



*Christian Ludvig
Flemmer*

*Anna Distin,
daughter of John Sweet
Distin*



CHRISTIAN LUDVIG FLEMMER 1839 – 1903
ANNA DISTIN 1849 – 1924

Our story of the 'South African' Flemmers starts with Christian Ludvig born in Denmark on the 12th November 1839, the first child of Dr. Flemmer and his wife Betty. There was a great celebration in the small port of Korsør at the arrival of the infant boy, the first grandson born into the family. The custom at the time was to delay the christening of a healthy baby until the summer months when it was easier for other family members to come to the church. Ludvig as he was known to his family, was baptised on the 23rd December that same year and it is probable that the infant was not very healthy in the early months of his life.

Whatever the reason for the early baptism, the little boy thrived and by the time he was 5 he already had a brother and two sisters to keep him company. He started school at the *Realskole* in the street next to where the Flemmer family lived. By the time he was 10 in 1850, the census takers recorded that siblings had been arriving in quick succession:

Christian Ludvig	10
Camilla Henriette	9
Töger Abo August	7
Charlotte Marie Louise	5
Kirstine Catinka	4
Hans Christian	1

The census must have been taken early in the year as another boy, Andreas Salvator, was born on the 11th February. Certainly Betty would have had her hands full with this brood even with her 3 servants to help.

It was very pleasant growing up in Korsør, the eldest son of a well-respected doctor. The family lived in a house overlooking the sea and the short summer months were filled with adventures along the shore with his friends and younger brother Töger.

Ludvig's grandfather had helped the growing family out with a very welcome monthly allowance, but when he died in 1847 the allowance ended and the family found itself under growing financial strain. His mother's brother Töger von Abo had been writing to the family from the Cape Colony over the years. He had lived there for some time and had become a successful businessman in Cradock. He painted an exciting picture of a land of opportunity, and when he came to Korsør in 1852 he offered to help finance the family's move to the Cape. Sitting around the dining table at night he enthralled the youngsters with tales of a country they couldn't begin to imagine. The stories of the vast open spaces, wild animals and warlike tribes that were the Cape Colony of the time, had young Ludvig wide eyed with excitement.

And so his parents made the difficult decision to leave behind family, friends and all that was familiar, and travel on the still quite perilous journey to a new life in the Cape. This young boy, 13 at the time, was caught up in the whirl of activity, buying supplies needed for their new life, packing and saying goodbye to the friends who were so much part of his life.

The family travelled to Copenhagen and then on to London where they stayed for a few weeks before setting off on the 'Corsairs Bride' for Algoa Bay. The family celebrated Ludvig's 13th birthday in London; it was an exciting place for a young boy more used to the quiet village of Korsør. Africa was very much in the news in England, and many immigrants were leaving for a new life in the Cape and Natal. Visitors to London could get a very good idea of life in the Eastern Cape from the huge revolving panoramas in Leicester Square showing the scenery and teeming game depicted with some license by the artists. Perhaps young Ludvig was taken to see the wildlife exhibit of the adventurer Gordon Cumming - described by a visitor at the time:

It is exceedingly interesting, being a large hall hung round with horns, stuffed heads, skins etc., of the animals which he killed, very tastefully arranged. His wagon in the centre of the room, just in the condition in which he used it with the ox-yokes and trektow pierced and mended, the rifles slung inside, the forechest and bed made up with skins etc., and his cooking pots and lead ladles. I soon got into conversation with his 'tracker' Ruyter, a funny little good natured Bushman, looking like a boy of 15 or 16 but I rather think, twice that age, dressed in skins of leopard and gemsbock.

Finally the day came to board ship for a voyage that was to take 75 days. These ships were crowded and noisy, with little space for children and their entertainment and Ludvig spent many hours keeping an eye on and amusing

his younger brothers and sisters. We have little detail about the trip on the Corsairs Bride but an account by Lucy Gray in 'A Victorian Lady at the Cape' probably gives us a good idea of one of the activities available to the Flemmer boys:

These ships were infested with cockroaches "*in size and swiftness not unlike a mouse*" and when it was found that every sack of potatoes had been attacked vigorous measures were taken by the Captain

There were sailors armed with their caps some with bare feet standing ready, the children with slippers, the Captain hatless and sleeves up near the door of his cabin with a besom as the sack came up. The moment it was emptied, out swarmed the myriads. Then came the beating, stamping and knocking until the creatures were annihilated and the potatoes cleared, when the former were swept together in a heap and the latter put in hampers and afterwards put on the mizzen mast. This amusement was going on I believe, for several hours till even the children tired of the delightful employment.

