



**SIMON'S TOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

BULLETIN



PRICE :
R20.00

JULY 2008

C O N T E N T S

Chairman's Report for 2007	page 1
R.M.S. TEUTON	3
H.G. Webber	4
Memories of the GENERAL BOTHA	6
An advertisement for Constables	8
The Albatross.....	8
Jewish Community of Simon's Town.....	9
HMS VINDICTIVE	11
Simon's Town Seniors Computer Club	14
Lt Cdr Fulmer	15
Captain R.F. Scott.....	17
Simon's Town Art Group (STAG).....	18
Patent Fuel	20
Marion Island	21
Captain Selby	21
Topstones	27
Otto Lay – would be settler	29
The Noon Day Gun	29
HMS DALRYMPLE	31
Inspector Store SAPS	36
Naval Activities at Klawer Camp	37
Simon's Town Landslides etc	38
Queen's Battery	43
Kelly Klaasen – former Head Girl	44

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AT THE 48TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY HELD ON 30TH APRIL 2008 AT THE SIMON'S TOWN MUSEUM

It is my pleasure to once again present my report for the past year. This has been a year of new responsibilities and challenges which has put some of the Committee under a good deal of strain as well as frustration. But I must say it has been a new experience and rewarding to a point. Much work lies ahead in the coming year and I am sure for some years to come. Of course I am referring to the Society's registration at last, as a Conservation Body with Heritage Western Cape in 2007. A little more about this later in my report.

However, we were also busy doing all those things we normally get involved in throughout the year, such as replacing stolen historical plaques in town; (Here I must thank Warrant Officer Harry Croome for this and all the other tasks he performs in and around Simon's Town) members walks in and around Simon's Town; assisting the Museum in a number of ways in various research projects; assisting and giving advice to the Simon's Town Amenities Development Company (STADCO) committee concerning the work and improvements on Jubilee Square; doing what we can in the Old Burying Ground; assisting with fund raising; assisting the Simon's Town Flora Conservation Group in listing all significant trees and preserving the town's old trees from being destroyed through development; maintaining a presence on the Architectural Advisory Committee; updating our Web page; compiling a list of all incorrectly spelt street names and other discrepancies and forwarding these to the authorities in the City Council for action; keeping an eye on Just Nuisance's grave in the Klawer Valley; submitting articles for publication in the People's Post concerning Society activities; attending many meetings with local organisations, the South African Heritage Resources Agency, Heritage Western Cape, Western Cape Museum Services and many more, as well as our own monthly committee meetings throughout the year.

As you will realise we have been busy and put to the test throughout the past 12 months. Here I must thank my committee each and every one of them, in dealing with all that we have been involved in. They have worked very hard with a great deal of enthusiasm, professionalism and dedication. They have given me their full support once again this past year, without which my role would have been very difficult indeed. My sincere thanks to them all. Each plays an important role with many activities taking place in the background. They simply get on with it and before I realise it, it is all done. I am very grateful indeed.

Society membership continues to be a challenge with our numbers following the usual trend of years past by declining. I remember some years back when membership totalled 700 and more. Today it is down to approximately 400. Your committee does promote the Society whenever possible, through the media, at functions and individually we all encourage folk to join. However, as I have said many times in the past, we need younger members to guide this Society into the future. The committee has not yet been able to develop a strategy to address this problem but this will receive the committee's full attention in the weeks ahead.

There is also an urgent requirement to increase the number of persons to serve on the committee because of the increased work load that we are faced with as a conservation body. Two members, namely Cherry Dilley and Harry Clayton, have decided not to make themselves available for re-election tonight. My sincere thanks to them both for their sterling work on the committee, particularly Cherry who has served for many years and whose experience will surely be missed. I urgently request members to make themselves available to either serve on the committee or be co-opted to assist us with the registration of historical buildings for the Provincial Heritage Register and one or two other tasks that have been neglected in the past. Please keep in mind that some of the present committee members cannot continue much longer.

When the Society registered with Heritage Western Cape as a Conservation Body, the committee received precious little in the way of responsibilities and duties we were now expected to perform. We have had to learn as we stumbled along. This has not been easy but we are getting to grips with that which we are supposed to do. We have a very large area of responsibility from Glencairn Heights all the way to Cape Point to oversee, excluding the two Naval Dockyards. We are to ensure that no heritage sites, objects or buildings are destroyed, damaged or altered without our comments to Heritage Western Cape, and we are consulted on all matters affecting heritage in the area of our responsibility. Simon's Town is constantly faced with the ongoing eroding of its heritage. This must be prevented at all costs. Since registering, Boet Domisse and I have been involved in a number of buildings and sites that were and are threatened. Where applicable we have also stated the Society's objection to proposed large scale development in the town. I must report that the committee fully supports the upgrading of historic lanes in Simon's Town by a group of residents who have taken on this task under the auspices of the Society as well as the promotion of retaining the so-called green belt behind the Historic Mile buildings. The committee has also begun the huge task of registering all buildings in Simon's Town that are older than 60 years and placed in the Provincial Heritage Register on behalf of SAHRA. This will take years to complete, hence the reason to increase the committee. As I have already reported, if there are any volunteers from the membership who would like to come on to the committee to assist in this task, you would be most welcome. As you will gather much needs to be done this coming year and the committee must be up to the challenge.

The committee continues to create greater awareness of the Society by publishing articles in the local newspaper informing the public of our activities and other matters we are involved in and for this I thank my Vice-Chairman Boet Domisse.

The Society's finances are healthy as you will see from the Balance Sheet. We have spent a good deal of our funds in this past year. I can report that it has not been reckless spending. (However, we must guard against accumulating large bank balances). Audrey keeps a tight rein on our funds, but where required we spend wisely. And now for the shortest announcement of my report. Thankfully we do not intend raising the subscriptions next year.

Once again our lecture/talk evenings have been successful which of course brings in much needed funds for the Museum Development Fund. The subjects have been interesting and well presented. I thank all members and friends who support us at these sociable evenings. The year has already got off to a successful start. I would like to thank Cherry who has for many years put these lecture programmes together. She has done a sterling job in this regard. This has now been taken on by Margaret Cartwright and I wish her well with this task.

No tours to the country areas took place this past year because of the past poor attendance. However, should a volunteer from the members who has experience in organising tours of this nature come forward, I am sure we will once again consider re-introducing this type of tour. Two members walking tours to the East and West Dockyards were well attended in recent months and feedback has been very encouraging.

Last but not least, ladies and gentlemen, my Chairmanship has now come to an end after 4 years in the Chair. It has again been a wonderful experience for me, backed up by a committed and dedicated committee. I have had tremendous support from each and every one of them including many members of the Society. I have derived a great deal of satisfaction from all that we have done together. I thank you all. I also thank my wife Des who has supported and encouraged me these past 4 years. New responsibilities and challenges have been taken on which I am sure past Chairmen would never have imagined would come our way. But what is needed now is a fresh mind and new leadership. In two years the Society reaches the milestone of 50 years in existence. The people elected to office now and in the future must take the Society forward and well beyond the half century. We cannot allow that which this Society stands for and has achieved in the past, to go to waste. Tonight you will vote in a new Chairman who I know will be a great success and who will receive my full support.

Thank you.

R.M.S. TEUTON

Audrey Read

She was built by William Denny and Bros of Dumbarton in Scotland. She was an iron screw steamship launched in March 1869 as the GLENARTY. She was built for Jardine Matheson & Co for the Calcutta/Hong Kong trade and because there were still pirates in the Chinese seas, originally she had been fitted with 2 12-pounder guns.

She was purchased in 1873 by the Union Steamship Co for their mail service between England and Cape Town. This led to her being lengthened so that she could carry 250 passengers in her 3 classes. Her first visit here was in 1873. In 1875 she again had changes made which increased her gross tonnage by 600 tons. In 1879 she was chartered to the British Government to transport troops during the Zulu Wars. A typical voyage from England to South Africa took 3 weeks with a call at Madeira for

coal. Such was the pattern of her last voyage from England. She left Plymouth on 6 August 1881 at 2 p.m. – arrived at Madeira at 11 p.m. on 10 August – and at Cape Town on 30 August. She discharged some of passengers in Cape Town and left for Knysna, Port Elizabeth and finally Durban with 262 people on board of whom 105 were officers and crew.

The ship struck a rock near Danger Point at 7.20 p.m. while everyone was at dinner. Due to the Captain's delay in ordering people to take to the boats and the ship sinking very quickly only 27 souls made it into the ship's boats. Among these was Elizabeth Ross who was travelling with her family to Port Elizabeth to which they were emigrating from England. The 2 ship's boats struggled into Simon's Town with news of the ship's fate. Vessels were immediately despatched to look for further survivors but no more were found; then miraculously one more boat limped into Table Bay with 9 men aboard. Wreckage washed up round the coast, even near Table Bay and only 1 body ever washed up – that of her Master Captain Manning.

Elizabeth Ross was taken under the wing of Mr Runciman of Simon's Town who was the local agent for the Union Line. She was about 16 when the tragedy happened. It is said that she was educated and became a teacher and later married in Cape Town.

HENRY GIVAN WEBBER

Charlotte Webber

He was born in Cupar, Fife, Scotland, one of six children. His father was Receiver of Inland Revenue at the time. On leaving school he attended Edinburgh University where he graduated as an M.A. – in mathematics and Latin mainly – but to me as a child he knew something of everything – mostly a lot. He had an enquiring mind and if there was something he did not know he made it his business to find out all about it and understand it from the very beginning upwards. His willingness to impart his knowledge was a great advantage to my sister and me in our early years. A lot of our young education started in the home. He would give us lessons on Astronomy with demonstrations of the world and planets using oranges and apples to simulate our globe and the planets – we were fascinated. He taught us to play the piano and read music. He taught us to knit and sew on buttons. He taught us to read, write, draw and to be curious about anything that crossed our paths. He had a very lovely tenor voice and my mother was an able pianist, so one had lots of singing round our piano, with friends of all ages joining in. He taught us to swim and enjoy playing in the out doors and to

appreciate nature, encouraging us to have our own plots in the garden at Glencairn where we lived from before I was born in 1924 until 1945 after his final retirement.

He spent some time – either before or after entering university – working and studying in the shipbuilding yards of Glasgow on the River Clyde so he was also very knowledgeable about engineering matters, mechanics, carpentry etc, always willing to fix things and to impart his knowledge and skills to us as children.

I think it was while he was in Glasgow that he contracted Pulmonary Tuberculosis – no cure in those days – and he came to South Africa in 1902 and forthwith overcame the disease. His first position was as assistant teacher at Harrismith School in the O.F.S. and then as headmaster at Rouxville, also in the Orange Free State. The countryside had been devastated in the Anglo=Boer War and he set about doing his best to improve matters. He added gardening, agriculture, horsemanship, carpentry, domestic science and other skills to the curriculum in the primary school that had suffered so much and set about raising the standards of all subjects; he then started a High School. Within a few years he had raised the standard to Junior Certificate and then Matriculation or Senior Certificate.

His wife, who had followed him to South Africa, died about 1917. My mother – from Beaufort West – joined his staff as assistant teacher at the age of 26 years and they were married in 1918. Shortly thereafter the devastating flu epidemic hit Rouxville and both were totally involved in nursing the sick and dieing. Neither of them contracted the flu virus and so were able to continue to help those who were sick throughout the scourge.

In 1922 my father was appointed as Headmaster on S.A.T.S. GENERAL BOTHA and they moved to Cape Town, first living in Sea Point and then in 1923 buying a house on the sea front in Glencairn. I was born in that house in 1924, when my sister was 14 months old. Revd. M.L. de Villiers was the Dominee at Simon's Town Dutch Reformed Church and he came and christened us both in our home.

My father had been brought up in the Presbyterian church in Scotland so when he came to the O.F.S. he joined the Dutch Reformed Church – both being Calvinistic churches. My mother belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church also. When my father arrived in the O.F.S. one of the first things he undertook was to learn Afrikaans and he became fluent in it, that was after mastering High Dutch.

In those days anyone in the civil service or governmental position was not allowed to partake in certain organisations such as municipal councils – so my father was precluded from that. What he did do was persuade the Simon's Town Municipality to construct a tidal pool at Glencairn in among the rocks below the railway station. So it was at an early age he taught us and our friends to learn to swim.

He retired in 1935 as headmaster aboard the training ship and did some private tutoring for a few years, teaching a variety of subjects, and then became Vice-head of the

Western Province Preparatory School. When war broke out in 1939 he returned to the GENERAL BOTHA as assistant teacher at the new complex on Red Hill, as most of the younger teachers joined the S.A. Defence Force and many ex-GENERAL BOTHA cadets won honours for their country. Sadly quite a number were killed on active service. What I failed to mention earlier was that when my Dad left Rouxville to join the GENERAL BOTHA quite a number of young lads left to follow him to be cadets on the training ship.

