



# Genealogical Society of South Africa

## Durban and Coastal Branch

### Volume 31 - Issue 3/2016

#### EDITORIAL ...

Once again we've reach mid-year, and the saying "How Time Flies" keeps running round my mind. Shakespeare used a similar phrase, "the swiftest hours, as they flew," as did Alexander Pope, "swift fly the years." A French philosopher, Paul Janet, first posed the following theory of time perception in 1897. "Spending a month eagerly awaiting Christmas when you're five years old feels roughly the same as waiting a year when you're 54. At five, a month is almost 2% of your entire life lived up to that point. At 54, you need to experience a full year to "live" that same amount, relative to your much older age". Time perception is still not fully understood by psychologists or neuroscientists, but there is one thing most agree on: The more time you've lived, the shorter time feels. Time is the greatest need of a genealogist, and it is also our enemy since it is so elusive. Shakespeare referred to "hours" while Pope referred to "years". What promises did we make to ourselves at the beginning of 2016? Are we on track? It really is possible to "make time" - (we will forever be grateful if we do!) Organisation is the key ... organisation coupled with self discipline really can give us "extra time". I'm going to give it a try!! Rose

#### CHAIRMAN'S NATTER ...

Working on sorting out the Branch library - a seemingly endless task which is happily nearing an end - has afforded much food for thought. Our library possesses an excellent collection of interesting and informative books - works on genealogical research, books about history with indexes of names of places and people, biographies, autobiographies and diaries - but we hardly ever turn to them nowadays to help with our research. It is astounding how quickly digital communication has taken over, becoming an integral part of our lives and a vital research tool. We rely on the Web (and Mr Google!) to provide the answers to whatever we are seeking and most of our communication is via computers and now via smartphones. In past meetings we have had interesting talks and discussions about writing and publishing our own books to record our family trees and family stories, but I have come to the conclusion that if I ever get around to writing my family stories I will do so in blog form or save the chapters to CD, a 'stick' or a 'cloud'. And yet I still love the feel of turning pages to see what the next one will reveal, of running my finger down index lists in the hopes of finding something that will solve a mystery or break down a brick wall and of discovering old photographs. And don't mention the thrill of handling the pages of the old documents in the Archives! I wonder if our descendants will feel as torn between two worlds as we sometimes do.

At one stage I was almost ashamed of admitting to people that I was on 'Facebook' but now it has become such an important means of communication that the GSSA is encouraging all Branches to have their own 'Facebook' group. Take a bow, Rose, for being pro-active and starting our Durban and Coastal Group some time ago! There are so many 'Facebook' groups dedicated to genealogy that the Northern Transvaal group, in their April training session, devoted a slot to showing members how to sign up on 'Facebook' and how to use it in their genealogical research. There are even step-by-step instructions in their May newsletter. I belong to several of the genealogy groups on 'Facebook' and have found it heart-warming to note just how much people are willing to help others and to share information to which they have access. One of the most active groups

is 'ZA Genealogical Transcriptions', the group run by Ellen Stanton. People request information and invariably up it pops, often accompanied by a copy of the original document. There are also people in the various groups who have subscribed to sites where one has to pay, such as IdentityNumber.org, but who are willing to use their access to help others with a once-off request. The genealogical sharing on 'Facebook' is amazing. I hope you will consider being part of it. Our first 'Round Table' meeting was quite a 'rip-roaring' success. I hope that many of you will come to this next one armed with tales of your triumphs, laments about your brick walls, pleas for help and suggestions about our way forward as a group. – Eleanor

## **FEEDBACK FROM OUR APRIL & MAY MEETINGS ...**

Our speaker, (and also member), Prof. Ken Knight, was most interesting. Now 94 years old, he had us all enthralled recounting his genealogy experiences. His interest was sparked 35 years ago while he was attending the Grahamstown Festival. He and his wife decided to go into Grahamstown Cathedral where they found a plaque which honoured a Capt. Arthur Knight. After taking a photo of the words, Ken spent time at the Cory Library from which he gained an amazing amount of information ... and, yes, he was descended from Arthur Knight!

