

CTFHS NEWSLETTER

Cape Town Family History Society

JUNE 2011 Vol 6 No 2

EDITORIAL

Early in 2011 two members handed me possible articles for inclusion in our newsletter. Both required a bit of editing—one about a family member who sank with the *Titanic*, the other rather maudlin and excessively religious entries from a Victorian diary. I suspect its style was not unusual; for its time period and thus makes an interesting read for us in the 21st Century. Both articles are fascinating & I will, I promise, include them in the next edition.

But in this edition is a visit to the Eastern Cape with something on the BIRT family. With no DNA available in 1851, Charles BELL had no way of proving whether the daughter his wife had after their divorce was his child or a product of a ship-board liaison between his wife and a Dr Stewart. Who says people were better behaved in the "good old days"?

Overheard at the last meeting

Jaco van der Merwe had just finished telling us that some Afrikaner families had in the 1980s refused to accept that they had slave blood in them from their ancestors, when I heard two members talking over tea.

Member 1: I'm descended from the French Huguenot's – the Du Toit family.

Member 2: Oh really! Didn't two Du Toit's come out with the Huguenots?

Member 1: Yes, the one man married a slave girl and the other man didn't marry. I'm not sure which branch I'm descended from...

Humour in genealogy is essential especially as it is an "infectious disease" Graveyard humour often raises its head. Have you heard about...

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Three Irishmen were stumbling home from the pub late one night and found themselves on the road which led past the old graveyard.

"Come have a look over here," says Paddy, "it's Michael O'Grady's grave, God bless his soul. He lived to the ripe old age of 87."

"That's nothing", says Sean, "here's one named Patrick O'Toole, it says here that he was 95 when he died."

Then Shamus yells out, "Good God, here's a fella that got to be 145!"

"What was his name?" asks Paddy.

Shamus stumbles around a bit, awkwardly lights a match to see what else is written on the stone marker, and exclaims, "Miles, from Dublin."

Comments, assistance or additional information on any of the articles is most welcome BUT...

More important—Why don't you write up an interesting aspect of your family research?

NEXT EDITION DUE: end SEPT. 2011

A RECENT VISIT TO GLEN AVON

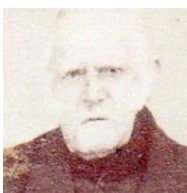
By Margaret Reed

During a short trip to the Eastern Cape a few weeks ago Dick and I spent a night at the historic and beautiful farm Glen Avon near Somerset East. With recent rains the farm was looking lush and green, though Greg Brown, son of the present owner, told us that the rain had come only in May, too late to provide the good pasture necessary later in the year. Bill Brown runs the farm, assisted by his son Greg, and Bill's wife Alison sees to the two spacious and comfortable guest cottages (self-catering or B & B) which have been created by modernizing two of the very old buildings on the farm. Bill and Greg are the sixth and seventh generations of Hart descendants to farm this valley and mountain area.

The farm was granted to their forebear Robert Hart in 1821 in recognition of his services to the Commissariat on the frontier. Robert Hart had come to the Cape in 1795 as a young soldier in the 98th Argyllshire and Sutherland Highlanders during the first British Occupation. After a stint of service in India he returned to Britain and in 1804 married Hannah Tamplin whom he had met when she was a bridesmaid at a friend's wedding. Robert and his young wife came back to the Cape in 1806 at the time of the Second British Occupation. When Grahamstown was founded in 1811 they were stationed there and ran a vegetable garden for the Commissariat, on land now occupied by Commemoration Methodist Church.

In 1817 Hart was appointed Superintendent of Somerset Farm in the area of the Boschberg, to supply barley and fodder to the military. An added responsibility came in 1820 when he was required to assist the Scottish party of settlers to their location in the Baviaans River Valley, near present day Bedford and Adelaide. Robert Hart is said to have established a wattle and daub hunting 'lodge' on land that was later to be included in the farm granted to him, and when he moved there in 1825 he developed this rudimentary building into a cottage – and with extensive renovations in recent years this is the larger of the two guest houses. Robert and Hannah had a large family, ten children in all, three of whom died in infancy.