At the end of 1945 at the end of the war, he retired from the GENERAL BOTHA for the second time and my parents bought a property in Kleinmond near Hermanus and lived there very happily. He had a flourishing vegetable and fruit garden and his hens and chickens were a great delight to him in those last few years of his life. He died in 1949 and was buried at Plumstead Cemetery. A most moving moment was when a detachment of cadets from the GENERAL BOTHA played the Last Post at his funeral.

MEMORIES OF S.A.T.S. GENERAL BOTHA

Charlotte Webber

She was originally HMS THAMES and was bought by Mr T.B. Davies to be a training ship for South African cadets in memory of his son Howard who was killed in the 1st World War.

In 1923 my father Henry Givan Webber (M.A. Edinburgh) became the second Headmaster in the academic area and lived ashore in Glencairn. One of the first tasks he set himself was to learn and master the necessary subjects of Navigation and Seamanship so as to aid the boys in familiarising themselves in these necessary disciplines for mariners. He also instituted the teaching of necessary academic subjects and raised the standard of teaching to Junior Certificate within the first 2 to 3 years. Later he raised the standard to Matriculation level in all subjects taught, so that cadets who did not wish to continue with seafaring could advance to tertiary education at a Technical College or University. He was aided by a loyal and competent team of assistant masters.

The seafaring side of the cadets' training was managed by men with naval experience. The discipline and team spirit on the ship was of a high standard and life on the ship was not for the faint-hearted, but there were few "drop-outs". The turn-out of the cadets for official occasions – white in summer, navy blue in winter – was in line with the Royal Navy, whose South Atlantic base was in Simon's Town. On board the cadets slept in canvas hammocks.

Sports – Rugby, cricket, soccer etc – were enjoyed in the cadets' spare time at sports fields in Simon's Town Dockyard. Sports matches were played against clubs and schools in Simon's Town and further afield. The "Bothie Boys" made a good name for themselves carrying off trophies.

Transfer from the Simon's Town pier to the ship which was anchored in Simon's Bay was by boat, either rowing-boats, in which the cadets did the rowing – or by motor boat for visitors who might be queasy. All very exciting for young girls like me and my friends, to be rowed there and back by these smart cadets in uniform.

There were regular highlights occurring, like the "open" days when V.I.P. and other visitors were invited on board and prize-giving at the end of the year, the end of the year dance on board was also a great occasion and my sister and I were the envy of our friends for being accepted partners every year. We were allowed to bring a few of our friends to make up equal numbers of boys and girls.

The teaching of academic subjects was by qualified teachers on their special subjects. Tim Joubert is the only name I can remember. I well remember the visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) who abdicated to marry Mrs Simpson. He visited the GENERAL BOTHA on the day he visited Simon's Town in his full naval uniform and was piped on board the ship to carry out his inspection.

The evening that the new gymnasium was opened by General Smuts, accompanied by his wife Issie Smuts (know as "Ouma" or grandmother, to South Africans) was also a grand occasion with everyone in full uniform. If I remember correctly the gymnasium was in the area where the engine-room had been. It was very popular with the boys.

On the occasion of King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935 there was a magnificent firework display in Simon's Town, put on by the Royal Navy, and we had a prime position watching it from the ship. The whole of Simon's Town and Red Hill was packed with eager sightseers – it really was something special with the whole night sky lit up and with depictions of the crown and George V in different colour fireworks.

Mention must be made of a very gracious lady Mrs Edith Pennington, wife of the one-time captain of the GENERAL BOTHA. They lived on the ship for the first years of his captaincy and added so much in kindness and understanding to the lives of the boys who were far from home and their home comforts and love. Afterwards they bought a house in Glencairn where they lived until his retirement after the end of the 2nd World War. Both Captain and Mrs Pennington became dear friends of our family. She was Auntie Edith to us and was loved by all she met including "Ouma" Smuts.

When war broke out in September 1939 the cadets were moved to a new base on Red Hill and the ship was used as HMS THAMES to accommodate Royal Naval personnel. On Red Hill the cadets had their own sports fields. Field Marshal Smuts came and gave the last prize-giving address to the cadets in 1945 at the Red Hill campus. The y were then moved to Gordon's Bay and later to Granger Bay. After the war the

GENERAL BOTHA was scuttled in False Bay, having been towed out there after as much as possible could be removed from the interior of the ship.

CONSTABLES WANTED FOR SIMON'S TOWN

TWO SINGLE YOUNG MEN, who can produce Testimonials for sobriety, honesty, and general good conduct.

Apply to the Resident Magistrate, Wynberg, or to the Acting Resident Justice of the Peace, Simon's Town.

Resident Magistrate's Office, Wynberg. 7 February 1844.

Advertisement in the Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette 11.2.1848

THE ALBATROSS

Dr Pearson

In my desk drawer there is an old 12-inch ruler and thereby hangs a tale.

In the years before the 2nd World War, I served as a medical officer in the Royal Navy in a sloop on the South Africa station engaged in courtesy calls on the various ports on the south and west coasts of southern Africa. This entailed cruises of about 3 months duration from the home base of Simon's Town. Sometimes this would mean three or four days at sea between ports. The ship's company consisted of 7 wardroom officers and about 100 seamen, stokers and other ratings. When calling at a port, local dignitaries were invited on board and suitably entertained, and they in turn would invite us ashore. This process was normally referred to as "showing the flag".

During the periods at sea the ship was always followed, gliding over the wake, by a beautiful bird, an albatross. He was always there, not far astern, gliding with outstretched wings never moving. He never landed on board or in the sea, but would dive and pick up tasty morsels from the wake with his long, hooked beak. It was the legend on the lower deck that this beautiful bird was the reincarnation of a sailor drowned at sea on some previous naval commission or action. It is an ancient but very definite naval tradition.

It so happened that our Engineer Officer, "Chiefy", had purchased an old .22 pistol at a port of call and while we were at sea a day or two later Chiefy decided to try it out by having a shot at a flying fish or any floating object. Suddenly, he noticed our lovely albatross and without really thinking he drew a bead on the bird and pulled the trigger. Miraculously, and to the Chief's dismay, the bullet found its mark and the bird fell dead into a foaming wake.

The death of the albatross was witnessed by various seamen working on deck and it soon became common knowledge among the ship's company. It is a myth and tradition among sailors that if anyone should harm or kill an albatross, he will be avenged by his own death. In this case the engineer was a popular officer, well liked by engine room staff and lower deck and there was great commiseration. "Poor old Chief is doomed" was the general feeling.

Not long after this the ship returned to her home base, Simon's Town, for a minor refit, moored alongside in the harbour. Shortly afterwards the engineer officer slipped descending a ladder and fell across a stanchion striking a heavy blow to his chest and fracturing a rib. I was called and I suspected lung damage so I sent him to the local naval hospital in Simon's Town. Here he was critically ill due to the lung damage and it was considered by the ship's company that he could not possibly recover after what had happened at sea. However, he did eventually recover and was invited to a local hotel for convalescence.

In due course he was well enough to return to duty and was given a lift from St James in the evening. The road is winding, the lights confusing and the driver lost control and ran the car into a roadside lamp post on the passenger's side: our engineer was killed outright. In view of the previous circumstances he was hardly mourned by his shipmates as this was considered inevitable as a consequence of his having killed an albatross.

By custom, when a shipmate in the Royal Navy dies by accident during a commission his belongings are brought on deck in the presence of the ship's company and are sold by auction. The bidding is always fictitiously high and the proceeds go to the next-of-kin. This is not usual for officers, but the sailors insisted that the custom be observed.

I bought the ruler for a few pounds and here it lies in my desk drawer!

Note: This story was previously published in the Naval Review in Feb 2006 when Dr Pearson was 100 years old and was given to us by his daughter Rosalind when she was on holiday here last year.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF SIMON'S TOWN

From an earlier article by the late Llew. J.D. Gay

It was about 1900 that the first of a large Jewish Community started to move into our village. With the building of the East Dockyard new buildings sprang up. Property began to boom. It was not long before there were 45 Jewish families settled here or who came in daily to carry on the many new enterprises that opened up. Many of these people came from Lithuania and central Europe, all via the United Kingdom.

This sturdy band of men and women started in a humble way, cobblers, rag and bone men, peddlers, and shopkeepers. Time never counted and they worked long hours and often under primitive conditions. Nothing was too humble for them to tackle. To-day the sons and daughters and grandchildren of these new Simonites hold most prominent positions in our professional life as doctors, lawyers, in commerce and as medical specialists.

Who were the men and women from Europe? One was Mr Solomon Harris, who built a street of houses at Seaforth, known then as Harris Avenue (later as Gordons Avenue after the next owner) and to-day it is known as Jackson Avenue after the firm which built the East Dockyard and whose staff were the first occupants of these houses. Solomon Harris and his three sons founded and owned South African Woollen Mills and had branches and factories in several South African towns. They reached their peak with the famous "Waverley blankets". Another was Mr J.H. Harris who carried on business as a General Outfitter and Soft Goods Merchant where Lewis Furniture store is to-day. He lived at Kalk Bay in later years and built the whole row of houses facing Kalk Bay Harbour in what is known as Harris Road.

Then there were the Cohen family, General Dealers, Soft Goods Merchants, Butchers. The best known of the family right up into the 1940s was Mr Harry Cohen and his wife. They started a grocery shop at the bottom of Harris Road (Gordon's Avenue/Jackson road) and then a soft goods shop next to Messrs E.K. Green (now Paddlers) and later moved to the centre of town opposite the Post Office. This building was later razed so that the new Standard Bank Building could be built. Their son Victor, was the last member of this happy band of immigrants still carrying on as a successful lawyer till the 1970s.

Then there were the Berman brothers, General Dealers, Coal and Forage merchants at the foot of Waterfall Road behind Yara Yara. The one brother joined Imperial Cold Storage and also started and owned a prosperous ironmonger's business in Paarl. Also there was Mr. P. Hendler who ran a fleet of passenger cabs and a Dairy at Seaforth. His dairy and herd of cows were housed where Gay's holiday camp stood at the corner of Seaforth road, now being developed at 15 apartments. Hendler eventually bought an hotel in Paarl and carried on a most successful business for many years.

Mr Simon Scher, started at the bottom as a cobbler, by sheer hard work in partnership for a time with his brother, ended up a leading citizen of the town and a leading ladies' and gents outfitters with his shop where Kalidas is to-day. He served as a Councillor for a number of years and was, in conjunction with the Mayor, responsible for reclamation of the foreshore and enlargement of Jubilee Square. This was done with the consent of the Minister of Commerce and Industries, the Hon. Sidney Waterson, the Railways and Harbours and the British Admiralty. To-day his two sons hold very high positions in the medical profession.

Old father Katseff was in squires Building, Station Road opp. Admiralty House and he cobbled all day and cobbled all night and was one of the most well beloved citizens of

the town and his lovely flowing beard was the hallmark of a natural gentleman. Mr S. Kissen and his wife started a small shop in the building which housed Jewel's Garage (now the new entrance to the East Dockyard, next to the Magistrate's Court). He then moved across what was then Cole Point Road to a small shop which has also disappeared under the new road. After that he went to Ark Rock Café at Seaforth (next to 711). Many a local child spent the 1d a week pocket money there!

Mr B. Benjamin, a law agent and auctioneer, carried on business at Jenks Building (now the building between the Magistrate's Court and the Police Station). Mr Abrahamson and Mr Friedman were well-known butchers, each with their own business. Mr A. Knopf carried on a Newsagents and Barbers business in a shop on the ground floor of the British Hotel for many years. His only son, David, was killed just before Delville Wood in 1916. Tailors and Outfitters comprised Mr S. Binderman, Mr. H. Chiat, Mr S. Cohen (where At Ease bookshop now is) and Mr. F. Lizerbrum. All did a thriving trade. Then there was the famous Mr J.L. Michalowsky, watchmaker and general dealer, in Regent House where Go Go's now is. Mr Levy had a general dealers opposite Admiralty House where the toll keepers cottages had been, somewhere near where the old anchor is to-day. Lastly, there was Mr Lazarus, house speculator, who at one time lived in the old house behind the Police Station.

All these members of the Jewish Community carried out to the letter all the customs and religious rites of their religion. If at any time they wished to gather as a community to celebrate or worship according to their faith, they were granted the use of the Royal Alfred Masonic Hall in Alfred Lane. They were an essential part of the local community whose descendants have dispersed to many parts of the world as they prospered.