So began his “journey”. Prof stated that on the software package that he uses, he has 500 000 names on one of the versions, and 600 000 on the subsequent version – not all his family of course, but names of many other people he has researched.



The research of the topic he brought to the meeting was as a result of a note passed on to him in 2007 by Judy Letard, committee member, and former secretary, of the Durban & Coastal GSSA Branch. “A query from a Brenda Hawkins living in France”. She was enquiring after an ancestor, Charles Knight, who had been born in England around 1860 and had come to Durban where he was believed to be buried. The only other information she had was family heresay mentioning that his estate was substantial enough to be bequeathed to nieces, who had built 3 houses in England, one of which is named “Durban”. She had been advised by a great-aunt that Charles enjoyed gambling, and liquor (which they were led to believe hastened his demise) and that he owned hotels in Durban (named the Langham and/or the Lincoln). He was known as “The Silver King” – no doubt arriving from his gambling prowess.

So began the quest – through the usual research – libraries, newspapers etc, but it was during a visit to the Killie Campbell Library in Durban (*where Prof was investigating his own Fairbridge connection*) that he sourced a Robert Charles Knight in one of the substantial collection of Braby’s and other wonderful sources of history which are housed there. During all this time of research, Brenda Hawkins in France obtained a Birth Certificate for Robert Charles Knight, and it was discovered that his mother was Mary Ann Isbel who married a George Knight 8 years after Robert’s birth, and that George Knight formally adopted Robert.

Prof visited the West Street Cemetery in Durban, where he discovered a grave for Robert Charles Knight & found that Mrs. E F Knight, wife of RC Knight, was buried in the same plot. Brenda Hawkins had believed Robert Charles had never married! However, it was discovered through an investigation in England’s Family Records that RC Knight had married an Emily Frances Young – in Australia! How Robert Charles Knight travelled to Australia is still being researched.

Prof’s next step was to send off for the Death notice, Death Certificate and Will of Robert Charles Knight. He also had asked Brenda Hawkins to look in the UK Census records during her visits to

the UK. In the 1871 Census, it was discovered that Robert Charles was recorded with parents at 118 King Street Plymouth together with 2 half-sisters, Frances Jane and Mary Ann Patience.

The names of the 2 half-sisters were given in the DN, and in the Death Certificate – the cause of death, which (as expected) was cirrhosis of the liver. In the Will, he had bequeathed money to 3 children’s charities – the Durban Children’s Home, St. Martins, and one other. Other monies had been left to the man who handled his finances, some money to his wife’s brother, and a further sum to his housekeeper’s daughter - Trilby Hamilton. The balance of the money was bequeathed to his mother, and 2 half-sisters. He had signed the Will in January 1925, his mother had died in March 1925 and he died in the December of that year. With the money bequeathed to his half-sisters, 3 houses were built (and still stand) – all in Cardiff.

Prof concluded his most interesting talk by advising :

1. If people ask for help from a genealogist, amateur or whatever, do not ignore the request.
2. In research, remember that pursers of ships, or immigration officials, did not necessarily have good spelling ability, or writing ability, and ‘sounds-like’ may be what you are looking for.
3. First names get swopped around, or only the used name is recorded
4. Try and make connections – census records/family names, street names, residences to verify your information is correct. Find correlating evidence.
5. Don’t give up (this quest took many years to resolve). His achievements were the result of practical research (hours and hours of it), tenacity, fortitude and of course, great discoveries.

