

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2023 No 2

June 2023

Editorial

As I came to the realisation that it was **LATE MAY** and, so far, I had **NO ARTICLES** for the June Newsletter, I received two emails from GSSA (which I recently joined). One was from eGSSA, the online branch, and the other from the Western Cape Branch. The former was asking for articles for their newsletter *Genesis* and the latter was doing the same for *Capensis*. Shortage of material to include in newsletters is not unique to the Cape Town Family History Society. But that is no excuse!

Our society has seventy members. We have 1 141 followers in our society Facebook group. Surely amongst all these people there are some who have experienced the thrill of finding that missing ancestor and broken that brick wall. Can't you share that with us? Even if it is only a few lines long.

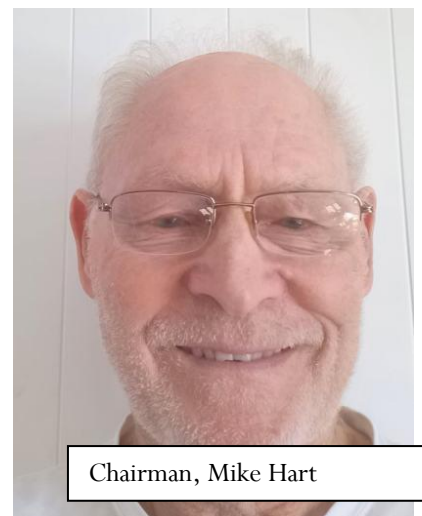
On the other hand, perhaps our newsletter has become too academic in nature and you, the members, would prefer a more chatty-and-newsy newsletter with a more laid-back feeling to it. Or we could contemplate re-launching it not so much as a newsletter but as an organ where research can be shared. We could give it a fancier title and perhaps only have two editions a year.

Your views on the way forward would be appreciated. Send them to me (I won't be offended if you say you hate the current format of the newsletter!) at dpratt@mweb.co.za

After writing this I received two articles, one from Kevin Turner and one from David Slingsby. Thank you, gentlemen.

CTFHS COMMITTEE FOR 2023

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Chairman, Mike Hart

WHY DID OUR ANCESTORS TELL LIES IN MARRIAGE REGISTERS AND ON OTHER OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS?

If you are only chasing up your own family tree and perhaps found that one of your ancestors added or subtracted a few years when the minister filled in the bride and groom's age in the marriage register you might have laughed it off as 'Silly great-granddad, didn't even know his age!' I, on the other hand, have had to search for many marriages for people who have asked me to research their family tree, and I can say that adding or subtracting a few years by couples at the altar is all too common.

Use of ID Documents

Of course, this only occurred pre-ID documents being available. Nowadays ministers take copies of the marriage register to Home Affairs who check the ID number to make sure they are 'real' people before they accept the copies. This was introduced after many elderly ladies, when applying for the new ID card, found that they had been married to a man from somewhere else in Africa who was hoping to obtain permanent residence after five years of being married to a South African citizen. Just a pity no-one told the SA citizen about the marriage!

A few years ago, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs addressed church marriage officers and told them about some of the forgeries. The best example was a South African lady who illegally agreed to let her ID number be used for a marriage provided the 'groom' paid her R200 a month. After five years he obtained SA citizenship and stopped paying. His 'wife' went to Home Affairs and told them to make him continue paying. They said she would have to divorce him in court, with all the legal hassles divorce cases bring. But that is not really lying – it is more fraud.

But what about before ID Documents?

I have often wondered what proof of identity ministers demanded in the 19th Century. Perhaps both bride and groom were well-known in the community and banns had to be read. These banns were read for three consecutive Sundays asking if anyone knew 'any just cause or impediment' why the couple could not be married and if so they were to declare it.

Use of Banns

Janet Cartwright – a former member of the Society (she is now too frail to attend meetings) indexed all the banns from St Francis, Simon's Town and she tells of many, whose banns were never read to completion. She told me about two. The first was read once and then the minister wrote in the margin, 'This wedding was cancelled as the groom is already married.' The other was quite sad. The first two banns were read on the Sundays before Christmas Day and in place of the third reading the minister wrote in the banns book that the groom 'drowned while swimming on New Years Day.'

Banns did work, but not always. I was asked to research a Royal Navy seaman serving on HMS Flora in Simon's Town because his descendant had found someone with the same name and age had married a Simon's Town girl and had two children by her. Meanwhile back in Devon (his home base being Plymouth) he had another wife and two children. At the end of his twelve years in the Royal Navy, he returned to the UK and moved with wife and children to Edinburgh and appeared to live happily ever after. I hope the wife he left in Cape Town did the same. I did find that she married a man from Madeira and one of the descendants from that marriage contacted me after I placed an article in the newsletter.

Lies about Age

But it is the simple adding or subtracting a year or two from one or both of the parties at a marriage that leads to confusion. Imagine: You have found you ancestor's baptism where there is a date of birth given – let's say 1 Jan 1880. You find a marriage record from 1914 with the same name as your ancestor but the www.familysearch.org index and the marriage register image tells you the groom is 29 years-old while your ancestor would be 34 years. And so you think. 'It can't be my ancestor.' A more careful look at the marriage register, shows that the bride is 19 years-old and has her father's permission to marry. Among the witnesses signing the register are what appear to be the parents of your ancestor. What the groom had done was to knock five years off his age. I suspect he did this purely so it didn't look like he was 'a dirty old man' (at 34y!!!) marrying a 'sweet innocent' 19-year-old.

It works the other way too. If your male ancestor had married in 1902 aged 22 years and his bride was 25 years then, he could very well add on three years to make him the same age as his bride so that she doesn't look like a cradle-snatcher or as 21st Centenary people would call her, a cougar.

In a more philosophical vain

I seem to remember reading that before registration of births marriages and deaths, became compulsory the actual birth day, month and year of individuals, especially those who were illiterate or partially literate, was not really remembered or known. Perhaps for families of our dear friends the 'Agricultural Labourers' the actual birth day was calculated by linking it to the agricultural year – planting and harvesting. 'He was born just before the Spring planting but after the equinox.' The church year – especially Easter and Christmas and other saints' days – were also landmarks to approximate births – 'Tuesday in the week after Christmas.' Easter – the major church festival is itself a moveable feast so using it as a landmark could also produce inaccuracies. For example: my mother married on Easter Monday, 26 April 1942 when Easter Monday fell the latest it can be while the earliest it can be is 1 April, so nearly a month difference if they had used Easter as the guideline.

Have you noticed that in early (pre-1800) church baptism registers no date of birth is given only date of baptism. Even today in Anglican Baptism Registers (and I suspect other churches too) there is a column titled 'Declared date of birth' which implies that the declaration of the date of birth of the parent is taken as being genuine and there is no need for the birth certificate to be produced. Once again in the poorer rural community where registration of birth required a journey of more than a hundred kilometres to the nearest Home Affairs office, the child was never registered at birth. With the coming of the vote for all South Africans, the declared date of birth was accepted by Home Affairs for those without an ID document wanting to vote in 1994. It is this that makes the church minister's accurate recording of information in church registers so important.

