



## GSSA Cemetery Recording News

Vol 2 no. 1 March 2004



St Mark's  
Anglican Church  
Cemetery,  
Shafton, Karkloof,  
Lion's River,  
Kwazulu-Natal

Welcome



**Cemetery Recording News is 1 year old !!!!**

So glad you could join us to celebrate.

I wish to record a special welcome to the members of the Rootsweb and Yahoo lists that have joined the mailing list of this letter. It is a privilege to have you on our mailing list and we sincerely hope you enjoy the contents of our newsletter.

## **Contributors and Volunteers**

It is a pleasure to once again acknowledge the work of voluntary contributors to the Cemetery Recording Project. My only wish is that the time given by these great people could motivate others to follow and help make the database grow. There must be many enthusiastic persons out there who are also passionate about recording and preserving cemetery data. Please contact Errol or Peter at the e-mail addresses at the foot of this newsletter for guidance on our requirements. Sharing this data is a great step forward to so many who may have hit a 'brick wall'.

## **Cemetery CD**

So much work has been done in the last 3 months of 2003 to overhaul the data held in the main database by Peter Moss. Names have been standardised, corrections made to individual entries where applicable, details previously exclude have been moved into the notes on the individuals and entries that had no value, such as 'No Name, No Name' have been eliminated. We estimate that there have been in excess of 12,000 corrections made to the data to bring it into line with the standards that we use at this point in time.

The final preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cemetery CD is moving ahead in the hands of Allie Semmelink. The CD will contain at least 1,564 cemeteries containing 125,300 names. This represents an increase of 701 cemeteries and 54, 877 names. It will include all data that was on the 1<sup>st</sup> CD as well as some cemetery photos and other information.

Please visit the GSSA website at [www.ggsa.info](http://www.ggsa.info) to view the latest list of cemeteries that are on the database. Go to 'Projects', 'Cemetery Headstone Project', 'Summary'. It will download a PDF file. The listing is sorted in 'Country', 'Province', 'Magisterial District' sequence. Those marked, as "Published" will be on the new CD.

**Watch out for a Special Edition of Cemetery Recording News when this CD is about to be released.**

**The first Special Edition is coming SOON !!!**

## Recording Experiences

A sign in a cemetery in Uganda says: 'Persons are prohibited from picking flowers from any but their own graves'.... [!!]

**Well, it is good to know that at least there are graves somewhere with flowers to pick.....**

Last year, on travelling from Komatipoort to Vilankulo in Moçambique, we noticed that all the graves and cemeteries seen along the road were well kept. All surrounds and headstones or crosses are painted snow white. A stark contrast against a filthy, poverty stricken, broken down, fallen-to-pieces, bombed country!  
'Who'd dunnit?' Who paid? [Enough to put us to shame.....]

**Someone mentioned that their dead are sacred to them..**

## Branch/Individual Contributions

Eastern Cape – Alice Mitche!

In the Alexandria Cemetery there is a sneezewood cross that for the past 100 plus years has borne a brass plaque dedicated to the memory of a "beloved husband, Albert George Harwood" and Thomas Geoghegan and 12 of their shipmates who lost their lives in the wreck of the barque "Roma" on 19th August 1892. That plaque has now gone and the denuded wooden cross stands forlornly commemorating - what?

This morning I received the following e-mail from member Vernon Whittal who is greatly distressed and writes:

"A few months ago I was told that all the little brass plates on the wall of the Garden Of Remembrance of the Catholic Church in Vereeniging had been stolen. I wondered what people wanted to do with such things and I was told that they sold them to scrap dealers !

In the children's section of the Sasolburg Cemetery where our two babies we lost in the 1960's are buried, all the heads of the little angels on the graves, have been broken off !

Last year when Yvonne and I were in Graaff-Reinet we decided to go and visit the monument just outside of town, to the great South African Voortrekker leader, Andries Pretorius. To our dismay we found that the surrounding tiled steps had been chopped out and that Andries himself had become a target for people who did not know what to do with empty bottles. There was a squatter camp nearby and it was obvious that the tiles, even when broken, could be used in such a camp. No one was interested to listen when we wanted to tell them about this !

Today I had an E-mail from a fellow genealogist, Garnet Marshall, who has been to the Eastern Cape and visited Bathurst. He tells me that the Toposcope, a monument to the 1820 Settlers, erected on a hill above Bathurst, has been vandalised and all those bronze plaques indicating the locations of the different parties have been removed.

Needless to tell you that both Yvonne & I are feeling devastated that someone would do this. We and thousands of other people have been to the Toposcope and looked in amazement at the scenes where our ancestors had been dropped in this new country and had to try and start a new beginning. Why on earth would some one do such a thing and destroy it? What have the police done about it? Are there scrap dealers who have bought those bronze plaques? All I can say is that I am so grateful that I was able to visit the Toposcope and I wish that the destroyers of such a thing will be haunted by their deed forever !