My interest in visiting Glen Avon was historical. Many years ago I did detailed research on the life of a missionary of the London Missionary Society, the Rev. Richard Birt. He came to the Cape in 1838, together with his young bride



**Robert Hart of
Glen Avon,
Somerset East,**



**A guest cottage at Glen Avon,
Somerset East**

Eliza. Birt's first mission was at Umxelo, near Fort Beaufort, and his second mission at Peeltou, outside King Williams Town. The reason for the move was the Frontier War of 1846-8. At the conclusion of

this War the tribes occupying the territory between the Keiskama and Fish Rivers were banished from that area and driven beyond the Keiskama, into British Kaffraria.

While Birt was working at Umxelo his wife Eliza gave birth to a daughter whom they named Mary Ann. Birt's Diary is blank for the next year – we all know how hectic life becomes with the arrival of the first child in a family! Very sadly the next Diary entry described a terrible tragedy. Eliza was killed in a wagon accident when the family was returning from a month spent at the sea, a holiday made necessary by Birt's frequent headaches and ill-health. On the return journey they were travelling over a precipitous track never previously used for a wagon. They stayed on the wagon because of Birt's physical weakness, although they should have been walking beside it on such a steep incline. The wagon overturned, Eliza was flung out and the side of the wagon landed on top of her, killing her instantly.

Birt's struggle to come to terms with this tragedy in his life is amply testified in his Diary, both in what he wrote and in the long periods when he wrote nothing.

After a year he began to consider returning to England to marry Eliza's younger sister Mary Ann. For reasons that are not clearly specified the engagement was broken off and two years later Richard Birt married Margaret Fleischer. She was a widow with two young daughters and was herself a daughter of Robert Hart of Glen Avon. Her elder sister Ann was married to Captain Lennox Stretch, the Diplomatic Agent at Alice (a government official with responsibilities relating to the tribes in his area). By coincidence it was at Stretch's home that Birt had been first introduced to Chief Bhotomani of the Imidange tribe, amongst whom he was to work at Fort Beaufort. He probably had regular contact with Lennox Stretch and it may have been through him that he met his new wife.

(Continued from page 2)

Margaret and Richard Birt had a long and happy marriage. Six daughters were born to them, so that together with Birt's little girl from his first marriage and Margaret Fleisher's two daughters, they were eventually a family of nine girls!

For Richard Birt the connection with Robert Hart and his family was a most propitious one. Robert Hart was a compassionate man with a huge heart and a warm sympathy for those working in the mission field. He was a great benefactor and gave Richard Birt practical and financial help for his work. The most outstanding example of this was at the outbreak of the war of 1846 when Hart allowed Birt and his family to move to Glen Avon, together with all the families residing at his mission station, about 104 persons in all. Robert Hart supported them until they could find local employment or grow their own crops on the farm. At the conclusion of that war Birt had to relocate his mission, as indicated above, and he helped Chief Bhotomani and the Imidange to find a new home. Robert Hart's concern and support continued throughout his life, so that Birt had really found a wonderful patriarch who accepted him like a son. During the 1846-8 War the missionary John Brownlee and his wife also spent about a year at Glen Avon.

Birt's origins lay in a cluster of small villages in Gloucestershire. When he had been in South Africa 10 or 12 years all four of his brothers with their families, and probably one sister and her family, moved to SA and settled in the Eastern Cape. The warm family connection between Richard Birt and Robert Hart was now enlarged to include Birt's extended family. Birt's brothers and certainly some of his nephews, and perhaps also his nieces, were visitors to Glen Avon and enjoyed the generous hospitality of that home, and also the kindness and hospitality of the married families of the next generation.

One of my objectives in visiting Glen Avon was to see the family cemetery. One of Birt's nephews was staying there when his little daughter died. I had hoped to find her grave, but there was no grave with her name. It was, nevertheless, very interesting to look at the many family graves there. I also had a good chat to Greg Brown about the Hart family history. We hope to visit Glen Avon again sometime, just to enjoy its beauty and peace. I also hope to give a talk sometime to the CTFHS on Birt and the Birt family migration to the Eastern Cape.

"Whose your Daddy, then?"

By Derek Pratt

Excuse the colloquial headline but that must have been the question on the lips of Charles Davidson Bell, on the Oct 1850 when his divorced wife arrived at St Paul's, Rondebosch to have a recently born daughter baptised. This started an interesting correspondence among Charles Davidson Bell, Martha Bell (born Ebden) the Rector of St Paul's, and the Bishop of Cape Town, Robert Gray.

