. They do have a delightful footnote, though: “In case the evening of performances should turn out wet a gun will be fired . . . at Fort Napier at 6 on that and every succeeding evening until weather turns favourable.”

Miss E. Talbot Rice of the National Army Museum thinks it unlikely that the press was more than a hobby as she can find no record of a Regimental press so early and I feel sure she’s right. He would have had at least two assistants (vide N. Parkinson) if it had been official!

It was a member of the Regiment, Maj. G.E. Francis, who financed the first Natal party to search for diamonds on the Vaal but he himself was not among them as he had had to sail with the Regiment to Mauritius in June 1870. They returned to the Cape for a while in 1871 and he visited his party on the fields which by then had done very well. They were in fact the first to dig, as opposed to searching the surface, for stones.

Apart from Barlow’s promotion to Captain in January 1873 and his retirement in March 1874 nothing else on him has been traced by me.

Out and about

Elsewhere in this issue we publish an article on the Drakensberg and also review a book that will enhance the many varied delights and challenges of the most dramatic and beautiful part of our Province. We look now at some other aspects of the enjoyment of out-of-doors Natal. Mike Coke, Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Ramblers’ Club, writes:

An unusual diamond Jubilee birthday occurred in June 1981 when the Ramblers Club celebrated sixty years of footwork along the many country pathways surrounding our garden city.

On Saturday 6th June this year Boet Kruger led a cheerful throng of Ramblers, young and old, up the Voortrekker Road to the top of Town Hill. Amongst them was Jack Hatton, longest-standing member of the Club, as well as numerous children. (Nowadays, members may bring their children along on the “Leader’s Choice” ramble on the first Saturday of each month).

At a birthday braai that evening reminiscences were rife as veteran members Jack Hatton, Marge Penney, Eve Harkness and Bob de Carle recalled the old days. The key conversation piece — a 1921 photograph of the very first ramble of the then Baptist Ramblers Club — came from an album kindly loaned by Miss Vi Blanchard.

On 4th June 1921, sixteen members of the Baptist Church set off on an historic walk. Following ‘Chapel Street Extension’ they rambled up

Town Hill, returning via the Botanic Gardens. One of the party photographed the group, amongst trees and tall grass tufts, wearing long dresses, broad-brimmed hats and even jackets and bow ties.

Nobody knows quite who started the Baptist Ramblers. Probably it was by common agreement amongst several members of the congregation. After a few years, membership was thrown open to the public and the Club was firmly set on its path of life.

Vi Blanchard's album shows the first eager steps taken by the Club in 1921-1924. Following the inaugural ramble to the Botanic Gardens came others to Boughton Valley (after riding the 2.20 pm tram to the Gardens) and returning via the Ropeworks, and another through Alexandra Park and along College and Edendale roads. In those days the Town Hill railway was the main line north, and one snap shows a row of young and old Ramblers gathered in the mouth of the curved tunnel near Teteluku Station, nowadays nicknamed 'Toffee Tunnel' and which now features on our new Town Trails' system.

But not all adventures were close to home. One day-outing saw a trainload of Ramblers disembarking at Merrivale and walking to the foot of the Howick Falls before footslogging all the way back to Maritzburg. Weekend camps were soon established in club tradition, the first being held at Table Mountain. Two vast wagonloads of kit and campers were hauled by teams of 24 donkeys, and soon bell tents, trestle tables and enamel kitchenware were set up before astonished Zulu eyes.

Easter Camp rapidly became a firm favourite, and remains so to this day. In 1924 the Ramblers camped at Albert Falls and boated on the broad Umgeni River.

Some of those early Ramble venues have vanished forever under the spreading City. Never again will Pentrich, New England or Duzi Falls hear the crunch of Rambler boots and the clank of tea-filled billy. Others, like Boughton, Swartkop and Town Bush survive to see regular Rambles even today.

Many much-loved characters have arisen and been active in the Club. Perhaps best-loved of all was 'Uncle' Fred Holgate, Club leader for many years. Thanks to Freda Phipson, who pointed the Club camera at every opportunity, there are a host of photographs showing faces (many of which still need identification) in still-familiar places. Amongst them are Milly Armitage, 'Russy' Phipson, Vi Blanchard, Laura Ford and Tom and Jenny Wood.

Rather more recently, at a memorable 28th anniversary ramble on Saturday, 4th June, 1949, a large group of Ramblers once again gathered before the camera at the Botanic Gardens. There in their midst is Vi Blanchard, with 'Doc' Squires, 'Robbie' Robbins, Terry Fair, Don Allison and Peter Allan amongst the crowd of faces. 'Doc' was famed as much for his encyclopaedic knowledge of ramble routes, his prolific puns and friendly letters as for his ritual 'bath' of cold water, poured from a mug dipped into a stream at the Saturday tea-stops.