HMS VINDICTIVE

Bill Rice

One of the many interesting ships to have visited Simon's Town, albeit fleetingly, was the Second Class Cruiser HMS VINDICTIVE, a ship which, after an undistinguished career spanning almost eighteen years, wrote her name indelibly in the history of the Royal Navy on St George's Day in 1918.

HMS VINDICTIVE, one of the Arrogant Class Protected Cruisers, was laid down in No.2 Dock at H.M. Dockyard, Chatham, on 27 January 1896 and was floated out on 9 December 1897. Number 2 Dock, which still exists as part of the Historic Dockyard, was constructed on the site of the old "single dock" in which Nelson's VICTORY was built between 1759 and 1765 and was the birthplace of several cruisers including WARSPITE (1884), IMMORTALITE (1887), MINERVA (1895), PIONEER (1899)

and CHALLENGER (1902). After the launch of CHALLENGER the roof over the dock was removed. After completing trials, during which she exceeded her designed speed of 19 knots by more than a knot, she took part in the 1899 Peace Manoeuvres and then commissioned on 4 July 1900 for service in the Mediterranean.

The ship was then ordered to take part in the 1900 Peace Manoeuvres based on Milford Haven, after which she returned to Chatham for a brief leave period before sailing for the Mediterranean. VINDICTIVE left Chatham on 10 September and 5 days later went alongside in Plymouth where liberty was granted and enjoyed by many members of the ship's company. Unfortunately one of them, a Maltese, had a most unpleasant experience while returning to the quayside to catch the liberty boat out to his ship. As part of his going-ashore rig he wore a black hat, of a type which was common enough headgear in his native Malta, but which in English melodramatic theatre was used to identify the Villain of the Piece. As he passed by his appearance aroused the curiosity and suspicion of a loyal Son of Devon who shouted "Boer Spy!" The poor sailor was suddenly surrounded and jostled by a crowd of hostile patriots and had great difficulty, with his accented English, convincing them that he was, in fact, a loyal subject of Her Britannic Majesty. Fortunately an acquaintance happened along and was able to vouch for his loyalty and patriotism, whereupon the crowd dispersed. The cause of the trouble, the sinister black hat which had been removed from his head by a lady wielding an umbrella, was nowhere to be found!

VINDICTIVE's service in the Mediterranean followed the typical pattern of peacetime commissions, being a series of visits, salutes, escort duties, evolutions, exercises and target practices. Events of note during the commission were the death of Queen Victoria and Coronation of King Edward VII and the receipt in November 1902, of an order that all ships' sides and upper works were to be painted uniform grey, hiding the black hulls, white superstructure and buff funnels of the Victorian Era.

VINDICTIVE paid off into "D" Division of the Dockyard Reserve at Chatham on 7y January 1904, having steamed 62,407,2 nautical miles, loaded 26,208,5 tons of coal and issued 5 811,5 gallons of rum since commissioning there three years, six months and four days earlier. She remained in the Chatham Reserve, apart from a brief spell of "trooping" in 1906 until 1911. The Arrogant Class were among the last Royal Naval cruisers to be built with reinforced ram bows and none of her three sisters had careers of note. GLADIATOR was sunk in a collision in 1908. ARROGANT, which had relieved VINDICTIVE in the Mediterranean in 1903, was converted to a submarine depot ship and FURIOUS was hulked, being renamed FORTE after the name became available in 1914.

On being activated in 1911 VINDICTIVE was sent out to South Africa with a relief ships' company for HMS FORTE, a cruiser which had been launched at Chatham four years before her and which had seen far more active service. Both ships were 97,5 metres long but VINDICTIVE, with a beam of 17,5 metres, was 2,4 metres wider than FORTE. The 318 men heading South to join their new ship in Simon's Town would have found their "troopship" fairly spacious as VINDICTIVE's normal peacetime complement was 419 and she could accommodate 480 in war time.

According to the Simon's Town Staff Commander's Journal the 3-funnelled VINDICTIVE steamed into Simon's Bay on 8 April 1911. Two days later she was placed alongside the coal hulk NUBIAN, from which she took 950 tons of coal, finishing the evolution at 16:00 on the 11 April. On 12 April she exchanged ships' companies with HMS FORTE and on the 13 April the Dockyard tug SCOTSMAN took VINDICTIVE out into the Bay and swung her to adjust compasses. At 15:00 she sailed for England under new management. No longer a front-line cruiser HMS VINDICTIVE commissioned on 15 March 1912 as a tender to HMS VERNON at Portsmouth.

The only one of her class still active at the outbreak of World War I VINDICTIVE joined the 9th Cruiser Squadron and was dispatched to patrol the South-East Coast of South America. She then spent 1916 and 1917 in the White Sea, looking after, or at least monitoring, British interests as Tsarist Russia descended into revolution and chaos. In 1917 many of the German U-boats which were wreaking havoc with British merchant shipping were entering the North Sea via canals which crossed the coastline at Zeebrugge and Ostend and it was decided to use obsolete cruisers, such as VINDICTIVE to block the canals to prevent their use.

At Ostend the plan was for the designated cruisers to steam at full speed into the canal, hoping that they would manage to stay afloat under enemy fire long enough for their crews to sink them across the waterway and block it. Zeebrugge was a different proposition. Here the entrance to the canal was protected by a curved mole, at the seaward end of which was a German gun battery. It was almost certain that the blockships, HMS THETIS, IPHIGENIA and INTREPID, would be sunk long before they were able to get anywhere near the entrance to the canal.

The solution was to equip HMS VINDICTIVE as an assault ship and place her alongside the mole, outboard of the battery, which would then be stormed by the combined Bluejacket and Royal Marine assault force carried on board. VINDICTIVE was to be accompanied by two Mersey ferry boats, IRIS carrying an additional storming party and DAFFODIL to act as a tug and keep the cruiser alongside the mole.

Early in 1918 she was taken in hand at Chatham Dockyard to be converted to an Assault ship, capable of carrying and landing a large raiding force. While the assault was in progress shallow draught monitors of the Royal Navy would bombard coastal batteries, backed up by destroyers of the Dover Patrol commanded and led by Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, who had conceived and planned the raid. Two obsolete submarines, packed with explosives, had the task of destroying the girder bridge which linked the mole to the mainland in order to prevent reinforcement of the German troops manning the battery.

The attack, which began just after midnight on St George's Day, 23 April 1918, achieved its objective in spite of the fact that a sudden change of wind blew the smokescreen away, exposing VINDICTIVE to enemy fire as she approached the mole. The cruisers INTREPID and IPHIGENIA were scuttled in the canal and THETIS which had fouled nets on the way in, sank just outside the entrance. The old submarine C3 destroyed the bridge, isolating the mole. After the successful raid on Zeebrugge, the battered hulk of VINDICTIVE was sent down the coast to Ostend where, on 10 May, she and the old cruiser SAPPHO were to block the canal. The raid was only partially successful as SAPPHO did not reach Ostend and VINDICTIVE only managed to block one third of the waterway. She remained there, featuring in many photographs and picture postcards, until 1920 when the hull was raised and scrapped.

References:

The Cruise of HMS VINDICTIVE 1900-1903 W.W. Kirby
Chatham built warships since 1860 Philip MacDougall
The fighting ship in the Royal Navy E.H.H. Archibald.

SIMON'S TOWN SENIORS COMPUTER CLUB

L. BURRA-ROBINSON

The Club was formed in 2000 by members of Probus with the following aims and objectives, as set out in the Constitution:-

1. To enable members, through mutual help and at a minimum cost, to acquire and improve their computer and electronic communications skills.
2. To provide, in an atmosphere of fellowship and enjoyment, a setting for the interchange of computer and communications knowledge, skills and ideas.
3. To assist members with the provision of adequate facilities in pursuance of this aim.
4. To provide regular meetings, activities and training sessions to attain these objectives.

The success of the Club is totally dependent on the members of the Club and, as such, members are encouraged to participate in the various activities, courses and discussions that are organised. Members are also required to request what type of training and forums they feel should be available.

All training sessions are held at the Simon's Town High School and the headmaster and staff of the school have gone out of their way to assist the Club in all its activities. As a result a special relationship has developed between School and Club.

Committee members have developed courses expressly for club members and in most

cases these committee members present the courses. The courses have been designed using Microsoft Windows XP operating system which was the most common operating system to June 2007. Whenever differences occur with Windows 95 or Windows 98, this is pointed out at the time. Courses are very moderately priced and each session lasts two hours and there are frequent question and answer sessions.

LT-COMMANDER C.H. "FAIRY" FILMER

A.E. READ

He died aged 91 on 15 July 2007. Cecil Howard Filmer, always known as "Fairy" was born in South Africa in 1916 and in 1931 he joined the GENERAL BOTHA. He was runner-up to the King's Gold Medallist for his term and appointed a midshipman R.N.R. After 3 years' apprenticeship with Houlder Brothers, a UK firm he passed his 2nd mate's certificate and was sent to the destroyer FORESIGHT. He then transferred to permanent service, serving as a Sub-Lt in the battleships RESOLUTION and RAMILLES. Aged 21 he was appointed navigator of the destroyer GRENADE in the Mediterranean and volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm as a pilot, obtaining his wings in 1938.

Much has been written previously about the German Battleship KONIGSBERG in the 1st World War but Filmer was to have the distinction of sinking another KONIGSBERG, that in the 2nd World War.

On 10 April 1940 he dived at 60° from 12,000 ft as part of a force of 16 Blackbird Skuas with 800 and 803 naval air squadrons to hit the KONIGSBERG with a 500 lb bomb, which was one of 3 that caught the ship in Bergen harbour, Norway. They sank her. "It was" said Filmer "the first time in the history of aviation that a major warship was sunk by air attack in wartime". He was mentioned in dispatches for his daring and resource in the conduct of hazardous and successful operations. Between 12 and 26 April Filmer flew 5 more sorties against German shipping and the Luftwaffe from Hatston in the Orkneys and from the carrier GLORIOUS. On the last of these he broke away from his flight of 3 Skuas to attack three Heinkel 111s, shooting down one but being caught by a burst of fire.

Blinded by spraying petrol and with his cockpit full of smoke, he ditched his aircraft in a fjord, but his torpedo air gunner, Petty Officer Ken Baldwin, was killed. Filmer was for ever after haunted by the thought that had he waited for his flight to follow, Baldwin might never have been killed. With Norwegian help he salvaged his aircraft

and was evacuated to Tromsø in the cruiser GLASGOW with King Haakon and the Norwegian gold reserves before taking a short period of survivor's leave and rejoining 803 squadron with a replacement aircraft.

His memory of meeting the Norwegian king made Filmer all the more determined when, on 13 June, he was section leader of 803, which flew from carrier ARK ROYAL to make an ill-fated attack on German ships. "As we neared Trondheim I was stunned to see the battlecruiser SCHARNHORST was surrounded by a heavy cruiser and 4 destroyers. It was painfully obvious that the firepower from the 6 naval ships, plus the land batteries, was going to be immense. The tracer bullets commenced rising well before we were within striking distance". Despite the heavy flak Filmer completed his attack but was jumped by 2 Me110 fighters. Outgunned and out-maneuvred, he ditched his aircraft to save his wounded observer Midshipman Tony McKee, landing wheels-up on the fjord where they were picked up by Norwegians in a small boat. En route to hospital he and McKee planned their escape to Sweden, but they were taken prisoner and flown to Germany.

Filmer spent the next 5 years as a prisoner-of-war, beginning at Dulag Luft, and delighted in making repeated escape attempts. Once he and 5 others jumped at night from a train travelling at about 25 mph but were recaptured the next day. Another time he hid in the false bottom of a box filled with empty food tins and was carried out to a rubbish dump! While the guard was distracted he slithered out and hid in a hut until darkness fell and walked away from the camp using the lights behind him as a navigation aid. After 10 days he reached the Danish border, where he was caught again.

He helped with the tunnel at Stalag Luft III for the Great Escape of April 1944 which led to 50 of the airmen who got away including his Norwegian friend Halldor Espelid, being shot on Hitler's orders. Finally with several thousand other PoWs, he marched hundreds of miles, in freezing conditions, from south-west of Berlin to the port of LÜBECK, in order to avoid the advancing Russians. He was mentioned in dispatches for his good services while a prisoner of war.

After the war Filmer flew again with the Royal Navy but retired in 1958, returning to his first love, the merchant navy, and within 12 months he was master of a ship belonging to the King of Tonga. Even then life was never dull. Once, south of New Caledonia, his ship broke down and being unwilling to be adrift in the hurricane season, he made sails out of deck awnings and sailed 350 miles at 4 knots to a rendezvous with an Australian rescue tug. He continued for a further 16 years, based at Fiji, and sailing between Tahiti, Rarotonga, Honolulu and the Gilbert Islands, before retiring, aged 69, to Durban in Natal.