Charles Bell landed in the Cape in 1830 and through his uncle Sir John Bell, Secretary to the Cape Government, was given a post in the civil service. He went from Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council in 1838, to Assistant Surveyor-General in 1843, to Surveyor-General in 1848.



The famous triangle stamp designed by Charles Davidson Bell

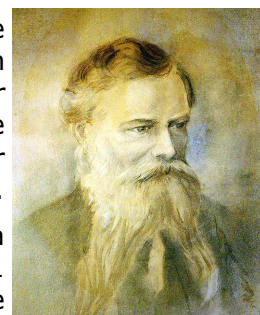
Bell designed the well-known Cape of Good Hope triangular stamp, the first of that shape, which became extremely rare and consequently much sought after by philatelists. His design of rectangular stamps remained in use until 1902. He also made

an important contribution to heraldry in South Africa. His collection of copied old Dutch/Afrikaner coats of arms from memorials, seals, stained glass windows, and other artefacts, became the basis of Cornelis Pama's *Die Wapens van die Ou Afrikaanse Families* (1959), and his later heraldry books.

Bell was a founder member and chairman of the South African Mutual Life Assurance Society (the 'Old Mutual'). A large number of his original art works hang in the Library of Parliament in Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand and the Africana Museum in Johannesburg.

After Bell's retirement in 1872 he returned to Scotland in 1873 with Helena, his second wife, and their three surviving children, where Helena Bell died on 10 September 1881 and he died on 7 April 1882.

Bell had married Martha Antoinette Ebden on 3 June 1841 at Belmont, the home of the brides father, John Bardwell Ebden. The minister at the ceremony was the Revd George



Charles Bell

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Hough who was Senior Colonial Chaplain attached to St George's, Cape Town, so the marriage appears in the Cathedral's marriage registers.

From this union three children were born: John Alexander Bell born 25 January 1843 in Grahamstown: Charles David Ebden Bell born 1 August 1845 in Cape Town and Catherine Mariann Bell born 16 December 1848 at Canigou, Rondebosch, Cape Town. Catherine died 16 July 1863 and was buried at St Paul's Graveyard. The Burial Register entry has a note to saying that her body had been transferred from the Scotch Burial Ground Cape Town. I presume that is the one that was in Somerset Road.

Charles Bell divorced Martha Ebden on 1 July 1850 having cited Dr. Lestock Wilson Stewart as co-respondent. The Court granted Charles Bell custody of the three children. Martha gave birth to second daughter Charlotte Margaret on 17 October 1850 but Bell denied paternity of the child. Charlotte Margaret died young, sometime before 10 April 1866.

On 27th January 1851, the now divorced Martha, living at her parent's (the Ebden's) home, Belmont brought Charlotte Margaret Bell to be baptised. Charles Bell realised that his name would be entered as the father and so on the very day of the baptism he dashed off a letter to John Fry, the Rector.

*Camp Ground
Monday morning 27th January 1851*

*To the Revd. J Fry
Minister of
St Paul's Church
Rondebosch*

*Sir,
I have received notice that it is intended to present for baptism at St Paul's Church, Rondebosch this morning a child said to be my daughter.*

I regret that it never occurred to me until a few minutes ago that probably my name may be entered on your registers as the father of this child; it is now too late to obtain legal advice as to the means of preventing it, but I will not, if I possibly can avoid it, permit my name to be thus used, and I, in the meantime protest against it because this child was not born in the bonds of wedlock; its birth took place nine months after its mother was living in notorious adultery with Lestock Wilson Stewart of the Madras Medical Establishment as proven by sentence of the Supreme Court of this Colony on 1st July 1850 re: Bell vs Bell

*I remain Sir your Obedient Servant
Charles Bell*

This placed the Rev John Fry in a pretty pickle. What was he to write under the column for "Parents' Names"? Although divorced from Martha in July, she must have conceived Charlotte in February 1850, while still married to Charles.

Fry's response was to send off a letter to Bishop's Court to find out what he should do.

*Charlie's Hope
27th Jan 1851*

My Lord,

Previous to administering the rite of baptism to Mrs Bell's child this morning, I received the enclosed protest from Charles Bell esq. declining to have his name entered on the Register of Baptisms in St Paul's Church, Rondebosch.

This is a case quite new to me, and do not know of any precedent to guide me in the matter, I therefore beg to receive your Lordship's instructions to the course proper to be pursued.