The Ramblers Club have ambled happily through sixty years of outdoor enjoyment along forest pathways and through grassy fields around our fair city. Many a billy has boiled over mid-afternoon fire, and many a Maritz-Burgher has savoured the beauty of the countryside, mingled with friendly company.

Won't you join us?

Postscript: If you'd like to ramble — contact us through the Publicity Bureau. If you happen to have relics of Rambler history, or could help to identify faces in the album, please come forward and give us a hand!

What bird is that?

Cyrus and Robson's *Bird Atlas of Natal* (University of Natal Press, 1980), which was reviewed in *Natalia* 10, listed 570 species commonly or regularly observed in Natal and provided notes on 100 uncommon species. Very few Natalians, however, can recognise more than a couple of dozen of them. There are many excellent books but most people will readily admit that they are daunted by a fieldguide and, when trying to identify a bird they have seen, will simply flip through the pictures hoping to light on the one that will lead to a positive identification.

Such hopeful but ill-trained birdwatchers will find Gordon Maclean's *Aids to Bird Identification in Southern Africa* (published by the University of Natal Press, 1981), a boon. Designed to fit inside *Roberts Birds of South Africa* it provides concise guidelines and a set of dichotomous keys which, systematically used, will unlock the secrets of bird classification and remove the hit-and-miss element from identification. All who use this little book or remember Gordon Maclean's lively contributions to the SABC's *Talking of Nature* will be interested to learn that he has been appointed editor of the *Roberts* revision project. Work on the revision is expected to last two years and will lead to the publication of a completely revised and updated work.

'The sweet bird's throat'

Another useful aid to bird identification is provided by tape-recordings of their calls on cassette.

In 1977 two members of the Natal Bird Club started producing and selling tapes of birdcalls which proved an instant success. They are the only producers in the southern hemisphere of birdcalls on cassette for sale to the public and sales have reached well over 3 000 in this country and further afield. Among the customers are birdwatchers, schools, museums, radio stations and ordinary South Africans living abroad who are homesick for the sounds of the bush.

Peter Newman (brother of the well-known bird artist, Ken Newman) writes:

Our aim is to produce a tape that is a reference aid that can be carried into the bush as a working tool or guide for the amateur bird lover or the serious ornithologist, in order to learn to identify calls or to call out birds from hiding for positive identification and study for breeding or research into migration etc. They are not intended as Hi-Fi productions although many are purchased for the sheer beauty of their song and played in the home simply for the pleasure they give.

Tapes are available from Audio Three, 6 Larch Road, Durban 4001, at a cost of R6,50 per tape including postage and packing. By the time *Natalia* 11 appears a total of four tapes will be available. Volume 1 contains birdcalls of the forest and bushveld and Volumes 2 and 3 each contain about sixty new calls with a descriptive dialogue and an interesting section on mimicry. In Volume 4 calls are regrouped into families and presented in *Roberts* order. Of particular interest is a recording of a mocking chat imitating twenty-nine other birdcalls.

Durban Botanic Gardens

Two bronze busts of historic interest, both by Hannah Lurie, were unveiled in the Gardens towards the end of the year. One represented Dr. John Medley Wood (Natal's famous botanist curator of the Botanic Gardens and founder of the Natal Herbarium) and was presented to the City of Durban by the South African National Society. The second bust, commissioned by the City Council, was that of Mark J. McKen, first curator of the Gardens, appointed in 1851.

Early in September there were reports in the media that Durban had experienced the wettest August ever recorded since records had first been kept in the 1890s. But Miss B. Ellis, whose researches into the impact of the early settlers on the natural environment of Natal take her into a very wide range of records, has pointed out that meteorological records are in fact much older. In the *Mercury* of 12 July 1854 a subscriber suggested that the curator of the Botanic Gardens keep a record of observations on the weather so that statistics would be available on 'temperature, moisture and direction of the winds'. A standard thermometer and barometer were lent to the Gardens by Dr. P.C. Sutherland the Surveyor-General and records were kept from 1 January 1855. These were published in the *Mercury* during 1855 and 1856. The *Report of the Forest Commission* of 1878 includes rainfall records of Durban in 1855 and 1856 and 1873-1879, Pinetown in 1856, Pietermaritzburg from 1858-1865.

