

CTFHS NEWSLETTER

Cape Town Family History Society June 2009 Vol 4 No 1

A Change Is As Good As A Holiday!

The format of our newsletter has changed to enable us to send the newsletter out as an email, though of course we will still print and post copies to those who do not have an email facility or prefer to have a printed copy.

This format will also be more flexible, allowing us to print longer reports on meetings and stories, when necessary.

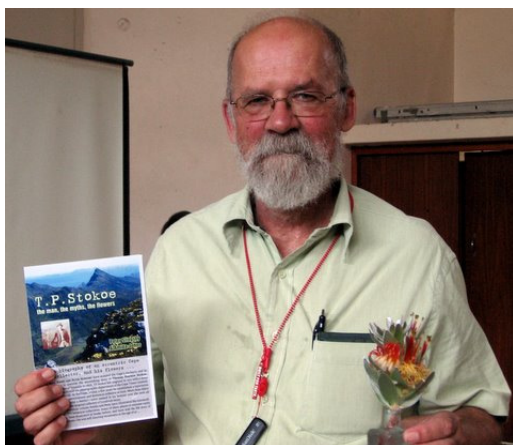
We are, of course, very dependent on you, our members, to make sure that we have something interesting to publish so make sure that you write up that interesting little kink in your research you found in the Archives the other day!

A Magnificent New Book On Its Way

The February meeting featured a talk by Peter Slingsby on the research he did and the book he co-wrote with Amida Jones about Thomas Pearson Stokoe.

This was a fascinating account of Stokoe who came to South Africa in 1911 as a lithographer to work at the Cape Times at the age of 43. He remained there in the photographic department for the rest of his working life. It was his hobby as a mountaineer and a botanical collector that brought him recognition. More than 30 species of plants – and a beetle – bear his name. He was also the original collector of hundreds more plants that had not been previously identified.

He was born in Tyneside in Northumberland in 1868 and Peter was able to track him and his family through the successive English censuses. He married and had one child. It was always believed by his many South African colleagues that he as a widower but in fact Peter uncovered the information that his wife and daughter continued to live in England long after Thomas had left them. He does not appear to have maintained contact with them.



Peter has collected a wonderful array of photographs and descriptions of Stokoe's flowers and many photos of him, his climbing buddies and some of his original sketches, paintings and cartoons. An added bonus was a package of letters which reveal Thomas as a humorous and entertaining correspondent.

Peter is publishing the book himself. It will be a magnificent volume, richly illustrated and a fitting memorial to someone who contributed richly to our botanical pool of

knowledge. Thomas Stokoe continued climbing to the age of 91 and lived a life well worth celebrating.

More About Photographers

The article on photographers in our last issue brought several responses. Mel CROSS sent us a list of South African photographers gleaned from her album and has provided their addresses and the dates when she thinks the photographs may have been taken.

F.E. Pollard,	Sunlight Studio, Germiston.	1900
Cabinet Portraits	Johannesburg.	1905
Maxwell Deitch (Pty) Ltd.	Gilhove Chambers, 60 Noord St., Johannesburg.	1955
Rand Happy Snaps	110 Glencairn Blds., 34 Joubert St. Johannesburg.	1950
Phocus Photographers 320 (Pty) Ltd.	Bree St., Johannesburg	1971
R H Scrimgeour (Pty Ltd. (formerly BRS Photographers Pty. Ltd.)	204 Pritchard House, Pritchard St., Johannesburg.	1950/60
BRS Photographers	29 Havard Bld. Prichard Street Johannesburg.	1950
Dawn Studio's	3 Hilton Court, 52 Wanderers St., Johannesburg.	1949
Photo Bob	P O Box 46, Johannesburg P O Box 118 Randburg	1966
Elmar Photos	Springs, Tvl.	1950/60
Mardo Photos	Grootfontien Box 540, Sasolburg.	1990

Sigi HOWES advised that an expert in this field is Mr Carol Hardijzer. He can be contacted at chardijzer@fnb.co.za

There are two books available about the history of photography in South Africa, one by Dr. Arthur Bensusan, *To God the Glory* and one by Bull & Denfield, *Secure the Shadow*, the story of photography in the Cape in Victorian times, published in 1970. The Bensusan Museum in Johannesburg holds his entire collection of photographs, cameras and books which he collected over a lifetime and is well worth a visit.

Sigi is also compiling a list of South African photographers but this is still in its infancy!

