

Genealogical Society of South Africa

Durban and Coastal Branch

Volume 20 Issue 2/2004

New Members

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to our new members and wish them lots of success in their research and a fruitful association with the Society.

Mr. S. and Mrs J Botha
Paul, Ancia and Tanya Bower
Rosemary Dixon- Smith
Mrs P. Fourie.

Speakers

12th June 2004 at 2.30pm Dr. Tony Cubbin, previously of the University of Zululand give us a talk about the Origins of British Settlers in Port Natal. Please join us, and feel free to bring a friend, for what promises to be a very interesting afternoon!

Changing Direction

Submitted by Joan Rachmann

I began genealogy, as I suppose most of us do, by compiling drop-line family trees that were mainly names and dates. Although I did not think any of my family had ever put pen to paper, I was amazed to receive the gift of a copy of an old diary written by a family member for the period 1821 to 1830. This not only helped by family tree, but it changed the direction of my research. As it seemed a pity to waste so much first-hand information that could never be fitted onto a family tree, I decided to convert my data to a family history.

There are three aspects to family history – genealogical, biographical and historical. During my genealogical research I had inevitably collected a certain amount of biographical detail. I expanded my notes on each ancestor into a brief summary of that person's life. As I was writing this for descendants who knew nothing of their forbears' homelands, I found it necessary to add some description of their countries of origin and their probable reasons for immigrating. To find this information I needed to consult travel and social history books. Many of the descendants did not live in Natal or even in Africa so I also needed to describe old Westville, the family hometown for three generations. Local history I found in Newspapers, periodicals, church magazines, biographies of contemporaries of my forbears and in a few letters and petitions to the Colonial Secretary. While genealogy is the base on which all else rests, it is necessary to consider what world events were taking place during forbears' lives, as a man is a product of his times. The Municipal library has a number of useful books giving key events throughout various periods.

I decided on the order of my chapters and once I had assembled sufficient detail for any chapter I began writing. As I was still researching some branches I did not write the chapters in order. It took me three years to complete my book. I learnt two things from my search for family history. Firstly, I found it was possible that the life and/or opinions of family members, had at various times, been recorded. I found newspaper reports of a family wedding, various obituaries and an interview with an elderly relative when she was in her nineties. Secondly, I found that just because no world-famous people are on my visiting list, it does not mean my ancestors did not know any. Don't discount those old family traditions, sometimes they are true!

MAKING THE MOST OF DECEASED ESTATE FILES

Submitted by Rosemary Dixon-Smith

- ❖ Golden Rule: Look at ALL the documents in the file, not simply the Death Notice & Will. Surprising nuggets of information may emerge in the most unlikely pieces of paper.
- ❖ When finding an online index reference make a note of anything appearing under "Remarks" and look at those related files too. Leave no stone unturned. (The family historian's motto.)
- ❖ A pre-deceased spouse's estate reference is usually supplied; if "No Trace" is mentioned, check the index for other provinces.