The Captain had every article in the cabins turned out on deck twice; and then there was a regular slaughter. He and the boys (to whom it was a great treat) fall upon them with slippers. Then the cabin is washed out and the things replaced. They are not particular as to their diet; paper, ink, clothes and especially shoes, as well as more likely things, are attacked by them.

Not, perhaps the kind of cruising entertainment we are more familiar with these days, but it certainly helped to pass the time!

And so the days went by, from the cold northern seas, into the heat of the Tropics, around the Cape with its windstorms and finally into Algoa Bay. What excitement there must have been that day for 14-year-old Ludvig. Down the side of the ship into surf boat and then the exhilarating ride surging through the breakers and up to the beach. Grabbed and carried ashore by some Black stranger, at last on shaky legs ashore in a teeming mass of people of all hues, new arrivals, hawkers and sightseers. The sun was beating down that February day and the exotic smells of Africa were overpowering as the young boy saw his grandfather Christian Johannes von Abo walking along the beach to greet the party.

The family camped in tents near the beach for a few weeks and every day brought a new adventure. Arrangements had been made for the hire of ox-wagons and drivers, and with all their worldly goods safely stowed the wagons trundled off to the crack of whips and shouts of the drivers. I can give no better flavour of the trip up to Cradock than to quote from 'The Little Dane' by Ludvig's daughter Anna Louie:

The wild unbroken country through which they passed was a mixture of grandeur and monotony, the ever changing hills a source of constant interest and delight, a great change from the almost dead level of the Denmark they had left, with trees and water everywhere and its dense population. Now they would travel the whole day without passing a single homestead. Weird and

wonderful night noises thrilled the travellers. The furtive eyes and stealthy tread of animals beyond the range of the camp fire were abundant evidence of the presence of the denizens of the veldt: the call of jackals at night and the bark of baboons during the day kept the children in a state of panic or delight throughout the journey.

*Parts of the country through which they travelled were thickly covered by a wild fruit, the prickly pear, a fruit which is relished by the Natives. Thinking to please the children, one old wagon driver, "Windvoel" collected a dish of the prickly pear fruit, the cleaning of which is quite an art as the fruit is **covered** with minute thorns, almost invisible. These are brushed off with a bush gathered for the purpose, and then a thin skin is removed, leaving the luscious juicy fruit the size and shape of a large egg.*

Old "Windvoel's" efforts was greatly appreciated, the children were delighted and thoroughly enjoyed the fruit. The following day, as soon as a halt was called and the camp pitched, the eldest son, Ludvig, full of enterprise, himself made off for the prickly pear bushes and collected a quantity of the fruit, filling his pockets and shirt without realising the presence of millions of minute thorns. The agony which he suffered can only be realised by those who have handled this unkind fruit and have found that one thorn is enough to cause great inconvenience. It was most fortunate that his father was a medical man and was thus able to alleviate his suffering. The rest of his life was spent in South Africa but nothing would induce him to eat another prickly pear.

Certainly a lesson learned the hard way!

After 3 weeks trekking the family finally arrived in Cradock and there was a great deal to do in moving in all of their belongings, and most importantly for the time, being formally introduced to the people who 'mattered'.

Lucy Gray, mentioned above, was the sister of Samuel Gray, the first Anglican minister appointed to Cradock in 1850. From her book we see that Samuel 'was to find in von Abo a devoted friend. The two men had many interests in common.' This was Ludvig's uncle Töger, and it seems quite likely that Töger had managed to have Ludvig taught at Samuel Gray's small school. He taught ten boys as a way of supplementing his very meagre stipend and his services as a teacher were much in demand. Perhaps in this way Ludvig was able to finish his schooling without having to go to the Government school, a rough and tumble sort of place as this unfortunate teacher found out:

Goaded beyond endurance by the idleness and insolence of colonial youth, Blair had ventured to inflict corporal chastisement on one of his pupils. He was subsequently assaulted with some violence by the culprit's irate mother. There was little deference either for age or for rank and social standing.

In 1858 aged only 18 he and his 16 year old younger brother Töger, set off by themselves for the mouth of the Gonubie River near East London. It may seem incredible to us today that boys so young should travel through still wild

and dangerous country on a venture like this, but such was the spirit of the settler families. Dr. Flemmer's finances were not all that sound and it was essential for the boys in the family to strike out and make their own living as soon as possible.