Filmer never married. "just as well" he often said "A wife would not have seen much of me over the years". One of the many Botha boys who covered themselves in glory during the 1939-45 war.

CAPTAIN ROBERT FALCON SCOTT R.N.
"SCOTT OF THE ANTARCTIC"

A.E. READ

Whenever we hear of Scott it is usually in connection with his explorations in the southern oceans. Very little has been known of his earlier sea-going career and the fact that he had been stationed in Simon's Town in the 1880s. In fact when you read of his arrival here on the way south there is no remark from him that he had previously known Simon's Bay.

At this stage he was a Midshipman in HMS BOADICEA having left the training ship BRITANNIA. He joined BOADICEA on 4 October 1883 and was read the articles of war and returns of courts martial. With him on joining were Lt Roope and Midshipman Dampier. Scott, as a midshipman, was still under instruction. His mornings were usually spent in navigation lessons but often these lost out to watchkeeping, taking sights, managing men and running the ship's boats. It was a very busy time for a 15 yr old.

His ship was flying the flag of Rear Admiral Nowell Salmon, a rather stern figure "with a face that would not look out of place on Mount Rushmere" ! Salmon, in the Crimean War had served against the Russians in the Baltic and as a young Lieutenant in SHANNON's Naval Brigade during the Indian Mutiny, where he had won one of the 4 naval Victoria Crosses awarded at the relief of Lucknow. He was a stern disciplinarian and Scott kept the usual midshipman's diary or log book and one finds entries such as "Mr Kirkley gunner was cautioned by the Captain and his leave stopped for 1 month for not being fit for duty in the morning from his having taken too much liquor the night before".

On 2 January 1884 he records "Sub Lt the Hon Francis Addington was cautioned by the Captain (Captain Church) for un-officerlike conduct in using abusive and disgraceful language to one of his ship mates in the gun room on Xmas Day"

29 January life took a more serious turn when he recorded "British barque GUAYANA in want of medical assistance arrived, Captain having stabbed the 2nd mate and assaulted one of the crew with an iron belaying pin"

There are very few surviving letters from his time in BOADICEA but some of his shipmates left snippets. They made the trip from Simon's Bay to the Congo and then on to Accra and Lagos on the west coast of Africa, keeping the peace and ensuring that there was no slave trading and with the Duke of Connaught on board.

At Freetown in Sierra Leone they were received with great fanfare. Addresses were presented at the Town Hall, read out by the Town Clerk, an African gentleman with rolling eyes, wearing a barristers wig and gown – (in that tropical heat). In the garden at Government House the Duke received deputations from native chiefs in all sorts of unusual garments – some of them with tinsel crowns and one in a naval cocked hat with military plumes. Also received were a deputation from the Coloured Freemasons, and the African Ladies of the Colony. The latter were a group of a dozen African ladies dressed in the latest Paris fashions with picture hats, hobble skirts, gloves etc – most unexpected.

At St Helena they had pointed out to them a woman in her sixties, said to be Napoleon's daughter.

Scott obviously had impressed Captain Church for when the captain left BOADICEA, he took the 17 yr old Scott with him to HMS MONARCH which was part of the Channel Squadron. On board also were 2 lieutenants who were to become famous – Rosslyn Wemyss (a future Sea Lord) and John Jellicoe (who made his name at the Battle of Jutland).

Reference: "Scott of the Antarctic" David Crane. Harper 2005
ISBN 13 978-0-00-715071-7 brought to my attention by Dr Cullis.

THE SIMON'S TOWN ART GROUP (S.T.A.G.)

BOET DOMMISSE (compiled from notes provided by Estelle Byrnes)

This is their 10th year of existence.

The first exhibition of work by local Simon's Town artists was organised by Reg Loxton in 1994, and two subsequent exhibitions were held in the Town Hall, and one in the Simon's Town Museum. Artists exhibiting at that time included the Loxton family, Ryno Swart, Mike Munnik, Paul Andres and Debbie Lunderstedt.

In 1997 Ryno Swart stimulated the formation of a co-operative Art Group with the assistance of several semi-professional artists. Estelle Byrnes became the unofficial secretary and kept notes of each meeting. The group got off to an ambitious start, with each member pledging to pay R50 per month. A full-time curator was appointed and Albertyn's Stables was hired as a permanent venue for meetings, classes and exhibitions. The building was in poor condition and was cleaned, painted and renovated by a hard-working group of volunteers. The floor was coated black and

picture hanging rails and overhead lighting was installed. Furniture was borrowed and a telephone installed.

The first exhibition in Albertyn's Stables opened on the Easter weekend in April 1998. The standard of exhibits was very varied and sales were disappointing. The Gallery remained open with members expected to do weekend duties. Life drawing and other sessions were held and Frances le Roux arranged a medieval instrument concert as a fund-raiser. Meetings were held with demo's but it was a long cold winter and a big barn of a gallery. It soon became apparent that the fledgling society would not be able to meet the costs of running a large permanent gallery, overheads were mounting, and bills were outstanding. The initial optimism evaporated and several rather unpleasant meetings ensued with frayed tempers and some acrimony.

For a while Clive Calder, who rented the other half of the building to run a bronze foundry, agreed to combine forces with himself at the helm. The art group had the use of less than half of the front section, and so lost their independence. At the end of 1998 a meeting was held and the short life of the society was ended.

An entirely new group, the Simon's Town Art Group (STAG) was formed under the chairmanship of Mike Munnik. Membership was open to all and a single annual fee of R60 was charged. Meetings were initially held in members private homes.

Fortunately, and after some persuasive negotiations, the ex-domestic science school room alongside the Municipal building was made available to STAG. After demolishing the partitions and generally renovating the room, it proved to be an ideal venue for meetings, workshops and demonstrations. STAG supports the Library with donations in exchange for the exclusive use of the studio.

The Simon's Town Art Group has grown in strength and currently has over 100 members, many of whom exhibit regularly. Several most successful exhibitions have been held, initially in the courtyard of the British Hotel, and more recently in the Library Hall. Income generated by way of commission on sales has been used to improve STAG's facilities and equipment, to support local charities, and to buy books and artistic DVD's for distribution by the Friends of the Library.

PATENT FUEL

Researched by Bill Rice

There was a Patent Fuel Store in the West Dockyard, in the area of the general workshops.

Patent fuel was made by mixing coal dust and small coal with powdered pitch, heating the mixture and compressing it in to 28 and 56 lb moulds. The first patent fuel manufacturing processes, operated by the Crown and the Anchor Patent Fuel Works in Cardiff, Wales, were extremely slow and costly because of the number of men required. Both had the added disadvantage that neither produced a brick capable of being stockpiled for any length of time without losing some of its calorific power.

In 1874 T.E. Heath, an employee of the Crown Patent Fuel Works, perfected the "Dry Heat" method of manufacture in conjunction with his son (T.E. Heath Jnr) and an engineer named Thomas Evens (not Evans). Heath approached the Crown Work directors for a loan to finance further research, but when this was refused he left the firm, convinced he could produce his own patent fuel more cheaply. Having acquired a loan he was able to start the Star Patent Fuel Works and these were erected in 1874 alongside the Crown Works. The works prospered from the start and in 1887 a limited company was formed. Most brands of patent fuel were made by using steam heat to melt the pitch (pitch being the residue after distilling coal tar) but hot air was used in the Star process. Other makes tended to become porous on cooling whereas the Star briquettes remained as made and therefore did not absorb moisture and crack with frost. They measured 11 in x 7 in (279 mm x 178 mm) and weighed approximately 22½ lb (100 briquettes to the ton).

The Star Works was very dependent on overseas orders and the First World War marked the beginning of its decline. The outbreak of hostilities meant breaking ties with many customers including the Austro-Hungarian Navy's patent fuel bunkering depot at Trieste. During the War output was maintained at a reasonable level, patent fuel being directed to customers abroad (especially the French Railways) by the Admiralty. However, many foreign markets were lost to competitors, or the customer found a substitute fuel. The gradual decline in trade can be visualised by the fact that after the War the daily output fell from 1,000 – 1,100 tons to 700 tons. Even worse was to follow and in the 1920's the growing world depression caused an almost total loss of markets.

MARION ISLAND

It was 60 years ago on 29 December 1947 that South Africa took possession of Marion Island. For full details of this see the Society's Bulletin Vol.XIII No. 4 of July 1985.

(The voyage was considered so important that John Fairbairn's orders read: "Being in all respects ready for sea HMSAS TRANSVAAL is to set sail from Cape Town 10h00 hours on Sunday....Your destination is top secret and is not to be disclosed to the ship's company until you are at sea...all signals are to be top secret and encoded in high grade code....")

CAPTAIN W.H. SELBY R.N.

AN EXCERPT FROM HIS DIARY

I suppose my time at the Admiralty was due to come to an end by the latter half of 1949 and I started looking around to see what job I could possibly get. By keeping in constant touch with the Second Sea Lord's office I found that there was going to be an opening in the middle of 1950 as the Captain of the Dockyard in Simon's Town, South Africa. This sounded like a very good job indeed, but in those days it was a very "old boy" network and it was very difficult for someone who had not served in the South Atlantic Station to be able to work in, particularly in the job such as this. However, it so happened that the present Commander-in-Chief was Sir Desmond McCarthy, who had been my R.A.D. Malta. So I got word out to him to see if he would accept me, and if he would recommend me for the job. He said that he would accept me if the Admiralty would allow it. So it all fell into place and I went off to Greenwich to do a senior officers war course in early 1950 for three or four months. It was an interesting course, where I met up with a lot of my old pals. We surveyed, rehashed and looked forward to what was coming. We had insight into things which were not often clear to us on the job.

Eventually my appointment came through as Captain of HMS AFRIKANDER and Captain Superintendent of the Dockyard to join in mid-1950. This was a great joy and we all looked forward to going out to South Africa. We found some people to rent the house – a Commander Hennessy. We were happy to let them have it, though not so happy when we got back from South Africa. The condition of the carpets and furnishings was poor and dirty.

I had heard a buzz before we left that the new C-in-C was to be Admiral Sir Bertie Packer, who was the Fourth Sea Lord at the time and had been very helpful in trying to assist with a compensation settlement over the Corfu Channel incident. It had not been successful but he had been very sympathetic and I looked forward to meeting him again.

We left in the WINDSOR CASTLE in the middle of 1950 from Southampton. First class of course and a lovely fortnight's trip at sea with a stop at Madeira about four days out. We went to the Reed's hotel and went round the market. We loved the island and had hopes of visiting there for a holiday some day.

One of our fellow passengers was Sir William Halcrow and his wife. He was a big construction company boss and most interesting to talk to, his wife was quite pleasant too. Days went past, we crossed the equator with due ceremony. We were met in Cape Town by my predecessor, Roy Harry and his wife who immediately looked after us and took us the hour's drive to Simon's Town. Our first service residence was Belmont House which came complete with staff. (They were Joe Davis – Driver; Effie the maid; George & Leo stewards; a Bantu gardener). My turn-over took about 3 days, then there was a big party after which the Harrys were driven to Cape Town and seen off in the WINDSOR CASTLE on her return trip.

I think the C-in-C was away in the Flagship when I first arrived, but I got on with the round of calls which is required on first arriving at the station. Government officials in Cape Town and other parts of my territory; then I had to meet all the heads of departments in the Dockyard and my new secretary to be, John Crowley, a civilian, and my personal secretary Lt John Erskine, a paymaster. The principal naval departments were: The King's Harbourmaster who looked after the moorings and anchorages outside the dockyard; the First Lieutenant of any barracks, camp or quarters; the reserve fleet which consisted of two or three old destroyers moored inside the dockyard; and the hospital with a surgeon commander which was behind the town, and the sick bay for casualties. Then there was the Chaplain and the welfare department, and of course the signals office which played an important part with wireless stations at the Cape and on the Cape Flats and one up north.

On the Dockyard side: apart from all the usual facilities to run a dockyard at Simon's Town, stretching from Admiralty House south across the Bay; there was also the combined officers club. There was an ammunition depot at Kimberley, a big store depot south of Durban, all of which came under my jurisdiction and would have to be visited at some stage of my stay.

The Nationalist Party, the Boers, had got into power about 18 months before we arrived, and already there were signs that their apartheid policy was beginning to bite. The first thing I noticed was the seats on the railway station and the division of the post office into "Blank" and "Nie Blank".

