

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2016 No 3

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EDITORIAL

I have purchased a new desk top computer and so this edition of the Newsletter is being done on the new machine. The trouble is that in the past I have used MS-Publisher for all the previous Newsletters but I decided to avoid annual subscription fees for Office365, which offers MS-Publisher and I went with a "Student" edition of MS-Office 2016 which only gives you MS-Word, MS-Excel and MS-PowerPoint. So, if this Newsletter looks 'different' it is because I am learning to do it in MS-Word.

The Theme of this edition is **Coincidences in Family History**. The theme seemed to touch many of you and I had numerous short and long articles from members to include.

Coincidence in family history

Some members share...

Jennifer Leak:

On the 21st July 1995 my husband Rodney, my daughter Bronwen and I found ourselves part of an extraordinary moment in history. Rodney's great grandfather Robert Leak, born in Ireland in 1864, was a trooper in the Imperial Light Horse fighting in the second Boer War. In January 1901 he died at Naauwpoort of wounds sustained in a battle that had taken place on the farm Cyferfontein in the Magaliesburg. Another battle had taken place at Nooitgedacht in the same area.

The British soldiers killed in these battles had originally been buried on farms in the area, but the bodies were later exhumed and re-buried in the Garden of Remembrance in the Krugersdorp Cemetery. A memorial was erected at the Krugersdorp Cemetery with the names of all those who had died in battle and Robert Leak's name is on this memorial.

In 1995 we were on holiday in Gauteng and staying with family in the Magaliesburg, so decided to go to Krugersdorp Cemetery to find the memorial on which Robert Leak's name appears. When we arrived at the cemetery we did not know where to start looking and spotting two gentlemen walking among the graves, decided to ask them for directions. They turned out to be members of the M.O.T.H. and informed us that they were at the cemetery that morning for a wreath laying ceremony to commemorate those who had fallen at Cyferfontein and Nooitgedacht during the Boer War. When they heard of our quest they insisted that we stay and join them for the ceremony.

A few minutes later the rest of the M.O.T.H. members arrived, along with a reporter from the local newspaper. We were then included in the very moving ceremony honouring those who had fallen in battle at Cyferfontein and Nooitgedacht. Special mention was made of us and Rodney was photographed standing next to the monument. He was in fact the only person present who was directly linked to one of the soldiers being remembered. Rod was also probably the first Leak family member to attend a service for Robert Leak as all of Robert's family lived in Cape Town at the time of his death. We were sent the newspaper article that appeared in the Krugersdorp News, a wonderful record to add to our family history file. It is not often that one becomes so personally connected with ones past. All who were present at the wreath laying ceremony commented on the coincidence of us being there on that particular day and at that particular time. Was it coincidence or destiny?

Lucille Le Roux:

I started doing research in May 1998 then had heart bypass surgery Nov 1998. I had to travel from Kommetjie to Claremont to attend the Heart Rehab Gym in 1999 for my recovery period.

While walking on our treadmills I struck up a conversation with an older woman, Jean, who I had never met before. I mentioned that my Gran had lived in Vineyard Rd Claremont where Cavendish Square is today. She asked for names and when I told her that my Gran Winifred had been a Roberts & married my Latvian grandfather Jacob Smiltneek. She said that my Gran was her aunt. Her father was my Gran's younger brother. I had heard of an Uncle Sonny but never met him.

The next time we were at the Rehab Gym she brought me a photo of the Roberts family all together at a celebration. I was so thrilled as there in the middle was my mother holding a bouquet. Judging by the children on the photo I worked out that it must have been my mother's 21st birthday.

So was it not a coincidence that Jean after her heart attack and me after my heart surgery met at the same Heart Rehab Gym?

Named in the photo are my gran, my mother, Jean about 4yrs & her father "Sonny".



Jennifer Couper

It is the 1950s and I am a little girl of about seven growing up in Rhodesia. My parents have friends staying for an extended visit. The man is Pat and his wife, Bobbi. Other than that I know absolutely nothing about them, but enjoy their company. Over the years, I think of them often and never forget their very unusual surname [kept private for this article]. My parents lose touch with them.

Fast forward fifty years and I am living in New Zealand. I meet someone new at church one morning who tells me that the mother of her husband Bryan was South African. As the newcomer and I exchange contact details and I see the surname she has written, I blurt out: "Pat and Bobbi ... ?!!" Indeed, Pat was Bryan's father and Bobbi, his

stepmother. Bryan's mother and father had emigrated from South Africa to New Zealand, where Bryan was born and where he and his mother remained after his parents had divorced and his father returned to Africa. My husband and I become firm friends with Bryan and his wife.

It is a year or two later and I am doing some research on the internet. I am amazed to find that Bryan and I are actually *cousins*! This is through the marriage of a van der Bijl (along my father's paternal line) and a van Breda (Bryan's maternal line) in the early 1800s.

By now I have discovered that on his father's side, Bryan is descended of the English nobility. One day, as I am researching my father's English paternal line on the internet, I am "gob-smacked" to read in an extract from "The Gentleman's Magazine" in an e-book about my family that my great-great-great grandfather (name given) was Chaplain to the Countess of (name given), the same Countess being my friend and cousin Bryan's ancestor.

Not to be outdone, on my mother's paternal side there is a supposed link to Bryan's English family. I've been able to find nothing to substantiate this and feel it is probably a family legend! And anyway, perhaps three coincidences are enough to go on with, really ...

Ann Erikson

My mother's maternal ancestors came from the Orkney Isles which lie to the north of Scotland. While researching my family history, I came across a strange case where two of my ancestors got married twice. The records are identical so far as names are concerned, and why this couple got married twice is a mystery.

My great-great-grandmother was Hannah GROUNDWATER. She was born in St Andrews, Orkney on 22 June 1818. I still have a sampler she embroidered at the age of 12, and I have included an image of this. Hannah married Alexander STEWART, who was born on 30 October 1812 in Kirkwall, the main town in Orkney. The first record of their marriage is on Saturday 28 September 1839, in the parish of St Andrews, Orkney (where the bride's family lived). Then, three days later, on Tuesday 1 October 1839 they married again in the parish of Kirkwall and St Ola, where the groom came from. The marriage was recorded in both parish registers. Why did they do this?