The Colonial Government was keen to settle the newly conquered land which was simply given away, sometimes with a small subsidy for the basics of farming. The venture proved unsuccessful as their ox wagon with 6 months supply of provisions was destroyed in a bush fire started by local tribesmen. To make matters worse most of their stock of animals was killed in another fire, this time started by a careless neighbour.

Returning from Gonubie, Ludvig held a position as agent for the Cradock News in Bedford for a short time, before going back to Cradock. It was here that fate stepped in and set the course for his future life. John Sweet Distin was a wealthy merchant in Cradock, a larger than life character, and the host to many a lavish party to which all and sundry in the little town were invited. It was at one such party that Ludvig met his wife to be, the daughter of the house, Anna Distin. Ludvig was 19 at the time of the party, and with couples taking to the floor his father suggested to him that the polite thing to do was to ask the daughter of the house to dance. We can imagine the reaction of the teenaged Ludvig to this, as Anna was only nine at the time! Being a dutiful son, he took the little girl on to the floor little realising that 10 years later they would become man and wife.

It was at about the time of this dance that John Distin bought the farm Tafelberg Hall, near Middelburg. Over the years he turned it into one of the most progressive and successful farms in the Colony and there are many articles holding it up as an example of modern farming. The purchase included a nearby farm called *Plat Rivier* and he offered Ludvig the job as farm manager, a great opportunity for the young man. And of course it gave him the opportunity to see Anna regularly. The nine year old that he had been so reluctant to dance with soon grew into one of the most eligible girls in the district. Anna Louie gives a wonderful description of what happened in The Little Dane:

Five miles from the main dwelling house was another homestead belonging to Mr Distin. Here Ludvig Flemmer worked as manager for Mr. Distin for several years. As there were no telephones or motors in those days, Mr Flemmer, to keep in touch with the farming operations, could constantly be seen covering the five miles on horseback. He was a great horseman and performed many amazing tricks while riding, such as dismounting and remounting his horse while going at full gallop. These rides became more frequent as his interest grew in Anna, who had now grown to sweet maidenhood - the little girl whom ten years ago he felt too big to dance with!

Most of the Flemmers were very musical and Ludvig was also something of a poet, not a skill one would expect to find in a Fish River farmer! In 1867 he and Anna became engaged and he wrote her this poem on her first birthday after their engagement:

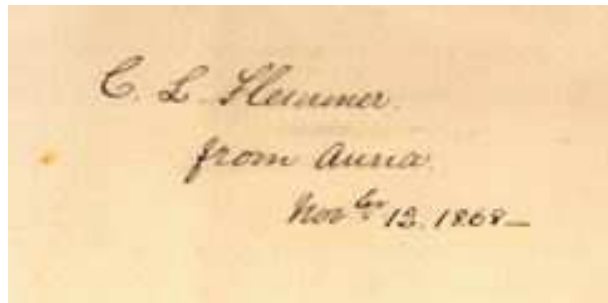
"November 3rd, 1867"

*"Anna, I wish I the first would be
To wish you joy upon this day:
First birthday that I spend with thee
Though seventeen have passed away.*

*And now the eighteenth has come round
To us, what changes since that last.
Love's golden chain we both have found
And firmly it is round us cast.*

*What hopes, what joys have dawn'd on us
Of which we could not dream before,
Nor thought to realise them thus,
That we should meet and part no more.*

*No thought will rise that may not be
From that true gentle heart of thine,
So I may surely hope to see
Fulfil'd this birthday wish of mine."*



1868 - A birthday gift from Anna

The wedding on the 8th September 1869 was one of the major social events of the year in Cradock. The staid Cradock News which did not normally 'cover' weddings wrote a lengthy article of this marriage between *"families that are old and influential residents of the town and district"*.

The Anglican minister, the Rev. M. Norton conducted the ceremony in the magnificent newly opened Dutch Reformed Church. This arrangement was possible due to the generosity of the DRC minister, the Rev. Du Plessis, as St. Peter's Anglican Church was undergoing repairs at the time. Because of the heat weddings were held early in the day and the wedding breakfast was attended by 100 guests.

Festivities.

