

CTFHS NEWSLETTER

Cape Town Family History Society

SEPTEMBER 2011 Vol 6 No 3

EDITORIAL

Quite unintentionally we have a bit of a ship wreck theme in this newsletter.

Betty Nelson discovered, much to her surprise that one of her ancestors had drowned on the *Titanic* and she researched via Google to find out more [see page 8]

Did you know that Woodstock had a beach? Woodstock Beach is now under the container terminal at Cape Town Docks. I remember re-searching the first Rector of St Mary's, in Albert Road, Woodstock, the Reverend John Mulhusen Arnold. His parish was faced with a shortage of money for his stipend but he told the Bishop that he could walk a block down to the beach and find fresh fish aplenty to sustain him. He would have a tough time finding a beach anywhere near St Mary's today!

Woodstock Beach was the place where the North Westers would blow ships ashore. We have all heard about Wolraad Woltemade and the *Jonge Thomas*. But did you know that there could have been many more than the 47 survivors of the *Jonge Thomas* wreck? Wolraad had engaged in a rebellious act because the Dutch East India Company officials were more worried about the valuables from the ship getting stolen than the lives on board. They stopped people on the shore from helping those on board to safety. Over 160 persons drown because of these callous actions.

Nothing had changed when an almost identical scenario occurred in 1821, with the Cape under British rule. With the sinking of the *Dorah* on Woodstock Beach young **Francis Rose**, also on horseback, swam out and rescued as many as he could, before he drowned in the waves. Unlike Woltemade, Rose is not even remembered by history. But we are remembering him in this newsletter. [See page 2]

Then moving right away from the sea we come to an article sent to me by Sharon Wood about her gran - 'Mad Cap Connie' who was one of the pioneers in Johannesburg [Page 4]

Other articles are sourced from various web-sites, books and journals and try to assist you in your research of family history, things as various as land tenure in the Cape [page 11] and software to transcribe digital images of

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documents. Enjoy!

By the way, let me know if you prefer the single column per page format for the articles overleaf. Or whether you prefer two columns



Comments, assistance or additional information on any of the articles is most welcome BUT...

NEXT EDITION DUE: December 2011.

THE ROSE FAMILY –SEEING GOD’S HAND IN SHIPWRECKS AND DEATHS

Social norms vary from one generation to the next. What was totally unacceptable to our grandparents (and sometimes even our parents) is totally commonplace to us. In my profession, death and families facing death is fairly normal. What I have observed is the reluctance of families to talk about it. Euphemisms are used, such as “passed away”, “deceased”, “departed this life”, “demised” etc when simply saying, “he died” would sum up the situation. Our ancestors, on the other hand would never talk openly about sex, even covering a grand piano with a large cloth so that its legs would not show and sexually stimulate any males who saw them!

One of our CTFHS members passed on to me a journal from one of her ancestors who seemed to “enjoy” going into “whys, whens and wherefores” of the family’s deaths in a truly 19th century melodramatic way with lots of references to our lives being in God’s hands and God’s largesse . Needless to say these entries are very wordy but I’m including a few extracts below to show how differently our ancestors from the 19th Century must have thought and how they handled the death of a loved one.

Just from the notes given me, it is hard to work out who is who in the family tree. The journal/diary/ history was written by Ellen Rose for her son, Henry Rose of Klawerfontein Nieuveld Flats. The family came from Stroud (near Stratford-on-Avon) in England. Henry Rose had a sister Caroline whose is mentioned in the journal and with whom Ellen spent time in Mauritius. They arrived at the Cape Town in 1817.

The first episode given below occurred when Francis Rose drowned on 4 January 1821 (aged 20 years) on the same day as the *India Packet* (a Danish ship), the *Dora* and the *Emma* sank off Paarden Eiland, Salt River on 4 Jan 1821.

It was in the year 1817 that we settled at the Cape. At that time stagecoaches and omnibuses were unknown to the Colony, therefore to reside in the beautiful villages of Rondebosch, Claremont, or Wynberg was the exclusive privilege of those who kept their own carriage. But as nature in its modest form always presents something to admire and to instruct we preferred a cottage on the side of Table Mountain to a superior dwelling in the heated town. The southeast gales which prevail in the summer season are always, preceded by a cloud upon the mountain top. These gales are a source both of health and annoyance to the inhabitants of Cape Town - of health, because they carry the impurities of the atmosphere far away to the sea, and of annoyance because they raise such clouds of dust as almost, blind the pedestrian, and disturb careful housewives by filling their houses with sand. On the back of our cottage these gales spent their fury, but in the front we had a spacious veranda, covered with creeping plants which sheltered, us from the rays of the sun, and from the wind whether coming from the mountain or sea.

Wild and rude as was all around us, many fine trees and plants and sweet flowers indigenous to the Cape grew there, and at one season of the year this wilderness rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. To the discerning eye, mountain, sea and cloud, and sky are ever there telling the glory of God. Our family at this time consisted of two sons and four daughters; our eldest son [Henry] had left the paternal roof to engage in business for himself, the youngest [Francis] had attained the age of twenty, industrious, moral in conduct, amiable in temper, and having superior talents for business he had become his father's steady assistant, and had won the confidence of the merchants in Cape Town.