- ❖ The Death Notice is the key which unlocks many doors – but some remain firmly closed e.g. when the space on the form next to “Parents” gives that dreaded word “Deceased”, or more starkly, “Dead”, instead of the hoped-for names; or under “Birthplace”, simply “England” instead of at least a County as a starting point for the researcher. Nothing much one can do about that except swallow one’s disappointment and plod onwards. The fullness and accuracy of the information appearing on the Death Notice is in direct proportion to the knowledge of the Informant, usually but not always the next-of-kin. It may be that a son either never knew, or has forgotten, the names of his overseas grandparents, or where his parents were married. These Notices are completed under stress of family bereavement: a widow may not recall precisely where her husband was born – if she ever knew. If the Informant is not a family member, details may be sketchy. However, *additional information may be added after the completion of the Death Notice* and this sometimes comes to light in later documents in the file – another reason for seeing ALL the papers.
- ❖ More recent Death Notices give the SA Identity No. (which came into being in the mid- 1950s): this can be useful when ordering Death Certificates through the Dept of Home Affairs. Unless you are addicted to documentary evidence (and which of us is not?), if the Death Notice is found, the Death Certificate may not be worth the effort: the only facts the latter will supply which the Death Notice doesn’t, are the Cause of Death and the duration of the final illness. A copy of an Abridged Death Certificate is sometimes included in the Deceased Estate file, which gives the above details and may obviate the need for a Full Certificate. (While on the subject of certificates, a divorce file often ironically includes the Marriage Certificate of the once-happy couple.)
- ❖ If the deceased was unmarried, yet names appear under “Children”, these may be *siblings* of the deceased. A note usually clarifies this, but not always. Clearly, if a young man of 19 died as a result of military action, he is unlikely to have produced 3 children before that and the names listed are his brothers and sisters. They may be beneficiaries in his estate.
- ❖ The deceased’s daughters’ married names are usually given (unless they were still single, of course) and this can be the start of an entirely new search for descendants under a different surname. Addresses given for children can lead to locating living descendants.
- ❖ “Minor” children’s dates of births are generally given on the Death Notice, which is most useful; “Major” children’s d o b are not given.
- ❖ Finding two separate Death Notices in one deceased estate file may indicate that the first form was completed at the place of death e.g. during a military conflict (many examples during the Anglo-Boer War) and a later “official” Notice followed. Or the first Notice may have been issued in another area – a recent case being in Maseru – a second, more fully-completed Notice filled in later.
- ❖ The Will is the next most significant document, many being in bland “standard format” and not particularly informative, though beneficiaries under the will are named of course and specific bequests e.g. the medals of a military man, may be included. Sometimes there are unpredictable additions to the list of beneficiaries: a favourite god-daughter, or an adopted or illegitimate child previously unknown to the family. Or even a mistress being rewarded “for services rendered during her lifetime”. I’ve seen this happen. Check out all the names. She might have been the housekeeper.
- ❖ Family rifts may become apparent from the last wishes of the deceased: recently I found an angry clause from a father who stated in no uncertain terms that his daughter, who had “taken her mother’s side” in her parents’ divorce, would not benefit under his will. Forgiveness, alas, remains Divine.
- ❖ A child not appearing as beneficiary in the Will is not necessarily evidence of such a rift e.g. a father makes apology for non-inclusion of a son and says this shouldn’t be taken as indication of disapproval or lack of appreciation for everything the son had done for the family business to date, but that this son was already well-established and other children were more in need.
- ❖ Which leads on to the premise that its essential to see beyond the stated facts: a list of children on a Death Notice of 1903 shows 5 sons and 3 daughters, only 2 of them Majors and “all residing with their mother”, the surviving parent. The 5 Minor children born 1889, 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1899 range in ages from 14 to 4 and obviously none of them wage-earning. The eldest Major son would be required to take on the role of breadwinner. The Death Notice reveals that the estate did not exceed a certain value and the deceased died in testate, leaving no immovable property and not much in the way of movables either. Reading between the lines, a parlous situation for this family.
- ❖ Instructions in the will as to choice of burial or cremation can be helpful when seeking the ancestor’s last resting-place.
- ❖ We’re fortunate in Natal that Will and Death Notice and other papers appear in one file – they’re separated under the Cape system.
- ❖ Where a deceased estate file isn’t found, it may indicate that the ancestor had no assets, hence no estate – though there are cases where a minimal amount in PO savings is the only apparent asset and yet an estate was definitely filed. No reference to a deceased estate may simply mean that the ancestor died elsewhere – i.e. not in SA. Time to look at Census returns overseas or check another colony.
- ❖ The title page may list events in the immediate aftermath of the death e.g. meetings of heirs etc – it may also give a civil death register entry number and place of registry.

- ❖ Signatures appearing on Death Notice, Will and other documents may supply appropriate illustrations (if digitally-photographed, photocopying of estate papers not being allowed) for a family history publication.
- ❖ Estate Accounts may provide information not available at the time the Death Notice was signed.
- ❖ One of the most intimate glimpses of our ancestor is offered in the Inventory: from the farm or house he owned to the porcelain basin and jug he used while shaving in the mornings. The full legal description of a piece of land can come in handy for searches in the Deeds Office. Its more difficult to quantify what is gained from details such as: “Machinery for Water Mill”; “Pair Cart Wheels, unmounted”; “Agricultural Implements old & worn out”; “Standing Wheat Crop 10 acres ... can’t be valued as it is liable to so many risks & enemies” - but such clues reveal the fabric of the ancestor’s life and times.
- ❖ Typically grouped at the back of the file are various invoices e.g. from tradesmen claiming settlement from the estate. All are potential sources of information. The funeral parlour invoice merits special attention because frequently there is a note re burial place e.g. Stellawood, and sometimes even a plot number of the grave. This can be a helpful short-cut. The undertaker’s invoice may also tell us who paid for the obsequies and how much: the high cost of dying then, as now, becomes apparent. Some idea of the scale of the funeral can be obtained from references to “procession of 2 carriages and a special tram car for mourners”. With the tradeplate of the undertaker emblazoned at the top, the invoice can provide an illustration for the family history – gloomy? Possibly, but interesting and decorative nevertheless.
- ❖ Other less obvious invoices mention the minutiae of the ancestor’s daily life, such as what medicines he bought from his local chemist (perhaps in an attempt to stave off the inevitable). A seemingly innocuous list of garments turned out to be my great great grandmother’s mourning clothes, plus some for her daughters, ordered from the “Silk Mercer, Milliner & Straw Bonnet Manufacturer”, so the family would be correctly attired for my great great grandfather’s funeral in 1869.
- ❖ Miscellaneous correspondence may offer examples of the handwriting of relatives as well as throw light on arguments over division of property among the heirs – or who would pay for the tombstone.
- ❖ Some letterheads are fine examples of the printer’s art as well as giving intriguing bits of information about a family business, its street as well as telegraphic address, who the directors were etc. The prize find in one file was an engraved letterhead bearing a picture of the building where the ancestor in question had lived, worked and died – an unimportant structure in itself and not likely to be found in any museum photo collection, but with a unique link to the deceased himself and a perfect illustration for a proposed book. It doesn’t come much better than this in family history.