The first official duty which I had to do in the C-in-C's absence was to attend the memorial service for Jan Smuts. He had died about three months earlier, but the service took place in the middle of 1950 in Cape Town. To my astonishment in talking to people after the service, they didn't think much of him. In England he was considered a world statesman without a great deal of affection from the South Africans who felt that he had been so busy being a world statesman that he had neglected the local people. It came as a bit of a shock to me.

Our visitors' book for Belmont shows that we took up residence there on 1 June 1950 and our first guest to stay was Miss Lucy Bean, a well known writer for the Women's section of The Cape Argus and a great figure in the South African women's welfare section who were very good to all our troops during the war, and after too. In fact they rather had to be slowed down to peace time pace, tactfully of course, but were one of my first slight problems, otherwise they would have spoilt our Libertymen with kindness.

One of my earlier calls, of course, was on Commodore Dean, who was at that time the head of the South African Navy. I also travelled to Gordon's Bay, on the other side of False Bay, to call on Jim Legassick, who was the Captain of the Naval College, SATS GENERAL BOTHA.

There were a lot of things to get adjusted to my way of thinking. I had to work myself in, examine the problems, try to be as friendly as possible all round, but it struck me that things had been going very easy for a long time with no one really wanting to exert themselves too much. I had to apply the pressure gently in the case of the Dockyard, and maybe not so gently in other quarters. However, things started moving and by the end of our stay as the man-in-charge of Simon's Town, things were beginning to look more shipshape. The C-in-C returned in the cruiser and the McCarthys took up residence at Admiralty House. Shortly after they began preparations for their relief.

By now it was the start of the South African spring and invitations were flowing in from everywhere to start again with cricket, general get-togethers, tennis, golf, etc. And, as well, the wonderful South African hospitality from the braai-veils on the beach using driftwood to make a wonderful fire for roasting to the magnificent scenery of the apple-growing farms in the northern part of the Cape across the Hottentot Mountains.

There was plenty to do for both of us. Hilary had the dockyard wives, and service wives and the welfare of the dockyard, as well as our steadily climbing social life, and the running of the house. I was able to take up golf again, and even improved. The Royal Cape Golf Club was a wonderful place and we were honorary members there. Curiously enough, no Jews were allowed in as members, so they bought a smaller course between Muizenberg and Simon's Town, behind Fish Hoek, and started to renovate the course and enlarge it. I used to go there to play so that there were no hard feelings and picked up some useful tips on how to improve the greens which I then applied to the Simon's Town cricket field (near the Martello Tower – Ed.) which was in very bad shape at the time.

Another thing which needed tightening up was the question of fishing off the Bull Nose. This was a very ancient routine in which Passes were given to local civilians to come in and fish over the week-end. The Bull Nose was the two sides of the entrance to the Simon's Town harbour. However, I found that all sorts of peculiar things were going on and decided to cancel all passes for about a fortnight. Meetings were arranged with those involved so that rules and regulations could be introduced, and when it was realised that this privilege could be withdrawn at any time, the people were very much better behaved than before!

By now our daughter Carol had finished at Queen Anne's and sister Enid Gray travelled out with her in the PRETORIA CASTLE, arriving on 18 January 1951. Enid stayed for about a month with us before returning to England and it was very pleasant.

One of our earliest meetings there was with the Hollebones. He had been in my term at Osborne, but had parted from his wife and gone to live in Kenya. Alice, his ex-wife, and her two daughters Sonia and Auriol, had lived in Simon's Town for some time. Auriol was Carol's age and was able to show her round and, in fact, they went off together to Cape Town Technical College to do a secretarial and domestic course. Carol tried the University of Cape Town with the idea of doing science, but one week was enough, as everything was so new and strange, including the curriculum.

I think it must have been around this time that we said good-bye to Sir Desmond and Lady McCarthy and waited with anticipation for the new Commander-in-Chief, Admiral and Lady Packer. We had all heard about Lady Packer, she was a South African and a vivid authoress, who had written books about her life with the Navy. Hilary had read her first book "The Grey Mistress" so we were interested to meet them. They arrived amidst the usual flurry of receptions and fanfare. Also arriving was a refitted, refurbished HMS BERMUDA, the cruiser Flagship, captain by Phil Currie, who was a South African, a term after me in Osborne. It was good to have a pal of mine in such a position.

During the early part of 1951 Captain Desmond Ross arrived to take over command of HMS ACTAION, and he stayed at Belmont House with us for the first few days after his arrival. He had been my 1st Lieutenant in HMS RESTLESS, my makey-learn command, so it was very pleasant to meet up with him again. He had a most delightful wife, Lettice, who joined him later, and we all became good friends. There was another local pair with whom we became very friendly – Mary and Jack Dendy. They lived in a lovely old Cape house called Ida's Valley in Stellenbosch, and he used to grow flowers and vegetables for market. We saw a lot of them over the years.

While the Commander-in-Chief was settling in he agreed that I should visit our Out Stations. So Hilary and I motored up to Kimberley and across to Durban and home by the Garden Route. It must have been at that juncture we heard of the whereabouts of Geoffrey Grove who was running a broiler chicken farm in Knysna. He had married

one of the Stuttafords, the family who owned the large department store in Cape Town. By the time we got back we started with plans to bring Sue out to join us as she had finished her nursing training at St Thomases.

When Sue had arrived and settled in to Simon's Town life, she looked around to see how she could use her nursing skills. It was a great disappointment for her to discover that her nursing qualifications were not considered adequate to work in a South African hospital, so we had to fall back on the Dockyard, and with the aid of a bit of nepotism she got a job in my signal distribution office. In those days one used to make copies by running the original over a horrible jelly of purple ink and poor Sue used to get covered in this stuff. On 8 December 1951 Hilary and I celebrated our Silver Wedding Anniversary. We had a big party at Belmont House it seemed as if most of Simon's Town was there and it was a most enjoyable occasion.

It must have been some time in the new year that we arranged for the four of us to go on a trip by car, the plan was to go through the Garden Route, through Knysna and then onward. We had just started and were about 2 hours into the trip, coming down a long hill past Haarstadt. I lost control of the car, a Studebaker, and went off the road. Hilary was taken to hospital in Haarstadt and then the navy ambulance was driven out from Simon's Town to collect us the next day. I drove the ambulance part of the way back to Simon's Town. Hilary had broken her shoulder, and was badly bruised, but otherwise recovered fairly rapidly; Carol ate her meals from the mantelpiece for a few days since she had been thrown through the rear door but hung on to the middle strut and had her bum scraped along the ground – baboon bum! We all recovered pretty rapidly though.

February 1952 brought the sad news of the death of King George VI. I remember the C-in-C Admiral Bertie Packer, holding an outside memorial service on Jubilee Square, Simon's Town, after the official service one on the dockyard parade ground.

When Carol finished her secretarial course in Cape Town, I got her a job in the Victualling Department in the Dockyard. The social life of Simon's Town was in full swing, with dances and parties and Scottish dancing evenings in the Recreation Hall in the East Dockyard which the girls joined in with gusto. Sometime in March or April 1952 I got hit with Virus B Hepatitis, which took me out of circulation for a while. On recovery Hilary and I went north to Salisbury in Rhodesia where the battle ensign of HMS MASHONA was hung in Salisbury Cathedral. We were also able to visit Bry and Elizabeth Bartley and their young daughter, Susan.

We also went to Worcester for a week's recuperation. Sue and I got into an argument over the lunch table and I poured a jug of water over her head - I can't now remember what it was all about. Carol remembers that we stayed at a lovely golf course hotel at Ceres and that Hilary and I played golf nearly every day and that the game did not always put us in a good frame of mind!

Around this time we noticed that Sue and the Royal Marine Flat Lieutenant to the C-in-C Captain Anthony Stapleton Harris, R.M., aka Tony Harris, were seeing more of each other and, as the Packers remarked "Romance was in the air". It must have been in March/April that the atomic bomb party paid a visit to Simon's Town on their way out to the Monte Bello Islands. They consisted of the frigate HMS PLYM which carried the bomb, and an aircraft carrier HMS CAMPANIA, with her attendant escort. They were in for three or four days.

In the middle of 1952 the Packers announced that they were going to retire to Constantia near Cape Town, when they had finished their navy life. Joy Packer was South African and her son Peter and family lived near Cape Town already. The Packers were to be relieved by Admiral Powlet who would arrive sometime in September. I had met him before and did not like him very much. I was due to be relieved in October, after 2½ years in South Africa.

It must have been sometime in August that Sue and Tony announced their engagement. There was a big engagement party to which everyone came, followed by "showers" for the bride. Parties were given in Sue's honour where she was showered with small gifts – a linen theme or a kitchen theme. This was a novel idea to us British but it certainly was a fun one. I notice that the last entry in our visitor's book is for Tony Harris, who stayed at Belmont from the time he had to leave Admiralty House when the Packers retired, to when he sailed for England. Sue followed soon after in order to prepare for the wedding which was set for 20 December 1952.

We decided to make a last trip by car northward through the Transkei and Transvaal to visit outposts near Kimberley and Durban. Hilary, Carol and I set off and for the first part took Dr Coote, the Naval Surgeon at Simon's Town, to be left at the hospital in Johannesburg. We visited the great hole at Kimberley and went over the De Beers Diamond mine. There was a fabulous collection of diamonds in every colour. From there we turned east through the Valley of a Thousand Hills to Pietermaritzburg. There Hilary stayed with Lofty and Trudy Lawson who had settled there, while Carol and I spent four days at the Hluhlew Game Reserve seeing such game as black and white rhino, giraffe, all kinds of deer, lions etc. After returning to pick up Hilary, we went on to Durban and then home to Simon's Town.

So we wound down our stay in the Cape – my relief arrived, a Captain Lambert, and Hilary, Carol and I sailed back to England in the EDINBURGH CASTLE in November, leaving behind a special poinsettia tree planted in the garden of Belmont to make the grave of Ming, the faithful little friend of the family for 15 years.

It was on this trip home that we met a certain young military type, an Irishman, named Michael Burke, who had just finished a tour of duty in Bechuanaland and was very full of himself, and the importance of his job. He was also very keen about Carol and would not be put off.

Back to cold and damp England via Madeira once more, where, this time we were able to go up the hill and down on the sleds over the cobble stones. We also brought back with us the old Studebaker, which did us pretty well although it was a left hand drive.

TOPSTONES, DIDO VALLEY ROAD, SIMON'S TOWN.

In 1970 Mobil Oil embarked on one of the most successful petrol promotion campaigns ever conceived. Many will remember going to fill up their cars with mum and dad and being given a small gemstone wrapped in plastic with its common name and scientific name on a small piece of cardboard. That promotion started many a gem collector on a life-long hobby. It was also the single most important event that launched what is arguably the South Peninsula's most successful company. To-day Topstones produces over 65 tons of 150 varieties of tumbled gemstones every month. These gems are exported all over the world.

In 1970 Bruce Baines was little more than a tumbling hobbyist; Johannesburg born, Natal educated and a non-practicing lawyer, he wound up in London tumbling gems in a paint can to make cheap jewelery which he sold to earn his bread and butter. That year he met a man involved in the running of an international trade fair in Earls Court in London. The man suggested Bruce take a stand at the fair to represent South Africa. So, with £100 of stock Bruce took a table and sold gems to people at the fair. Not only did he sell all his gems, he took names of all those people who bought or wanted to buy gems. At the end of the show he had £1,000 and 400 names of potential buyers. He then began to phone all the names for more orders.

It was at this time he met a Hollander name Andre Tops, who sold promotional ideas. Mr Tops believed he could sell Bruce's gems so they formed a small company and Topstones was created. Although Bruce cannot recall just how the name was chosen, he good-humouredly tells how Andre Tops insists it is taken from his name.

Wherever the name came from it was Andre who brought in the deal with Mobil. Mobil had run a "small" experimental promotion in Denmark using 2 million gemstones, which had proved so successful they wanted to roll it out throughout Europe. To do so they would need 40 million tumbled stones to be manufactured in a single year. At the time there was only one large commercial gem tumbling company in the world and it was situated in California and had been running since 1953. Baines and Tops convinced Mobil to award the contract to them and then brought the Californian company on board to help them tumble stones.

At that time the South African government had a ban on the export of rough tiger's eye, which is only found in Southern Africa. To fill the order, which had a 10-times penalty clause, Topstones would have to open a South African tumbling factory. They secured premises in Dido Valley and splitting production roughly 50/50 between the South African and Californian factories, churned out the required 40 million stones within the year.