Our eldest daughters had married and settled at the Cape; one remained in England for education; two girls whom I was educating at home and their brother Frank composed our home circle.



Wreck of the *Jonge Thomas*

On the 1st of January we had a family gathering to hail the new-born year, and to cheer each others hearts by "Thoughts that breathe and words that burn". In the evening we took a pleasant walk and as we returned our dear boy pointing to the dark clouds rising in the North West, said, "Oh mother we shall have a dreadful night." But happy in the sunshine of each others love, we thought no more of cloud or storm till the signals of distress awoke us from our slumbers about 4 o'clock in the morning. My husband being a merchant, had great interest in the shipping and arising hastily, and calling to his son to accompany him, they left their home to render what aid they could to the distressed mariners.

I walked to the gate with them and earnestly besought my husband who had been much weakened by rheumatic attacks, to take care of himself but felt no fear for the strong healthy young man at my side. My boy soon came back for a fine horse he had, and returned with haste, saying as he went, "Oh do not trouble so mother". Awed by the violence of the storm and the signals of distress, I watched and prayed as hour after hour passed slowly away, and my loved ones came not. At length I saw my poor husband coming alone, and riding furiously; he threw himself from his horse fell upon the floor and fainted. Alarmed and sick of heart with terrible forebodings, I waited to know what I feared to ask. Our boy was lost! He had succeeded in saving all on board,

but on returning to shore for the last time his noble horse utterly exhausted sunk with his rider and the father's hope and stay was never more to gladden that home which he loved so well. The whole town manifested the deepest sympathy for our loss, but our sorrow, lay too deep for human consolation. My poor husband took to his bed, after some time he rallied, but never recovered; mentally and physically he gradually sunk, till a broken heart brought him to the house appointed for all living.

My poor husband enfeebled in mind and in body, and deprived of that arm, on which he had so fondly leaned, was unable to enter into the activities of business and everything went ill with him. My son-in-law knowing how ignorant I was of the altered state of affairs, thought it important that I should be acquainted with the truth, and he with my daughter, urged me to pay them a visit, that the disastrous facts might be unfolded to me as I could bear them. Almost immediately I arrived in Wynberg a Christian lady eminent of piety, called upon me guided by the Holy Spirit, she brought in her had a book of prayer, containing several and remarkable answers to prayer. This book she left with me and it proved of signal benefit in preparing me for the approaching hour of distress. When I had been made fully acquainted with the state of business affairs, I was enabled to take a calm and steady view of the distress and destitution that awaited me.

We had three children to care for, and a fourth was expected to be soon added to their number. I knew that my poor husband could never more do ought for his family; I looked around and refuge failed me. I then looked up to God and looked only to him, resolving to try the utmost that prayer could do and day and night I poured out my soul to him.

Mrs Rose was then offered a business opportunity of running a school in the city bowl. At first her husband disapproved but finally relented and allowed her to take over the school.

I was but just settled in my new abode, when my husband was taken ill and my infant was born.

When another month was passed, I was a widow and my child fatherless! Intensely solemn was my state of mind "Love and grief my soul dividing." Before me lay the lifeless body of my husband, and before me too was spread the miraculous provision God had made for me and mine.

Love and gratitude took possession of my soul, and I was longed to cry out as with a trumpet, "Trust in him at all time ye people, pour out your heart before him, God is a refuge for us all." Nor was it the least of his mercies that the spirit of prayer was in my heart at this time, as a well of living water. For many days everything was irksome that kept me from communion with him.

What a season of blessing! How sweet the memory still! Ere my babe opened his eyes on this world of sin and suffering, he had been the subject of much





prayer; in sorrow doubly dear, I pressed him to my bosom with a tenderness widowed mothers alone can feel! I said with one of old, "This shall comfort me", and I called his name Jabez because I bear him with sorrow". The funeral over, I was compelled to resume my labours, which were soon shared by one of my daughters. Mercies countless as the sand heaped upon us but it pleased God to afflict me still for the babe of whom I said "...This same shall comfort me" was

destined to be a source of long deep affliction. Nevertheless God left not himself without witness that he is the hearer and answerer of prayer. Poor Jabez! He learned to read but he could never be taught to add 2 and 3 together.

Jabez – later called James – grew up protected by his mother from the taunts of others.

"Mother," he would often say, "What is an idiot? Why do people call me silly?" These questions uttered with great emotion, were ever and anon calling forth pitiful sympathy of that mother's heart. To soothe and comfort his afflicted spirit I had recourse to every expedient maternal love could devise.

James would later die on his older brother's farm in Beaufort West area where he was staying.

Poor James was sent to bring home some horses and although they were near the house he lost his way and the mist being great, the darkness coming on, the poor fellow could not retrace his steps. All the people on the farm were sent -to look for him, fires were lighted, guns fired, and lights placed in all windows, but he was not found till he had been exposed 48 hours to the inclemency of the weather, the cold had seized his legs and brought on inflammation and he sleeps at Klaverfontein, till the grave shall give up its dead, having left a satisfactory testimony that-"He had washed his robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb".