I suspect that although the distance from Kirkwall to St Andrews is only seven miles, that roads in those days were not as good as they are now. Getting married in two different places would have saved wedding guests from travelling in coaches in bad weather. (The average annual temperature in Orkney is 8 °C.) Or maybe there was an elderly relative who could not travel at all.

It is also a possibility that the family could not agree as to where the wedding should take place!



Map showing Kirkwall to the north and St Andrews further south. Distance is seven miles.



Sampler embroidered by Hannah GROUNDWATER in 1830 at the age of 12. (I am prepared to sell this sampler if anyone is interested.)

Derek Pratt

My story of coincidence in a family history does not involve my own family but that of a family of a parishioner from St James, Sea Point. At the time I was curate in the Atlantic Seaboard Parishes which included St James and Holy Redeemer in Sea Point and St Peter's in Camps Bay.

My Rector was on leave and the Parish Secretary phoned me to ask if I would do a funeral for a former parishioner who had moved out to the Northern Suburbs. "It won't be a big funeral," she said, "because Joan [not her real name] has no family except a son in the UK who will not be coming to the funeral. She used to live in a beach front block of flats but became a sort of 'house mother' to a group of gay men who bought a house in Durbanville and she moved out there with them. She later became more frail and moved into an Old-Aged home. I suspect that only the men from Durbanville and her lawyer will be at the funeral."

I was a bit surprised that her son wasn't coming out for the funeral, but that night I received a phone call from him and he told an amazing story, which he later faxed to me and I read it out at the funeral, deciding that his story had all the God-given connections needed for the service.

John (not his real name) told me that he was born during World War Two in Lowestoft, in Norfolk. His mother was not married and worked in a munitions factory. After he was born she tried to look after him and continue working but found it too difficult so she gave him up for adoption. After the war she met and married a Yorkshire man whose family were in the seed potato business. He was some years older than her and he was sent out to Johannesburg to run the South African branch of the company. She came with him and they happily lived in Johannesburg for many years until they retired to a beachfront flat in Sea Point. They had no children of their own and she had all but forgotten about her son John.

Her son John, on the other hand, knowing that he was adopted wanted to find his birth mother and duly went through all required procedures. He discovered that she was living in Sea Point in Cape Town and was happy to meet up with him again. John himself was married to Susan (also a false name) with two young children so John brought the whole family to meet his mother, her mother-in-law and the children's grandmother.

When the family arrived in the Sea Point flat, John's wife turned as white as a sheet as she looked at her mother-in-law. Then she said, "We've meet before!" It turns out that some ten years previously, as a young teenager, Susan's family had taken advantage of the £10 immigration scheme to Australia in the 1950s. On the way, the ss *Oriana* had stopped in Cape Town and the family came ashore for a drink in the Grand Hotel in Adderley Street. There the English family had met up with Joan and her husband. As the evening progressed, Susan needed to visit the Ladies so Joan went with her. As they were 'powdering their noses', Susan asked Joan if she had any children. Joan said

that she hadn't except a son she had given up for adoption during the War. "I don't know why I'm telling you this," she said, "My husband obviously knows but no-one else really."

Susan and her family went on to Australia but they weren't happy and so they returned to the UK. Here she met and married John who she knew was adopted but only when he traced his mother in Cape Town and brought Susan and the children to meet her did she realise that this was the same lady who had gone to the Ladies with her at least ten years previously and mentioned her adopted son.

When I read the fax that "John" had sent me I felt the hair on the back of my neck stand up and I used this story as my sermon at the funeral. I have no proof of the details of this story but I can think of no reason why John should make it up or why Susan should have done the same, so I've taken it as being absolutely true and a wonderful coincidence!

Peter Erikson

This is the common story of someone only becoming interested in family research after the key sources of information i.e. parents and grandparents, have died and had left very little information to start with. All I had were some old photos and the odd letter from distant relatives I had never heard of.

In 1992 I became interested in my roots and started researching my Swedish ancestors. My Swedish grandmother had left a few letters from her relatives with whom she had been corresponding over the years, when she died in Johannesburg at the age of 91 in 1966.

I tried rather unsuccessfully to contact some of them and their families in Sweden but by then most of them had long since passed away or moved on.

In brief, my paternal grandfather John Erikson left Åmål (a small town in Dalsland in central Sweden), in the late 1890s and found work in Cape Town. In 1902 my future grandmother, whom he had known since his schooldays, followed him to South Africa. She brought her wedding dress with her and they were married in Cape Town the day the ship docked here.

My father John and his brother Eric were born in Cape Town but were sent back to school in Åmål. On completing their schooling they returned to South Africa and started work in Johannesburg.

In 1997 I picked up my family research once again and started writing letters to various genealogical offices in Sweden to try to trace my Swedish ancestors.

An address I found was for the library in Åmål where my family came from and I wrote to them. One of the librarians, a man named Roger Carlsson, was running a course on Genealogy at the library at the time. The daughter of my grandfather's sister, Stina Gylling (what a coincidence, she turned out to be my second cousin!) was attending the course and was also trying to trace her family tree.



One day during the course, she was looking through microfilms relating to her ancestors when Roger mentioned to her that he had received a letter from someone in South Africa who was looking for his ancestors in Åmål. She

immediately recognised the name John Erikson as one of her relatives and she wrote to me straightaway, and the contact was made.

Stina helped me so much with my Swedish research and helped me to trace my ancestors back to the 1790s. Further back the records became very difficult to decipher as even her Swedish could not translate the very old Swedish language.

Anyway my wife, Anne, and I went to Sweden in 1998 for a short trip where we met and stayed with Stina at her apartment in Åmål. She took us to many places of interest in Dalsland province where our past relations had lived. Stina also arranged a big gathering of our relations at her brother's house, both to meet us and to show them what she had discovered about our ancestors.