The 2nd year of the business was probably the most difficult for Topstones. They had many of their factory costs paid from the income of the Mobil deal but now had to start the business from scratch all over again. From having one huge client they now had none and had to find all the small orders they could from local South African, British and American companies. The orders came in slowly and the Company was able to buy more rough stone locally and abroad and process it. Five years later Mobil moved into other campaigns and left many of the stones they had bought unused. Topstones bought these back from Mobil and slowly but surely saw positive growth. Almost ¾ of their business was tumbling stones, often considered to be the lowest form of stone work. Topstones perfected this however, and regular steady growth became the order of the day. They also began cabochon (domed flat-backed stones) cutting to produce stones for their jewellery industry. In 1980 they were the only exporter of wholesale gemstones in the world.

One day some people were seen scratching in the dirt driveway of the factory for loose stones that had fallen "through the cracks". This led to the idea of vibracreting off of a small area, pouring lots of stones into it and allowing the public to help themselves for a small fee. Thus the "scratch patch" was born and hundreds of children enjoyed themselves finding these coloured stones. Not long after this they set up a small retail department called Mineral World which also opened on weekends, allowing tourists to buy items en route to Cape Point.

The following two decades have seen Topstones enlarge and improve in various stages in 1985, 1988 and 1995 resulting in a factory which is now covered by over two acres of roofing. Then came the disastrous mountain fires in the Cape Peninsula in January 2000 and a significant portion of the factory burned down. Simon's Town itself came near to burning down and it was only with the help of the South African navy personnel that the town was saved.

It has not all been plain sailing for in the late 1990s China started to set up gem-cutting factories, some of which employed up to 7,000 people. This resulted in tons of off-cuts, which they decided to tumble and sell on the world market. The sheer numbers meant they could offer the same products as Topstones for half the price, albeit of a lower quality. The firming rand has also seen the same turnover earning considerably less in Rands than previously. Despite these problems Topstones is well placed to remain one of the South Peninsula's leading companies.

The Baines used to live in Glencairn but have now moved to Noordhoek. Andre Tops also started Dixies, now a thriving restaurant business on the main road. Andre Tops' daughter married and lived in Glencairn until 2005 but she and her family have now moved to Sedgfield.

References:

Simon's Town Museum files and "Full Circle" May 2004.

OTTO LAY – The Would-be Settler (From SAPA 29.12.1908)

A man named Otto Lay claiming Orangia as his domicile arrived at Simon's Town on 18 instant on the steamship WENNINGTON HALL. Having been prohibited from landing by the Immigration Officers, he was detained on the steamer pending her departure. Last night he made a desperate attempt to escape seizing one of the ship's boats which was discovered this morning wrecked upon the rocks adjoining the North Battery. There is little doubt that the unfortunate man was drowned. There was a heavy sea at the time of his leaving the ship.

(In those days the Immigration Officers had their office at the corner of Wharf Street-roughly where the steps outside "Harbour View" restaurant now are. This was also the home of the local Customs Officer. Ed)

THE NOON DAY GUN, CAPE TOWN

A.E. READ

Commander Gerry de Vries believes that it was soon after the 2nd British Occupation of the Cape in 1805 that the authorities instituted a time gun which was fired off daily from Imhoff Battery adjacent to the Castle in Cape Town. This continued until c 1867 when the fixed time of 12 noon was arrived at. Electrical signals and detonators for the time gun were introduced around 1864. The guns have always been used in pairs with both being loaded daily in case of a misfire in the designated gun. In favourable conditions the gun could be heard at Stellenbosch and Somerset West – roughly 35 km away.

In 1902 the City of Cape Town decided to move the time gun up to Lion Battery where it would rattle less windows and nerves. Two 18 pdr Blomefield guns Nos 249 and 54, having been modified to accept the small breech block which fired the electrical detonator, were moved to Lion Battery on Signal Hill, in July 1902. Manned by men of the 84th Company of Royal Garrison Artillery, they fired the first gun from Lion Battery on 4 August 1902. Cape Town's Noon Guns are the oldest guns in daily use

in the world and are one of the oldest live traditions in the City. In November 1996 the South African Navy opened the Lion Battery and Noon Day Gun to the public and it is a popular tourist attraction.

The Blomefield gun is named for Maj. General Sir Thomas Blomefield who was Inspector of Artillery at Woolwich in 1780. The gun is officially described as "Gun, iron smooth Bore 18 pdr 9 foot 42 cwt". They were designed in 1786 and refined in 1789. Forty-eight of these guns were off-loaded at the Cape and 27 were mounted at Imhoff Battery. For various reasons the original guns have been exchanged for others, in 1924 and again in 1945. A retired Naval Petty Officer rams the charge of black powder down the throat of the gun each day.

During World War I the people of Cape Town met monthly to remember and pray for "our men overseas participating in the War". These meetings, held on a Sunday, were termed "in fellowship with those who have fought so well, endured so much and still keep on smiling". A booklet was issued each month after the meeting and some were even sent overseas to prisoners-of-war, who were thrilled to receive them, as sometimes it was the only mail to reach them from "home". At the same time the ladies of the S.A. Gifts and Comforts Committee also ran The Rest House, a place where troops could call in for a cuppa and a chat. There was also the Returned Soldiers Committee organised by the Governor-General's War Fund and by the Recruiting Committee.

The monthly meeting of 2 June 1918 was attended by 30 naval men from Simon's Town. Rev. Leonard Green, who had served in Mesopotamia, was Chaplain to the Forces in Cape Town and gave the Soldiers Prayer and led in the intercessions and pronounced the Benediction. He was later to settle at "Blue Gums" near Millers Point where he provided an oasis for off-duty sailors for many years.

According to The Citizens Meeting of June 1918, page 2, the following appears: "Do you remember me telling you how much I had been impressed by the suggestion made by the Bishop of Pretoria that each of us should offer a prayer at noon each day for the safety of our troops overseas? Well, you will be pleased to learn that we have got the idea adopted in Cape Town. Mr (later Sir) Harry Hands, the Mayor, issued a request that such action should be taken and on 19 June, if you had been walking up Adderley Street, for instance, you would have been impressed by the way the request was responded to. As the mid-day gun went off everyone came to a standstill and all tramcars and other traffic stopped. Then clear and loud rang out the notes of "The Last Post" - for a bugler was stationed on Cartwright's balcony (at the corner of Darling Street) for the purposes of thus expressing the wishes of the people to honour the valiant hearts who had already been "called home". As the ringing bugle notes reached the streets, heads were uncovered and silent prayer engaged in. Such a scene had never before been witnessed in Cape Town. It was the most solemn and inspiring function I have ever attended. The ceremony takes place daily."

As you hear the noon-day gun from Signal Hill you may be interested to know how an idea for this signal on the anniversary of Armistice Day is said to have originated. It has often been thought that the practice of 2 minutes silence at 11 a.m. On 11 November (the time when the battlefield guns of World War I fell silent) was the idea of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, author of "Jock of the Bushveld". Sir Percy had lost his son Nugent, who was a Major in the South African forces in France in 1917.

However, it is thought that it originated with an Australian journalist Edward George Honey, born in Melbourne in 1885 and died in the U.K. from consumption in 1922. He had endeavoured to begin this custom in 1919 when he wrote a letter to the London Evening News under the pen name of Warren Foster. Nothing happened at first but then Lord Milner forwarded a letter from his friend Sir Percy to King George V's private secretary, suggesting the British Empire countries keep the 5 minutes silence on Armistice Day. It was decided that 2 minutes was ideal and so on 7 November 1919 the king issued the necessary proclamation. During World War 2 there was a pause of 1 minute each day when Cape Town came to a halt.

As we go to press it has been reported in the Cape Times newspaper that the S.A. Navy's Flag Officer Fleet (Rear Admiral Rusty Higgs) unveiled a plaque at the Lion Gun Battery on Signal Hill to mark the 90th anniversary of the two minute silence pause.

References:

"Now & Then" Kimberley Historical Society
Booklets: 33rd & 34th Meetings of Cape Town Citizens" - lent to us by Margaret Cartwright

Various papers lent to me by Commander Bisset, SAN (Retd).

HMS DALRYMPLE – HER PASSAGE FROM SIMON'S TOWN TO PLYMOUTH IN 1954/55

STEPHEN MUIR

In 1954 HMS DALRYMPLE, a survey ship converted from a 2nd World War frigate, was detached from duty in the Persian Gulf and East African waters for a refit in Simon's Town Dockyard. I, an RNVR Sub-Lt, joined her in mid-refit straight from service in a fishery protection minesweeper around the north coast of Scotland. Refit completed, DALRYMPLE's departure was delayed by minor acts of sabotage by her crew, some of whom deserted the ship and were left behind when she finally sailed out of False Bay bound for the Gulf but on her way diverted to her home port of Plymouth. En route she searched for the rock off Ponta Zavora which sank the Dutch liner KLIPFONTEIN (see

Bulletin Vol.XXX No.3) and carried out surveys off Zanzibar, off the Horn of Africa, at Famagusta and at Malta.

In the 1950s the 53 mile long island of Zanzibar was a British Protectorate ruled by Sultan Seyyid Khalifa ibn Harab advised by a British Resident. On its western side the island is fringed by numerous submerged reefs hazardous to shipping. These reefs were first surveyed in 1823 by HMS BARRACOUTA and HMS VIDAL under Captain William Owen's direction, then 50 years later by Captain Wharton in HMS SHEARWATER. Another 80 years further on the coral had grown, increasing the danger to ships approaching Zanzibar Town and making their way north to Zanzibar's companion island of Pemba. From 1951 all this extensive reef system off Zanzibar's west coast from Ras Nungwi at its northern tip to Ras Mkita at its southern end was surveyed by DALRYMPLE under three captains – Captain E.C. Irving (later Hydrographer of the Navy 1960-66; he persuaded the Admiralty to abandon the practice of converting warship hulls into survey ships and instead to commission purpose-built vessels like HMS VIDAL and SAS PROTEA) and Commanders R. Bill and J.T.K. Paisley. It was the last part of this survey south from Zanzibar Town in which I took part.

After the firing of a 19-gun salute on arrival and a formal call on the Sultan DALRYMPLE spent weekdays at sea anchored off the reefs while her four survey boats were lowered to plumb with asdic sounders the seabed near the coral. Before surveying started markers, as reference points for the triangulation, were erected on the shore. One of these was already in situ; a gazebo in the grounds of Sir John Kirk's old house. (In the reign of Sultan Bargash, Kirk, first as surgeon and from 1873 as Consul, did more than any other individual to suppress the Arab slave trade for which Zanzibar was the entrepôt). As the shoreline, up which one had to clamber to fix the markers, was bounded by low undercut flat topped cliffs of coral, long canvas boots were worn to protect legs from the poison darts of the coral polyps, ejecting a powerful toxic fluid, which caused severe pain. Once the markers, usually flags on the end of poles, were fixed, the boats started surveying, measuring with sextants the horizontal angles between the markers synchronised with the asdic recordings of the depths below the boats. The boats ran at a constant speed of 4 knots which by happy coincidence was ideal for trolling for the large game fish attracted by the creatures living among the coral. At sunset, always about 6 p.m., the four boats returned to DALRYMPLE and after dinner, the surveyors settled down to transferring the soundings from their survey pads to rough chart sheets, which, after amalgamation into one fair copy, were sent to the Navy's Hydrographic offices in Cricklewood, London and Taunton, Somerset, to emerge as Admiralty Chart 665 "Approaches to Zanzibar".

Every week-end DALRYMPLE upped anchor and sailed through the reefs to Zanzibar Town. As she passed the lighthouse on Chumbe Island, guarding the Mwamba reef, the keeper had ready for us a sack of oysters. On arrival at the town DALRYMPLE anchored opposite the House of Wonders surmounted by the clock, always six hours slow, measuring Islamic time. Sixty years before a less benign squadron of the Royal

Navy in the Indian Ocean had bombarded the same building, then the palace of the Sultan, to bring to heel an usurper to the Sultanate. Allegedly the squadron was conveniently at hand because it had learned that there was to be a cricket match it wished to watch. Once ashore DALRYMPLE's crew were in the hands of Bombay, Guide No. 1, an old Sidi Boy, (so called as Sidi Boys were the subjects of Sultan Seyyed Khalifa) a survivor of a large number of Arab and African ratings taken on as firemen and stokers in coal burning Royal Navy ships before 1914. {Some of these men were stationed in Simon's Town but the clash between Islamic and other religions led to them being repatriated and Xhosa men from Herschel in the Eastern Cape replacing them – Ed}. He led us through the narrow lanes of Stone Town permeated with the aromatic scent of cloves, past the ornately carved and studded teak doors of the Arab houses to view the Sultan's Palace, the Anglican Cathedral on the site of the old slave market, and the House of Wonders with its rickety lift and birds nesting in its chandeliers, the day ending in the English Club on the waterfront. From the club's balcony across the reefs one could see the reason for our presence in Zanzibar waters; the wrecked bow, pointing skywards astride the Fungu reef, of a cable ship of the Eastern Telegraph Company which , approaching Zanzibar on her maiden voyage on Christmas Eve 1903, took a short cut to arrive on time for the Bachelors' Ball in the Company's mess.

