

Notes and Queries

Venus Observed in Transit

A colony established in the nineteenth century provides many centenaries for us, and in countries of the younger sort centenaries tend to be important! In the Notes and Queries of *Natalia* nos. 6 and 7 mention was made of E.N. Nevill and the Natal Observatory. Nevill arrived in Natal on 27th October 1882, after a voyage of exactly one month in the S.S. *Warwick Castle*. He found the Observatory built and ready to begin its work.

Its establishment resulted from a proposal made several years earlier by Mr (later Sir) Harry Escombe, who himself provided the main Equatorial Telescope at a cost of £600. Two Durban businessmen, Messrs Greenacre and Randles, each gave £175, the Durban Corporation £350 and the Natal Legislative Council voted £500. Smaller contributions were made by other interested persons and firms, making up a total of about £1 900. Mr Gill, Astronomer Royal at the Cape, who had advised on various aspects of the project, sent Mr Robert Pett to supervise the construction of the building and the erection of the instruments. The establishment of the Observatory was expedited so that it would be ready in time for the Transit of Venus in 1882.

The two planets closer to the sun than the Earth (Mercury and Venus) are sometimes seen from Earth to pass across the disk of the sun, and astronomers observe what is called a transit. At such times valuable information can be obtained. Transits of Venus are rare, and come in pairs, eight years apart. They occurred in 1874 and 1882, and the next pair will be in 2004 and 2012.

Pett was recalled to the Cape in October 1882 to take his share in the transit observations there, and Edmund Nevill was appointed Government Astronomer in Natal. The Natal Government Gazette of July 31, 1883 contains Nevill's very full report on the establishment of the Observatory, a detailed description of its various instruments and an account of the observation of the Venus Transit. It is interesting to note that Nevill's use of the pseudonym 'Neison' extended to his signature of this official report ('Edmund Neison'), and only later did he resume the use of his real name. By the end of his career in Natal in 1912 Edmund Neville Nevill, F.R.S., F.I.C., F.C.S., F.R.A.S., was well-known in scientific circles all over the Empire and the world. He had three assistants, and had done a great deal of scientific work for the Colony. As well as being Government Astronomer, he was Government Meteorologist, Government Chemist and Official Assayer. He undertook not only astronomical observations, but compilation of tide tables, the keeping of meteorological records from 46 observing stations in the Colony, provision of accurate time signals for the region and geological assaying, including analysis of coal samples from Northern Natal. Nevill's intended sojourn of a few months in Natal to observe Venus in 1882 became a distinguished career of thirty years.

Versions of Two Zulu Names

Mr J.C. Stuart of Pietermaritzburg writes:

In the No. 5 issue of *Natalia* (December 1975) there appeared a letter from Mr G.S. Moberly regarding the spelling of Eshowe and Shaka (to use the modern versions). To my surprise there has been no response, and I venture to offer this contribution which I trust will at least keep the subject alive.

As to the spelling *Ekowe* I think that the correct explanation can only be that the early Norwegian missionaries were responsible for it. In the Scandinavian language the *ch* sound is represented by the letter *k*. This clearly supports the alternative spelling *Etshowe*, and the spellings *Echoi* and *Echowe* referred to by Mr Moberly as being used by Gardiner and Grout. This brings me to the second point — the spelling and pronunciation of Shaka's name.

During the late forties I was charged with the custody of the Fynn papers pending publication of the Diary and their return to the Fynn family. In 1949 I received a visit from the late Mr F.W. Ahrens, the well-known retired magistrate and accomplished Zulu linguist. He was most anxious to ascertain how Fynn had spelt Shaka's name. In conversation he waxed most indignant at the modern spelling. 'How was it,' he said, 'the old authorities such as James Stuart, Samuelson and others spelt it *Tshaka* unless the Zulus themselves pronounced the name thus?' As I had been forbidden to allow access to the papers I was not able to satisfy Mr Ahrens's quest, but, for the record, Fynn himself wrote *Chaka*. So did Nathaniel Isaacs. It is true that in the absence of established orthography early writers did adopt what appear now to be quaint spellings in their efforts to reduce Zulu words and names to paper. Nevertheless their renderings are I think easily reconcilable with the recognised pronunciation of such words today. How is it then that what once obviously must have been pronounced *Etshowe* and *Tshaka* have now become *Eshowe* and *Shaka*?