Next Newsletter: Ellen Rose and the death of loved ones in Mauritius during a cholera epidemic.

LIVING IN EARLY JOHANNESBURG

Sharon Wood writes:

I have been enjoying the great website of CTFHS this afternoon, and thought I would send you an article written in 1957 when JHB turned 70 yrs old. The article is about pioneers on the Rand but my gran was born in Kimberley and her mother Catherine Amelia Ryan - b.1863) born in Jagersfontein. My g.g. grandparents at one time lived in Claremont and moved on to Jagersfontein, Grahamstown, finally settling in Kimberley where my gran was born (Madcap Connie). The article is about her life and I thought it would be of some interest to you although not directly linked with CT.

LIFE WAS HARD FOR A WOMAN ON THE RAND IN THE EARLY DAYS

by G. Le Roy

[the originally appeared in The Star in 1957]

CONNIE MADCAP'S STORY

"Connie Madcap" was what they called the little Miss Williams when she arrived in Johannesburg, age seven, by mule wagon from Kimberley in 1889, She was always dancing and skipping, for she was a strong and lively little girl.



Market in early Johannesburg

(Continued from page 4)

She needed her childish strength, according to the story told to me by her older self, Mrs Connie Wood, recently. Mrs Wood is a neat old lady of well over 70. "I've quietened down with the years" she said. But there is still a twinkle in her eye as he recalls the time when she was

Connie Madcap and led a life of work so hard that it would horrify the modern generation in

Johannesburg.

"Young people these days? They expect everything to be done for them." We shook our heads over the present day Young Idea.

Connie went shopping in the early morning, matching buttons and material for her mother, the leading dressmaker in early Johannesburg. Then came lessons at the school run by the sister of the late Prof. John Orr.

After school Connie was housekeeper, family shopper, water carrier and errand runner for her mother. Her mother, busy with silks and satins, stitched away until four a.m. most nights, and tired little Connie sat by and threaded needles so that there would be no waste of time.

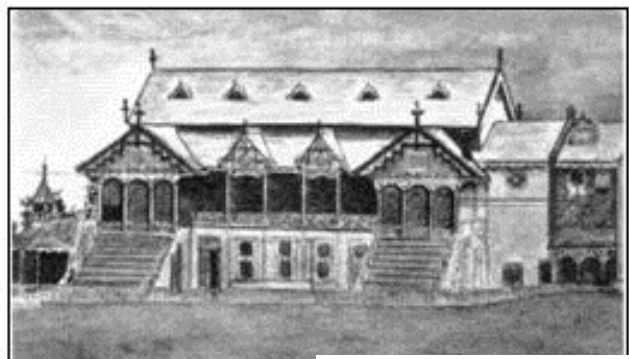
Carriages lined the street outside their home, bringing fashionable women who wanted the latest styles and the nine gored skirts, so elaborate to make, of the 1890's.

Sewing for the fashionable clientele was done at night. In the daytime Connie's mother (Catherine Cleveland - nee Ryan) stitched away for visiting operatic and theatrical companies in the early theatres such as The Globe, The Gaiety and for Fillis's Circus.

Connie used to take her lunch to the theatre and watch rehearsals as her mother sewed. She liked the operas best. "I could sing all the songs" she told me.

The glamour compensated for Connie's hard work. Housework in early Johannesburg was accomplished with no labour saving devices. There was no water laid on. At one time, Connie's family lived near a spruit (possibly near Sans Souci) and all the children in the neighbourhood went with their buckets and filled them, surrounded by the local cows and hores and by the animals from Fillis's Circus, who came to drink. It was all very friendly.

On other occasions she chased the water cart in the street and sometimes she ran so hard that she fell down with her bucket, like Jack and Jill and grazed her knees. But when she had got the water she walked carefully. It was valuable, for half a crown a bucket.



The Wanderers 1905

PRECIOUS WATER

Working families like Connie's, could not do their \washing-up in soda water as they did

(Continued on page 6)

at the Rand Club during the drought (1898). she knew the washing-up was done this way because her stepfather (Henry Arthur Cleveland), was librarian at the Club and told her so. When it rained her family collected rain water from the roof in home made drain pipes, and kept it in baths covered with sheet iron. Sometimes this water was covered with dust an inch thick but no-one thought of throwing it away. They skimmed off the dust and used the precious liquid.

MUSICIAN

The versatile Mr Cleveland, Connie's stepfather, was a musician as well as a librarian. He did other jobs too, from time to time. One of these was to assist in laying out the Wanderers Sports Ground. Connie used to carry his breakfast to him there, scrambling up and down the new cutting for the railway - the lines had not yet been laid, but the "donga" for them was quite a hazard.

She watched him lay the bicycle track, scene of so much subsequent excitement, and helped him plant the famous gum trees that were cut down only when the Wanderers was converted into the Johannesburg railway station. She often wondered, later, which of the towering trees had been planted by herself.

She saw people shooting at the clouds to try to make rain. She watched the famous "Professor Price" ascending with his balloon over the open veld of Orange Grove on Sundays, and over the Wanderers on Wednesdays (1893).