*I am
Your Lordship's
Obedient servant
Jno Fry*

*To the
Right Revd.
Bishop of Cape Town*

Obviously Fry must have shared the contents of Charles letter with the child's mother who on the 31st January 1851 sent a letter of denial and protestation at the accusations made by Bell.

*To the Chaplain of St Paul's Church
Rondebosch
Belmont January 31st
1851*

My Dear Mr Fry,

When I brought my child, Charlotte Margaret Bell to be baptised by you at St Paul's Church Rondebosch, on the 27th January 1851, in the sight of God and man, I little expected that any opposition would be made by her father to have the baptism of his daughter registered in any but the legal and usual manner.

After the baptism was over, I was surprised at Mr Bell's scandalous and unfeeling letter to you, the association of which I pronounce to be false and I do with truth most solemnly assert that my child Charlotte Margaret Bell was procreated in the bonds of wedlock by Mr Bell and that no other person is or can be father of the child and I shall not rest until steps be taken to

<p><i>Janet's Charlotte 2nd Margaret No. 112</i></p>	<p><i>Oct 17th 1850</i></p>	<p><i>Daughter of Martha Antonette the fifth Daughter of John Broadal Ebden Esq. pronounced to be divorced from Charles Bell by sentence of the Supreme Court dated the first July 1850</i></p>	<p><i>Bapt. Bianca Bell Mrs. Fry Sup. Dakes No. Fry Sol: B. H. G.</i></p>
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The entry in the St Paul's Baptism Register for Charlotte Margaret BELL

(Continued from page 4)
establish her legitimacy.

I consider I have cause to complain of the manner in which the Baptism has been registered and trust that you will do me the justice to bring my complaint to the knowledge of the Bishop of the Diocese and have to request that if no alteration is made in the mode of registration that this letter may be carefully preserved with the Church Records as an act of Justice towards Charlotte Margaret Bell.

I shall be obliged by an early reply.

*Believe me
Yours faithfully
Martha Antoinette Bell*

This resulted in a further letter from Fry to the Bishop seeking further guidance.

The result?

The entry in the Baptismal register now appearance as follows

Under "Parents Name" we have a typical Anglican compromise! It reads:

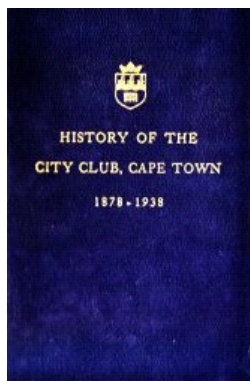
Daughter of Martha Antoinette fifth daughter of John Bardwell Ebdon Esq. pronounced to be divorced from Charles Davidson Bell by sentence of the Supreme Court dated the first of July 1850.

Thus Charles Bell is appears in the registered not as the child's father but as the divorced husband of the child mother. No mention is made of Dr Lestock Wilson Stewart.

Bell's second marriage to Helena Krynauw took place on 7 July 1859. She bore him five further children.

BOOK REVIEWS

I had to visit a parishioner at St Luke's Hospice in Kenilworth but unfortunately I arrived during their rest period – between 1 pm and 3pm. So I popped into their bookshop and found that they were having a 50% off sale of their Africana Books. I found three books worth having.



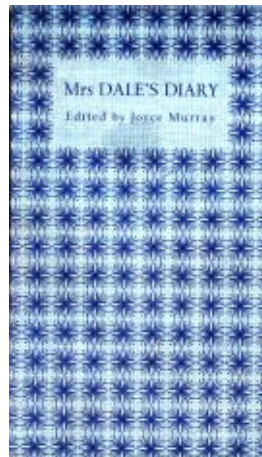
The first *History of the City Club, Cape Town 1878-1938* by A. I. Little (published by the club in 1939). The actual history of the club was a bit dry, merely telling of the interesting visitors who had come to the club and internal club affairs discussed at the AGM. What was interesting however was a list of all the members of the club in 1939 as well as all the office-bearers from 1878 and for the next

60 years.

There is a 30 page section of "Biographical Notes" of members of renown, both living and departed in 1939. These pages are most useful, giving potted histories of many of the posh citizens of Cape Town in the sixty year period. I plan to make copies of these pages and then present the book to the CTFHS Library so that you too can search for your ancestors among the members.