Guessing ages when only year is given

A year or even two years difference between sets of official documents can be put down to genealogical sites giving 'Year of Birth' in their index (calculated by subtracting age in marriage register from year of the event.) For example: if you ancestor was born in June 1880 and married in January 1910, he would still be 29 years till June 1910 when he would turn 30y, yet in the index it would say he was born in 1881.

Census

This subtraction method does not only affect marriage records. In fact, it applies to all records where only age and no date of birth is recorded – for example: Death Notices until 13-digit IDs were issued.

This applies particularly to UK census records. Most were collected in March, April and May in the first year of each decade (1841, 1851, 1861 etc). So if your ancestor was born around March, April and May, his age could vary by a year in each of the different census records depending on the actual day the census was taken. Also remember the 1841 UK census is unique as the ages of adults is given to the nearest five years. Children under fifteen years have their actual age in years entered. Some census takers ignored this instruction applying to adults and recorded actual ages of those over 15y as well – just to add to the confusion!

Here is a table from Wikipedia giving details of various UK censuses.

Year	Date	Notes	New questions asked
1801	10 March	The pre-1841 censuses were simply headcounts. The data was collected on pre-printed forms which were destroyed after the details had been extracted and published in official census reports. There was no requirement to record details of individuals but some local officials took it upon themselves to do so. Some of these unofficial lists have survived and can be found in local record offices.	
1811	27 May		
1821	28 May		
1831	30 May		
1841	6 June		Name. Age (for those over 15, this was supposed to be rounded down to the nearest 5

			years, though this instruction was not obeyed in all cases). Occupation. Whether born in same county recorded as "Yes" or "No" of resident county and if no whether born in Scotland, Ireland or Foreign Parts would be indicated by an 'S', 'I' or 'F' as appropriate. Religion (Ireland).
1851	30 March		Relation to head of the household. Marital status. Place of birth. Whether blind, deaf or dumb. Language spoken (Ireland). Rounding down of ages dropped.
1861	7 April		
1871	2 April		Economic status. Whether an imbecile, idiot or lunatic.
1881	3 April		Language spoken (in Scotland).
1891	5 April		Language spoken (in Wales). Whether an employer, an employee, or neither. Number of rooms occupied, if fewer than 5.
1901	31 March		Number of rooms in dwelling. Whether an employer, worker or working on one's own account. Whether working at home or not. Language spoken (in Wales – children under 3 years of age excluded).
1911	2 April		First UK census where the census return for a particular household or institution written directly by the "Head of Household" was used as the primary census return. Industry or service with which the worker is connected. How long the couple has been married. How many children were born alive, how many who are still alive, and how many who have died. "Nationality of any Person born in a Foreign Country". The final column, which had been "Deaf and Dumb, Blind, Lunatic, Imbecile, Feeble-minded", becomes "INFIRMITY: Totally Deaf and Dumb, Totally Blind, Lunatic, Imbecile, Feeble-minded".
1921	19 June	Ireland – no census; a Northern Ireland census was held in 1926 instead.	Place of work and industry. Whether a marriage has been dissolved by divorce.
1931	26 April	England and Wales – documents destroyed in 1942 fire; Scotland – documents survive. Northern Ireland – no census; a Northern Ireland census was held in 1937 instead.	Place of usual residence
1939	29 September	National Registration Act 1939.	Includes every civilian member of household, their full birth date, full name and occupation.
1941		No census due to the Second World War.	
1951	8 April		Household amenities.

In order to ensure privacy of data, the census records are only released 100 years after the census, the 1921 census was released in 2021. The next available census is 1951 and it will be realised in 2051. I wonder how many of our members will be around for that?

The 1939 National Registration has been available for quite a few years but with those born less than one hundred years ago, blacked out, once again ensuring privacy of those who might still be alive.

Derek Pratt
May 2023

JOHN 'BARNEY' HINES



27 September 1917

Private No 2296 John (Barney) Hines of the Australian Imperial Force, 45th Battalion.

'Barney' Hines was a kleptomaniac who became known in the trenches as the "Souvenir King". But he was one of the bravest soldiers at the front and would have been decorated many times had it not been for his lack of military discipline.

He earned his nickname because of his incurable habit of hijacking medals, badges, rifles, helmets and watches from the bodies of the German dead – and, in some cases, of those he captured. He brought the Kaiser's wrath down upon his head when a photographer took a picture of him on 27 September, 1917, showing him surrounded by some of his loot after the Third Battle of Ypres. Prints were circulated among the Diggers and inevitably some fell into the hands of German soldiers – from whence they made their way to the infuriated Kaiser.

Born in Liverpool, England, in 1873, Barney Hines was always a rebel. Of Irish descent, he ran away to enlist in the army at the age of 14 but was dragged home by his mother.

Two years later he joined the Royal Navy and saw action during the Boxer Rebellion when he served on a gunboat chasing pirates in the China Sea. Discharged the following year, he went gold-seeking around the world and was in South Africa when the Boer War broke out. He served throughout it as a scout with various British units. His lust for gold continued and he searched for it in the US, South America and New Zealand. He was working in a sawmill in Australia when World War I broke out in August 1914.

Despite being in his early 40s, he immediately tried to enlist but was turned down on medical grounds. Undeterred, he haunted recruiting centres until he was accepted to serve in France in 1916 as part of a reinforcement for the 45th Battalion. And, once in France, the legend of this huge, powerful man who never showed fear, began. He generally disdained conventional weapons such as his .303 rifle, preferring to go into action with two sandbags packed with Mills bombs. His commanding officer had a brainwave and gave him a Lewis gun, which was an immediate success.

Hines was entranced by its spraying effect and announced in his broad Liverpool accent: "This thing'll do me. You can hose the bastards down."

Another nickname he earned was Wild Eyes and at a later date the commanding officer was heard to say: "I always felt secure when Wild Eyes was about. He was a tower of strength in the line – I don't think he knew what fear was and he naturally inspired confidence in officers and men."

One of Hines' pastimes was prowling around collecting prisoners and loot with enthusiasm. On one occasion, annoyed at the sniper fire from a German pill-box, he ran straight at it, leapt on its roof and performed a war dance while taunting the Germans to come out. When they failed to comply, Hines lobbed a couple of Mills bombs through the gun port. A few minutes later the 63 Germans who had survived staggered out with their hands above their heads. Hines collected his "souvenirs" before herding his prisoners back to the Australian lines.

Another time he came across a battered German dressing station. Creeping in, he found the surgeon standing over the operating table and, on tapping him on the shoulder, Hines was amazed to watch him topple over – dead from a shell splinter in the heart. Only one man had survived – ironically a wounded Tommy who was on a stretcher on the floor out of the blast. Picking the man up as if he were an infant, Hines carried him towards safety but he died before reaching Allied lines. Hines lowered him gently to the ground – then returned to the loot in the dressing room.

His booty wasn't confined to portable keepsakes. At Villers-Bretonneux he liberated a piano which he managed to keep for several days until he was persuaded to give it away. On another occasion he scored a grandfather clock which he carried back to the trenches. But, after its hourly chimes were found to attract German fire, his mates blew it up with – what else? – a Mills bomb.