Her stepfather was a member of the band that played as the intrepid professor made these ascents and Connie watched, round eyed, as he dangled from a parachute attached to the balloon.

She watched him plunge his knife into the balloon and cut himself adrift to descend by parachute, while the balloon, issuing smoke, came down just anywhere like a piece of black rag.

The Price's lived next door to the Cleverlands, and an unromantic aftermath to these ascents was the patching of the balloon by poor Mrs Price, who had to spread the vast "black rag" on a vacant lot nearby to search for the rent.

At one time Connie and her family lived opposite the gasworks. "What an explosion there would be if those gas cylinders blew up" her mother was fond of saying. "We'd all be blown to smithereens!"

One day a terrific explosion occurred. Connie was flung right across the room. Her mother, peeling vegetables in the kitchen, shouted out that the gas cylinders had exploded at last.

But when Connie looked, the gasworks were just as usual. Soon she saw a stream of people going in the direction of Braamfontein. "Something terrible has happened", she told her mother. (19 Feb. 1896).

DYNAMITE

It had! It was the famous dynamite explosion in Braamfontein with the dreadful destruction and loss of life to those in the vicinity.

She remember the time of the Jameson Raid (Dec/Jan 1895/96), and the consequent barricading of shops. Food was issued at depots, and Connie, with her basket, went to collect it. It was bully beef one day and fresh meat the next. "I used to say that we had had bully beef the day before, so I always managed to get fresh meat" she confessed ingeniously.

Cheapjacks on the Market Square, Madame Patti singing at the Wanderers Club, a fancy dress carnival for musicians, for which her mother made her stepfather a clown's suit and painted his face parti-coloured to match - "none of the musicians recognized him" - and many other events are remembered by Connie Madcap. She recalled how her mother, needle and scissors in hand, used to attend all the big balls in case the belles had to be sewn into the elaborate gowns she made for them.

TOY SOLDIER

When the theatrical company Wheeler and Edwards, brought "La Poupee" to Johannesburg, Connie appeared as a toy soldier and Mr Wheeler wanted to take the

little girl back to England as a permanent member of the Company but her mother would not let her go.

It was a disappointment but Connie was used to taking the rough with the smooth. This was a philosophy that stood her in good stead later on in life when she was Mrs Wood and her husband, a builder, was out of work during the Depression. There were 10 children by that time, who took a lot of feeding. A fitting tribute to the late Mr Wood, Connie's husband, is the Johannesburg Cenotaph, of which he was the builder. He also helped to build the University of the Witwatersrand.

Connie too, helped to build, though her memorial will not be a tangible one. It will be one of colourful memories, and the work of a child towards the development of a city. It will also be the human one of 10 children, 25 grandchildren and the great grand children so precious to her - citizens, as she is, of 70 year old Johannesburg.

TRANSCRIPT

We've recently been included in the mailing list of *G.N.U.S. The Quarterly Newsletter of the Natal Inland Family History Society*.

Wow! Their newsletter certainly puts ours to shame! I'm sure they won't mind if I lift a few items (not the lengthy articles) which our members might also find useful.

As someone who has had to transcribe from photographed documents this program sounds very useful to me.

Transcript 2.3.2

Transcript Version 2.3.2 is a small program designed to help you transcribe the text on digital images of documents. Transcript is free for private non commercial use. In all other cases it costs 15 €

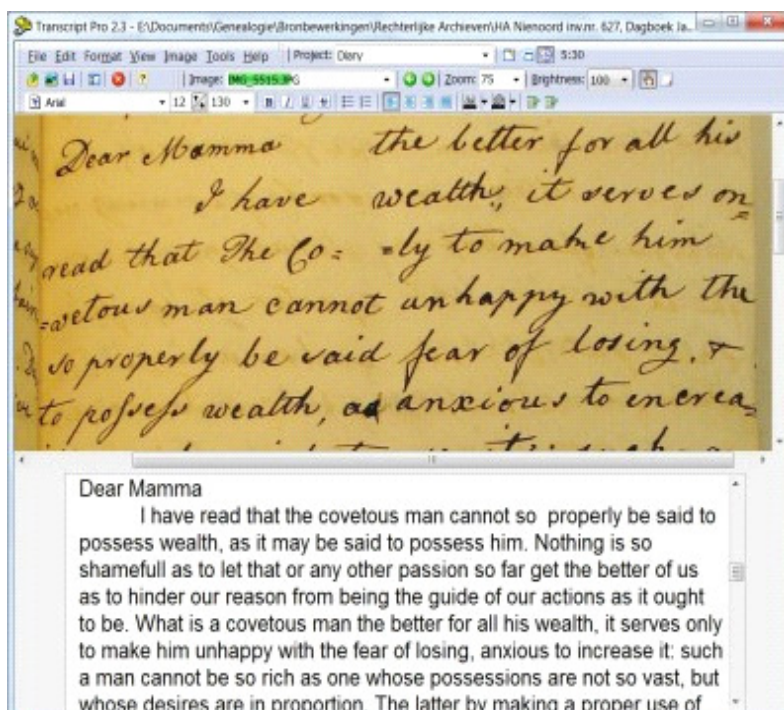
This program does not convert the image to text! It only helps you do this by not having to switch between your text editor and your image viewer and it's easier when you can do this within the same program.