It was possible, if lost among the lanes of Stone Town, to orient oneself by the smell emanating from the old dhow harbour at the town's northern edge. As DALRYMPLE's junior surveyor I was allotted the unpleasant task of recording the depths in this highly insanitary and stinking stretch of water by lowering and hoisting up a traditional leadline.

DALRYMPLE's survey was carried out during the North East monsoon when temperatures and humidity rose to uncomfortable heights. Occasionally a squall arose out of nowhere driving a wall of wind and rain across the grey sea. One such sprang up during our last weekend when the Sultan's yacht, moored between the ship and the shore, broke loose drifting fast for the reefs. A boat was hastily lowered with myself in charge, we soon found the yacht heaving around and with difficulty attached a towrope and returned her safely to her moorings. A letter of thanks with the Sultan's arms was received by Commander Paisley.

The Zanzibar survey was interspersed with welcome side trips to Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa to take on bunker fuel. At Mombasa the crew members who had deserted ship in Simon's Town rejoined us. They had been rounded up and sent to serve time under the strict discipline of the naval detention barracks in Fort Jesus, Mombasa. At Mombasa no hydrography was called for as Kilindini and Port Reitz harbours and their approaches had been surveyed on a large scale in 1942 by HMS CHALLENGER for use by the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet which had withdrawn from Ceylon in the face of a superior Japanese force. Port Reitz, by the way, is named for a son of a famous Dutch/South African family who at one time served in the Royal Navy and died in Mombasa. A third trip was made to Pemba at the invitation of the District Commissioner to attend a bullfight. Many of these small islands were used by the Royal Navy as dumps for coal and contain several old naval graves which have been researched by Kevin Patience of Mombasa.



HMS DALRYMPLE anchored off Dar-es-Salaam

The survey of Zanzibar's reefs completed, DALRYMPLE's next scheduled stop was the island of Socotra off the coast of Arabia, once a Royal Navy coaling station. Here the intention was to take on board a bull from the miniature cattle native to the island as a mate for the cow which DALRYMPLE had presented to the Sheikh of Bahrein during the previous year's surveying season in the Gulf. Unfortunately high seas prevented a landing on Socotra's harbourless coast.

The usual watchkeeping duties were carried out between there and Aden and the Suez Canal. On entry into the Mediterranean we found the Red Sea not to be wine coloured by white! There the DALRYMPLE was struck by a ferocious gale, the wind shredding and flattening the waves which spewed flying foam to the horizon. On deck it smashed boats and bent guardrails. Somewhat battered she arrived at Famagusta, and, sailing past the golden walls of Othello's Tower, berthed alongside the ancient stone quay between lateen sailed caiques. A run ashore after the long voyage was enjoyed by the ship's crew in the waterside bars and dance halls, followed by a short survey in the harbour.

Next it was to the home of the Mediterranean Fleet – Grand Harbour, Malta. There DALRYMPLE was tasked to re-survey an adjacent bay, the same bay on which St Paul came ashore after the pilot of the vessel on which he was a passenger sounded in the dark his way in by leadline before beaching his ship. This time – with the aid of asdic – Lieutenant Dalton led a party of surveyors to do a full resurvey of St Paul's Harbour, an additional fleet anchorage to Grand Harbour. To assure the triangulation's accuracy our first task was to measure out a baseline with steel tapes and an astrolabe star fix at either end on the only flat space available – the race course. The survey itself involved clambering up through windows of shoreside houses and hotels to fix survey markers, to the alarm of some of their occupants. This work resulted in Admiralty Chart 195 "Plans in Malta and Gozo: St Paul's Bay".

Before leaving for U.K. DALRYMPLE returned to Grand Harbour for an Admiral's inspection which even Survey ships, normally operating apart from the Fleet, cannot escape. In the event she passed first time, the Admiral no doubt making allowances for the survey ship's informal existence and maybe relieved that she carried only one gun – an antique used solely for saluting foreign potentates – which he was required to certify was in proper order. On the passage between Malta and Gibraltar, passing the snowclad Sierra Nevada to starboard, the ship was stopped every hour to lower a reversing water bottle – an open ended cylinder to trap the sea water with a thermometer attached to its outside – to measure at various depths sea temperatures and salinity for later use by submarines. A brief stop at Gibraltar then the last memory of my short career as a marine surveyor on an ocean-going ship: a cold dawn off Ushant on the morning watch looking out across water dotted with fishing smacks through which the ship threaded her way up channel before dropping a final anchor in Plymouth Sound at the conclusion of what was for me an eventful voyage.

A postscript: the bunkering call at Dar-es-Salaam was soon to bear fruit. After a few months surveying the changeable sandbanks in the Thames Estuary I left the navy to join

the Colonial Service in which I was offered a cadetship in either the Gilbert and Ellice islands or in Tanganyika. Despite my hydrographic experience I did not feel confident of navigating the typhoon prone Pacific between the islands I would be responsible for administering and instead opted for East Africa. There in five years service I only went to sea once – on a day outing as the sole crew member in an ingalwa – a small native outrigger canoe – whose owner, a court messenger in the District Office in Dar-es-Salaam, sailed us one Sunday through the narrow entrance of the harbour to an offshore island, a popular outing for boats from the city's yacht club. Our ingalwa, laboriously tacking against a stiff onshore wind, only reached the island as the club boats were about to start on their return journey but with the wind now behind us the outrigger, skipping over the waves, beat all of them back to port.

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Admiralty Charts at the Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

INSPECTOR GUN STORE OF THE SAPS

In December 2007 Inspector Store retired from the Police service after almost 32 years. He served amongst other places in Fish Hoek and Simon's Town and was very well known to various women's groups to whom he taught the art of self-defence.

He says he is not sure quite what led him to become a policeman but one day, after leaving Marist Brothers school where he was taught by Salesian priests, he caught a train to Cape Town and made his way to Caledon Square and after a remarkably quick period of 26 days was sworn in as a policeman, much to the disbelief of his teachers. He obviously has a very kind streak in him unlike many policemen. He says he joined the police to help people not to arrest them. At that time the police force was made up of predominantly Afrikaans speaking people so he had to adapt to speaking primarily in Afrikaans.

Inspector Store has had a varied career in the police from tea boy to acting station commissioner. He has a very active mind and is always studying something new – at the moment he is completing a B. Tech degree. For the past 40 years he has kept racing pigeons, bred and shown Doberman dogs and Siamese cats and has bred hamsters, even introducing new colours. He says he is fascinated by the study of genetics.

He has a long-suffering wife who puts up with all his interests. Sadly his son (28) and daughter (24) have left to live in the United Kingdom. In retirement Inspector Store will continue to work in “security” in the Simon's Town/ Fish Hoek area where his talents will be put to good use. Simon's Town will surely be the poorer for his retirement from the Police.

NAVAL ACTIVITIES IN KLAWER VALLEY

(from “The Ways of the Navy” by Rear Admiral D. Arnold-Foster CMG RN)

Besides the fleet in home water, every fleet on a foreign station has a range of its own to practice on, some of them being in beautiful surroundings. The naval range at Simon's Town where the crews of ships on the Africa station go for their rifle firing, is one of the ideal ranges of the world.

It lies in a wild, sheltered valley perched high up in the rugged mountains not far from the Cape of Good Hope. So clear is the atmosphere that houses 30 miles to the eastward across the dark blue water of False Bay are plainly visible, with the Hottentot Mountains in the distance, beyond. The flat top of Table Mountain looming up 20 miles to the northward seems quite close.

The air up there is fresh, the sun pleasantly warm, and the floor of the valley is carpeted with beautifully coloured heaths and flowers. The only drawbacks are the snakes that lurk beneath its rocks and stones or bask in its open spaces and the frequent bush fires. Early in the cool of the morning the ship's crew detailed for the range, dressed in white duck suits and carrying rifles and kit, toil in single file up the steep steps that zig-zag up the sheer face of the hill from Simon's Town. Hammocks, provisions and ammunition are sent up by the aerial car suspended from stout wire hawsers stretched taut between the brow of the hill and the West Dockyard below.

At the entrance to the valley stands the naval sanatorium, a building fitted up like a ship, where the party is quartered during its stay – usually 7 – 10 days. Officers and men are organised in sections and are soon busy with rifle and aiming drill – and everyone is told all about the snakes. These creatures are shy and timid and a fully clothed man seldom receives a fatal bite, but, since a single snake can discharge enough poison to kill a dozen men, it is as well not to take risks. The men are shown how to treat a bite, told to wear their canvas gaiters always, and to carry sticks when wandering about the valley.

At the butts old rifle shots are always inclined to put too little range on their sights, for, owing to the wonderful clearness, distances are deceptive and everything appears to be closer than it really is. But once this is understood conditions are favourable for good shooting, and many marksmen's badges are earned on the range.

Small bush fires in the valley and on surrounding hills are put out without interrupting the shooting. But sometimes a fire gets a good hold on the wooded slopes and threatens the town and dockyard below. Every available man is then hurried to the wide "fire paths" which intersect the mountain side, and armed with long branches, they check the course of the fire by energetic flogging. During one of these fires the senior officer who went up the hill to take charge omitted to put on his gaiters, and a frightened snake took refuge up the leg of his trousers. With some presence of mind he pulled the snake out by the tail and threw it away before it had time to think of doing any harm!

In the corner of these rifle ranges is a secluded spot for pistol firing. Here officers, petty officers and others usually provided with pistols when landed with armed parties, practice firing at small targets, under the strict and careful eye of the gunner. Here too, good pistol shots, who are few and far between, compete for prizes. The gunner in charge of the pistol range always treats everyone armed with this handy little weapon that goes off so easily, as a highly dangerous person. A novice indeed, generally finds the procedure insisted upon for squad-firing a tiresome and complicated business. However, the drill is designed to ensure that at no time shall he point the short barrel of his pistol at himself, at one of his mates, or at the instructor! And the instructor allows him to take no risks.

SIMON'S TOWN LANDSLIDES, PAST DISASTERS & PRESENT THREATS

Boet Dommissie

Simon's Town's backdrop is a steeply sloping hillside topped by horizontal layers of table mountain sandstone and granite. The hillside slopes have been formed over the ages from the erosion of the upper layers and consist of mixed layers of clay, sand, gravel, stones and decomposed granite, termed Talus and Landslide debris. Large boulders are strewn down the slopes and on the sea shore.

Early paintings of Simon's Bay depict the hillside sloping steeply down to the shore with very little suitable space for building between the land and the sea. The only reasonably level area was at the foot of the Klawer valley, and it was here that the first houses were built. Many such as Admiralty House, Palace Barracks and the Storehouses remain today. Extension of the early settlement took place by excavation along the sea front, eventually forming St George's Street. The excavated ground enabled the narrow corridor to be widened. Later a second row of houses were built on the slopes immediately behind the first buildings and some dockyard buildings were built on the reclaimed sea shore.

The earliest description of the town and the possible dangers of landslides is the annotation to the Map of Simon's Town prepared by L.M. Thibault, the Colonial Engineer in 1814.

“The little distance that lies between the sea and the lower slopes of the mountains of this bay have forced the inhabitants to cut into the ground in order to level it so as to find a suitable surface on which to build the house. All these excavations have formed a street, which, 30 years ago was so narrow that a carriage could hardly pass along it without risking falling into the sea. Some houses are today built in such a way that, being close to each other, the excavation of new ground is impracticable. Others where it would still be possible to excavate or cut into the earth, have other houses behind them so placed that, the very little space between the upper and lower being divided in half, the result of excavating the lower half would be that the house on the higher ground would collapse on to the lower one, and that would surely be a nice affair.”

Thibault was however incorrect in stating that “The mountainsides are extremely cohered and composed of heavy soil, rocks and debris which even the rains can scarcely separate.”

In those early days there were several springs or fountains on the lower slopes fed from the large amount of water in the extensive catchment area above the town. Surface water after the rain and that from the springs would run freely down to the sea. Much of this flow has since been channelled into storm water drains, and still flows almost continuously throughout the year. There are still several springs on the mountain slopes which some fortunate residents are able to use.