During 1950 there was an exchange of correspondence in the *Natal Daily News* on the subject. Mr Ahrens crossed swords with well-known linguists such as G.V. Essery and E.A. Ritter who came down on the side of *Shaka*. Mr Ahrens retorted by pointing to the spellings adopted by Sir Theophilus Shepstone and the Rev. Lewis Grout (*Chaka*), and by Bishop Colenso, Dr Dube, J.Y. Gibson, James Stuart and R.C. Samuelson (*Tshaka*). I am sure that there must be many, like myself, who would like to learn from an authority the reason for these apparent changes.

May I refer, before putting down my pen, to another point raised in *Natalia* No. 8 (December 1978). Mr Frank Emery, in his article on soldiers' letters from the Zulu War, refers to the book *A South African Boy: Schoolboy Life in Natal* and the fact that the name of the author, writing under the pseudonym 'Natalian', is unknown. Once again we have recourse to Mr R.C. Samuelson who reveals that the author was Albert Baker, Dux of Hilton College in 1872, who thereafter practised at the Bar in Natal, giving this up for evangelistic work on the Transvaal mines. Incidentally, Baker relates a nice little story about a 'tall, raw, untutored lad, brought up among the Zulus in Zululand' who walked all the way from his home to Hilton College driving before him cattle with which he was to pay the school fees. Marching into the headmaster's presence he laid, in true Zulu fashion, his assegai and two favourite sticks at the feet of the headmaster in token of

submission. Baker does not give the boy's name nor, for that matter, does he even vouch for the story. At pp. 71—2 of his book Samuelson refers to this story, asserting that it was exaggerated but nevertheless revealing that he was the one concerned. However he confirms also that he and Baker became good friends. One feels that Samuelson would have done better if he had simply ignored the story.

To Mashonaland via Natal

Difficulties encountered on the Bechuanaland and Transvaal routes to Mashonaland led some travellers in the latter part of the nineteenth century to go by sea to Beira, and then inland to Umtali and Salisbury. One such party was an Anglican mission to the new territory, led by Bishop Wyndham Knight-Bruce. Mr R.R. Langham-Carter of Cape Town writes of this party's visit to Natal en route. The Bishop, five African catechists, a doctor and three nurses reached Durban from Cape Town on the *Roslin Castle* on 22 April 1891.

'There bad news awaited them. The Chartered Company's first detachment had left Durban in the *Norseman* on 7 April. The Portuguese authorities at Beira had declined to let them proceed further and they had to return to Durban. Knight-Bruce was a determined character and he had no intention of being stopped. He and his five Africans would manage to force their way through (and this in fact he achieved), but he would not subject his nurses to these hazards. The medical group would go up by the Natal version of the land route. The railway line from Durban had reached Ladysmith in 1886. They would go thus far by train. There the Anglican Rector would see them on to a coach or post-cart. They would travel by such means through Pretoria and Pietersburg to Fort Victoria in Mashonaland, and would do the final stage of their journey by ox waggon.

The party and their stores disembarked . . . (and) the medical group went first to the Royal Hotel . . . The bishop moved the medical party three days later to the boarding house on the Berea of a Scottish lady, Miss Wright. Knight-Bruce went to stay with Canon L.P. Booth at St Aidan's Indian Mission in Alice Street which Booth had founded eight years before. Where the five Africans put up is not clear, but it seems probable that they also came to St Aidan's. After seeing the nurses into their new quarters on 25 April the bishop took the train to Maritzburg where he had been invited to stay at Government House by Sir Charles Mitchell . . . After calling on his colleague W.K. Macrorie the Bishop of Maritzburg and making arrangements for the onward movement of the nurses, he returned to Durban on 2 May . . . (and) preached next morning at St Cyprian's (which was then in Smith Street) and he and the nurses attended the afternoon service at St Aidan's. Booth was a qualified medical doctor and after the service they had a picnic tea with him in his surgery (!).