In Armentières he came across a keg of Bass ale which he started to roll towards the battalion. He was stopped by military police and told not to go any further with it. Unfazed, Hines left the keg and went ahead to round up fellow Diggers who returned to drink it on the spot.

When the AIF reached Amiens they found the beautiful cathedral city deserted. It was too much for Hines. He disappeared and was finally sprung by British military police in the vaults of the Bank of France where he had already squirrelled away millions of francs, packed neatly in suitcases.

He was hauled off for questioning by the British who, not sure what to do with the reprobate, returned him to his unit. Later he was to boast that the escapade had cost him no more than 14 days' pay and that he had been allowed to keep the banknotes he had stuffed into his pockets.

But for all his incorrigibility, he was an outstanding, if unpredictable soldier who managed to capture 10 German soldiers single-handed.

There were some near misses, too. At Passchendaele he was the only survivor of a direct hit on the Lewis gun nest. Blasted for 20 minutes and with the soles of his boots blown off, he crawled back, got the gun working and continued firing until he fainted from wounds in his legs.

Hines was also renowned for the party he held at Villers-Bretonneux after he found a cache of 1870 champagne and tinned delicacies. His mates were all decked out in top hats and dress suits which he had also acquired.

It was to be his last party for some time. Just after it ended, he scored a bullet wound over his eye, another in his leg and a whiff of gas. Despite protests, he was hospitalised at Étaples, being almost blinded.

A few nights later the Germans bombed the hospital, causing 3,000 casualties. Hines hauled himself out of bed, found a broom which he used as a crutch and spent all night carrying the wounded and dying to safety.

After that he was invalided home and, in the ensuing years, despite his wounds, he worked as a drover, shearer, prospector and timber cutter.

He volunteered for World War II and, when he was turned down – he was now in his 60s – he stowed away on a troop ship. He was caught before the vessel got through the heads at Sydney and put ashore.

After a colourful life, Barney Hines died, penniless, in the Concord Repatriation Hospital, Sydney, on January 30, 1958, aged 84.

This story was sent by David Slingsby via a Whatsapp. He had found it on a Facebook page of Douglas Banks who wrote the story and restore old photos. Douglas seems not only to colourise them but also 'sharpens' the image. Below is a picture he has on his Facebook page to advertise his services

<https://www.facebook.com/ColouriseHistory>

<https://www.facebook.com/ww1incolour>

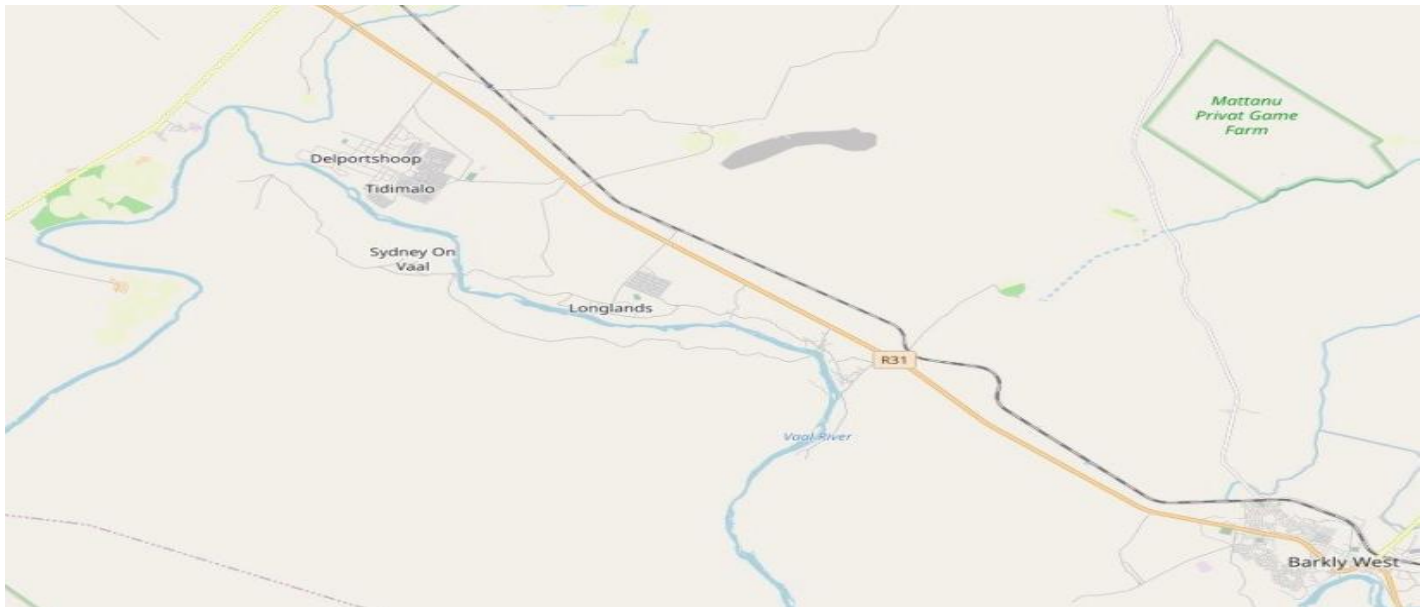


SERENDIPITY AND SURPRISE

Kevin Turner

For some time, I have been wracking my brains for something to write as a contribution to the newsletter. Turning ideas over in my mind, I went looking at Derek's webpage and his collection of old CTFHS newsletters.

After a while, I came across the *Serendipitous* story by Jean Tuckey in the December 2021 newsletter. In the postscript, there's a passing mention of Jean's husband, 'Tuc' Tuckey, having been born in Sydney-on-Vaal, near Kimberley. Well, that rang a bell; my grandfather spent some of his childhood living on the Droogveld diamond diggings outside Sydney-on-Vaal. Most people I chat to have never heard of Sydney-on-Vaal, let alone the Droogveld – though that does have a pretty generic ring to it, a place name that could suit any number of southern African spots!

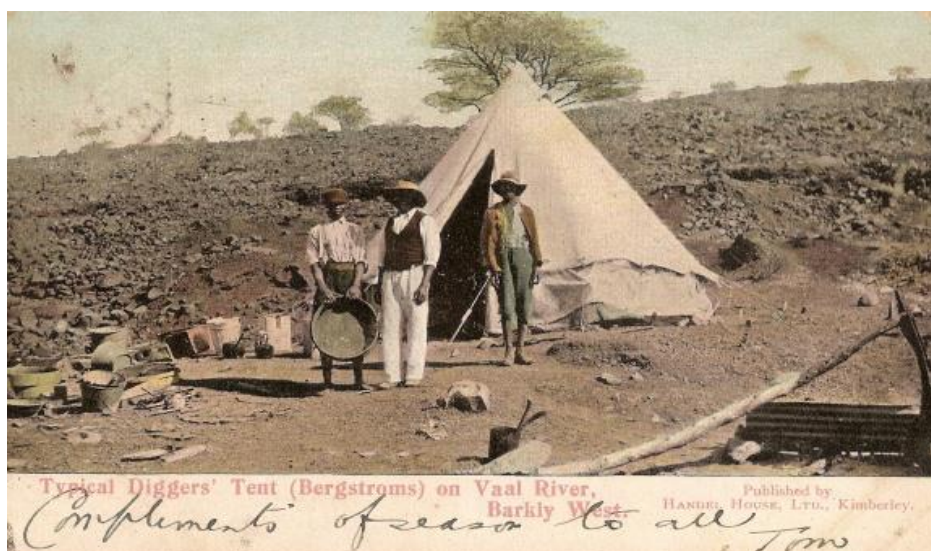


The tiny hamlet, now described by Wikipedia as a ghost town, lies on the western bank of the Vaal, south of Delpoortshoop (previously called “Thomas Hope”), and about 6km upstream of the confluence of the Vaal and the Harts rivers. One of the Tswana names for the area is Dikgathlong, meaning 'meeting-place' in reference to the confluence of the two rivers. The Droogveld diggings is a desolate rocky area to the north-west of the village of Sydney-on-Vaal.