Conservationist of the Year

Anyone in Natal who is concerned about wildlife conservation knows the name of Dr. Nolly Zaloumis who seems to be behind almost every conservation project we hear about. His two particular interests are the Umgeni Valley Ranch and A.C.E. (African Conservation Education). Both these enterprises reflect a keen understanding of the importance of education in conservation and a realistic appreciation of the role that blacks will play in the future practice, policy-making and philosophy of conservation. *Natalia* congratulates Dr. Zaloumis on being the first recipient of the Wildlife Society award to the Conservationist of the Year.

Return of the elephants

One of the factors which originally attracted whites to Natal was the rich harvest of ivory to be gathered from the huge elephant herds. As a result elephant populations in Natal and Zululand declined rapidly throughout the nineteenth century and, except for a small herd in Maputoland, they had disappeared by the early years of this century. The skeleton of the last elephant shot in Zululand in 1906 can be seen in the Natal Museum. It is pleasing to note that the Natal Parks Board has been able to reintroduce elephant into its Zululand Reserves.

History, historians and historiography

In July this year a vitally important event took place at the University of Durban-Westville. The barriers which threaten permanently to divide South African professional historians from each other, began to crumble as liberal and conservative historians from South African universities (including the Transkei), Zimbabwe, North America and Australia got together and indulged in a lively and frank exchange of ideas and points of view. The occasion was the eighth biennial conference of the South African Historical Society and the theme was Southern African History: Perspectives and Future Directions. Dr. Ruth Edgcombe writes:

While the conference was an important breakthrough in that constant debate is vital to the continuing health of South African historiography, it also underlined how precarious our situation remains. We missed historians from Great Britain (partly because of the boycott of South Africa by the Association of University Teachers), from Botswana and from Lesotho, and also some of the radical historians at our own universities. Their absence was all the more acutely felt because they have produced, and are producing, some of the most original and important work being done in such areas as pre-colonial history and the impact of industrialisation on South Africa. Perhaps changing circumstances will permit their participation at a similar conference in the future when we hope that many more black historians will also be present to make their contribution.

While a partial boycott undoubtedly impoverished the attempt to take stock of the state of South African history, much was still achieved. Twenty-seven papers were delivered, some of which will undoubtedly be regarded as landmarks in the evolution of South African historiography — to mention but two, Professor Richard Elphick's 'Liberal Historiography and its Marxist Challenges' and Professor Norman Etherington's 'Theories of Imperialism Revisited in Southern Africa'. The proceedings underlined the high quality of some of our established historians and indicated a promising future in the work of rising young historians such as Johannes de Bruijn and Paul Maylam, who are working in the fields of frontier and urban history respectively. The many papers presented were made more digestible through pre-circulation which also allowed ample time for discussion — an opportunity that was exploited to the full.

An interdisciplinary approach is becoming increasingly vital to historical research and one of the striking features of the conference was the participation of anthropologists (Prof. M. Whisson and Mr. C.R. de Wet), economists (Charles Simkins and Dr. Ken Hughes) a political scientist (Francis Antonie) and an archaeologist (Dr. Martin Hall). Their lively contributions were immensely valuable and perhaps they too benefited from being among historians.

The conference generated new enthusiasm, new ideas, and new research projects. Certainly with regard to the latter, the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg might well within the next few years be producing a corpus of regional studies. While the germ of the idea was already present it was brought into vigorous life by the example of Prof. Jeffrey Butler's work on the Cradock area. Arising out of the

interest in regional studies was a renewed attempt to tackle the thorny question of the preservation and destruction of archival material. Particularly at risk are the magisterial records, so vital to any adequate regional study. While historians are aware of the problem of the explosion of sources in the 20th century when space in the archives is limited, they are being kept in the dark about regulations governing the weeding out and destruction of material. The S.A.H.S. will be approaching the Director of National Archives in order to devise a policy that will keep destruction to a minimum.

A vitally important development arising out of the conference was the setting up of a panel of historians by Prof. Colin Webb and Dr. Hermann Giliomee to commission a textbook for use in black schools. This was in answer to an impassioned plea from a delegate from the University of the Western Cape who pointed out that the inadequacies of existing textbooks were a major feature of current unrest in the schools.

A similar conference is envisaged about six years hence, and it is then that the value of the recent conference will become fully apparent. It is important to take stock periodically: to examine what we have done and what we ought to do. Our ideas and approaches should constantly be put to the test and examined in the context of historiographical developments in the world beyond South Africa, which Professor Deryck Schreuder of the University of Sydney so ably did in the final session of the conference.

M.P. MOBERLEY



Scene in West Street, Durban, 1855. What are the objects in the centre of the picture? Lutes for hire? Early model Durban Corporation parking meters being tended by a meter maid?

(Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the Local History Museum, Durban)