The second coincidence is in the photos we took of all the relations that were present on the day and compared it with one taken by my father of the same earlier generation 60 years ago in 1937 when my parents visited Sweden on their honeymoon. By coincidence Stina appears in both photos. She is the little girl (ringed) in the 1937 photo.



She is also in the 1998 photo sitting in the front row (yes, I had a beard at the time!). I was probably there in 1937 as well as I was conceived during my parents' honeymoon!



So that is a double coincidence found during my family research!

Ann Marie Bury found eight coincidences in her family's history:

She writes: 'At last I can easily provide you with some material for your newsletter, under the theme of "Coincidences".'

1. When my father's great grandfather John Grindrod (JG) left his position as headmaster in Appleton UK, the post was filled by my mother's great great uncle. John Robert Timson (JRT) (1856-). JRT was the younger brother of Anne's maternal g.g.grandfather, Samuel Rowland Timson (SRT) (1854-).

I have found a directory references that JG was the schoolmaster at St Thomas' National School in Stockton Heath, near Warrington, Cheshire in 1878 where he was also organist and choirmaster at St Thomas' church. When JG moved on to become the head teacher at Ince school, he had been replaced as schoolmaster at St Thomas' in 1883 by JRT. JRT also took his place as organist and choirmaster at the church. According to church records, a new organ was installed at St Thomas' on or around 1880 so perhaps both would have had the pleasure of playing it. The challenge is now to find out how it came about that the one (JRT) followed on from the other (JG).

However, I have not been able to 100% prove that it was a consecutive position; there may have been someone else as head teacher in between my two relations but I think it is likely that the one followed the other.

The thing that makes this story such a coincidence is that JR Timson and family came from Berkhamstead, quite a way from Appleton. Timson had studied at University of Dublin, so maybe he just hopped across the pond to Appleton, instead of going back south to his home town. Such a delightful coincidence to think that my parents' families have crossed paths since at least 137 years ago.

2. Wande connection: On my 50th birthday, we went away with some friends to Hermanus. My mother-in-law arrived with a gift for me: a silver fish slice. As it was broken, she took it away to be mended and I asked for the name of her ancestor, to whom this fish slice had belonged. His name was Ferdinand Wande. Of course I researched him as soon as I could, and I discovered that his son (my husband's great uncle) had married a relation of the friend who had been with us in Hermanus when I was given the fish slice!
3. I discovered a paternal great great uncle was buried in the Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires, Argentina. When I told my husband about that, he casually remarked that he had played in the Chacarita as a young boy growing up in Buenos Aires.
4. My father's cousin Glenys Rosser married my mother-in-law's cousin, Robert Armstrong. So my children are related to my cousins twice, through both my husband and I. In fact, Glenys Armstrong taught my husband's cousin Keith Armstrong how to swim, and he went on to become a record holding swimmer.
5. My father's first girlfriend was a cousin of my mother in law's.
6. I worked with Barbie Schreiner at the Market Theatre for a couple of years. Little did I know that I would marry her cousin many years later. Barbie's mother and my mother-in-law are first cousins from the Wande family.
7. Back to the mother-in-law again! It is a long story but, in short, her grandfather Johnny Armstrong was a friend of the Zulu king Dabulamanzi. During the Anglo-Zulu wars, Johnny was a sniper with the Welsh regiment. The story goes that Dabulamanzi rode into battle on a big white horse. As he did so, unknown to the historians perhaps, the other two snipers sitting with Johnny aimed at the Zulu king. Johnny turned his gun on the two snipers and threatened to shoot them if they shot at his friend Dabulamanzi. The king rode on and I believe that battle was won by the Zulus.

We were having supper at my mother-in-law's home and she was telling this story to her guests. One of the women turned to her and said, "And it was my grandfather who sold that big white horse to Dabulamanzi"!

8. When my daughter was at Michael Oak Waldorf School, her class had to do a family tree project. As I went around looking at the other family trees on display, I discovered that one of the other children had a business connection to my family. At that school at that time were descendants of the founders of Grindrod Shipping Lines & Woermann Shipping Lines, and also grandchildren of the MD of Deutsche Afrika Linea, which descended from Woermann Shipping. A unique little moment in history!

Steve Peel

THE COINCIDENCE OF TWO TRANSPORTEES MARRYING INTO THE SAME CAPE FAMILY ON THE SAME DAY AND PLACE – or - William Rosser's Arrival at the Cape.

When I decided to follow up my wife's, Olga Rosser, genealogy, I wrote letters to all 23 Rosser families listed in Telkom's White Pages country wide. Almost immediately I received an encouraging reply from an 80-year old Cecil Rosser, who over a period of nearly 50 years had built up a tree of all South African Rossers and kept it updated with births, marriages and deaths.

The original South African Rosser, I subsequently learnt, was a certain William, born in Gloucestershire in 1817. He had married a 22-year old Maryna Cordier in the newly consecrated church in Ladismith in 1851 and they had 8 children. The eldest of his children was born on the Cordier farm, Klipfontein, at the foot of the Rooiberg, some 25km south of Ladismith.

A John Rosser who is the eldest son of the eldest son going back five generations also sent me copies of the hand-written entries in a family Bible showing that amongst other family members William Rosser was born in Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and died in 1892 at Boschluiskloof, which I later discovered at the western end of the Gamkaskloof valley.

As to the date of his arrival, Cecil had said that an aunt (Hester Anna Rosser, 1889 – 1964, and a granddaughter of William) had told him that William had been shipwrecked but knew no further details.