The editor part of Transcript uses the standard Windows Rich Text Editor.

Have a look at the screenshots on <http://www.jacobboerema.nl/en/Screenshots.htm>

Download Version 2.3.2 build 74 - November 19, 2008 from <http://www.jacobboerema.nl/en/Freeware.htm>

[this item was by Vanessa Ford of the Natal Inland Family History Society

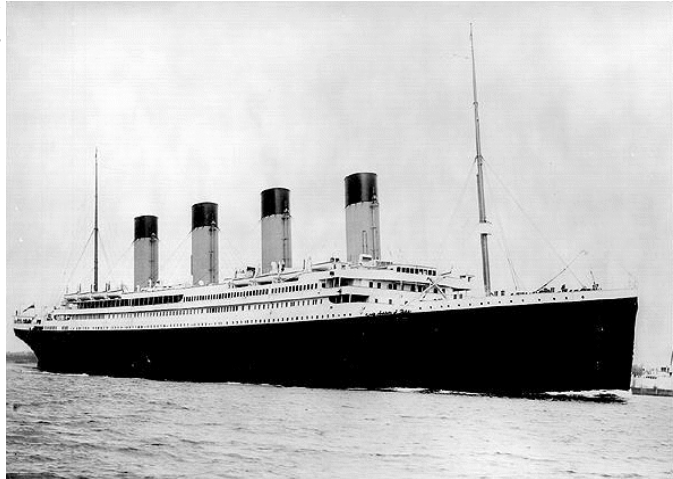


THE TITANTIC

by Betty Nelson

[Betty, our indefatigable tea lady submitted this article about her research into a relative who had died on the Titanic]

It was about sixty years ago when I was chatting to my grandfather that, just by chance, the subject of the "Titanic" came up. I couldn't believe my ears when he mentioned that my grandmother's brother, Walter Harris, was one of those drowned when the ship sank. I can still remember feeling very moved when he told me how upset he was when he saw the billboard announcing the tragedy



especially as he didn't know how he was going to break the news to his wife.

As far as I can recall my grandmother never spoke of her brother but every year his widow used to come to my grandparents for a holiday. It is now years later, when because of the success of the search for the wreck of this famous ship and the clarity of the video footage of it, that my interest had been renewed.

My great-uncle's name is listed in the "Passengers drowned" section of all the "Titanic" publications I have seen, so the other day I decided to go on Google to see what I could find when I typed in his name. Almost immediately there was information on him under the heading "Belfast Newsletter". Here is a copy of the article:

THE LADY PALMIST AND TITANIC PASSENGER

Friday 19 April 1912 Page 9

The Central News says:

Of the second class passengers of the *Titanic*, Walter Harris, of Enfield Highway and Percy Thomas Oxenham, of Ponders End, were booked on the "Philadelphia" for New York. Owing to the coal strike that boat did not sail and they transferred to the *Titanic*.

Before sailing, Harris visited some friends, of whom one lady practised palmistry. After looking at Harris's hand she declined to say what she had read, merely remarking that she did not like it. Harris's little son asked: "Is Daddy going to be drowned?" The name of Harris is among the missing, and that of his friend among the saved.

I believe this article to be accurate as I know Walter had a little son also named Walter. He and his mother were left behind in England until he would have been ready to have them with him in America. As time proved this was not to be and, sadly, his body was never recovered. I then decided to see what I could learn about Percy Thomas Oxenham. This proved to be very rewarding as can be seen from the following article.

Vineland Times Journal

SURVIVOR OF TITANIC DISASTER TELLS OF GRIM EXPERIENCES

By Stan Sloane

Wednesday 25 March 1953

It was around midnight on April 14, 1912. The luxury liner "Titanic", the finest vessel afloat was on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England,



to New York. The ship collided with an iceberg off Newfoundland in the fog and sank. In the disaster 1117 persons lost their lives. Soon next month a motion picture dealing with the tragedy will reach the screen in most major cities. There is one man in Vineland who knew of that "Titanic" disaster personally, He is Thomas Oxenham of Helen Avenue, near Grant.

A passenger on his way to America from England, Oxenham now 63 years old, remembers that ill-fated night as if it were

only yesterday. "I had been in my bunk, two decks below the main deck about 10 minutes when I noticed that the engine had stopped," Oxenham recalls. "That the engine had stopped was noticeable because it had been pounding away since it had left Southampton on April 10. I lay there awhile and said to a friend of mine, Walter Harris, 'What's the matter? The engine has stopped'.

Oxenham said that Harris didn't think that anything was wrong but Oxenham, suspicious, got out of his bunk anyway. "I slipped on my pants and Prince Albert coat (I still have it) and went out the passageway. I ran into one of the crew members and he told me that all the problem was that they were probably having a boat drill."

Oxenham, not satisfied with the reply, said he went on the boat deck and noticed crew members starting to pull the canvas off the life boats. "This struck me as funny. A boat drill at midnight?", he said.