**(Thanks to Gail Richards for her notes)**



### **“Sugar and Settlers – A History of the Natal South Coast 1850 – 1910”**

Our guest speaker was Duncan Du Bois, the author of this book. He is an entertaining speaker who is a passionate historian. The book, published last year, is the product of research done by Duncan for his Ph.D. Thesis which he completed at the University of KwaZulu Natal in 2013. The south coast of Natal has had very little written about it, so his idea was to attempt to produce a critical, comprehensive, wall-to-wall account reflecting the lives of those pioneers set within the colonial and imperial context. It is also an

account of how the colonization process affected the lives of the indigenous African population and experience of Indians both as indentured labourers and as free settlers.

Duncan focussed on the South Coast, partly because he had spent many happy times as a child at Umzinto with his family. History, while not really being a popular subject at school, gains popularity with the adult population since it is a source of knowledge and background of the past. *(Every genealogist knows this!)* The content for his book was based on unpublished archival material, from the Pietermaritzburg and Durban Archives, and the following gives an idea of just some of the research involved:

More than 1,500 volumes of records were examined.

The material was anything between 105 and 165 years old.

These included letters, reports & petitions, a few of which have not been seen since they were written. These were written when goose quills were used as pens.

*Sugar and Settlers* commences with the Byrne settlement of 1849/1850 and the stark, raw reality the new immigrants encountered. It ends with the coming of the union in 1910. In between the

account is contextualized by events such as the role of indentured Indians, the economic meltdown of the mid-1860s, the Langalibalele affair, the Anglo-Zulu War, coal mining in Northern Natal, the Witwatersrand gold boom, constitutional changes in Natal, railway development, the Anglo Boer War and the Bhambatha rebellion. But the dominant narrative is travel and transportation which also affected the sugar planters on the North Coast just as critically.

Transportation was a major problem as initially there were 26 unbridged rivers along the South Coast, from the Mlazi to the Mzimkulu, and no railway line. Over time, bridges were built, and in 1897 the first train reached the north bank of the Mkomaas River. Groups of settlers at Mkomaas and Port Shepstone relied on small sea vessels which plied their services up and down the South Coast. Three gentlemen who were very involved in this were James and David Aiken, and William Bazely. On the initiative of the Aitken brothers shipping on the Mzimkulu began in 1880, and, through the efforts of Bazely, rocks in the entrance were blasted and a seawall was constructed to facilitate access.

As one probably realises, there were negatives as regards the experience and treatment of the Indians both as labourers and as settlers. And with the passage of time, the position of indigenous Africans became increasingly marginalized. Because colonization defined their respective lives, it was felt that their experiences merited a separate focus in the historical account. So, ***Sugar and Settlers*** is divided into three parts: the first from 1850 to 1893, the second deals with the Africans and Indians, and the third accounts for the period 1894 to 1910 when Natal's constitutional dispensation allowed for a degree of self-rule.

Duncan's talk was really excellent, and since it is hard to do it justice in such a small space, his book will definitely be well worth reading. Many thanks to our two most interesting speakers.

## **FROM OUR LIBRARY SHELVES ...**



Before the next meeting you should receive the updated lists of all the books that are available for research and borrowing. Lyn Paul has donated several books from Delyse Brown's collection and Bryan Dicks donated two boxes of books on a variety of topics of interest including some relating to the Boer War and several covering the history of schools and higher educational institutions. Our very grateful thanks to Lyn and Bryan for these donations.

For ease of quick location the number of the shelf on which the book can be found is on the list. Small books and 'floppy' thin ones that could easily get lost among the others are now in file hangers in the top drawer of the filing cabinet. Please feel free to browse and to borrow. Many of the books make very interesting and enjoyable reading. The discs, pamphlets and magazines still come to you at a later date.

## **A LEGACY FOR YOUR DESCENDANTS ...**

This is a list of 16 facts which you should leave for your children's children .... etc. Not all apply to every person, but they're adaptable to fit your unique life:

1. Your full name and when and where you were born.
2. Your siblings' names, and when and where they were born.
3. Your parents' names, when and where they were born, what they were like, the kind of work they did, special memories about them...
4. The same for your grandparents and great-grandparents, if you knew them.
5. How your parents met.