Despite the confusion of spellings, it is clear that the village was named after Sidney Mendelssohn*, one time director of the Bultfontein Mining Company and chairman of the New Vaal River Diamond and Exploration Company, which bought the original three farms along this stretch of the Vaal River (named Mozib, Than and Droogeveltdt), and worked the alluvial fields. The company laid out a mining township on the land in 1902 and called it Sydney-on-Vaal. On 2 March the same year, my paternal grandfather was born in Belfast, Ireland.

My grandfather, John Llewellyn Turner, known in the family as Jack, came to the Droogveld, probably around 1914 or 1915, aged about 12–13, when his father, Walter, fell for the lure of diamonds. We don't have a clear timeline, but family recollections allow us to piece together a sequence of events. Having been here in 1901, then leaving, they returned to South Africa from Warwick, England, soon after the sinking of the Titanic (1912). My grandfather remembered feeling very frightened to be setting off to sea. For a while, they settled at Northdene outside Durban, and ran a successful butchery and bakery business. At some point, my great-grandfather, Walter Turner, became friendly with two descendants of Dick King, who convinced him that it was worth risking everything on a treasure hunt. From what I surmise, he was an adventurer, and something of a rolling stone, and probably didn't need much convincing to sell up, uproot the family again, and leave relative comfort and civilisation. I wonder at the discomforts and uncertainties my great-grandmother endured.

These photos, of similar digging sites further along the Vaal, show the landscape and the typical accommodation, not the most hospitable for raising a family!





The alluvial diggings at Sydney-on-Vaal with tented settlement where the village was established.

Living in a tent on this rock-strewn landscape, one of the shocks the family survived was a lightning strike hitting my grandfather and his sister, Natalie, and their puppy whilst in their tent. The strike left my grandfather with a scar on his buttock, and my great-grandmother with a magnetised knife sharpener. To this day it picks up paper clips! Though the children were hurt, they recovered, but, sadly, their puppy died.

My grandfather was enrolled at the Droogveld school. He walked to the school, scuffing the ground as he went, just in case; he did find a few random stones, but nothing significant enough to change the family fortunes! This school certificate, dated 23 March 1917, shows he had completed Standard VII (now Grade 9), presumably in the preceding 1916 academic year, when he would have been 14.

Around this time, the family relocated again to a farm outside Chieveley, in Natal. However, in 1918, Jack was a boarder at Kimberley Boys High School, where his

school report states he was one of 23 in Standard 'B'. I don't know what modern standard or grade that relates to, but assume it might have been Standard 8 (Grade 10). This was the year of one of the flu epidemics – commented on by the headmaster in the third Quarter school report. The headmaster, Oscar J.S. Satchel, was a significant influence on the course of my grandfather's life, as he persuaded my great-grandfather to allow his son to complete school rather than go to work on the farm at Chieveley. Mr. Satchel also then raised the funds to allow Jack's continued schooling, having spoken with Sir David Harris* of De Beers for his assistance. Apparently, Harris was a cousin of Barney Barnato.

In 1921, Jack was part of the KBHS matric class, and his future opportunity uncertain. However, Mr. Satchel clearly believed in my grandfather's ability to study further, and on his behalf, applied in February 1922 to De Beers for a Diamond Scholarship. De Beers advised the company was unable to give a scholarship that year, and we presume this was due to the impact of the Great Depression.

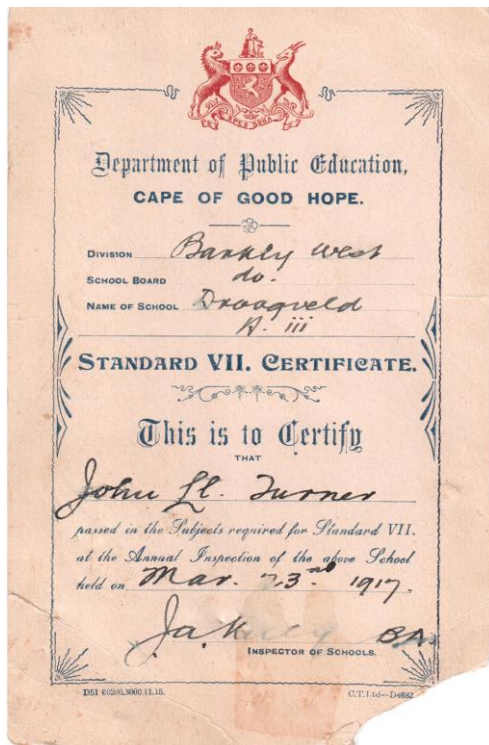


THE DIAMOND RUSH TO THE VAAL RIVER DIGGINGS. DIGGERS (NEW ARRIVALS).

"Published by Hallie & Co., Port Elizabeth".



Jack and three of his sisters: (Gladys, Jack, Natalie, and Nellie in front), probably about 1920



Satchel did not give up – he asked a Mr. Hirschhorn for a Beit Scholarship, which was then awarded in 1922 for my grandfather to begin studies at UCT.