What can we do?"

Well, I am going to write to the Editor of the EP Herald, and I am going to fwd Vernon's letter to all the Branches. Maybe we can make a collective noise about this.

If you want the full text of the brass plaque for the "Roma" I have it but it is rather lengthy. I also have a photograph if you would like a copy.

Thanks Alice Mitchell for this item – Ed.

#### Western Cape – Yvonne Robinson

This report has been condensed – Ed.

The Moorreesburg cemetery, which was started in August 2002 was visited again on 26 March 2003 to complete the recording. As only two members were able to attend it was left to Yvonne Robinson and Fred Deas to make the trip. However they were joined by four ladies of Moorreesburg, who took pity on them, joined in and the recording was completed. These ladies were Erna Swanepoel, Evelyn Dippenaar, Eurice Teichmann and Rose Baker.

Between 8 may 2003 and 10 July 2003 (5 visits) the Old Cemetery at Malmesbury was recorded.

Then between 16 August 2003 and 6 September 2003 the Stellenbosch District Cemetery was recorded.

After a planning trip on 13 November 2003 and then a visit on 29 November 2003, a very successful recording of graves on Robben Island was achieved.

Quote from full report:- **“We had to dig right down in front of most of the headstones to find [or not to find] the plaques. Afterwards, and before levelling the ground again, the place looked as if ant-bears had a whale of a time there! To read the plaques, we had to copy the postures of warthogs! On knees, bottoms up, and on elbows! [Wonder why the passing tourist buses suddenly slacked down? I’m sure I heard cameras clicking!] It must have been a puzzling, colourful and an hilarious sight!”**

## **Branch News**

### **Johannesburg Branch**

Burgershoop, Krugersdorp recording is all but complete. The processing and checking will commence shortly and then be sent on for inclusion in the next CD. We are also now planning to record the Edenvale (Gauteng) Cemetery in the near future.

## **Q & A Department**

Correspondence from a contributor has provided some useful items for this column.

Q. What do I do when there is no official burial at a cemetery, but a person's ashes have been scattered and a memorial stone placed?

A. The title of the project is "Cemetery Recording". We therefore record what we see. Comments could be added in "Notes" to the effect that it is a memorial plaque.

Q. There are cases where several names are listed on a single stone but only "Given" names are shown except for the person at the top of the list.

A. You as the recorder are in the best position to interpret the data. It could be assumed that the surname does in fact apply to all those other persons listed unless otherwise stated. A comment in "Notes" to qualify your interpretation would hopefully satisfy the researcher reading the Cemetery CD Data. Again one can only record what you see, however be very careful of 'assumptions'.

These are excerpts from correspondence between the Project Team and a contributor. – Ed.

## **Hobby-X Report**

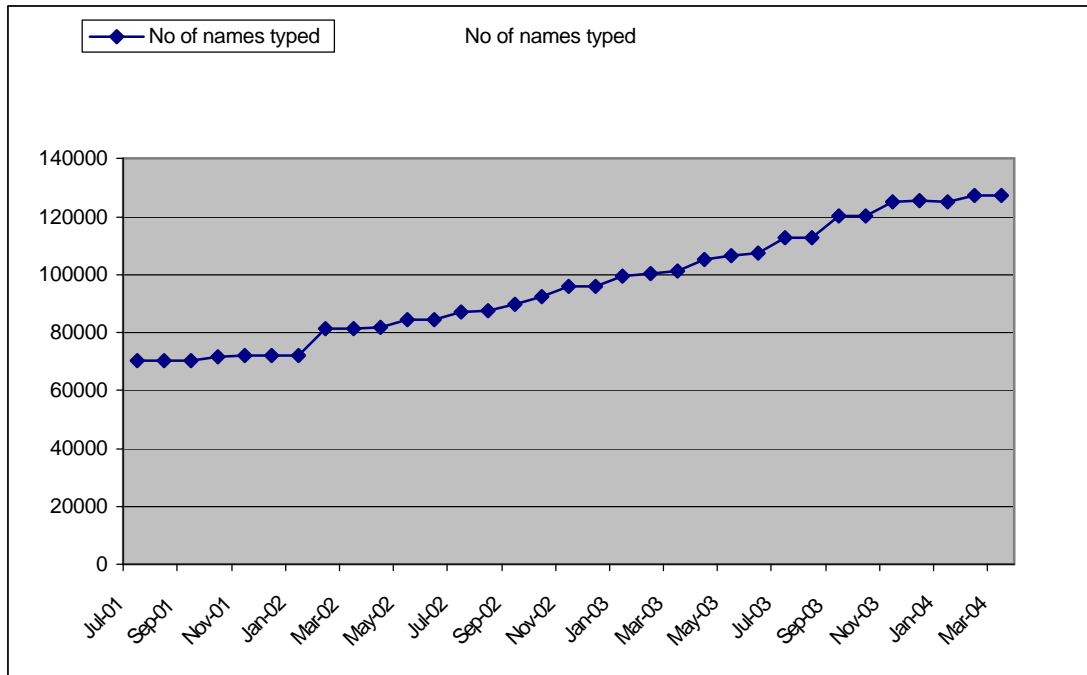
The GSSA hosted an exhibition stand at the recent Hobby-X show at The Dome at Northgate. Here is a report from Andre Heydenrich.