It seemed strange to me that an Englishman, and furthermore a shipwreck survivor, should end up deep in the Cape mountains rather than carrying on to his destination. I scoured the records for wrecks along the Southern Cape coast for the period 1830 to 1850 with no luck, as well as searched for ships plying the lower reaches of the Breede River. In the end I thought that perhaps he had "jumped ship" on the Breede, and had headed northwards doing odd jobs and picking up the language as he went. On Cecil Rosser's recommendation I read "People of the Valley", Brian du Toit's sociological study of the marginal existence of those Cape Afrikaners in Gamkaskloof and also came across a reference in Deneys Reitz's "Commando" to a Koot Cordier who gave assistance to members of Smuts' commando in 1901. So while researching Olga's ancestral families of Cordier, Hartman, Veldsman and De Kooker and, how over several generations they had gradually migrated south-eastwards down the Touws and Groot Rivers, I always kept in mind the question as to how and when William Rosser had arrived. And the lack of a documented arrival date stuck out – the precise dates of the arrival of the Huguenots were recorded and other European immigrants are generally known within a year or two.

Then one day going through some old papers left by my late mother, I saw the headline "*The Loss of the Abercrombie Robinson and Waterloo*" in a 2002 copy of The Cape Odyssey. The August issue described how in a winter gale in 1842 the Abercrombie Robinson had dragged her anchors and had ended up on Salt River beach with no loss of life. The next issue promised to tell the story of the Waterloo. An internet search quickly found contemporary reports in the SA Commercial Advertiser with a listing of those drowned including three Rossers - a James, a John and a William. But what is remarkable is that the Waterloo was no ordinary boat; she was a convict ship from England carrying 219 transportees, convicted to serve their time in Tasmania.

What a let-down – the William Rosser I'd finally located had drowned along with 142 other convicts. In the Tasmanian Prison Registers I saw that William was also listed as drowned but also that he had been convicted to serve 10 years. James and John Rosser had received sentences of 10 and 15 years respectively.

On Ancestry.com.au I found that a William Rosser, aged 20, had been charged in the Gloucester Quarter Sessions in 1837 and had been acquitted. This was more than just interesting, as both the locality and his date of birth matched our William Rosser. It looked like our William was no stranger to criminal courts. On looking through the names of drowned convicts, another name struck me as familiar – Brookes – and odd as he was the only convict of the 143 drowned without a Christian name. I checked my family data and found a so-called William Brooks marrying Maryna Cordier's widowed mother, Anna Petronella (nee Hartman), on the same day and place as her marriage to William Rosser.

This was too much of a coincidence. Mother and daughter marrying Brooks and Rosser at the same church in Ladismith on 2nd November 1851 was sufficient evidence to me, especially considering the family legend of William having been shipwrecked and his earlier brushes with the law, that they were surviving run-aways from the convict ship Waterloo.

I re-read the reports of the shipwreck. As the north-wester gale picked up strength, both the Abercrombie Robinson and Waterloo dragged their anchors and were pushed slowly towards the shore. Mid-morning the Abercrombie ran aground near the mouth of the Salt River in Table Bay about 150 yards from the shore on the edge of the surf zone. Eventually a lifeline was got to the shore and rescue efforts got underway. Meantime the crew on the Waterloo could hear the Abercrombie Robinson's cannon firing distress shots and see her flags asking for shore

assistance. The Waterloo's ship surgeon ordered the convicts between decks to be unshackled as they awaited their eventual fate. About 500 yards up the beach from the Abercrombie Robinson, the Waterloo ran aground. *"She took the ground between eleven and twelve o'clock in the forenoon and in fifteen or twenty minutes became a mass of rubbish. And now ensued a most piteous massacre. In about two hours and a half, amidst the crumbling heaps of their perfidious prison of men, women and children, one hundred and ninety-four were crushed, disabled and drowned."*

As the gale-driven swells hit the Waterloo, it quickly became apparent a disaster was unfolding. The ship's timbers were rotten through with age and beetle borings. With each wave the decks and planking sprang apart and the ship started breaking up; the masts and rigging came down on those gathered on deck, knocking many into the sea. Others became entangled in the fallen rigging and the ship was pulverized with each successive wave. *"We stood amongst thousands on the beach within a hundred and fifty yards of the dissolving fabric, looking on the agonised faces of our fellow creatures, as they sunk in dozens, battered and bruised and suffocated useless as children, or idiots, or wild Caffers. As corpse after corpse floated to our feet lifeless and was raised from the brine, there seemed a curse in every dead man's eye on the improvidence, the imbecility, the brutish indifference to human suffering."*

Rescue efforts from the Abercrombie Robinson continued, eventually saving all 500 on board but little could be done for the Waterloo as lifeless bodies and half-drowned survivors washed up. By mid-afternoon there was nothing left to show where the Waterloo had come aground, except ninety-four survivors stripped naked from the ferocity of the waves and, of course, so many dead bodies.

Amidst the chaos on the beach, Rosser and Brooks saw their chance: Africa beckoned, and so without their shackles, they were free men again.

The names of the survivors were easy enough to compile, as would have been the dead crew and the soldiers, their wives and their children (14 in all). But identifying the dead convicts by name would not have been such an easy task, as the convict records on-board would have been destroyed with the Waterloo. The ship's master and surgeon with some convenient arithmetic (total on-board minus survivors equals the number to report as drowned!) were perhaps able to claim that the sea had not yet yielded up all the bodies, and so quell inquiries into any escapees.

And so William Rosser and Mr. Brooks arrived on the South African shore on 28th August 1842. How they managed in the first weeks, one can only imagine. But clearly they decided to get away from Cape Town where they would have been quickly discovered, instead heading into the country districts. After a number of years, they found themselves some 250km east of Cape Town on the Cordier farm Klipfontein in the thinly populated district of Ladismith, and a very long way from the attentive watch of officialdom.

In a family Bible Anthonie Louis Rosser (1854-1902) recorded, *"William Rosser, de ode, ben boren 17/5/1817 hoot de ou de dom van 75 jaar 5 maande 13 daa op de plates ge sterf Bosleuiys kloof, Dest Prens Albert, onder getenken van zein zoon."*

And on the death notice of 77-year old Anna Petronella Brooks (1794-1871), formerly Cordier, nee Hartman, and with an estate valued at 230 pounds sterling, the former transportee and now run-away convict "William" Brooks, after 20 years and 6 days of marriage, made his mark thus: x.