It is not usual on the part of editors to make a practice of wielding the "grey goose quill," or the more matter-of-fact "magnum bonum," in the description of such episodes as the weddings which occur so surprisingly frequent even in Cradock, for the simple reason that, however interesting—and delightful—such events are to those immediately concerned, there is a sameness of detail in the majority which renders a report of them rather dull reading to the general public. Sometimes, however, it happens that, from a combination of circumstances, the public are led to take almost as much interest in the "launch" of the happy pair into matrimony as the "assistants" at the very ceremony. Consequently, on an occasion like this, it behoves the editorial mind to quit for a space the prosy details of parliamentary news, the chronicling of this, that, and the other "small beer" and seizing the golden nib, dip its bright point in ambrosial ink, and recal to mind the various items to be noted: the fair bride and her charming train of smiling girls—none of them wondering a bit if their turn would come next; the happy bridegroom and his train—each making vain attempts to keep his eyes off the pretty faces opposite; and then the breakfast, and the wedding-cake; the merry speeches; the renewal of old friendships; and as the daylight waned and darkness reigned without,—within, all brightness and gaiety; sweet music and the graceful dance; sparkling eyes, rosy cheeks, and cheerful voices, &c., &c., &c. All these have to be noted, but in the conjuring up of such sweet visions the editorial mind has not anticipated falling into a delicious dream, from which only the cry of "copy!" can arouse him.

The particular event which this time induced us to leave our accustomed course possessed unusual interest for the public, as the families thus connected are old and influential residents of the town and district. The bridegroom is the eldest son of C. A. Plummer, Esq., M.D. and the bride the

eldest daughter of J. S. Distin, Esq., of "Tafelberg Hall." The wedding took place on Wednesday last, at the orthodox hour, in the Dutch Reformed Church, which had been kindly lent by the Rev. J. H. du Plessis—St. Peter's Church, which is undergoing some repairs, being unavailable for the occasion. There were six bridesmaids and six groomsmen, the nuptial knot being tied by the Rev. M. Norton. Not being sufficiently versed in the subject of such 'works of art,' we feel ourselves utterly incompetent to describe the ladies' dresses, but leave it to the imagination of our readers, merely observing that the most glowing description of ours would fail to convey anything like a correct idea of how successful they had been in this respect, and how enchanting they all looked.

After the ceremony came the wedding breakfast, in which about a hundred joined, to wish the bride and bridegroom health and happiness. We might devote "columns" to a description of the princely way in which the guests were received, the numberless toasts and witty speeches, but we forbear; space forbids us to dwell upon the pleasant theme, and we must hurry on. In the afternoon, the bride and bridegroom left town accompanied a short distance by the bridesmaids and groomsmen in carriages.

In the evening there was a large gathering of guests in the premises prepared for the occasion by Mr. Distin, where a splendidly decorated hall furnished accommodation for the lovers of dancing, which was kept up with unflagging spirit till long past the small hours, when the silent streets again re-echoed with the roll of carriages as they conveyed the tired but well-pleased guests to their several homes.

LOCAL NEWS.

NIGHTMARE will be held in the

Cradock and Tarkastad Register 10th September 1869

The generous father in law, John Sweet Distin gave the newly weds the farm *Plat Rivier* complete with stock and equipment as a wedding present. This was a wonderful gift for a couple starting out in life and particularly for Ludvig who would have had to work all his life to buy a farm like this.

Here the couple settled into their new home and we can thank The Little Dane for the description we have of the farmhouse. It was of two storeys and built of mud, with walls three feet thick. The ceiling, clad with local reeds was also very thick to support the upper storey, the whole creating a wonderfully cool home in the baking Karoo summers.

Alas, the newly weds had little time to enjoy their time alone together. News reached them that Ludvig's father had died suddenly on the farm *Ruigtervlei*

near Steynsburg where he and his wife had retired. Dr. Flemmer was only 56 when he died of a heart attack, but I suspect he had been ailing. Ludvig as the oldest son had the responsibility of looking after his mother in the event of his father's death. It is not clear why he didn't move his mother to *Plat Rivier*, but he made the decision to lease his farm and move to *Ruigtervlei* immediately. This was not easy for Anna as we see from *The Little Dane*:

Poor little Anna shed bitter tears at giving up her charming little home where she had reigned supreme: and although she was very fond of her mother-in-law she did not look forward to making her home with the Danes, where practically only Danish was spoken and Danish dishes eaten.

It is not quite clear who these Danes were, but it was probably Ludvig's younger brother, Hans Christian and their cousins the Naested family who were on the farm at about this time. It must have been very difficult for Anna as apart from anything else, she was expecting their first child when they moved. Being the dutiful wife she made the best of it, supporting her mother in law through her bereavement.