The book was marked R250 and with the 50% reduction I paid a mere R125. Did I get a bargain? I checked it out on www.abebooks.com and found a copy available there at \$40 or R275. So I got a bargain.

The second book was entitled *Mrs Dale's Diary* edited by Joyce Murray (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema) 1966. At first I ignored it thinking it was something to do with the BBC Radio programme of the same name. Then I remembered that Sir Langham Dale had been the Superintendent General of Education in the Cape Colony and headed up the University of the Cape of Good Hope which was the predecessor of UNISA. Sure enough, this book was the diary of his wife. But what made this interesting for me is the Dale family was connected to St Paul's. Emma and Langham Dale were married at St Paul's. Two of their children were baptised there and three of them buried from St Paul's. There is a purchased grave in our graveyard with a very attractive plinth but unfortunately no plaque.



Joyce Murray has removed the domestic matters but left in enough to appreciate Emma Dale's difficulties of being a housewife in an isolated spot, Montagu Cottage which was near the beach where Koeberg Road and the Hard Road (later Voortrekker Road) crossed the Cape Flats, meet. Nowadays, of course, this is no where near the beach and is in the midst of industrial waste lands of Salt River. Then there was little water and supplies could only be obtained from town via the daily Paarl Coach. This is an interesting read to see how our ancestors must have battled when today we take so many things for granted.

(Continued on page 6)

Finally, there was a soft covered book in excellent condition called *Rondebosch down the years 1657-1957* edited by F J Wagener, which tells in essays the history of the suburb. What I found fascinating was the map in the centre of the book which shows the old farms and estates superimposed upon a contemporary map. But even the contemporary map is now 54 years old and the Liesbeek Parkway had not yet been built so the streets around Belmont, Erin and Park Roads look so different.

The subjects and the authors of the essays are various. They range from a description of a fashionable wedding through to how Rondebosch had its own municipality and coat-of-arms. Authors include Frank Bradlow and Eric Rosenthal. This fifty page booklet was the most expensive of the three but one which is the most significant for me as Rector of St Paul's Rondebosch.



The old Rondebosch Municipality Coat-of-Arms

It's short for...

With more and more original parish registers being scanned and placed on subscription sites such as ancestry.com or findmypast.co.uk perhaps a list of abbreviations used would be useful. Tombi Peck posted this on a rootsweb list the other day and I'm reproducing here (I'm afraid without asking her permission!)

Abbreviations in Parish Registers.

b	= born
bach	= bachelor
bap	= baptized
bapt	= baptizatus/a
btc	= both of this chapelry
btp	= both of this Parish
ch	= child
Ch	= Church
Chyd	= Churchyard

d	= daughter
d + date	= died
f	= filius, filia (son, daughter - Latin)
h	= husband
illeg.	= illegitimate
in matr.cop.	= in matrimonis copulabantur
jun	= junior
lab	= labourer
lic	= by licence
mar	= married
mth	= month
otc	= of this chapelry
otp	= of this parish
pa	= parish
s	= son
sen	= senior
sep	= sepultus/a
spr	= spinster
ux	= uxot.
vid	= vidua
w	= witness
wdr	= widower
wf	= wife
wid	= widow
wk	= week
yeo	= yeoman (a yeoman farmer was a farmer who owned his farm rather than renting it). My New Oxford Dictionary didn't have <i>in matrimonis copulabantur</i> . I wonder what it means? Answers to dpratt@mweb.co.

BUMPER STICKERS

Gene-Allergy - It's a contagious disease, but I love it!

Genealogica Bonsai: Little family trees.

Genealogists do it generation after generation.

Genealogists do it in trees.

Genealogists live in the past lane.

Genealogists: People helping people.....that's what it's all about!

Genealogy can sometimes be a really dead end hobby

Genealogy is a family affair

Genealogy is breaking bread with the dead.

Genealogy is not a hobby, it's a disease!

Genealogy is the only hobby where dead people can really excite you.

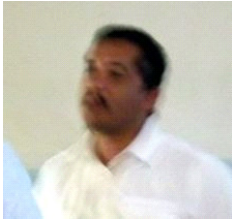
Genealogy: Chasing your own tale!

Genealogy made me what I am today.

Jeanealogy: the study of LEVIS and WRANGLERS families.