Sources:

- Mr. Cecil Edward Rosser of Bellville, (021 945 1379 or 23 8th Street, Boston, 7530).
- Mr. John Rosser (011-886 4207 or maryna.rosser@mazars.co.za).
- The Cape Odyssey, August and October 2002, issues 7 & 8.
- SA Commercial Advertiser. Extracts from South African Commercial Advertiser transcribed from CO53/6 at the National Archives, Kew, London.
- Tasmanian Records Office: Convict Register CON33-1-30.
(<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au> . See digitized records *then* convicts *then* CON33-1-30 Cape Packet ex-Waterloo(2) *then* images 167 & 164 & 166).
- Hesse, J.A. & Lombard, R.T. - S.A. Genealogy vol 1, page 666.
- Death Notice of William Rosser, MOOC 6/9/314, no.580.
- Death Notice of Anna Petronella Hartman, MOOC 6/9/137, no.7610.
- Brian M. du Toit, 1974. People of the Valley. Balkema, Cape Town.
- Deneys Reitz, 1929. Commando – A Boer journal of the Boer War: re-published in paperback in 1983 by Jonathan Ball; see ch.23, page 273.

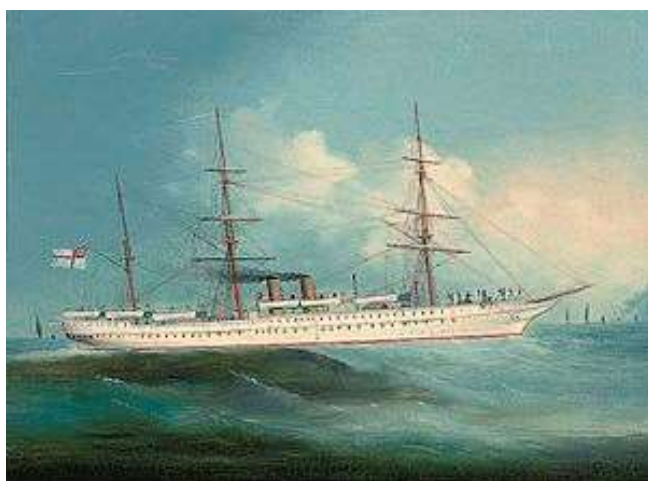
Afterword & Afterthought!

Rosser & Brooks are unlikely to have been the only two survivors from the Waterloo to have escaped – the chances are that others also managed to get away. Family historians who hit the proverbial brick wall on how their English surnamed forefather popped-up in the Cape in mid-century might consider going through the list of drowned transportees.

The surviving transportees were admitted to Cape Town gaol (whereabouts?) on 2nd September and subsequently arrived in Tasmania. I wonder where the drowned were buried. Is there a burial register? Were the convicts given a common grave and the crew, soldiers and their families likewise?

A FINAL DIP INTO THE DIARY OF MAURICE FITZGERALD WILSON

April 30th - Saturday A very wild day with heavy rain and strong N.W. Gale, I had to go and take the positions of ships in the Bay this morning to see if they shift at all but I don't think they will though tonight the wind seems increasing. I lunched at Government House and found them all in a very good humour. We were a very small party, Lady B, Mrs. St. John, Miss R [see note 1] and myself; the Governor himself had just sailed for Natal in the "Orontes" [see note 2].



HMS Orontes

The Debate finished Thursday with a Government majority of 5 which will be a lot of use I think [see note 3].

The races this week seem to have been a success but I did not go to them. Woodbine Cloete[Note 4] had an awful smash. His horse shied and got entangled in some wire fencing but somehow neither were any the worse. He has just gone smash for £75,000 but does not seem to care much but goes on racing just the same.

I dined with Bell [Note 5] the other night: he has a nice little house and prettily furnished but I did not care much about Mrs. Bell and I am sure she will go out of her mind

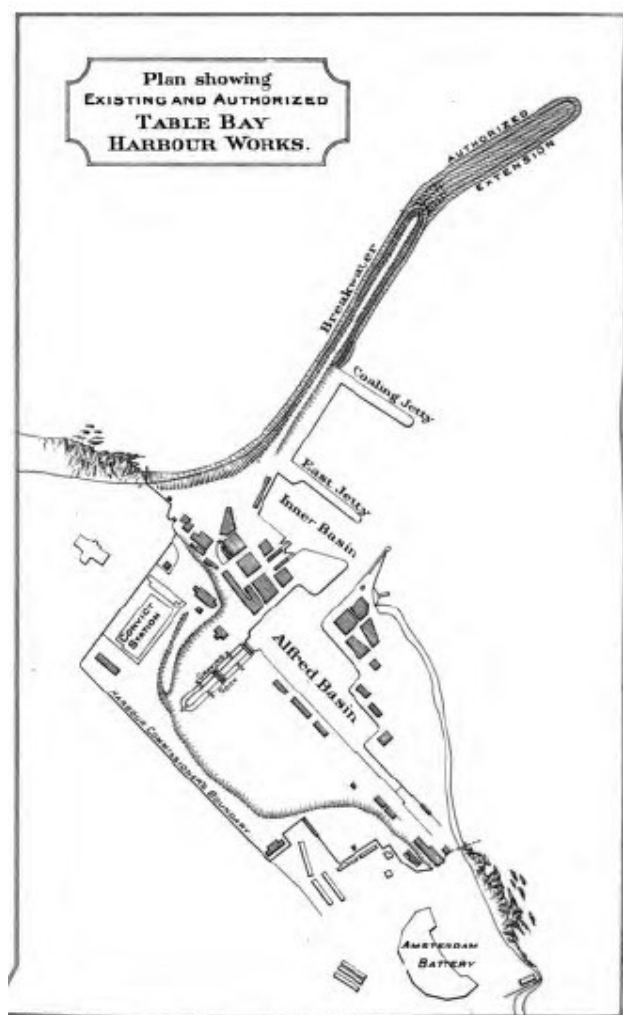
someday, she has such a fearful look in her eyes. To-morrow I lunch with FitzGerald quite one of the nicest fellows I have met yet. He comes from near Killaloe and knows all the people about, Jim, Marcus Patterson, Will Spaight, Massey Dawson, the old church people and all. It is very funny meeting him out here. He is a sort of general agent for any thing and every thing and I believe is doing very well.