The baby was born on the 12th June 1870 and named Christian Augustus after his late grandfather. Eighteen months later Anna and Ludvig's second child, Selina Camilla was born on the 4th December 1871. She was baptised at St. Peter's in Cradock on New Year's Day 1872, and the young couple had to cope with the great sorrow of losing her at the age of six weeks.

It was at this time that a decision was made to leave *Ruigtervlei* and move to Cradock. Ludvig's sister Camilla had married another Dane, Hans Michael Naested who had established himself as a successful trader in Adderley Street, Cradock. In 1872 Naested decided to take his wife and family on a trip back to Denmark and rather than close his business, it made far more sense for Ludvig to take it over. The family found a small house for his mother Betty where she lived with her brother Töger. The older and more established families lived down toward the river, but Anna and Ludvig, with more limited means bought themselves a house a few streets up. In those days these were new houses with no trees shading their tin roofs baking in the summer sun, and with clouds of dust swirling up at every breeze. The house they lived in can still be seen today and occupies erven 632 and 633 on the northwest corner of Frere and Victoria Streets.

Ludvig and Anna's house in Cradock

Here the family settled in and Ludvig went about establishing himself in business. There are records to show that he applied to the municipality to take over Naested's wool washing



lease, the application being prepared by another brother in law, attorney Edward Gilfillan. Wool was a major earner in the area and was washed before going by wagon to the coast, to remove dirt and grease and thus reduce its weight. The hot springs outside Cradock, a health spa today with a ready supply of warm water, were ideal for this purpose.

Ludvig was supplying the municipality with maintenance equipment and took out a permit costing 15/- a month so his wagons could travel through the new Gilfillan Bridge toll to the hot springs at the Bath. He was able indulge his interest in local horse racing, with his beloved horse 'Meldrum' stabled at their home.

Life was settling down very pleasantly for the family, surrounded as they were by friends and family. On the 28th January 1874 another daughter was born – she was Anna Louise, baptised at St. Peter's on the 11th February of that year. Known all her life as Louie, she grew up to be a lively child – The Little Dane – who in later life was to write the wonderful record of her family and the times in which they lived. All was not happiness and laughter unfortunately as the couple's first-born Christian Augustus died just after his fifth birthday in June of the same year. The following article appeared in the local paper:

We regret to state the Mr. C.L. Flemmer, of this town, has lost a fine little boy of 5 years old through the prevailing epidemic. The child died on Monday morning last notwithstanding the unremitting attentions of Dr. Fehrsen, assisted by Doctors Lattey and Bond.

The 'prevailing epidemic' was almost certainly scarlet fever, a regular visitor to the frontier towns killing many young children over the years. Typical of the times is that Mrs. Flemmer is not mentioned at all in this article, although her grief must have been hard to bear. It is an indication of a woman's secondary role in public life of this era this despite the fact that they were the very backbone of their families.

Naturally the time following the death of their first born son was filled with sadness for the couple but life had to go on despite their feelings, made clear in Ludvig's poem to Anna on their fifth wedding anniversary:

*Months and weeks have pass'd away
Since last I wrote on any day
That we dear wife commemorate
I could not write for cruel fate
Had in that time fill'd full the cup
and sorrows, heap'd on sorrow up
T'll all seem'd dark and dreary.
And heart and spirit weary
How could I try a joyous strain
The trial had been all in vain
My verses would in spite of me
Run melancholy as the sea
When hard at even sighing moaning*

*Like spirits chain'd, for freedom growing
 But joy again returning
 Bids us no more moaning
 So let us with a joyous lay
 Thank God who sends to us this day
 Which marks five years of precious life
 For you and me my precious wife
 Though sorrows have been sore and great
 Yet may we not repine at fate
 Our hearts are fill'd with joy
 We bless our Baby Boy.*

The reason that their '*hearts are fill'd with joy*' is because shortly before this anniversary another son, John Distin Flemmer had been born on the 4th August 1875. Known as Jack, he was named after his grandfather and was baptised at St. Peter's on the 4th August 1875.

On the 25th January 1878 another son, Christian Ludvig Flemmer was born and was baptised at St. Peter's on the 13th February that year. By this time the district was fairly crawling with the infant's cousins: the Gilfillans had 7 children, the Naesteds 6; Ludvig's brother Töger had one and Hans in Steynsburg 3. Perhaps the families got together for special occasions, certainly enough people to fill a small hall!