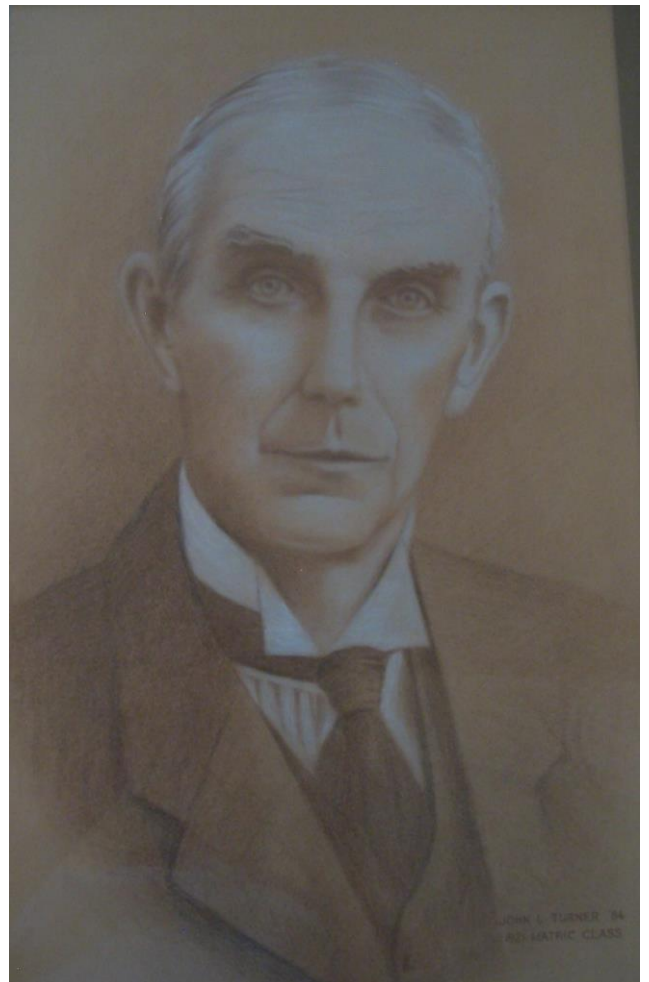
In September 2010, on a road trip from KZN to the Cape, I was able to make a detour to stop over for two nights in Kimberley to do some searching. I visited KBHS and saw the portrait of headmaster Satchel

done by my grandfather. It felt heart-warming to walk the passageways and halls he must have known so well 90 years before.

Having made a detour to the Sol Plaatje Museum and Library, I wanted to see what information I might find about Sydney-on-Vaal, before driving out that way. I stopped at the Africana Library in Du Toitspan Road, almost opposite the Kimberley Club. The main room is a wonderful, double volume space, with an inner balcony, and floor to ceiling bookshelves above and below.

A kind assistant (whose name I wish I could acknowledge here) led me through to a smaller room and quite soon found two very slender folders of papers relating to Sydney-on-Vaal, but indicated that was all they had. As I browsed through the loose pages, I was staggered to find a letter written by my grandfather's sister, Natalie – an original handwritten letter, dated September 1966, and addressed to the then manager at Sydney-on-Vaal, a Mr. MacGregor. The letter was attached to a newspaper clipping from the *Sunday Tribune* which had obviously prompted my grandaunt to write. In the letter, she mentioned the lightning strike they'd survived, the wood and iron school building on the Droogveld, her father selling his diamond finds in Sydney-on-Vaal, and trips by ox-wagon to Kimberley for supplies. I suppose it's logical that such documents might be stored in a library or archive, but it certainly felt like serendipity, and it spurred me on to drive out to find Sydney-on-Vaal.

Although the entire village is now privately owned land, something I didn't know at the time, the security manager arranged for me to explore and meet some of the staff at the old hotel building, which was then being used for staff training and accommodation. This proved to be a 'mine of information' and the source of some fascinating photographs of the early diggings. I was also able to explore the library, and wondered how many of those very books my grandfather might have read, some 95 years earlier!



Oscar J.S. Satchel, headmaster KBHS 1918-1927



The Mendelssohn Library, Sydney-on-Vaal, September 2010.

All in all, it was a very satisfying experience to retrace family steps and see for myself the places that have featured in my family story, but I left feeling glad that it was not home, and that I'd grown up in the lush landscapes of the Natal midlands.

A further interesting snippet about Sydney-on-Vaal is that the mining company was bought in 1962 by Ward Gant (of Gant's fruit farming). An information poster in the old hotel explained that the few diggers and residents that remained at that time had to vacate the village, after which Sydney-on-Vaal was used exclusively for agriculture. In 1986, almost 90% of the land was expropriated to become part the Vaalbos Nature Reserve, and then, in 2002, the remaining land and village was again sold and diamond digging resumed under the control of Sonop Delwery.

One of the other things from Jean Tuckey's story that jumps out at me, is that many of us have photographs of our family members taken with other friends, colleagues, etc. and how these photos could well be a gold mine (or red herring, as in Jean's story) for someone else working on their family history. With that in mind, I am sharing here some of my grandfather's photos, taken with some of his friends whose names he recorded on the reverse (presumably they were all students together at UCT). They are braving the waters of Bachelor's Cove or Maiden's Cove, between Camps Bay and Clifton. I wonder if serendipity will find a reader connected to one of these chaps?!



Labelled: "The Beauty Chorus. Johnson, Immelman, Reggie, me." (Jack Turner at far right)



Not labelled, but presumably: Immelman (or A.N. Other?), Reggie, Johnson, Jack.

A century later, it happens that I now live in Green Point, facing Croxteth Road, the street where my grandfather boarded during his time at UCT in 1922–1923, and where he met my grandmother.

As we can see, 'serendipitous' is a word that crops up repeatedly when doing family history searches – and when we encounter these moments of 'good luck' it certainly boosts our spirits. So, my words of wisdom/injunction to end this article:

Research your family history – it's good for your mental health!

(* If any of our readers has the inclination to share with us some research into Jewish genealogy in South Africa, both Sidney Mendelssohn and Sir David Harris would be interesting subjects. As well as the library in Sydney-on-Vaal, Mendelssohn bequeathed a substantial personal collection of Africana books and paintings to the South African nation. Apparently, that collection is now housed in the National Library of SA.)

Some interesting references:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_on_Vaal

<http://africanalibrary.co.za/>

<http://www.on-the-rand.co.uk/Diamond%20Grounds/Barkly%20West.htm>

<https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Mendelssohn.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Belfast

<https://sahistoryofeducation.webs.com/SA%20timeline.pdf>

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-education-1658-present>

<https://www.k12academics.com/Education%20Worldwide/Education%20in%20South%20Africa/history-education-south-africa>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Harris_\(South_African_businessman\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Harris_(South_African_businessman))

Pretty Postcards

Derek Pratt

Karen and I are reaching the age when we are investigating moving to some sort of elder-care accommodation. Although the one we fancy has a six-to-eight-year waiting list, we decided it was time to start downsizing anyway, especially all my books, CD, and DVDs. Half of my CDs and DVD I never listen to or watch and my books – many theological in subject matter, I'm unlikely to need again, besides which the internet has the information I might need to include in a sermon when doing a *locum* for a clergyperson on leave. Of course, my genealogical books will still be at my right-hand ready for references.

While we were doing this Karen appeared at my study door with a wad of postcards, 'Are these part of your collection?' she asked. 'No, I thought they were your grandmother's friends who sent them and she collected them and when she died, they came via your mother to you.' That is as far as we got at finding their source but they were all addressed to the same two people – either Dr E. Leonard GILL or Miss Marion Gill. They date from 1907 through to the 1950s. My detective mode clicked in and I had to find out who these GILLS were.



Dr E. Leonard GILL

A quick google search produced an obituary in the journal, *Nature* 178: 520 (1956) by D. Watson

E. LEONARD GILL died in Cape Town on July 5. He was born in Reigate and after attending a Friends school, entered Owens College, Manchester, graduating in 1899. He then became a member of the museum staff at Manchester and so gained experience in museum arts and management. Later, he became curator of the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne. Here he was responsible for large,

important collections of fossils, birds and marine invertebrates, as well as the general contents of an old-established natural history museum. The maintenance of this large building, very old-fashioned in its design and furnishing, also fell to him, and the funds of the Society which owned it were, even then, inadequate.