I am getting awfully sick of little Thwaites [See note 6]. He is so very pleased with himself always and is always giggling and drinking whiskey and abusing Jenour [see note 7] of whom he is evidently very jealous. The "Nubian" has not arrived yet but I suppose will do so to-morrow. The letters by her ought to be in answer to my first lot. I think my fiddle is all right now but somehow I get very little time for practice.

May 7th - Saturday Another week gone since I last wrote this up. It is certainly wonderful the pace the time slips away. I had dinner with FitzGerald on Sunday and then went on to see the Sivewrights [Note 8] and Curreys[note 9]. This has been a very uninteresting week, the only excitement being the heavy rain and its consequences. Here alone 7 new houses simply fell down. They are all run up wholesale with soft new bricks and some sand and water with a very small proportion of bad lime for mortar and so when the rain comes they simply get washed away "stock and block" as Tom would say.

About 7 on Monday we were all roused up by a chimney collapsing, and down the Kitchen Chimney all the time it was raining there was a perfect stream of clay and sand from the dissolving bricks!! It really is shameful and I should not be the least surprised if the whole house fell some day. However, it is quite in keeping with every thing else out here. Now that the rain has come there is no more thought about the water supply of the Town but they will wait till there is another drought probably next summer. Cape Town has no proper water supply, no drainage, no places for depositing rubbish, no pavements, no nothing - in fact it is without any exception for a so-called civilized town the

most benighted and forsaken place it is possible to conceive[see note10]. The gutters along the street sides till the rain came were full of dead cats and dogs and filth of all sorts. All the rubbish is thrown anywhere on the beach. The sewers run out anywhere and everywhere and while they were dry the smells from them were truly delicious. One really could not turn a corner without coming to fresh stench each one worse than the last. If it were not for the South-Easter which blows during the Summer nearly every day for a while there would most certainly be a break out of yellow fever or some thing equally bad and all solely and simply because that lively lot of old women calling themselves the Town Council are so utterly stubborn and pigheaded to do any thing but wrangle among themselves as to which is the bigger fool. They did make a reservoir last Summer but never made any arrangements for filling it, I suppose they thought it would fill itself. One of the warehouses at the Docks too got flooded and of course a great deal of jabber and jaw and squabbling between Jenour and Hewat (Dock Superintendent) who hate each other like poison.



The harbour works supervised by Maurice Wilson

I went to the Theatre again last night and saw 'Ixion' (note 11) which was not up to much. But that again is quite as it should be for any thing good here would be quite out of place.

The Ministry resigned yesterday and so the others are going to take their places and form themselves as they like. (see note 3) The Governor is away but still they don't seem to mind that at all. I called on the Grahams (see note 12) this afternoon and they seem rather nice and have tennis every Wednesday when it is fine. I went on to call on Mrs. Fleming (see note 13) but there were people sitting on the Stoep which frightened me and I did not go up, so I must try again another day. I got worried again by mosquitoes last night which is a nuisance to say the least of it. It is teaming rain again now and I am sure the house will go. At any rate I must go to bed for I am horful sleepy. I am rather in hopes my hair is growing again with some stuff Thwaites gave me. I have to dine with him on Tuesday which all things considered is rather a nuisance.

May 12th - Thursday I dined with the little man on Tuesday which was not so bad after all. Just before dinner we went out to the observatory and saw Mr. Finlay (see note 14) who took us over and shewed us round and tried to explain every thing to me but generally had his words taken out of his mouth and inferior ones substituted by Thwaites who will always have his say whether wanted or not. They have some very nice instruments there which were most interesting to me for I had never done more than read about them before. The Transit there is about the finest in the world, with a 6 ft. Circle read by 6 equidistant verniers - the lower one reads the degrees and to 5 minutes of arc, the others read the minutes to the one thousandth part which is pretty accurate. (see note 15) He is off to Aden soon when Gill (the Astronomer Royal here) returns from home to get the exact Longitude of the Cape for that has never yet been accurately obtained.

After dinner we had music from a Miss Newman who did not play badly and some things (walses) she played very well. Little Thwaites who knows no more about music than an old stick and has no more ear than a fish though he thinks himself a second Mendelssohn was in raptures and stood over her all the time looking round periodically with a most "intense" smile of placid, satisfaction. It was great fun.

I have been taking soundings all day to day at the end of the Breakwater which was at any rate a pleasant change, but the boatmen of course were most aggravating, invariably pulling the wrong oar, or backing when told to pull and

vice versa - but that is as it should be out here. I am going to dance to morrow at Mrs. Flemings which I hope will be nice, and have just got an invitation for one at the General's for Saturday. But I can't go unluckily for I am going to the Cloetes (see note 16) to dine and sleep. But there are to be some more I believe soon; the Government House one is next Wednesday.

The shopkeepers here are certainly most amusing in their free and easy manner. I went into a boot shop this morning to get a pair of evening shoes, Mr. Boyes was sitting there quietly but never took the slightest notice so I said I wanted a pair of dress shoes. "Oh!" "A pair of dress shoes please". "Yes! Patent leather". "Yes". "Won't you sit down". Then he walked over and began talking about the weather. "Take your boot off please", which I did. "I wonder what day of the month it is. Do you know?" "12th, I think". "Oh! I have an almanac here only it's a year old and so it won't help us much", "It is the 12th". "It won't do to go backwards, that would be like the Klief (note 17). Have you ever seen a Klief? It is a sort of Crawfish which strikes out forwards and goes backwards - curious, isn't it? Fancy walking forward and going back all the time. That is what the boys say in the streets of a lazy fellow; "Augh em Klief". (note 18) Now I'll measure you please; thanks, that will do, you can put your boot on again if you like and I would not advise you to walk out without it if I were you for it is rather muddy. "Name please". "Wilson", "So many of them Please give me an initial, though, (soliloquising) Patent leathers will distinguish him for I have no patent leather Wilsons here at present". "Can I have them by Wednesday?" "Well, I daresay you might; are you in a hurry, Bad plan to be in a hurry for any thing in Cape Town; However, I daresay you shall have them by then. At any rate you might look in in the morning and see how they're getting on".