Knight-Bruce and the five Africans sailed in the *Norseman* (Capt. Forder) on 7 May, and after many adventures reached Umtali on 1 June. As the situation in Mozambique was now more stable he was able to cancel the medical group's overland plans. They left Durban on 20 May and . . . arrived safely in Umtali on 14 July.'

Two years later in 1893 Knight-Bruce was in Durban again with another party bound for the Mashonaland mission. This time he took the inland route through Natal, which began with a twelve-hour train journey to Ladysmith and thence over Van Reenen's Pass in a vehicle of the Natal and Randt Coach and Mail Service, or the Jubilee Mail Coach Line. The following year, 1894, Knight-Bruce, who had suffered badly from malaria for several years, was invalidated out and passed through Durban for the last time en route for England where he died within three years. About this time the rail link between Beira and Umtali was improved, and lines from the south reached Pretoria and Bulawayo, making a 'Natal route' to Mashonaland unnecessary.

The Diary of Mary Milner Greathead (1835—1896)

This is a recent acquisition in the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban. Mary came to Natal in 1856 with her parents and sister. Her father Thomas and Martha her sister ran the Cheltenham Academy in Pinetown in the early 1860s. Despite its grand name it seems to have had only a score or so pupils, and young ones at that. The diary comprises 36 pages and covers the period 1856 to May 1864. With Pinetown being on the main road to the interior, Miss Greathead always had plenty of comings and goings to record. The family made the occasional visit to Verulam, Durban and the Karkloof and these are duly recorded. In 1863 Mary married Frederick Edgar Shaw of the Karkloof and thereafter the scene changes to that district. The diary ceases shortly after the birth of their first child.

This little book went to New Zealand with Mr Len Shaw, a grandson, who willed that on his death it be returned to Natal, which it duly was. His sister Mrs Sheila Ogram has donated it to the Library. For the second time in the last few years nineteenth-century Natal documentary material has found its way back from New Zealand and to the Killie Campbell Africana Library. The other instance was the return of the original letters of George and Ellen McLeod, typewritten copies of which had previously been used by Dr R.E. Gordon as the basis of her book *Dear Louisa* (Balkema, 1970). Mr John Talbot, a McLeod descendant in New Zealand, sent the originals back to be incorporated in the Byrne Museum Collection. However, as the Killie Campbell Library has proper facilities for manuscript preservation, it was decided by Dr Gordon and the then Custodian of the Collection that they should be housed there.

SHELAGH SPENCER

Genealogical Workshop

On 3rd and 4th September last a genealogical workshop, arranged by Professor Eleanor Preston-Whyte, was held at the University of Natal, Durban. Mrs Lorna Rosbottom, a genealogical and heraldry expert from the United Kingdom, and Dr R. Lombard, head of the Genealogical Unit of the HSRC, gave informative talks. Mr J.D. Krige, Secretary of the Genealogical

Society of South Africa, and Mr H.C. Hillerman spoke on their respective family histories, covering many hundreds of years.

On the Wednesday evening preceding, a genealogical discussion evening on the same lines was held at the University, Pietermaritzburg.

A Natal Branch of the Genealogical Society, centred on Durban, and a sub-branch thereof, the Midlands Circle, centred on Pietermaritzburg, were established as a result of the two meetings.

C.O. HOLNESS

The Care of Photographic Collections

The Department of Library Science at the University of Natal held a two-day symposium in April 1982 on the documentation and care of photographic collections. The basic subjects covered were copyright, indexing, preservation and the copying of photographs for museum and archival purposes. Individual papers on related subjects included 'Nineteenth century Natal photographers', 'Collecting and identifying for a local history museum: a personal view' and 'The photographic collection of the Natal Archives'. The proceedings have since been published by the Department of Library Science.