Gill served in the Friends Ambulance throughout the First World War, returning to the Museum, when he began to modernize some exhibits. In 1922 he accepted a post, in the Royal Scottish Museum; but in 1924 he became director of the South African Museum, Cape Town.

In the seventeen years he spent in this post, Gill revolutionized the Museum; its size was nearly doubled, the exhibition galleries were modernized and enlarged, and the scope of the Museum was extended to cover not only important South African antiquities, but also some art collections. Gill wrote descriptive labels, in Afrikaans [sic] as well as English, which brought the Museum into much closer touch with the general public, and increased this contact by circulating specially made museum cases to schools.

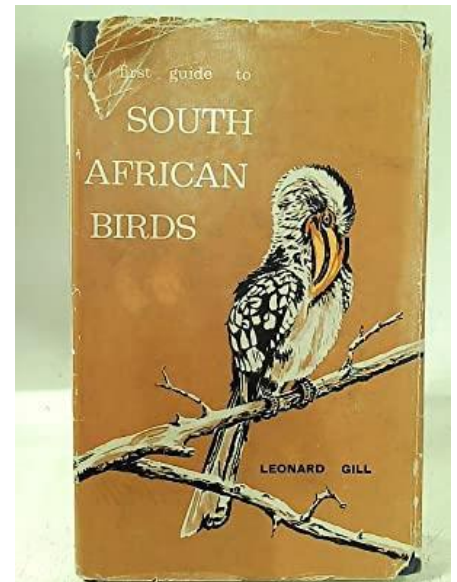
Gill published a few useful papers on fossil fish; but his chief interest was in birds. On his first visit to the Museum in Cape Town, he found on his table a dead bird just picked up and brought in. On its leg was a ring which Gill himself had placed there at a nest in the Farne Islands. Gill found that there was no small cheap book about South African birds, so that it was impossible for any ordinary man to know them, and thus to observe them intelligently. Hence he wrote an inexpensive book with many small but admirable figures drawn by Gill himself and his artist sister. This book was most useful, not only in South Africa but even farther north, and it has gone through several editions.

Gill added to the general interest in natural history, by newspaper articles in Afrikaans as well as English, and by lecture talks. Also he founded the South African Ornithological Society, which recently celebrated its silver jubilee.

Gill was a man of unusual character, willing to take great trouble to help anybody, friendly and helpful to everyone.

The obituary speaks about the cheap definitive guide to SA Birds. I found a review from 1937 showing the price as 7/6 or for those not familiar with pound sterling notation seven shilling and sixpence.

This book should be in the hands of anyone interested in our birds, as its abundant coloured figures cover most of the types commonly to be met with, and it is such illustrations that convey the most to the layman who wishes to identify the species. The concept follows that of the Australian book, What Bird is That, which has been such a great success on that continent. It contained twenty one plates with fifteen to thirty figures in miniature on each, a total of over 450 figures, only two of the plates are not in colour, and with three text figures. The drawings are all good and lifelike, and the colours are on the whole correct, though they appear to have suffered at the hands of the reproducer in some cases. Dr Gill and his sister, Miss Marion Gill, the artist, are to be congratulated upon their excellence.¹



Marion GILL

I found reference to Marion GILL on the SAHistory.org website but will show more of her art works on p19.

Marion Gill was born in 1879, United Kingdom. She lived in SA from 1924 to 1957. She first studied at the Slade School of Art, London, and at the Art School in Newcastle-on-Tyne, where she experimented with sculpture and craftwork. She discovered her true medium when she went to the Edinburgh School of Art, where she mastered the technique of making colour woodblock prints in the Japanese manner. She followed tradition in making her prints, one block being cut for each

¹ from a review by Austin Roberts of the book "A first Guide to South African Birds" by Dr E. Leonard Gill (Maskew Miller Limited, Cape Town Price 7s 6d. The review appeared in "The Ostrich" of December 1937.

colour and the printing done using hand pressure. She also made woodcuts in black and white. Gill exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy, the Paris Salon, the Society of Graver Printers and the Colour Woodcut Society, besides various annual exhibitions in SA. In March of 1933, she held a very successful exhibition of her work in Cape Town. Printmaking was sometimes set aside for oils, pastels, watercolour and chalk, and she produced landscapes as well as architectural and flower studies in these media. She worked at the SA Museum in Cape Town with her brother Dr Leonard Gill. She died in 1959, United Kingdom.²

Genealogical Background for the GILLS

As this a genealogical society newsletter, I tried to find more details about the GILLS. Using www.findmypast.co.uk and www.ancestry.com for UK records and www.familysearch.org and www.gendatabase for South African records, I could build up quite an interesting history of Dr Edwin Leonard GILL and his sister, Lucy Marion GILL.

The Birth Records only gave the quarter in which they were born but other sources gave more accurate birth dates. Edwin Leonard GILL was born 17 Nov 1877 in Reigate, Surrey where his father, Joseph John GILL was a private teacher and tutor. Edwin Leonard GILL who seemed to always call himself Leonard except on official documents, was the second born child of Joseph, who came from Dewsbury, Yorkshire and his wife Lucy, born CHEAL who was from Charlwood, Surrey. Lucy Marion GILL who seemed to call herself Marion except on official documents, was born in 1879 and was the third child.

The other children in the family, according to census records were John Frederick born 1877 who became a doctor and is listed in Leonard's will as a FRCS³, Hubert Alexander, born 1882, who is referred to as an electrical engineer on census records but seems to have been a patents agent. His family lived in a house called 'Houw Hoek' in South Croydon. I am not sure what his connection was with the Cape that he named his house thus. The youngest child was William Conrad born 1884. He obtained his degree at Leeds University and became a university lecturer, based for many years at Birmingham University.

Joseph John GILL and his family were Quakers and therefore were not as readily acceptable at Oxford and Cambridge and so they studied at universities such as Aberdeen (medicine – John Frederick) Manchester (natural sciences and museum curatorship – Leonard) , and Leeds (History – William Conrad).

Joseph John GILL was a private teacher and tutor. In the 1881 and 1891 census he and the family were in Reigate Surrey but by 1892 they registered as members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Ackworth, Yorkshire where Joseph was a teacher at the Quaker school there.

In 1898, Joseph John GILL's wife Lucy born CHEAL died in Brighton aged 51 (actually aged 54y). By this time most of the family had gone their separate ways to further their careers, except Marion who was at home with her widowed father at Carr Bridge, Ackworth Yorkshire. In the 1901 census Leonard was listed as a pupil and museum assistant at Dalton Hall at the University of Manchester.

In the 1911 census, Leonard is listed as 'Museum Curator' in Newcastle. His sister, Marion was staying with him. Rather strangely, in the column 'Relationship to Head' Leonard wrote 'son' and entered his sister Marion as 'daughter.' But no 'Head' is listed.