Heather Macalister reports that there is a fair amount about South African photographers on the website www.ancestry24.co.za Look under Topics for the Week, click on "General" and then on "*Was your Ancestor a Photographer?*" There is a list of photographers as well as more general information on photography in the past.

Liesbeeck Families of the Past

At our 7th AGM held in March this year, Lucille le Roux, our honorary treasurer for the past three years, reported that the membership of the Society had increased from 47 in 2006 to 83 in 2009. Our financial situation was sound and the committee recommended that no increase in the subscription for the coming year was necessary. This proposal, of course, met with hearty approval from the members present.

Lois Harley retired as chairman after three years service. It was proposed that the current committee again be elected en bloc and the new chairman would be elected from among their members at the first committee meeting.

Dr Helen Robinson then gave an entertaining and most informative talk entitled “The Significance of Genealogy or What’s in a Name?”, illustrating it with examples from the families living along the Liesbeeck River, taken from a book she is writing.

Families always have affiliations to other families, events, and every aspect of life – ie the baggage, which has significance. She claimed that genealogy is an art, and certainly Helen Robinson’s way of looking at it proves this.

In the past women have abandoned their names when they married, but now more young people are working under their own names. Early Cape women also used their maiden names, and often had three or more names – their own, widow such and such, and a 2nd (or 3rd) married name. This makes tracing them quite a challenge.

Other points to note:

Families married for benefit;

It is important that family stories should not be allowed to die;

Society and the support network were very important in the early days.

She ended by posing the question as to why there is so much interest in genealogy now, and suggested that it may be that we are feeling disconnected in our global village, family life having changed so dramatically in the recent past.

Tea and a good spread of eats were served after Helen Robinson had been thanked.
(Thanks to our secretary, Ann Smythe, for her report on the meeting)

New Committee

Chairman:	David Slingsby
Treasurer:	Jawn Goosen
Secretary:	Ann Smythe
Webmaster:	Tony Allan
Projects:	Derek Pratt
Refreshments	Jeanette Goosen (with Betty Nelson)
Library:	Cynthia Winstanly

Workshops & Help Desk Lois Harley
Membership Secretary Lucille le Roux
Newsletter Lois Harley (until a new editor is found!)

Family History Workshops for Beginners

The Beginners' Workshops have proved a very popular innovation of the Society not only with members but also the general public. To date nearly a hundred people have placed their names on the waiting list to attend a course.

Each course has been divided into 4 sessions. The topic for the first session is "Getting Started". The second session deals with sources of vital information for family historians in South Africa and Britain. The third session demonstrates some of the most used websites and how to get the most out of their use. "Putting it all together" is the title of the last session and deals with family trees and writing your family story.

The first couple of workshops at St. Paul's Church turned out to be most successful. Participants enjoyed getting down to work in the first session and grew in confidence as each session passed. The third workshop was still in progress as this newsletter was being prepared. The fourth workshop is scheduled to take place, also at St. Paul's, from the 22nd of July to the 12th of August on each successive Wednesday. Another workshop will probably be scheduled to take place in September.

Please contact Lois Harley on 0217976537 or lharley@bucknet.co.za if you want your name to be added to the waiting list. The cost is R120.

Using the Internet for Family History Research

Heather MacAlister drew a large crowd to our April meeting, so clearly this was a topic in which there was a lot of interest.

She made some valuable observations before dealing with individual websites that would be helpful for South African researchers.

- Have a plan before you start. Assemble as much information as you already have, which will facilitate your search for a family member
- Keep a note of every website you visit and who you were looking for so you don't waste time revisiting data you already have.
- Note every item of information you found and where you found it.
- Be organized in your approach and follow a logical progression
- Keep paper backups of electronic data
- BACK UP ELECTRONIC DATA. Computers are not infallible
- Don't expect to find everything on the net – visit libraries, museums and community institutes as well
- Don't expect to find everything for free. It is costly to set up and maintain a website and it is sometimes necessary to pay to get what you need.

Family History in Poetry

One of the participants in the first workshop was Peter Clarke, a well-known artist and poet. He has agreed to share with the members some of the poems which were inspired by his grandfather and his parents.

D. J. : ANCESTOR

Strange to think
a long time ago
he had been a young seaman
ebony skinned out of Sierra Leone
in naval white dress,
British seaman, in port a Black Romeo
with wild oats to sow,
creator of bliss with his Krooman kiss,
dark staff, dark ecstasy.
Passionate progenitor.