The weather since the last rain has been beautiful, nice and cool and still fine and bright though the sun is hot about midday. The Bay looked beautiful today going in for there was all over a sort of dreamy haze through which loomed the various ships in the Bay all lit up with a yellowy light from the rising or rather lately risen sun, the sea all the while being perfectly calm. Afterwards this haze cleared off and the atmosphere became clearer than I have ever yet seen it, the Blueberg Mountains about 4 miles distant being so clear and distinct that one could fancy he could see a man even if he chanced to be walking there. And coming back this evening they were looking most magnificent being lit up by the setting sun with the deepest red and purple, the tips of the highest Peaks being of the brightest gold and above them the Moon, nearly full, which had just risen. Altogether this has been the most beautiful day we have had yet. At any rate I am fearfully sleepy now and am off to bed.

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Footnotes:

1. Sir Hercules Robinson arrived as Governor of the Cape shortly before the disaster of the battle of Majuba [described elsewhere in the Diary], and was one of the commissioners for negotiating a peace and determining the future status of Transvaal. He was married to the Honourable Nea Arthur Ada Rose D'Amour, fifth daughter of the ninth Viscount Valentia (Lady B referred to above). Lady Robinson was described as "a majestic-looking woman", "fond of gaiety and society". Their children were Hercules Arthur Temple Robinson, serving in the British Army at the time, Eleanor Frances Alti Maria Robinson who was married to Colonel Edward Beauchamps St John (divorced 1883)[Mrs St John mentioned above], Nora Augusta Maud Robinson married to A. K. Finlay, and Nerida Leeta Robinson who at the time of the Diary was unmarried.
2. HMS Orontes was a 19th-century troopship of the Royal Navy, intended for carrying troops to southern Africa and the West Indies.
3. The Debate - Lord Carnarvon was trying to force a federation in South African and appointed as Governor Sir Henry Bartle Frere to ensure that this went through. He suspended the Cape Legislature and appointed Gordon Sprigg as Prime Minister. Sprigg implemented the conclusion of his Commission for Frontier Defence, which had been fiercely blocked by the previous government. This involved the disarming of all Black Africans in the Cape, including the soldiers and citizens in its own armed forces. His resultant "Peace Preservation Act" (1878) caused immediate uprisings across the country that swiftly flared into overt wars. Against the advice of many in parliament, Sprigg went ahead with applying the act in Basutoland – at the time administered by the Cape. The resulting Basuto Gun War, together with continued conflict with the Xhosa, saw the Cape government dragged towards bankruptcy. Sprigg's harsh "native policy" also involved calling in British Imperial troops to suppress Black African resistance,

the confiscation of traditional lands, and the expansion of white settlement into Black African territory. This policy eventually crushed and subsumed the last independent Xhosa state, but led to the 1880 Transkeian Rebellion and a further string of conflicts elsewhere in southern Africa. Rising costs from the lingering wars forced him to cut back on infrastructure projects such as railway construction and other public works. In spite of his good relationship with the British Colonial Office, Sprigg had little support locally, and when Frere was recalled to London to face charges of misconduct, his government fell. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by locally born Thomas Charles Scanlen.[See further on in the diary]

4. Woodbine Cloete – with a delightful name like this I will find out more about this man for next edition
5. Bell – Not sure who this Bell family is. Charles Davidson Bell had left the Cape in 1873. Was this a son?
6. Cape Town Harbour: Sir John Coode was Engineer-in-Chief, and his articled assistant was Maurice FitzGerald Wilson, the diarist. The Breakwater, Alfred Dock, and Outer Basin, were carried out under the immediate superintendence of Mr. A. T. Andrews, who was succeeded June 1871 by Mr. A. C. Jenour, during whose regime the extension of the Breakwater was commenced and the Graving Dock and Breakwater Jetty, etc., constructed; he retired in March, 1884, and Mr. H. Thwaites became the Resident Engineer.
7. See above Note 6
8. Sir James Sivewright K.C.M.G. (1848 - 1916) was a businessman and politician of the Cape Colony, South Africa. He was a strong political ally of Cecil Rhodes and, as his cabinet minister, was implicated in the "Logan" corruption scandal that led to the fall of the first Rhodes government.
9. This is most probably John Blades Currey's family. He was born in 1829, the son of Major Robert Currey and Charlotte Lipscomb. He married Mary Margaret Christian, daughter of Ewan Christian and Alletta Hendrina Schultz. He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby, Lancashire, England and at Brasenose College, Oxford. He emigrated to South Africa in 1850. He was a wine producer at Klein Constantia, and later was manager of SA Exploration Company (later De Beers). He was a personal friend of Cecil Rhodes, and a pallbearer at his funeral. He was Secretary to the Government of Griqualand West causing the so-called "black Flag Rebellion. He died in 1904. Children of John Blades Currey and Mary Margaret Christian: Ewan Southey Currey; Cyril Curzon Currey; Mildred Alice Currey d. 1900; John Badnall Currey d. c1901; Mary H. Currey; Winifred Mabel Currey; Dorothy Christian Currey; Mona Marjorie Currey; Hon. Henry Latham Currey b. 1863, d. Jan 1945; Cecil Maude Agnes Currey b. 1886, d. 1969.
10. Sewerage and water issues in Cape Town were not new. By the late 1850's the lack of drainage was pressing, and Cape Town was not a healthy town. There were particular black spots in slum areas in the vicinity of Barrack Street and Keerom Street, which were low lying and poorly drained, but the overall picture was little better. However the municipality was not prepared to invest in sanitary services. The municipal Councillors were usually wealthy property owners and landlords who had no inclination to increase the rates on their own properties. In 1857 the situation was becoming intolerable, and the newly established House of Assembly decided to flex its muscle. It appointed a Select Committee to report on the Sanitary State of Cape Town. By 1880 Cape Town was in a shocking state. Unrestrained winter torrents gouged out roads and flooded homes; sand enveloped the town in clouds of red dust during south-easters, blinding and knocking down unfortunate pedestrians. Waste accumulated in covered grachts and released stinking gases. Night soil and refuse collection was inefficient and the contents of the latrine pails were frequently emptied directly into the streets. Severe water shortages were now an annual event, and lack of sufficient water was a further reason for delaying any drainage scheme: all described by Wilson in these diary entries.