MONTHLY MEETINGS –2nd QUARTER

APRIL MEETING



In April we heard how skill in sport flows through families. Our Speaker was Dr Francois Cleophas, a teacher at SP High. He questioned whether this was “nature” (in the genes) or “nurture” (because of the parents enthusiasm and expertise). He mentioned how Cape Town soccer teams are characterised by families such as the MORGAN family who played for Tramways, the BYRNE family (Hellenic).

Francois also told us of families who had good sportsmen across multi-generations. These included the SOMO family where Jomo Somo’s son, Julius plays for Jomo Cosmos; in cricket the POLLOCK family had two brothers, Graeme and Peter who both were internationals and produced sons who played representative cricket—Peter’s son, Shaun perhaps being the best known. Also in cricketing families we find the D’OLIVERIA family where Basil became a international cricketer in England. His brother and father had also played first class cricket.

MAY MEETING



Dr Susan Broderick gave a fascinating talk on the German Settlers that came to the Cape between 1856-59. Because of the excess light many of her excellent slides were difficult to see but her expertise on the subject shone through clearly.

Susan spoke about the German Legion who had served in the Crimea. She has written a novel, *Unwanted* which is based on historical events. Her novel blends characters and events from the past and present including the Ninth Frontier War. It is set against the background of the Eastern Cape coast and mountains. In her book she captures her past family and she places them and her imagined characters into the lives of German & Mfengu immigrants.

Many Germans who formed the “British Foreign Legion” arrived in the Crimea too late to fight. Because of the awkwardness of political situation the politicians decided to offer them farms in the Eastern Cape. Between Dec 1856 and Jan 1857 2918 settlers came to East London on six ships. Later in 1858-59, 1600 civilian Germans came to the Cape—some to Worcester but the rest to East London.

JUNE MEETING



A large crowd of members and friends gathered for our June meeting at the Lodge de Goede Hoop. Freemasonry fascinates me as my great-grandfather was a Tyler in the Kimberley Lodge, so I was keen to see the interior of the Lodge here in Cape Town. My Oxford Dictionary tells that a Tyler is the doorkeeper

who keeps the uninitiated from intruding on the secrecy of a lodge or meeting. Others have said that a tiler is the caretaker of a lodge.

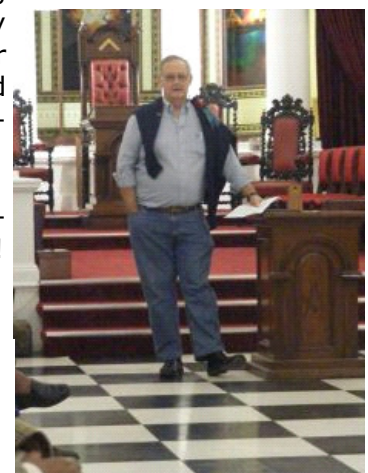
Our chairman gave us a good “guided tour” around the building with its fascinating collection of statuary. I particularly liked the skull!



The main meeting room was very grand with its star covered ceiling and its own thunder machine.

The tour was followed by a good tea!

David Slingsby telling us the history of the Lodge.



CAPE TOWN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Timetable 2011

Beginning Your Family History – An Introduction

Code	Date	Time	Venue	Cost
BS2	Sat 27 th Aug	9.30 to 17.00	Meadowridge Library	Donation

Workshops on Family History for Beginners

Code	Dates	Time	Venue	Cost
BW2	Thurs 1 st , 8 th , 15 th 22 nd Aug	9.30 to 11.30	St. Paul's Church Hall, Rondebosch	R150

Intermediate Workshops on Selected Topics

Code	Date	Time	Venue	Topic	Cost
IW3	Thurs 13 th Oct	9.30 to 12.00	St Paul's Church Hall	Using Your Digital Camera Colin Edwards	R50
IW4	Thurs 27 th Oct	9.30 to 12.00	St. Paul's Church Hall	Using Archival Sources for Family History Sharon Warr	R50

Hermanus Workshops

Code	Date	Time	Venue	Topic	Cost
HW2	Wed 19 th Oct	9 to 12.30	Hermanus Library	Beyond BMDs – further English research	R75

Programme and registration forms are available on request from Lois Harley tel 021 797 6537 or email lharley@bucknet.co.za

No more than 15 people will be booked on each course. Registration form and course fee must be received before the class commences.

The Society reserves the right to cancel a class if insufficient bookings are received or a venue should become unavailable for any reason.