SHELAGH SPENCER

The Umsindusi River again

Hardly had T.M. Wills's article on the Umsindusi (p. 45) been received than the *Natal Witness* (3 Sept. 1982) announced a Corporation plan to canalise the river from the Edendale Road bridge to Scott's Bridge. These works will not only facilitate municipal services to the new railway and industrial areas between Woods Drive and Camp Drift Road, but will provide a clear stretch of water almost two and a half kilometres long and eighty-four metres wide — a prospect of great promise for the devotees of fishing, canoeing, rowing and water-skiing.

The Umsindusi has for some years been canalised below Commercial Road. This has eliminated the picturesque willow-lined bends and loops which used to characterise its course in this area; but has brought into being useful 'new' land, and removed the fear of occasional summer flooding which used to affect low-lying areas near Bulwer Street and Echo Road.

When the proposed new canalisation scheme is complete, the only part of the river in the city to retain its original course and appearance will be the stretch in Alexandra Park itself.

The Corporation plan makes provision for a purification filter system upstream. This appears to be a necessity if water sports are to be enjoyed without risk to health. Gone are the days when Maritzburg College's 'Mr Chips', the late S.E. Lamond, could as a boy refresh himself with a drink of 'Dusi water while walking from school through the park. In this year's 'Conservation of the Environment' symposium, two Pietermaritzburg schools, Maritzburg College and St John's High School, tied for second place. Their papers were slightly different aspects of the same topic — the serious pollution of the Umsindusi River.

The Alan Paton Literary Competition

The Natal Association for the Teaching of English this year organised a literary competition for high school pupils all over Natal and KwaZulu, which it is hoped will become an annual event. Pupils in Standards 8, 9 and 10 were required to present papers on literary topics, which could be related to the school syllabus or beyond it. Dr Alan Paton kindly consented to his name being used, and this was one of the reasons for the great interest shown and the large number of entries from among pupils in all the education departments represented within the geographical boundaries of Natal. Preliminary and semi-final rounds were held in various centres, and the final took place at the University of Natal, Durban, on 14th October, when winners and runners-up in each of the three standards were chosen. Dr Paton was present at the Standard 10 final, and spoke to the assembled candidates and their audience. Generous sponsorship by a commercial firm made possible the award of prizes to individuals and their schools in all the rounds, and the payment of travel expenses of adjudicators going to distant centres and school parties coming from far away. The organisers are to be congratulated on the success of this venture. It entailed a considerable amount of administrative work by a dedicated group of teachers, and if enthusiasm on the part of pupils and organisers is an indication, the Alan Paton Literary Competition will take its place with the various other annual competitions which give promising pupils the chance to show their mettle.

Theatre Lane, Pietermaritzburg

The charm and utility of Pietermaritzburg's pedestrian lanes and arcades are recognised by residents and visitors alike. It is hard to imagine moving on foot about the central city area without the routes offered by Fraser Lane, Change Lane, Chancery Lane, Theatre Lane, Club Lane, Gallwey Lane, Harwin's Arcade and Perks Arcade. The City Engineer's Department is to be complimented on the replacement during 1982 of Theatre Lane's nondescript tarmac with handsome brick paving. With its new lighting, trees and bollards it is a pedestrian precinct of which any city could be proud.

The Leighton Street Affair

Leighton Street is a steep, picturesque little street joining Loop and Burger Streets in Pietermaritzburg, above Chapel Street. It is predominantly lined with old double-storeyed houses of traditional Pietermaritzburg orange brick, and dating from the early years of this century. During 1982 it became clear that the development of a vacant site at the top of the street would result in a block of flats which it was felt would detract greatly from the architectural unity and atmosphere of the street. The residents formed the Leighton Street Action Committee and brought the matter to the attention of the public. Their approaches to the developers elicited an assurance that the new buildings would be of face-brick and therefore 'in character' with the other properties in the street. Seeking further clarification the Action Committee obtained professional architectural opinion to the effect that the proposed development definitely did **not** tone in with the surrounding properties. A petition addressed to the Town Clerk, and discussion of the