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Membership Fees

Those members who have still not paid their fees for 2004 are reminded to please let Joan Rachmann have same ASAP.

Cemetery Recording CD

The new Cemetery Recording CD is now available and can be ordered from:

Andre Heydenrych	Postal Address:
(011) 804 6533 (H)	Suite 143,
083 282 0047 (Cell)	Postnet X2600
aheydenr@mweb.co.za	Houghton 2014 S.A.

Overseas Researchers

These following researchers have been found to be prompt, efficient and reliable by Delyse Brown, Librarian at the Family History Centre.

Jim and Linda Helman, 8 Galtres Road, Northallerton, N.Yorks DL6 1QP
jhelman@fsmail.net

The North Riding of Yorkshire is a speciality of the above.

Alison Maddock, “The Pigeon-hole”, Emms Lane, Bratton, Wilts. BA 13 4SA
ajmaddock@aol.com

Wiltshire research, and some Somerset research.

Campbell Collection / Killie Campbell Tel. No.

We would like to point out that the telephone number in the Directory is incorrect, and the correct number is: **2601716 / 3 / 0**

Natal Diocesan Archives (Article submitted by the Archives)

The Natal Diocesan Archives is housed in the Cathedral Centre, Pietermaritzburg, in Longmarket Street, between Commercial Road and Chapel Street. Here are housed most of the completed baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial registers of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Diocese of Natal (but not of Zululand). The earliest registers date from 1849. There are also records of Synods, of parishes and clergy, histories, Diocesan magazines, correspondence and photographs. We respond to requests for copies of certificates, and can have these certified by a commissioner of oaths, though we do have a charge to cover research, postage, etc. We charge R20 for an uncertified certificate and R30 for a certified one. We are also available for research, though we do like to have some warning so that we can prepare material. We are prepared to conduct tours of St Peter's and the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity. The Archives is open from Tuesday to Friday from about 9.30 to about 15.00 hours.

Van Riebeeck Society

The Van Riebeeck Society was founded in August 1918 'to print or reprint for distribution among the members, and for the sale to the public, rare and valuable books, pamphlets and documents relating to the history of South Africa.

For over 80 years the Society has carried out this objective by publishing one volume annually. Most have been in English but there are also several in Dutch or Afrikaans. There were fifty volumes in the first series. Many are out of print and command high prices in the Africana rare book market. There are now 34 volumes in the second series.

The Society relies solely on the voluntary unpaid efforts of its contributing editors and its committee of scholars. It has been ably guided by a series of distinguished South Africans since John X. Merriman, sometime Prime Minister of the Cape, became its founding chairman.

The Society is open to all. Those interested in South African history, particularly such rich sources as those published by the Society, constitute the Society's membership. Members receive each new volume and are entitled to buy available back numbers at special rates. Students receive a special discount in the first two years of their membership. Current South African membership is R100.00 p.a.

For further information please contact:

The Secretary, Van Riebeeck Society, P.O. Box 15151, Vlaeberg 8018, South Africa

Tel. (021) 423 8424 Fax. (021) 424 1484

Email: vanriebeek@mweb.co.za Web site: www.vanriebeeksociety.co.za

Genealogical Institute of South Africa (Article submitted by GISA)

General Information

GISA was established in 1997 and is situated at 115 Banghoek Road in Stellenbosch. The genealogical collections which were previously kept at the HSRC were transferred to GISA and this comprehensive collection is constantly extended further by the acquisition of new genealogical publications and manuscripts which are added to our library for future reference. Towards this end the Institute gladly receives copies of family histories, genealogies, local as well as parish histories, since these are valuable additions to its existing collections. Whenever a copy of these genealogies is donated to GISA, we offer to advertise it on our website.

The Institute's main objective is to continue the series of Heese and Lombard on the "Genealogies of South African Families" (SAG). On the termination of this series the publication of manuscripts of family histories in either electronic format as a CD, or as a hard copy (book), is also envisaged, and it is the aim of the Institute to help prospective genealogists by means of advice and the supply of relevant sources of information. GISA thus has a research as well as a preservative function. In this way care is taken that valuable information on families as well as identified family portraits are preserved for posterity.