The extensive fires of 2000 destroyed the large forests of Bluegum trees which previously thrived on this water. As these trees have been cut down this subsurface water is now percolating down underground through the soil, recharging springs, entering municipal stormwater pipes, and also surfacing in excavations for house foundations. The many houses on the slopes and the tarmac roads increase the rainfall run-off into stormwater drains, and further reduce surface evaporation. Poorly designed retaining walls create underground dams and obstruct and divert natural underground channels. In lay terms some of the mountain slopes consist of soils which are affected by moisture and either swell or shrink and this in certain instances results in foundation failures. It has also been suggested that voids may be formed in the soil, which later collapse and may initiate landslides.

A very detailed Geotechnical Assessment of slope stability was carried by M.J. Mountain and Partners in 1995. The specific areas assessed were those above Palace Hill and on Cable Hill. The report concluded that the hill slopes had an extremely complex geology with evidence that much higher sea levels existed previously. Photographic evidence indicated several old slope failures throughout the Simon's Town area, and that these related to various features including a series of parallel northwest-trending faults. It would seem then that some of the slopes above Simon's Town are unstable and that this

instability has been, and continues to be aggravated by poor building design, construction, and interference with the underground water patterns.

There have been several major landslides over the past two centuries. These have invariably been associated with exceptionally heavy rainfall. Many smaller land slips have occurred but not been recorded. An earthquake struck Simon's Bay on 18 August 1766 and damaged one of the front gables of the recently constructed hospital. This was repaired but two years later one of the back gables collapsed in heavy rain.

In 1743 Baron van Imhoff constructed a Storehouse "on the beach" and in 1765 an additional storey was added. In 1774 the foundations on the mountain side of the building partly collapsed and the building was propped up with poles and barrels of wine! Fortunately the building survived and is still in use today. In 1819 St George's Church, which was situated opposite the present Jubilee Square collapsed after a severe rainstorm. The Church was damaged beyond repair and for many years services were held in the Sail Loft and Mast House in what is now known as the West Dockyard. St Francis Church was built in 1837.

There may well have been other episodes, but the next recorded disaster occurred in 1905 when a house in Goede Gift collapsed after heavy rain and there was considerable damage due to mudslides and flooding behind the Central Hotel, directly below. There was also extensive damage at Seaforth where the recently installed storm water drains proved to be inadequate. There are a few photographs of this disaster in the Simon's Town Museum. There are also photographs of the damage caused by severe floods in 1948 and in 1950 when a section of the Red Hill road collapsed. Another large section of this road collapsed in similar floods in 1954.

There have been many minor and major landslips and landslides since then, the most recent being in 2007 when, after heavy rains, a large new retaining wall in Simon's Kloof collapsed. Later in the year building operations on the old Caltex Filling station site on Queen's Road, was interrupted by a landslip as well as the bank behind the Prince Alfred building (Backpackers Lodge). Walls behind the ABC and Central Hotel buildings also threatened to collapse.

The first major disaster which could really be attributed to building activities and excavations occurred in 1954, when more than £50,000 damage was caused by landslides and flooding. These are best reflected by quoting extracts from the newspapers of the time. Many senior Simonites will recall the disasters and the concerns of those times.

FLOODS SWIRL THROUGH NAVAL PORT Cape Argus 26 June 1954
HOUSES,ROADS DAMAGED: *heaviest rain for more than 30 years – 5.27 inches in 48 hours caused 14 landslides and severely damaged roads and property....major slides on Red Hill Road.....11 flats in Waterfall Road flooded.*

SIMONSTOWN REPAIRING STORM DAMAGE: Cape Argus 28 June 1954
...the Methodist Church building is now acting as a retaining wall, holding up a huge

clay bank, which has subsided against the Church

FLOODS ARE THE WORST IN 22 YEARS: Cape Times 20 July 1954

4.27 inches of rain in 48 hours.....landslide near Millers Point. Main road blocked by huge landslide.....entire rear wall of a garage destroyed by a pressure break.

SIMONS TOWN WATCHES SLIDES IN FEAR: Cape Argus 20 July 1954

....thousands of tons of clay are poised on the slopes directly above the buildings on St George's Street....for more than 100 years a widening crack runs down the centre of Smith's Lane.....damage estimated at £50,000....22 July 1954. The heavy clay banks are still moving and masses of clay and earth were sent tumbling into the backyard of the Central Hotel.

MORE FLOOD DAMAGE: Cape Argus 23 July 1954

.... a large modern building behind the Imperial Cold Storage building was severely damaged by pressure on the main walls.....sections of it will have to be demolished.

LANDSLIDE THREAT TO SIMONSTOWN INCREASING Cape Times 24 July 1954.

...Cracks in Smith's Lane have become worse....the garage in St George's Street is being demolished....further heavy slides have taken place behind the Royal Naval Hospital on Cable Hill, damage £ 2,000....Two walls of a house in Hospital Lane have collapsed.

CREEPING CLAY PUTS MORE HOUSES IN PERIL: Cape Argus 24 July 1954.

...A 200 yard stretch on the main street from Rectory Lane to the West Yard gate is the main area threatened.....insurance shock for Simonstown. Household policies do not cover landslides.

RAINS BRING MORE FLOODS: Cape Argus 6 August 1954

....a crack in Smith's Lane which had been cemented up a fortnight ago broke open again. There were continuing troubles and concerns the following year

SIMON'S TOWN HOTEL EVACUATED Cape Argus 30 April 1955

...the Council's Consulting Engineer feared that the 100 foot embankment behind the block might collapse at any time.

100 RESIDENTS IGNORE ORDER TO QUIT AT SIMONSTOWN

Cape Argus 7 June 1955

....the properties which might be threatened are 6 buildings on St George's Street, and a row of cottages and houses in Smith's Lane.....they are all determined to stay as long as possible

MOUNTAIN ON THE MOVE AGAIN Cape Argus 6 August 1955

WORK SOON TO BOLSTER WALL OF DANGER

Soon after this extensive work to stabilise the bank was undertaken.

Diagram No. 55.75 dated 18 March 1955, prepared by Ninham Shand details the steps to be undertaken to stabilise the mountain below Smith's Lane and above the building on St George's Street from Union Lane to the ABC Building. From left to right the properties on St George's Street belonged to Eaton, Cader, Green, Satusky and the Cental Hotel. The two properties immediately above Smith's Lane belonged to Gambino and Dreyer.

Smith's Lane was repaired and a wide storm water channel constructed from Goede Gift above to the lane between the Central Hotel and the ABC building. A huge amount of rubble and clay was removed from the bank behind Satusky's building and the Central Hotel. How this was done and where the rubble was dumped is not recorded. A 12 inch concrete drain ran below the bottom retaining wall, and at least 9 French drains ran in parallel from Smith's Lane to weep holes in this retaining wall. These long dug out drains were filled with packed rubble and 6 inch open-ended drainage pipes.

CREEPING MENACE HAS GONE

Cape Argus 3 March 1956

NOW THEY NEED NOT FEAR THE WINTER

...almost 2,000 tons of mountain rubble and clay have been removed from Simon's Town's "creeping bank" in the last 3 months, and for the first time for some years there will be no chance of landslides in the coming winter.....eleven French drains have been built into the bank to drain away the water from the strong underground spring.

CREEPING CLAY BANK HALTED

Cape Times 28 July 1956

...the drainage system appears to be effective.....Simon's Town Council has permitted reoccupation of the tenements and flats behind the threatened buildings.

The Simon's Town Naval Base was handed over to the South African Navy in 1957, and several old buildings were renovated. Since then many new houses have been constructed on the slopes of the mountain. The application of the Group Areas Act in 1967 resulted in many unoccupied dwellings being demolished. Larger houses were then built on these sites, often requiring further excavations and retaining walls, and in some cases without proper geo-technical site assessments. Some houses were built on recent landfill, and in the Harbour Heights extension above Runciman Drive at least two new houses collapsed and had to be demolished.

On the afternoon of 3 September 1993 a serious fault line developed in the mountainside on Erf 848 above the Cable Hill naval property. The slip fault was of some 100 metres in length and the existing retaining walls below were showing signs of stress failure. The Simon's Town Municipality instructed the S.A. Navy to evacuate all buildings in the Cable Hill area and to appoint a competent person to produce a full report. The report, a few days after the event, suggested that the failure was due to the saturation of the mountainside as a result of a burst naval water main. This was dealt with but a more serious problem with natural ground water was identified. An assessment of the Cable Hill area and fault formed part of the extensive investigation by M.J. Mountain and Partners in 1995, which was referred to in the opening paragraphs.

Simon's Town experienced an unusually heavy downpour in June 2007, which resulted in the flooding of parts of St George's Street by huge quantities of water pouring down between the buildings. Certainly a reminder that we need to be aware of past disasters and to treat the mountain slopes with great respect, and updated geo-technical assessments.

CONCLUSION

The historical and scientific evidence confirms the potential instability of the mountain slopes on which Simon's Town has been built. Any further development of infrastructure and building should be supported by reliable geo-technical assessments.

There should be compulsion for developers to include appropriate geo-technical engineering consideration of the above issues as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

Note: The author is grateful to the Simon's Town Museum, David Erickson, Peter de Villiers and Neil Grant (a former Town Engineer of Simon's Town) for information and advice.

QUEEN'S BATTERY

DAVID ERICKSON

The Battery was built by Royal Engineers of the British garrison stationed at the Cape of Good Hope between 1887 and 1889 and was part of the fixed defences of the Cape Peninsula. Stationed here at Simon's Town were 1 company of Royal Engineers, 1 company of the Royal Garrison Artillery and detachments of the Royal Army Medical Corps, Army Service Corps and Ordnance Corps. It was originally called the "Cemetery Battery" and it was opposite the old cemetery dating back to 1814. It was built for 2 x 9" RML and 2 x 7" RML guns which were mounted in March 1893 and 1890 respectively. In September 1897 the 7" RML guns were replaced by 2 pairs of 6" QF guns. Under Authority Cape Town/24163/97 dd 29/1/98 and dd 485/25/2/98 the name of the Battery was changed to 'QUEEN'S BATTERY'.

Five blockhouses for defence against land attack were erected inside the Battery and one, for the defence of the Electric Light Emplacements, was built near the sea in front of the Battery. All building material including the bricks, wood, cement and hardware came from England. Soil for filling and levelling was obtained from the site on Queen's Road between Flora Steps and the Caltex Filling Station (to-day Queen's Terrace).

In February 1919 the majority of the CGA were demobilized and those remaining were left in the Battery as caretakers. These were finally demobbed in January 1920 and were replaced by details of the SA Mounted Rifles (Artillery). From 1921 onwards the Battery was manned permanently by a small maintenance party of SAPGA details. In Aug 1922 2 Vickers machine guns were sent to the Battery.

In Aug 1939 upon hostilities becoming imminent the Battery was fully manned by the SAA and on the outbreak of war on 3 Sept 1939 volunteers were called on to assist in manning the Fort. On 21 Aug 1943 the Battery ceased to be manned and no longer

functioned as part of the defence system. Its duties were taken over by Noah's Ark Battery. It was handed over to the Royal Navy for use as Barracks during the same year. In 1957 the Royal Navy pulled out of Simon's Town. In 1961 it became home to the SA Navy's medical services. As time passed several alterations had to be done to accommodate growing numbers and activities. However 4 of the original bomb shelters are still in use: 1 as an archive; 2 as storage and the 4th became "The Gat", the unit's after-hours "water-hole".

The Officer Commanding in 1978 (Brig. A.G. Jones Retd) did the traditional rounds of the Unit every Friday with the RSM (WO1 Daantjie Viljoen). They wanted a bulk dispensary and chose bomb shelter No.4. However this was prone to flooding due to inadequate drainage. Due to the assistance of Admiral Edwards refurbishment took place. A Ten Pin Bowling Alley was built with wood that was discarded from the houses which had to be demolished due to road widening. Bowls came from the Kingsley Centre in Pretoria. The ships' lights and interior fittings came from Naval Armament Depot Stores Sales and various people made donations. The opening game was played between Brig Jones and WO1 Viljoen and Viljoen won!

KELLY KLAASEN

From: The Cape Times 23 April 2008/Brian Ingpen's column

Kelly was a former Head Girl of Simon's Town High School. She has completed her initial marine engineering studies at Cape Peninsula University of Technology with distinctions and is currently at sea as Safmarine's 1st female engineer cadet. Last year 22 marine engineering students enrolled and the intake for 2008 finds 46 candidates registering. SAMTRA at Simon's Town does its fair share in training people for sea-going jobs. It has a full-bridge simulator and engine room simulator and has launched an accredited GMDSS training course. It is a very successful training centre in the grounds of Simon's Town High School at Seaforth and much credit should be given to Maersk Line (a Danish Company) and Brian Ingpen (a former Headmaster of the Simon's Town High School) for their foresight in establishing this centre in our historic town.