6. Your childhood: the games and books you liked; your hobbies, sports and activities; where you went to school; favourite and least favourite subjects in school; what you wanted to be when you grew up; your chores around the house; trouble you got into ...
7. Your high school years: school subjects you excelled at and struggled with, sports and activities, jobs, friends and dates, learning to drive, how you got along with your parents
8. Your college years, job training, and/or transition into working life
9. Experience serving in the military
10. Adult relationships and/or how you met your spouse.
11. Where you settled as a young adult, your friends and activities, religious life, travel, work
12. Being a parent: when and where your children were born, their names and how you chose them, what you loved and didn't love about having children.
13. Life lessons you've learned and advice you'd like to share
14. Family stories passed down to you, that you in turn want to pass down to others
15. Medical struggles that might also impact others in your family, if you feel comfortable sharing them.
16. Of course, your genealogy discoveries.

*(Taken from the Genealogy Insider)*

## 5 UNSPOKEN LAWS OF GENEALOGY ...

**The Law of Horizontal Space:** A record's legibility is inversely proportional to how much a genealogist wants to read it. One of the unspoken laws of genealogy. Genealogists shall take up all available horizontal space. Books, papers, file folders keep taking up more and more space. It starts on our desks and spreads to the dining room table, the coffee table, the floor... Even in our digital world, this law is still in effect. Add up our laptops, smartphones, scanners, tablets, chargers, spare batteries and all our techie toys and we still take up a lot of space. Corollary to this law: There is not enough horizontal space in the world.

**The Law of Last Call:** Genealogists will make their biggest discovery after the library or archives announces that it will be closing in 15 minutes. This Law is more stringently enforced the farther the genealogist had to travel to get to said library or archives.

**The Law of Departure Time:** Genealogists will make their biggest discovery within 15 minutes of the agreed-upon time of departure from a library or archives. If the group is going to leave at 4:00, the biggest discovery will be made after 3:45. Do not attempt to trick the Law of Departure Time by stating a time earlier than what is really planned. The Laws of Genealogy know this and will punish you by not allowing you to find anything.

**The Law of Vital Records:** At least one member of the family tree will have been born or died 1-2 years before the start of civil vital records. This is to expose the researcher to alternate sources. (Yeah, that's it... )

**The Law of Legibility:** A record's legibility is inversely proportional to how much a genealogist wants to read it. This is perhaps the most unjust of the Laws. You finally found that record that will tell you who great-great-grandma's parents were! Unfortunately, it's the one record on the page that has a giant ink smudge on it. Or you finally found your immigrant ancestor's passenger list — and the person who wrote it was a graduate of Mrs. Chickenscratch's School of Penmanship.

*(Written by Amy Johnson Crow – [www.amyjohnsoncrow.com](http://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com) )*

## USEFUL WEBSITES ...

Genealogy Latin Dictionary – [http://www.genealogyintime.com/dictionaries/genealogy-latin-dictionary-pageA.html?awt\\_l=OGut.&awt\\_m=JAA8hvjbuwk.Vy](http://www.genealogyintime.com/dictionaries/genealogy-latin-dictionary-pageA.html?awt_l=OGut.&awt_m=JAA8hvjbuwk.Vy)

**DURBAN & COASTAL BRANCH – GSSA: FACEBOOK PAGE**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1574048666142463/>

**DURBAN & COASTAL BRANCH – GENZA**

<http://www.genza.org.za/index.php/en/branches/durban-and-coastal-branch-durban>

## GENEALOGY HUMOUR ...



## TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE ...

In keeping with our talk in May, here are some facts about Indentured Indians arriving in Natal. On the 16 November 1860, the 1<sup>st</sup> group of 342 indentured Indian labourers arrived in Durban on board the **Truro**. On the 26 November, the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of 310 indentured Indian labourers arrived on board the **Belvedere** from Calcutta. They were recruited by sugar cane farmers to work at various sugar farms on the North Coast, South Coast and around the port of Durban. Some of the sugar farms the indentured labourers toiled in were at Darnall, Gledhow, Mtubatuba,