matter by the Municipality's Works and General Purposes Committee followed. It became evident that the City Council is more or less bound by municipal by-laws which stipulate that as long as a proposed development complies therewith in accordance with the zoning of a particular area in terms of the Town Planning schemes, there is nothing much that can be done about it. In other words procedural machinery for objections to developments on architectural or aesthetic grounds simply does not exist. If a proposed development complies with the by-laws, it seems that the developers have an absolute and unqualified right to develop in whatever style they please. Public opposition (and much support was forthcoming for the Action Committee) cannot be transformed into action for lack of the appropriate machinery. The Leighton Street development received Council approval, and at the time of going to press building operations are well under way. This setback for conservation is very slightly tempered by the news that the Pietermaritzburg City Council intends introducing a system of listing and hence protecting certain areas of cultural, historical, architectural and aesthetic significance; and also that the previously defunct Pietermaritzburg Society has been resuscitated and is preparing itself for a more active role in the conservational affairs of the capital.

Proclaimed National Monuments

The most recent Report of the National Monuments Council to hand is that for the year ending 31st March 1981, which contains the following proclamations of Natal buildings and sites during that year:

1. *The Beachwood mangrove swamp at Durban:*
Mangrove swamps are among the rarest and most scientifically interesting ecosystems that occur in the highly specialised tidal environment. The Beachwood mangroves are of significant botanical, educational and historical value because they are situated close to one of the country's largest cities, which has a variety of important educational institutions.
2. *The old Law Court building, Victoria Embankment, Durban:*
This building, designed by the architect Stanley Hudson, was erected in 1911.
3. *The property with the geological exposure thereon, in Corinthia Road, Durban:*
This glaciated pavement shows striae on Table Mountain sandstone at the base of the Dwyka tillite of the Karoo System and is approximately 300 million years old.
4. *The property with the Riverside Mosque and mausoleum thereon, at Umgeni, Durban:*
This mosque was erected by the celebrated Hajee Soofie, who immigrated to South Africa in 1895. He was responsible for the construction of 11 other mosques, the establishment of 13 madrasas and the laying out of a large number of cemeteries. Hajee Soofie died in 1911 and his body lies interred in the octagonal mausoleum that he designed.
5. *The Town Hall, at Greytown:*
This building with its high tower, the cornerstone of which was laid on 22 June 1897, was only completed in 1903.

6. *The farmhouse, together with ten metres of surrounding land, on the farm Greystones, near Estcourt:*
This Victorian farmhouse, with its ornamental wood-decorated verandah, was built in 1873 by Sir Frederick Moor. He was the last Prime Minister of the Colony of Natal.
7. *The so-called Judith church, together with ten metres of surrounding land, on the Judith church farm, Dundee district:*
This stone church with its straight end gables and neo-Gothic windows and doors was inaugurated in January 1885. It was named after Mrs Judith van Tonder, who donated 58 acres of land as a church farm.
8. *The properties with the two Indian shop buildings thereon, in Retief Street, Weenen:*
These predominantly Edwardian shops date from the beginning of the twentieth century and form an impressive architectural entity.
9. *The Bantu Administration Building in Landdrost Street, Vryheid:*
This rectangular building dates from about 1930 and forms an integral part of the historic core of Vryheid, especially from an architectural point of view.

Since then there has been at least one more proclamation. The Government Gazette of 10th September 1982 mentions "The so-called Umgeni Water Board building, situate on Lot 2 of Erf 19, Longmarket Street, in the City and Borough of Pietermaritzburg, Province of Natal. Deed of Transfer 3979/1942, dated 1 August 1942. This double-storeyed building, with its wood and cast-iron decorated verandah, dates from the 1890s. The building forms an integral part of the façade of Longmarket Street." Readers will know the building in question as being directly opposite the end of Buchanan Street.

International Conference — South Africa and the West

In April 1982, a conference on South Africa's relations with the western powers took place in Durban under the auspices of the Department of History of the University of Natal. After the welcome by university Principal, Professor N.D. Clarence, the University of Zululand's Professor Absalom Vilakazi delivered the opening address, which was a personal memoir on South Africa's unwillingness to institute basic western democratic rights and freedoms for all its citizens. Subsequent papers and discussions covered the whole range of South Africa's present and developing rôle in the political, economic and strategic framework of the principal western countries, particularly the United States. Six overseas and two South African academics, and a senior manager of the Anglo-American Corporation were speakers. (Lest the proportion of overseas to local university speakers might seem too high, it should be mentioned that two of the former previously worked in South African universities). Out of the conference emerged a greater appreciation among delegates of the complexities which surround our country's vital and often tense relations with the western world.