Confusion Everywhere

As told by Oxenham, the crew began closing down the companionways, more and more persons came on deck and then confusion mounted.

"Officers started running around, shouting orders", Oxenham stated. "I knew it was no boat drill then. They started to issue life belts and put women and children into the boats, holding the men back. The wives didn't want to leave their husbands but most of them did. Even then most of the people didn't think anything was wrong."

Oxenham said that the "Titanic" started to list, but not too much. "The boats were being lowered one after the other. The sixth or seventh boat being lowered turned over and spilled screaming persons into the ocean while the ship continued to roll over. "Then all hell broke loose. There were screams and more confusion. I waited until the last boat was down, walked around, talked with a young fellow I knew by the name of John B. Thayer, and made my way aft (towards the stern)" said Oxenham.

Still on the boat deck, Oxenham said he looked over a rail and this was what he saw.

The Vineland survivor told how he and the other persons clinging to the boat watched the "Titanic" in its death agony about 60 yards away.

"She upended and went down bow first. There was no suction - or none that I could feel", he said. Men prayed.

"I saw a ring of people - mostly men - and in the centre were two men of the

Gospel and they were praying. There were about 30 or 40 of them, and the people started singing 'Nearer My God to Thee'."

Oxenham walked some more, he said, and met an artist he had become acquainted with on the ship, a Mr. Stanford, and they talked about what had happened.

"Then the boat started to go down faster and Stanford and I went to the port side and we both jumped overboard. We were swimming around for about 20 minutes when we bumped into an overturned boat. The next thing I knew I was straddling the boat and Stanford had disappeared. Later on about five or six persons were holding on to the boat," Oxenham said.

Criticizes Film

After floating around for about an hour Oxenham said he and the others were picked up by a lifeboat and at about 9 A.M. the next day the ship - the "Carpathia"- which had turned around to go to the rescue while on its way to Europe, picked them up.

Oxenham has a score to settle with the motion picture version of the disaster. He saw a preview of the film on Ed Sullivan's TV show and criticized it.

"There was no band playing an accompaniment to 'Nearer My God to Thee'. It was impossible for a band to play because all the instruments were below in the quarters and the hatches were battened down", he explained.

Another point Oxenham takes issue with is the depicting of John Astor, the financier who died in the ship sinking, as a hero.

Astor No Hero

"He didn't give up his place in a boat to a woman with a child in her arms," Oxenham said. "I don't believe he ever got on deck because most of the people who were drowned were below deck when everything was battened down."

On the voyage Oxenham said he met Astor who gave him a message to deliver to the financier's son, Vincent. For some reason, Oxenham said, Vincent Astor refused to see him in New York and the Vineland still has it "in his head".

Asked what was the real reason for the "Titanic" hitting the iceberg, Oxenham stated that the ship was 80 miles off its course and that the bergs had broken in the Arctic about two weeks ahead of schedule.

"There was a warning about two hours before the "Titanic" struck the iceberg", he said. "A man was assigned to keep taking the temperature of the water and it was getting colder and colder. By the time the lookout saw the iceberg, it was too late.

The "Titanic" was equipped with bulkheads and equipped with electric controls in case of an accident, Oxenham said, but these were of no use because the force of the crash buckled the bulkheads and they couldn't be closed.

Oxenham, after holding down many jobs, settled in Vineland in 1924 and now works at the Dorchester Shipyard. He has many memories but the "Titanic" disaster will always remain uppermost in his mind.

Then from the IGI Individual Records I found the following information:

Name: Percy Thomas Oxenham

Birth: 04 October 1889 -Aston, Birmingham. Warwickshire, England

Death: 1954-Vineland, Cumberland, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Burial: Greenwood Cemetery, Millville, Cumberland, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Parents: Charles Edward Oxenham and Phebe Oxenham

If only I had known of his existence!

Betty Nelson.

10 September 2007.

Land tenure systems at the Cape Colony

When researching early farm houses, placing a date on their construction is often bedevilled by the fact that land was sometimes inhabited for many years before formal ownership was acquired. Due to the nature and uncertainty of land tenure and the migration tendency of the trekboere, pioneer farmers often lived in their wagons or at first constructed only the most basic of accommodation.



Trekboer encampment

A brief review of the main early land-tenure systems can help to explain why, for instance, a house is often older than its owner's title deeds to the property on which it stands.

FREEHOLD SYSTEM.

In 1657 the first farmers were granted land along the Liesbeek River which was the settlement's earliest boundary. In 1672 the boundary was extended to Hottentots Holland [Somerset West] where the Company had established a farm and cattle station. Stellenbosch was founded in 1679 and by 1687 farms were being allocated along the Berg River in the Drakenstein Valley [Paarl and Franschhoek] where, a year later, many of the Huguenot refugees were also settled. By the time the Cape was ceded to the British in 1795 the boundary of the Colony had reached the Great Fish River.