Stanger, Doronkop, Melville, Felixton, Tongaat, Verulam, Ottawa, Mount Edgcombe, Shakaskraal, Inanda, Reunion, Isipingo, Illovo, Renishaw, Mzinto, Esperanza, Port Shepstone, and Mzimkulu. More than 150 years later, most of the descendants of the indentured labourers have migrated from the sugar estates to the urban areas of Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Stanger, Tongaat, Verulam, Port Shepstone, Mzinto, and other areas. Many of the sugar estates are no longer in existence

In 2010, a memorial was unveiled to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of Indentured Indians. The Chairman of the 1860 Legacy Foundation, Dr Bedassi, said that he was proud to be not only Indian, but also South African and African as well.



## DIARY DATES ...

**Our meetings take place at the F.H.C. in Durban on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month, from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm**

- June 11**      **Genealogy “Round Table” / Personal Research.** Our first one was a great success, so why not come along, bring your research problems and brick walls, share your tips on sources and methodology – and your successes! Together we can help answer your questions and provide new sources and strategies for research. The Family History Centre is a great resource which contains census data, family records, local histories and documentary collections.
- July 9**      Our July meeting is guaranteed to help each of us to get the maximum benefit from our Internet Research. Eleanor Lea and Elaine Filetzki are going to show us all the different aspects of the latest research methods on all the different search engines. Family Search has added some new (and tricky-to-manage) developments on South African Death and Probate Records – which is Elaine’s speciality, and Eleanor has turned Facebook into her personal genealogical go-to place, with some amazing finds. There is nothing quite like hands-on experiences, and that’s exactly what our next meeting will be. In Eleanor’s words “It is a case of genealogists helping each other – both locally and internationally”.
- August 13**      Our guest speaker will be **Prof. Donal McCracken**, Senior Professor of History at the University of KZN and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Originally from Ireland, Donal McCracken’s research interests are divided between environmental history, media history and the Irish diaspora in Africa. His talk will be about **The Irish in South Africa.**
- September 10**      TBA
- October 8**      TBA
- November 12**      TBA
- December 10**      **Ancestral Tea – details available nearer the time.**

## **DETAILS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2016 ...**

### **Chairman**

Eleanor Lea Cell: 083 776 5537 [eleanorlea@yahoo.com](mailto:eleanorlea@yahoo.com)

### **Treasurer**

Graham Hammond 031 312 3420 [ghammo@gmail.com](mailto:ghammo@gmail.com)

### **Membership**

Gail Richards Cell: 082 670 1842 [sagewood@cdoc.co.za](mailto:sagewood@cdoc.co.za)

### **Secretary**

Rose McArthur Cell: 084 729 1974 [rose.mus@gmail.com](mailto:rose.mus@gmail.com)

### **Librarian / Liaison**

Eleanor Lea Cell: 083 776 5537 [eleanorlea@yahoo.com](mailto:eleanorlea@yahoo.com)

### **Newsletter**

Rose McArthur Cell: 084 729 1974 [rose.mus@gmail.com](mailto:rose.mus@gmail.com)

### **Committee**

Judy Letard Cell: 072-146-7922 [kdee@mweb.co.za](mailto:kdee@mweb.co.za)

### **Stellawood Project Coordinator**

Maureen Schnittker Cell: 083 456 3779 [h.rudman@pixie.co.za](mailto:h.rudman@pixie.co.za)

## **OUR VENUE FOR MEETINGS ...**

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

N.B. : The F.H.C. is open at the following times: Weds. 09h00 - 15h00: Thurs. 09h00 – 12h00

### ***Be like a Tree***

*Stay grounded and connect with your roots.*

*Turn over a new leaf.*

*Bend before you break.*

*Enjoy your unique natural beauty.*

*Keep growing.*