Even as an old, old man he had presence,
a dark and marvelous dignity
and a melodious voice that embraced,
coloured as it was by
his heavily accented West African English
reaching into and holding your consciousness.
A revered patriarch,
he wore white shirts, dark suits and a tie
knotted with special occasion correctness,
walking slowly with legs bandy with age,
stick gripped in hand
so that those who were legitimate
or illegitimate offspring,
friends, acquaintances, with respect,
assisted him, the sage, holding his arm,
feeling perhaps when you,
who in comparison are young,
help those who are old,
it is like briefly touching
and being touched
by God.

MENDING SHOES

This is almost ritual.

I see
the nail gripped between Dad's teeth,
another placed in position
carefully.
Replacing the sole,
my father nails the shoe
clutched between his knees
and sips Old Brown Sherry
between hammerings.

Listening to the easy wine-sweet voice
of Al Jolson's singing
as the gramophone record turns,
I, the little boy, stand close,
looking and listening
through all the days.
I also learn
and mouth the words,
"I'll be loving you
a-a-always."

BAKING DAY

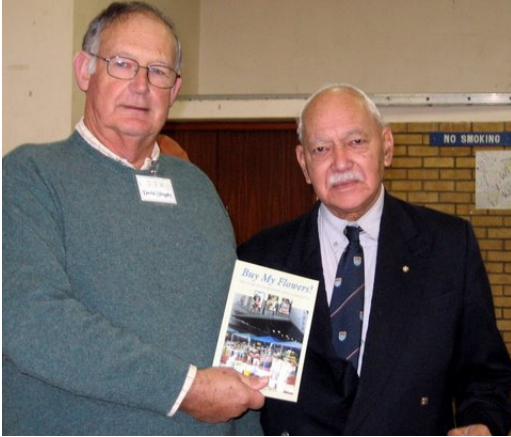
Commanded by urgency
my mother is all purposeful.
with the warmth of her heart
she bakes bread,
fills tart
with the sweetness of jam
and kindness
and intently folds pastries quietly
to contain love.

These evocative poems capture the personality and the occupations of Peter's ancestors in just a few unforgettable words.

Peter has joined our Society and I hope that we will be able to learn more about the people of Simons Town where he and another new member, Lionel Davis grew up.

The Story of Strawberry Lane

There was a gale-force wind blowing and the rain was pouring down; nevertheless St. Paul's Hall was packed with people who had braved the weather to come and hear Prof. Richard van der Ross talk about Strawberry Lane, Constantia, at our May meeting. He entertained and he moved us as he told us about the Coloured community that had lived there until it was scattered by the provisions of the Group Areas Act in the late



1960s. The tale that he had to tell was based on the memories of people who had been born and who grew up there. His own father had been one of them. The land had once been part of a grant to Simon van der Stel, governor at the Cape, of a large estate in the Constantia Valley. Over the centuries this estate had been carved up into smaller pieces, but farming, and particularly viticulture, had remained the main activity of the valley. Wines produced at Constantia were well-known and much prized. The labourers on these farms were largely

people descended from slaves and free blacks, a rich mixture of many ethnic groups and it was some of these people who settled in the area later known as Strawberry Lane. Some of them such as Carl Gideon and Julie Joseph, were able to purchase a plot of ground; others were tenants, particularly of Mr. Albertyn, Mr Schofield and Miss Bonnie Cloete.

The plots had good soil and access to water from the Spaanschemat River and families supplemented their small wages by growing flowers and vegetables and raising chickens and pigs. Many of them had a horse or a donkey to use to get to their places of work. The women would walk as far as Cape Town to sell their flowers until Mr. Petersen bought a lorry and they were transported by him to the flower markets.

Hadje Taliep later bought a bus and ran a bus service which greatly helped people. His one daughter was the driver and the other the conductor.

The family was the most important unit in this community and most had large families. The Christian families would start the day as early as five o'clock with a prayer and a bible reading before Father departed for work. This was repeated in the evening before bed. Mother was responsible for seeing that the children were properly fed and clothed and that they attended school and church.

A little school was built there by the Dutch Reform Mission Church to which all the children went, both Christian and Moslem. They could attend school there until standard 5. If they were able to study further, they would have to walk four kilometres to Battswood School in Wynberg. Prof. van der Ross's father was one who undertook this journey each day. His mother would walk to Wynberg with her basket of fresh vegetables and eggs to sell so he could buy the books he needed.

The church and the Burial Society were central to the people's lives. They paid their regular subscriptions to ensure that they were able to be respectably buried and this institution has continued until the present, having been established in 1878.