Leonard GILL registered as a Quaker Conscientious Objector and he served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit from July 1915 to February 1919. Initially at Jordans, York and other hospitals in England. He went to France in January 1916, serving at Dunkirk, and on Ambulance Trains 11 and 5. He left France for demob in February 1919. His medal card shows he served with British Red Cross (BRC) and St Johns Ambulance (entered on card as St J. J.) and was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

² from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/marion-gill>

³ FRCS is Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons.

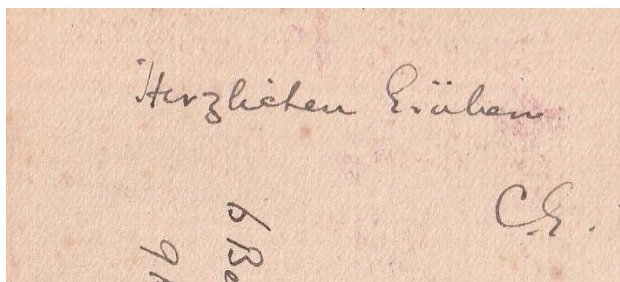
On return from war service, he continued at the Newcastle Museum. The 1921 census states his occupation as 'Museum Curatorship' and his employer as 'Natural History Society Newcastle on Tyne.' His father, listed as 'retired teacher' was staying with him at this time.

In 1922 Leonard accepted the post in Edinburgh as 'Assistant in the natural history department of the Royal Scottish Museum.' This was a government civil service post and so this appeared in the *London Gazette*.

In 1924 he accepted the post as Curator of the South African Museum and he and his sister came to Cape Town. With the two of them came the bundle of postcards which kick-off this article.

The Postcards

I am not a postcard collector so I am not sure if they are 'of no value' or 'highly sort after.' All of them have had the stamps removed –presumably by a stamp collector. I'm not sure if that ruins the value of the cards or not.

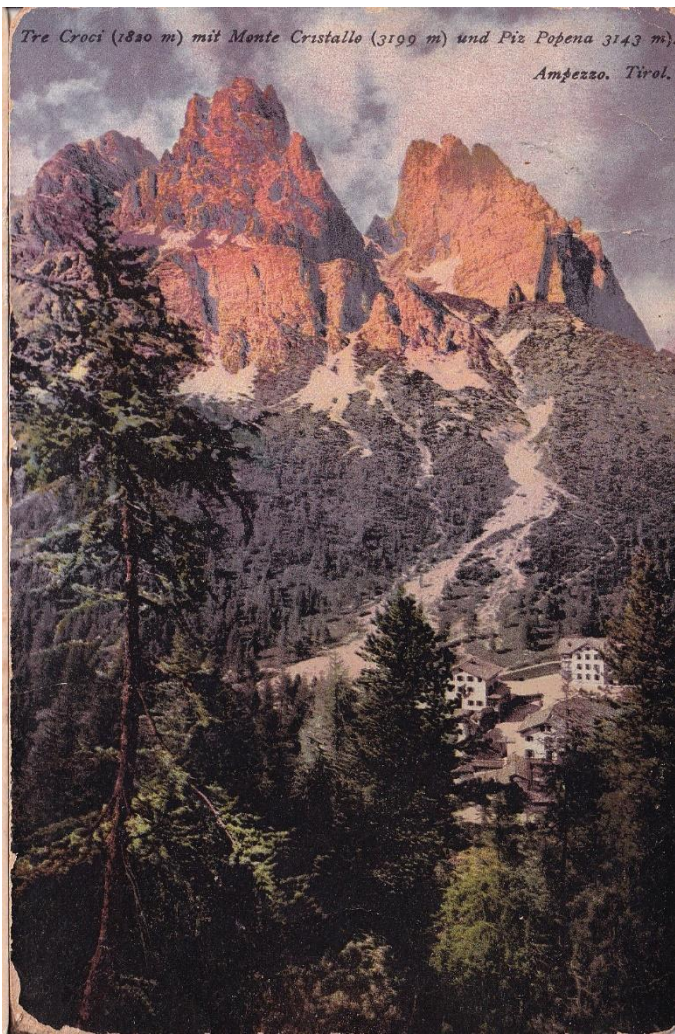


Many are not dated and with the stamps removed the postmarking have also partially gone but one can guess the approximate date from the dated cards of the same area where the GILL's friends were holidaying. If I was expecting the written text to be exciting expressions of love I was disappointed. They were the usually sent-on-holiday type messages saying how hot it was and lovely the scenery, etc. Only one card had what looked like a love message but it was in German and I couldn't read the

second word and Goggle Translate said it was 'Heartfelt Eulogy' which didn't seem right. Perhaps someone can read the word more clearly and give us the correct translation. The photo from this postcard was King's College Chapel Cambridge, so why he used German I do not know, but it was addressed to Marion Gill.



It would appear that the postcards had some hidden significance for either or both of the Gills, Leonard and Marion. Perhaps they were just from friends and the pictures on the cards made them significant or were pretty enough for artist Marion to keep.