"Hobby-X was on from Thursday, 4 March till Sunday, 7 March. Total attendance was more than 40 000 visitors with the numbers over the week-end being three to four times as many as those during the week. It took four people to answer all the queries that were lodged over the two busy days.

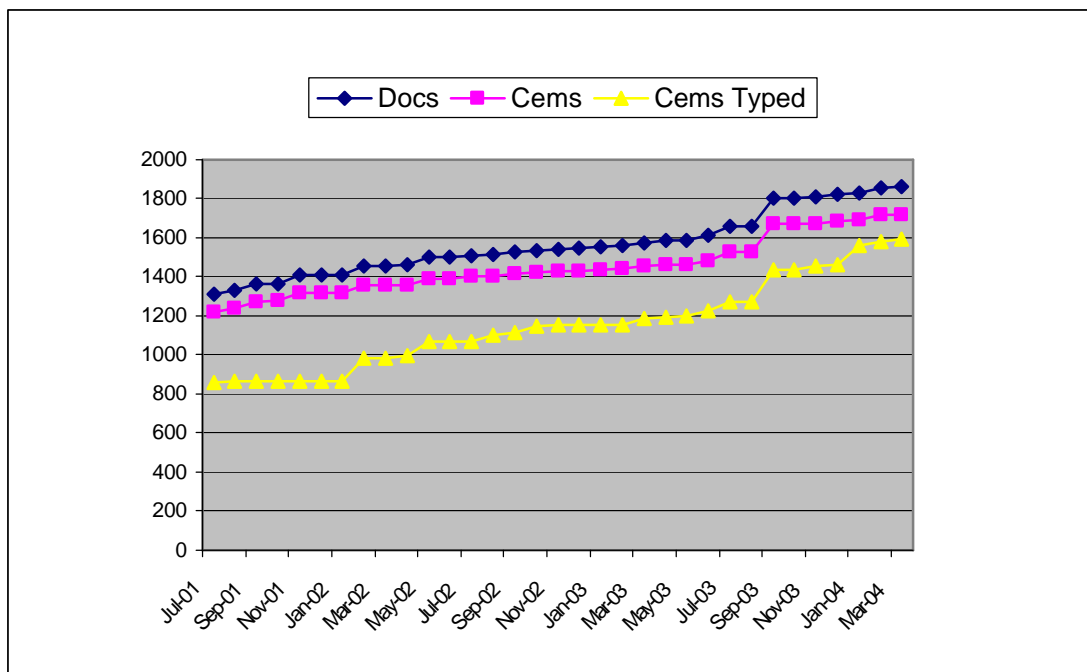
The Genealogical Society managed to attract two new members and sold a number of their products. From a financial point of view, it was a break-even situation. From a public relations point of view, we reached more people in a more direct manner than we could have done by pamphlets or even a talk show on radio."

I also visited Hobby-X on the Sunday and was impressed with the GSSA stand. It was very busy and the volunteers on duty certainly had their hands full. – Ed.

## Statistics



Since Jan 2004 the number of names on the database has increased by 2,202 to 127,502. We look forward to this number increasing steadily in the months to come.



As with the volume of names, this graph reflects an increase of 31 Documents held, 29 Cemeteries and 32 Cemeteries Typed since Jan 2004. There are now 1,858 documents held, 1,718 cemeteries on the database and 1,594 of these cemeteries typed and in the database of names.

## **Editor's Note**

My sincere apologies for some seriously bad journalism in the last issue. I am not a journalist, so that is my only excuse. I was caught out by a kindly recipient on some details, which I will now try to correct.

1. The Church Street Cemetery mentioned is in Pretoria.
2. The Cemetery being recorded by Johannesburg branch is Burgershoop in Krugersdorp.
3. Braamfontein Cemetery is being processed, but is so large that it is difficult to say when it may be completed.

I am extremely pleased to announce that due to the kind permission granted to me by the list owners of some Rootsweb and yahoo groups, this newsletter is now going to reach an international readership. I have had request messages from Australia, Canada, America, Germany, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand, to name a few. The response has been very gratifying from the list members and I look forward to hearing from more of them in the near future. –Ed.

## **Next Issue**

A list of the new cemeteries added to the database since we closed to create CD2.

Comments and feedback from readers.

## **Contacts**

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