For its survival this Institute relies heavily on the public for donations and bequests as it does not receive any subsidies or other state support.

Tariffs and office hours

The facilities are open to the public from Monday to Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm. The tariffs are R10/hour, R50/day. GISA also undertake commissioned research at a tariff of R60-00 per hour. Advice by phone or information and instruction provided during visits to our Reading Room is given free of charge. Only written requests are accepted, either by e-mail, fax or letter post. If an in-depth search is required, an estimate will be done for the time needed and the subsequent cost.

Written requests should be furnished with as much available information as possible, e.g. full names (no nicknames); dates (or approximate dates) of births, marriages and deaths; as well as the names of the locations where these events took place. Without these details it would be almost impossible to conduct a search. Keep in mind that the genealogical collections of the Institute contain mostly information on persons who were born or who arrived and died in South Africa between the years 1660-1930. Research regarding surnames in their countries of origin should be taken up directly with the respective bodies or organisations overseas.

GISA is open to the public on Saturdays and certain holidays on special request and special circumstances at double the tariffs. Appointments regarding the latter have to be made well in advance and are subject to the availability of GISA personnel on that day.

All monies are payable in advance by cheque or can be done directly into the bank account, and the deposit slip faxed to GISA. (Please write your name on slip as reference) Our banking details are:

ABSA Bank Stellenbosch
 Branch code: 33 44 10
 Account name: GISA
 Account no.: 909 075 9785

Books for sale at GISA

A limited number of copies of the following books are available for sale at GISA: SA Genealogies volumes 1 (A-C), 2 (D-G), 3 (H-I), 4 (J-K), 5 (L-M), 6 (N), 7 (O-Ph), 8 (Pi-Q); Handbook for Genealogical Research; Dictionary of SA Biography volumes II, IV, V; New Dictionary of SA Biography; Truter; Orlandini; Kitshoff; Boerepioniers van die Sandveld, etc. The electronic availability of the unaltered first 4 volumes of SAG on CD is currently being investigated.

Enquiries at the address above or:

Leon Endemann (Director): gisa@sun.ac.za
 Héula Nel (Enquiries): hnel@sun.ac.za
 Maureen de Villiers (Research): mdv@sun.ac.za
 Carol Greener (Orders): cgreener@sun.ac.za

Website: You are invited to visit GISA at our website at:
<http://www.sun.ac.za/gisa/>

Newsletter Articles

Members are reminded that they are very welcome to submit articles for inclusion in our forthcoming newsletters. They may also submit names from their brick walls.

Notice Board

There is a notice board hung in our section at the FHC and members are invited to post their area of interest to connect with others who are researching that same area to enable the sharing of films. e.g. Umtata, Sussex etc.

Continuation of Articles from Issue 2

We apologise for not being able to continue some of our articles from the previous newsletter, but will continue with these in the following one.

Diary Dates

8 th May	Personal Research
12 th June	Speaker - Dr Tony Cubbin
10 th July	Personal Research
14 th August	PMB Archives
11 th September	Personal Research
9 th October	Speaker /Activity
13 th November	Personal Research
11 th December	Ancestral Tea
15 th January 2005	AGM

Committee Members 2004 - 2005

Chairperson

Nigel McFerran, 22 Edgbaston Drive, Westville 3629
Phone: (031) 266-3177. E-Mail: mcferran@eastcoast.co.za

Vice Chairperson and Information Technology

Jaq Benade, P.O.Box 2337 Pinetown, 3600.
Phone: (031)708-3746. E-Mail: jaqb@telkomsa.net

Treasurer and Membership

Joan Rachmann, 31 Adrienne Ave. Glenashley 4051
Phone: (031) 572-3184.

Secretary

Cynthia McFerran, 22 Edgbaston Drive, Westville 3629
Phone: (031) 266-3177. E-Mail: mcferran@eastcoast.co.za

Librarian

Ann O'Brien - Phone: (031)208-2910

Preservations/Archives

Paul du Plessis - Ph: (031) 767-2676

Octogenarian

Annelise Peters - Ph: (031) 208-2910

Our Venue for Meetings

Family History Centre,
Church of the Latter Day Saints,
144 Silverton Road.
Entrance in Montgomery Road
Phone: (031) 202 3024

Our meetings are held at 2.30 pm on the 2nd Saturday of every month except in August when we have an arrangement to go to the Pietermaritzburg Archives between 8.30am and 12.00pm. Our AGM is held on the 3rd Saturday in January.

For the record, the F.H.C. is also open at the following times:

Tuesday	6pm – 9pm for own research
Wednesday	1pm – 4pm
Thursday	9am – 12.30pm and 6pm – 9pm
1 st Saturday of every month	10am- 4pm