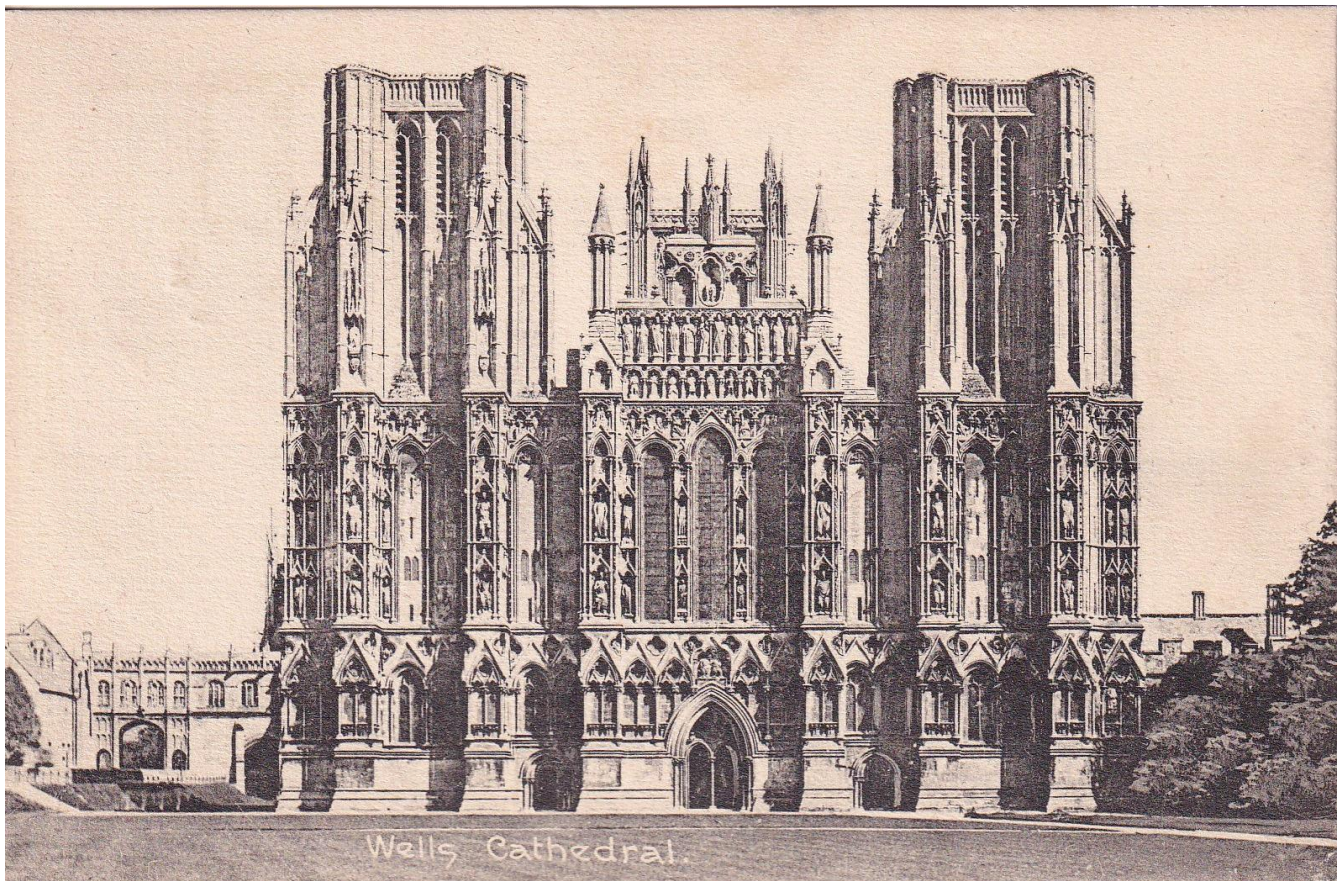


The earliest card was dated 1907 and was from J. Haltham Cadbury. This appears to be Joel Haltham CADBURY (1879–1946). I would love to say he was part of the Cadbury Chocolate family – he might be – but I could not prove it. The CADBURYS were, like the GILLS, Quakers so there could easily be a distant connection. The picture on this card was of the Dolomite Mountains 'at evening light which the writer hoped would lift Leonard's spirits.

Of the twenty-four post cards, five have been coloured in some way – either paintings or colour- tinted and two are 1950s colour photos.

Locations are also varied. Austria (Dolomites Tiral & Salzburg), Germany (Stein, Heidelberg, Nürnberg, Pitz-a-Donau) Switzerland (Interlaken) Italy (Cortina, Lake Como) Belgium (Bruges) and the USA (Colorado Springs). UK locations include Cambridge, Wells (seven cards) and Tewksbury.

The Wells Cathedral and the City of Wells collection of cards I found fascinating as I spent five days in Wells in the 1980 and went to many of the sites pictured. I am sure you have found, like me that Cathedrals nowadays are always covered in scaffolding. I wonder if it was for the writer of the postcard in 1913.



I would love to show you all twenty- four cards but the Newsletter would just become too large to email. So I'm going to just show three more.



Sent in 1923 – love the colours!



Menton – La vielle Villa – It looks so French Riviera one can just about see Noel Coward appearing! Card sent to Cape town in 1933



A Christmas Greeting Card sent 1951 from Colorado. A picture of Pike's Peak Region.

Finally, I must include some of Marion Gill's artworks. She developed woodblock printing with each colour being a different woodblock. I found one on an auction site where the estimated price was given as between £4 000 and £6 000. It was called *Cape Sunset*. I wonder which location she used. I think it might be Admiralty House Simon's Town. Any other suggestions? Notice too the woodblock 'signature; bottom left

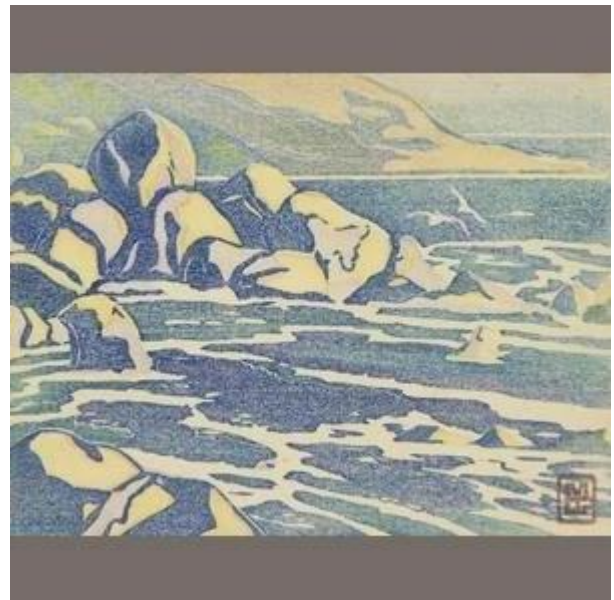
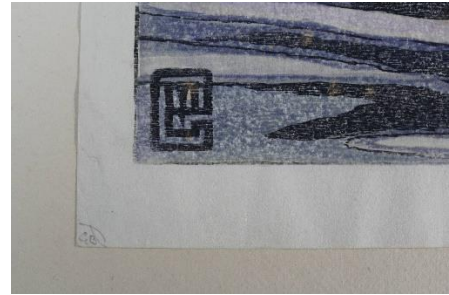


Table Mountain – Water Colour

Waves at Hermanus – Block print

MONTHLY MEETING ROUND-UP: April & MAY 2023

15 April 2023: Sigi Howes: A Boy's Own Adventure

At the April meeting Sigi Howes presented a talk entitled: "A Boy's Own Adventure." The presentation told of her father's life in Germany before and during the Second World War as well as his post-war experiences and immigration to South Africa in the 1950s. Sigi presented it as a series of eighteen "Boy's Own Adventures" that her father underwent. Sigi is a very good speaker and her presentations are always well researched. I regretfully was overseas on holiday for this meeting but I'm sure those who attended (with a late start to avoid load-shedding) must have enjoyed it.

Derek Pratt

20 May 2023: Derek Pratt: Finding Stephen Ramasodi

I was asked by a former pupil of an elite school in the USA, Kent School, Connecticut, to find what happened to Stephen Ramasodi after the SA government refused to give him a passport to study at Kent School in 1955.

Using genealogical tools and websites I found a person who seemed to be the right Stephen Ramasodi. I was able to get a copy of the government department file from 1955 containing all the correspondence between Father Trevor Huddleston and the various government departments who had refused Stephen a passport. Many renown Americans wrote to the SA ambassador asking him to stress the importance of rescinding the decision but to no avail.

The file did contain Stephen's date of birth. The day and the month matched exactly but the birth year differed by a year, 1938 rather than 1939 from the man I had found on gendatabase. I presumed the two were the same person. I found that he had died in 2000 aged 62 after working for the North West Administration in Mmabatho. His family still had the same PO Box number and by good luck rather than skill, I found his granddaughter and emailed her and later chatted to her on the phone. Although too young to know much about her grandfather's schooling she was amazed to hear how famous he had become with picture in *Life* magazine.

A YouTube video of the slides and my spoken input can be found here

https://youtu.be/j-4r6_DYdhs



Stephen Ramasodi with Fr Trevor Huddleston