CHARLES BALLARD

Durban Girls' High School

Various events in the early months of 1982 marked the centenary of the Durban Girls' High School. A book, *The First Hundred Years* by Miss S. Moran, was published, and on April 26th the 'Natal Mercury' devoted two pages to the school, giving a brief review of its history and various premises, and biographies of the ten women who have been its principals. They are Miss Annie Day (1882—1898), Miss Amy Beeston (1899—1912), Miss Ethel Walton (1913—1917), Miss Laura Meller (1917—1931), Miss Lucy Wolstenholme (1931—1938), Miss Anne Granger (1938—1948), Miss Margaret Martin (1948—1962), Miss Netta Manning (1963—1970), Miss Alison Clarkson (1971—1976) and the present incumbent Mrs Elizabeth Morris. Four of the ten were themselves pupils of DGHS, and there is among them a high incidence of longevity! Several lived into their eighties or nineties, the record being held by Miss Meller who died in 1967 aged 95. It is of interest to record that it was Miss Meller who arranged the first tour to the Cape by a party of pupils, at a cost of nine pounds per person for the fortnight's trip!

Roots, Growth, Change — Durban Architecture

One of the exhibitions which formed part of the Durban Arts '82 Festival was arranged by the Natal Provincial Institute of Architects and the Natal School of Architecture. It was in the form of a review of local architectural styles, the historical development of residential architecture and a selection of notable public buildings. The guide book to the exhibition, compiled by Dr Wally Peters, lists the ninety-three exhibits — photographs and models of actual buildings, or student projects illustrating aspects of style and design. Though different in function and concept, the guide book makes a pair with 'Pietermaritzburg' (Ed. Daniel & Brusse) which was published a few years ago under the auspices of the Institute of Architects and the Tatham Art Gallery. Such publications play an important role in directing the general public's attention to buildings in Natal which are too much taken for granted, 'seen but not seen.'

At Home in Government House

The week of 23—29 August 1982 gave citizens of Pietermaritzburg an opportunity of visiting and inspecting old Government House, a building once the centre of official and high social life of the Colony of Natal. The house is now, of course, the main building in a complex which houses the Natal Training College. (Vide 'Book Reviews and Notices' in *Natalia* No. 9, p. 66). Recent expert renovation by the Provincial Building Services led to the happy decision by the College authorities to celebrate seventy years of occupation by being 'at home' to the city at large. There were several functions during an exciting and memorable week. Invited guests (including the Administrator of Natal, members of the Provincial Executive Committee and the Director of Education) attended a cocktail party in the beautifully refurbished long drawing room. A Victorian and Edwardian Musical

Evening charmed a small audience in the fine old billiard room, now the College Senate Chamber. A large gathering of past students and staff enjoyed a reunion dinner in one of the residences. The band of the Royal Natal Carbineers played on the lawn while students in period costume served tea and sandwiches to guests spending a nostalgic Sunday afternoon. The College's archive and museum material was on display. Pride of place, however, must be given to the imaginatively conceived and expertly presented *Son et Lumière* which captivated evening audiences. The stone wing of the house, with its front door and carriage porch, was seen in various moods — floodlit and spotlit, in eerie moonlight, with candlelight glimmering in the rooms, with a brilliantly lit ballroom scene observed through french doors. There were comings and goings on foot, on horseback, in pony-trap and vintage motor-car. Red-coated soldiers abounded. Music, dialogue, sound-effects and commentary completed the brief sampling of the house's 130-year history. And all the visual effects were literally doubled by the fine reflections in the swimming pool situated between the building and the audience. It was a memorable experience in a gala week.

Compiled by JOHN DEANE