The earliest allocations of land were made under the freehold system whereby farmers enjoyed full ownership and property could be freely traded or bequeathed. These farms were usually small agricultural holdings measuring up to 60 morgen in extent. Above and beyond prior survey, the grant could be subject to varying conditions, such as allowing the building of a public road across the property without compensation, or the planting of oak trees, etc. Although this was a sound system that encouraged permanence and the construction of solid buildings, the expense and delay in processing applications caused it to be unpopular, particularly as the boundary of the Colony was rapidly expanding which made it even more difficult for officialdom to cope with escalating applications and subsequent surveys.

LOAN FARMS:

In order to supply its ships, the Dutch East India Company had an ever growing need not only for fresh produce and grain, but also for meat. Farmers were consequently encouraged to increase their herds which created a demand for larger grazing areas and speeded up the trek to the interior with the subsequent granting of grazing rights far from the Castle.

After 1700 a system of loan farms gradually developed out of the grazing rights system. To occupy unalienated land, farmers from 1703 onwards merely had to apply for a grazing licence. This granted them grazing rights to an unsurveyed loan-farm for a period of six months to a year. It was subject to the payment of a nominal rent which was termed a 'recognition fee' to be paid in cash or in kind, i.e. livestock or crops.

When pastures ran out, or a better tract of land was identified, the farmer simply moved on and submitted a new application. Under this system, two or more loan places, which were sometimes situated far apart, were often owned by the same person. Although no title to the land was held, a degree of security of tenure existed and it proved to be a

popular system as it was inexpensive and the government seldom exercised its right to cancel the lease. When it did, compensation was paid for improvements, such as an opstal.

In the pioneering years, when new grazing areas were being explored, this system hardly encouraged permanence. The dwellings of early trekboere were therefore more often than not no more than a hartbeeshuis, or a simple rectangular mud and rubble cottage. Often a loan place was left in the care of a trusted friend or servant, the owner residing on another property, or even in town.

Although the tenant had no title deed for the land, he could claim the value of the opstal and sell it to a new tenant.

PERPETUAL QUITRENT SYSTEM:

After the second British occupation of 1806, Governor John Cradock in 1813 decreed that land was henceforth to be allocated only in perpetual quitrent, or in freehold.



Khoi-Khoi Herder

Property owners were encouraged to register their existing loan farm/s under the new system which required the payment of an annual quitrent. Before a deed of tenure could be issued, however, the farm had first to be surveyed. As in the case of freehold title, this proved to be a major obstacle as the few available surveyors could not cope with the flood of applications. Delays of even years consequently ensued. In desperation, and good faith, many farmers simply remained on the land they occupied, built their homes, and trusted that formal ownership would eventually be granted.

Despite the initial frustration, this was a good and orderly system of land tenure as farms were now surveyed and clearly demarcated. It encouraged permanence, promoted better farming practices, created a market for ground and contributed to the establishment of the first villages. It also encouraged the building of a house and outbuildings in keeping with the size of the farm and stature of its owner. Many such dwellings were built before the deed was finalized and consequently carry dates which are earlier than the transfer itself.



Loan places thus gradually became surveyed quitrent properties which bestowed on the farmer all the rights of full ownership.

The original freehold farms are to this day still held as such. Properties, or portions thereof, which in the late 19th Century were granted in quitrent, either as such on their own or from converted loan places, became what is presently known

as redeemed quitrent land since the rent or fee initially required, had now been abolished.

SOURCE: A. PRETORIUS : OUR THREATENED HERITAGE (1997)

MONTHLY MEETINGS –3rd QUARTER

JULY MEETING



Jaco van der Merwe (left) and MEC Mr Meyer at the Archives

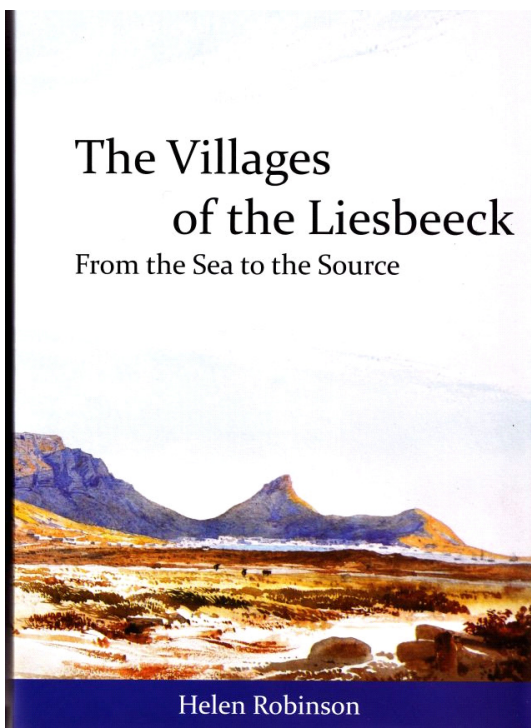
At the July meeting we were very lucky to have Jaco van der Merwe to address us on what the Cape Archives could offer us in our search for ancestors.

Having used the Archives for many years I thought that his talk would be merely confirming my technique of how to search for ancestors, but Jaco did so much more. As a regular user of NAAIRS one presumes that this is all that is available. But this is not the case. There are many sources which have not been indexed and although one might have to page through large volumes looking for entries with your family names.