When Prof. van der Ross spoke to those who were now living in Manenberg, Grassy Park and Mitchell's Plain, they all lamented the life they had left behind. The quiet of the area, the ability to grow their own vegetables and chickens and above all being part of a close-knit community were things they would never forget.

Strawberry Lane is very different now as expensive developments have taken place on the land that was once treasured by these simple people.

Prof. van der Ross very kindly donated a book about Strawberry Lane to our library.

New Books in the Library

The Gibson Brothers of the Red Star Line by Bernhard Louw

Three Gibson Brothers immigrated to South Africa from England in early 1870s. Two of them acquired a cart and set out for the newly opened diamond fields. Together with their brother they established the Red Star Line to convey passengers, mail and goods by coach between Wellington, Kimberley and the gold fields of the Witwatersrand. This is the story of their steady progress towards the ownership of elegant homes and lucrative farms.

Successful Self-Publishing in South Africa by Heather Parker Lewis

The author has successfully published a number of her own books and this is a step-by-step guide on how to go about doing this. It contains a list of useful contact details.

The Interloper by H Parker

This falls into the category of “faction”. The author has augmented her research into her grandmother’s history with imagination as there are so many unknown facts. However there is enough meat on the bone to satisfy a hungry family historian and it is an interesting read.

Buy My Flowers! By R E van der Ross

This is the story of the Coloured community which lived in Strawberry Lane, Constantia as tenants or landowners. They lived a simple life centred around their families, their places of religion and their little school. For the most part they worked as farm labourers or wood cutters and supplemented their meager wages by growing vegetables and flowers. It was a community tragically fractured by the provisions of the Group Areas Act which scattered the close-knit group to far-flung areas. They were united, though, by their membership of their burial society.

New Members

Roly HUTCHINGS; Kirstenhof; rolysheena@telkomsa.net

Lionel DAVIS; Muizenberg; lioneldavis@telkomsa.net; surname interests, Davis, Kersner

Peter CLARKE; Ocean View; 0217831340; surname interests, Clarke, Brown, Macauley, social history

Derrick LEWIS; Hout Bay; garlic@mweb.co.za; surname interests: Sanders, Nurick, families in Oudtshoorn

Virginia FERREIRA; Table View; goldens@mweb.co.za; surname interests, White, Meyer

Tom SMUTS-ERASMUS, Sun Valley; tomtom@wam.co.za; surname interests, Smuts-Erasmus, Huckell

Andrea ROUX; Retreat; andrea@ancestry24.co.za; surname interests, Bluff, Smart, Fransman

Etha VAN DER SCHYFF: Llandudno; evdschyf@pgwc.gov.za; surname interests, Rossouw, Marais, Laubscher

Janet CARTWRIGHT; Glencairn; kanga@cybersmart.co.za; archivist at St. Francis Church, Simonstown—all registers indexed

Songvei CLÜVER; Grabouw; songvei@cluver.com; surname interests: Boge, Godo, van der Voort, Cornwell, Tunbridge

Liz PADDOCK; Diep River; lpaddock@wynghs.co.za; surname interests: Liz has a long list of interests including Paddock, Lees, Parsons, Ross, Bywater, Tickle, Mooley, Scarlett, Elliott and Henson

Donald & Elizabeth GEYER, donlibgeyer@icss.co.za surname interests: Geyer, Place, Ashford, Vine

Kevin TURNER, Green Point, kevin@badgerscrossing.co.za surname interests: Turner, Barfoot, Patteson & Huntly

Ken MCKENZIE, Rondebosch, ken@mckenzieconsulting.co.za surname interests: McKenzie, Joubert

Stephanie BROTHERTON, Kirstenhof, steph.brotherton@yahoo.com.au surname interests: Brotherton, Thiel, LeRoux, Mostert, Fourie, Prenzler, S A Military History

Stephen PEEL, Claremont, speel@vodamail.co.za surname interests: Rosser, Cordier, Crous(e), Craus(e), Ellis

Rae & Roy SMITH, Milkwood Park, raeroysmith@gmail.com surname interests: Smith, Mathee

Esme CONNOLLY, Kenilworth, connolly@netactive.co.za surname interests: Esterhuizen, Retief

In Memoriam: Tom BLACKWOOD-MURRAY (1937—2009)

Editor: Lois Harley
Telephone: 0217976537
Fax: 0880217621080
Email: lharley@bucknet.co.za

Cape Town Family History Society Website: www.family-history.co.za