In the 1880 and 1882 Council elections two rival "parties" arose. Those that supported sanitation even if there was a capital outlay. These were referred to as the "Clean Party" and tended to be the rich merchants and recent immigrants from England. On the other side were the Afrikaner and Coloured and "Malay" voters who were apprehensive that increase in rates would result in them having to sell their properties, the very qualification which gave them a vote. They were known as the "Dirty Party". The *Lantern* newspaper - a tabloid of its day - had cartoons with supporters of both parties attacking each other in cartoons etc and many bad poems such as:

Sing a song of small pox

Hofmeyr gone askew

Ashley, Louw and Zoutendyk

*in a pretty stew!
When the scare is over,
these rascals will begin
their dirty tricks, to stop the brick
who would a clean town win*

1881 saw the completion of the Molteno Reservoir on Table Mountain, the main water supply to Cape Town. However, on 27 August 1882 the Molteno Reservoir on Table Mountain, developed a leak, the wall gave way and a flood of water swept through Cape Town, causing considerable damage to property. Rebuilt by 1886 the Molteno Reservoir became an important element of Cape Town City's water supply. "Bombing" seagulls became a serious pollution headache, until the problem was solved by stringing nylon line above the water. This information taken from *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* by Vivian Bickford-Smith (Witwatersrand University Press: Johannesburg), 1995.

11. "Ixion" – a play from Greek mythology story. The author of the version seen by Wilson is unknown but could even be Richard Sheridan of *School for Scandals* and *The Rivals* fame.
12. Graham family. Without first names or initials hard to know who this is.
13. Mrs Fleming was Adelaide Fleming (b. Port Elizabeth 1831 – died Camberley, Surrey 1917). She was daughter of The Rev. Francis McClelland (Colonial Chaplain, Port Elizabeth) and Elizabeth Clarke and the wife of William Fleming (b Uitenhage 1833- d. London 1894). According to the 1878 Voter roll, they lived in Wynberg. Helen Robinson kindly supplied some more information: Mrs Adelaide Fleming and her husband, who was a Mayor of Cape Town for a few years, lived at Fairholm in Wellington Ave. It was a big estate, sold in the mid-1890s - now broken up. William and Adelaide had four daughters – perhaps that was why they had so many dances! The Dances took place at Wynberg Hall, in Piers Road. It is now Mills Auction Rooms, next to the former Wynberg synagogue. It was funded by offering shares to the public - built in the mid 19th century on land bought from Cogill - of the Hotel which was where Pick n Pay now operates. All the important people in the village were involved - it was used for dances, wedding receptions, public meetings, drama and musical evenings, Masonic meetings and the Jewish shul - before the synagogue was built.
14. William Henry Finlay (born 17 June 1849 in Liverpool; died 7 December 1924 in Cape Town, South Africa) was a South African astronomer. He was First Assistant at the Cape Observatory from 1873 to 1898 under Edward James Stone. He discovered the periodic comet 15P/Finlay. Earlier, he was one of the first to spot the "Great Comet of 1882" (C/1882 R1). The editor knows a relative of Finlay who has some of his library in her possession.
15. The Airy transit circle was installed at the Cape in 1855. It remained the principal instrument for measuring star positions until 1905.
16. Cloete family of Groot Constantia
17. *Kreef* or what is know at the Cape as crayfish
18. Not sure what the shoemaker actually said. Perhaps "Agter hom, Kreef" Behind him or chase him, Crayfish?

DID YOU KNOW?

Cape Town Archives do allow you to take photographs. Photography is not allowed in the Reading Room.

You just have to phone and make an appointment and give the references for the files that you want. You will be allocated a small private room off the reading room and when you arrive; your files will be waiting for you.

PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP.....?

Just found your CTFHS Website and wonder if you could tell me if Caledon is in this area? I understand it is now called Overburg. Been trying to find my ancestor Cecil Francis born Caledon, Cape Colony about 1888. (Just found this on his 1911 London census). Now I know you do not search for individuals but maybe you could point me in the right direction for birth records for this town as I can't find anything on this gent. Apparently they had a farm there.

Many thanks

Lynette Bartlett-Sutton. lynbartz52@yahoo.co.uk

I am from Ireland and am researching relatives who lived in Rondebosch Cape Town around a hundred years ago. I would like to find out more about them. They have no descendants I believe.

I have found some records on The National Archives of South Africa website but no real detail. I'd like to know where they are buried etc. They arrived in South Africa around 1885 and had all died by 1960s. I have some good photos of them and some war records.

I would be grateful if you could suggest what I can do next.

Many Thanks

Frances McMichael francesmmcmichael@gmail.com

Hi all

I am doing our family history and wanting to get info on the Stoffenberg family in capetown

Can you point me in the right direction?

Thanks

Donna Jones jonesdonnaanne@gmail.com

If you can help any of these people please contact them directly (not the editor or Mel Cross). If you have a brickwall that needs breaking down send your request to melcross77@gmail.com for inclusion in the December 2016 Newsletter.

October Meeting:

An Interactive Journey through a Family History

This will be a look at the basics of how to do a family history but as we journey and each problem arises, you, the audience will be asked to make suggestions of the way forward. So, we will learn from each other.

Your 'tour guide' on this journey will be Derek Pratt

Saturday 15th October 14:15 for 14:30 (2:15pm for 2:30pm)

St John's Church Hall

Wynberg