Jaco spoke about the lack of passenger lists in south Africa but he did mention the records of different immigration boards which assisted with aided-immigration. I have certainly discovered this. My great grandfather wrote in his bible that he had arrived in South Africa aboard "the immigrant ship *Adelaide*". I was overjoyed to see this ship listed by Esme Bull, but I could find no great-grandfather in her list of names. Going through the Port Elizabeth Immigration Board files I found a letter addressed to my great-grandfather's brother, who lived in Graaff Reinet, asking him to pay the 21 shillings for his brother's board and lodging in Port Elizabeth. The date of the letter was about a month after the arrival of the *Adelaide*. Esme Bull does say in her book that some immigrants disembarked before their names had been checked against the official list so I suspect my great-grandfather was one of them.

Bottom line – there is more to the Archives than Death Notices! Thanks Jaco for sharing with us what is available.

AUGUST MEETING



At one of our AGM recently Helen Robinson spoke about the families along the Liesbeeck River which she was busy researching for a book. Thus it was great to hear more about them and seen the completed research with some really attractive slides of houses and people who were connected to those Southern Suburbs that border on the Liesbeeck River.

It was equally exciting to be able to purchase the fruits of her research, *The Villages of the Liesbeeck* (Houghton house, 2011) at a special discount. Unless I'm mistaken I think the discount still exists for members of the CTFHS.

Picture of people and now-demolished houses are often difficult to come by, yet Helen with her expert research technique managed to find some real beauties.

Helen is always a joy to listen to as she tells the stories of people and places in such a way that listeners feel that they are hearing "the news" fresh and perhaps "over the garden fence" from a neighbour with all the "juicy bits" still in it. Helen makes history very real and something to get excited about – Well done and thank you, Helen.

SEPTEMBER HERITAGE MONTH MEETING

We had 35 members who came to the Heritage Day exhibition, and 20 visitors – approximately. There were a number of people who didn't sign as they arrived, but it was just to give us a rough idea of who was there. It seemed as if there were more people there, especially between 2.30 and 3.30.

The tea went down very well – and thanks go to all the members and committee who helped out.



Merle Martin and the St Helena table



Pat Riley—Perfect Pictures



Glyn Murrell in his unpredictable T-shirt



Dave Watts tell us the size of a grave—
Ancestry24 cemetery project



Lois Hartley at her
'Help Desk'

SEPTEMBER HERITAGE MONTH MEETING



GSSA Table



Cape Archives Table



Heather MacAllister (centre) Ancestry24.com



Mel and John Cross



Sports Science and Family History—Frank Cleophas

CAPE TOWN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Timetable 2011

Intermediate Workshops on Selected Topics

Code	Date	Time	Venue	Topic
IW3	Thurs 13 th Oct	9.30 to 12.00	St Paul's Church Hall	Using Your Digital Camera
Presenter: Colin Edwards		Cost: R50		
IW4	Thurs 27 th Oct	9.30 to 12.00	St. Paul's Church Hall	Using Archival Sources for Family History
Presenter: Sharon Warr		Cost: R50		

Hermanus Workshops

Code	Date	Time	Venue	Topic	Cost
HW2	Wed 19 th Oct	9 to 12.30	Hermanus Library	Beyond BMDs – further English research	R75

Programme and registration forms are available on request from Lois Harley tel 021 797 6537 or email lharley@bucknet.co.za

No more than 15 people will be booked on each course. Registration form and course fee must be received before the class commences.

The Society reserves the right to cancel a class if insufficient bookings are received or a venue should become unavailable for any reason.

THAT'S LIFE: A CENSUS POEM

With the 2011 Census in South Africa dues perhaps this might bring a smile to your faces. Submitted by Lucille le Roux.

This poem by an unknown author was published in the July 2007 edition of RSS News, a magazine for members of the Royal Statistical Society in London.

He said "Your occupation please",
This census-taking guy.
I started to enumerate
And said quite frankly, "I
Wash the dishes, scrub the floors,
Shine the windows, polish doors,
Bathe three children, wipe their noses,
Work a little in the roses.
Do the washing, iron the clothes,
Pick up playthings, mend the hose,
Sweep out daily, close britches,
Sew a dress with tiny stitches,

Nurse a sick one, make the beds,
Kiss hurt places, shampoo heads,
Wash the blood off, hunt the mittens,
Wipe up after pups and kittens,
Tuck in covers, hear each prayer,
Brag a little, ease a care,
Take your pick. I get no pay,
But that's what I do every day".
He listened very carefully,
That's why I'm so annoyed,
Because that man just scribbled down
'Housewife. Unemployed.'

MINI-NOTE

It may be of interest to the members that there is usually a large selection of old photographs on sale at the Alphen Antiques & Collectables Fair. The fair is held on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of every month at the Alphen Centre, Constantia Main Road.

Sadly, as usual, most of the photos don't have the subjects name or date on them. But you never know – someone may recognize their ancestor amongst them!

[Editor's comment: Whenever I've come across old photo albums I've wanted to buy them and perhaps write a novel using the photos to create imagined characters and their life stories.]