THE CRADOCK REGISTER, JANUARY 17, 1879.



IMPORTANT
Sale by Auction.

INSTRUCTED by Messrs. JACOB VENTER & C. L. FLEMMER, who are Dissolving their Partnership Business in Ostriches, the Undersigned, will Sell by Public Auction on the Farm

PLAT RIVER
 Half an hour from Mr. Durr's Farm Tafelsberg and 2 1/2 hours from Middelburg.
 On Wednesday, the 5th day of March, 1879.

The following Valuable OSTRICHES, also OXEN, HORSES, WAGONS, &c., viz.:

Ostriches

3 pairs Splendid Breeding Birds, that have bred and hatched Chicks.
 1 pair 5 Years Old—4 pairs of the same Lot have been put up this Season and bred.
 4 pairs 4 Years Old
 2 pairs 3 Years Old
 2 Cock Birds, 4 Years Old
 90 Birds, 18 Months Old
 11 " 7 Months Old
 43 " 4 Months Old.

These BIRDS are really a Fine Lot, every one has been taken of them. They are Healthy and in good Condition, and have been kept specially for farming purposes.
 An inspection is all that is asked.

ALSO,

2 Spans of Oxen
 2 pairs of Draught Horses
 1 Scotch Cart Horse
 1 Riding Horse
 2 Buck Wagons (nearly new)
 1 Scotch Cart and Harness
 1 Horse Wagon.

Bargains Expected!—Refreshments Provided!—Sale to commence at 10 o'clock a.m.

GEO. ARMSTRONG, Auctioneer.

1879 dawned, a fateful year for the family as we shall see and indeed for South Africa at large. In January a series of big advertisements appeared in the Cradock Register announcing that Ludvig and his partner, Jacob Venter were disposing of their farming venture at *Plat Rivier* and were auctioning off all of their animals and equipment.

The Cradock Register January 17 1879

Often an article about the actual sale followed such notices, but in this case more pressing news filled the paper for weeks in January. The British Army had invaded Zululand and it was not long before the disaster at Isandhlwana where nearly 900 whites were killed filled the headlines for weeks. The slaughter at Isandhlwana was unprecedented and sent a collective shudder though the settlers in the Colony. Life in the little *dorp* continued unchanged for the time being and in March Ludvig was made a steward and Honorary Secretary of the Turf Club – a position he was to hold until the Club closed in 1886. In April he became a churchwarden at St. Peter's. Advertisements for his business, C. L. Flemmer & Co. – The Ostrich Farmers, appeared regularly in the Cradock News along with notices

that he was selling Danish butter in 1 and 2lb. tins. In the Midland Gazette he advertised to '*Struisvogel Boeren*' as a buyer of feathers and hides.

There was trouble brewing closer to home, with the Basuto chief Morosi beginning to collect his own men about him. A minor war started against the Griquas; in the north the Sekukuni rebellion continued and there was trouble brewing in the Transvaal Republic. It comes as no surprise to find that the Colonial Government decided to mobilise all of its available military resources in the face of these spreading outbreaks. Ludvig was a sub-lieutenant in the Cradock Mounted Volunteers - The Cradock Bricks of the relief of Whittlesea fame. These worthies met on a monthly basis for drilling and target shooting for which Ludvig was paid 11/- a day. 'The Bricks' were one of the many volunteer units formed in virtually every town in the Colony.

Although there were Imperial troops in the country, the British Government was very reluctant to reinforce them in view of the cost to British taxpayers. The only other armed men available were the volunteer forces raised in small towns and the Afrikaans burgher commandos. Many of these men were accomplished bush fighters, used to living off the land and prepared to risk their lives for the security of their homes and farms. There were many more who did not volunteer, and among the burghers there was disillusionment with the British who they believed had given them a raw deal after previous border wars. The Cape Yeomanry Act of 1875 had given some structure to the volunteer corps laying down training requirements and reasonable rates of pay. The Act also made provision for volunteers who may have trained with their units for months to pay a 'substitute' in the event of them being unavailable or unwilling to get involved in the actual conflict. A daft bit of legislation that meant in some cases men who had trained for months substituted themselves for a completely untrained person with no particular ties to the unit at the very moment their training was needed most.

Following the slaughter in Zululand it says a lot for Ludvig that he reported for duty with the Cradock Mounted Volunteers in 1879. He was typical of many of the brave men in these units. He comes across as a kind and gentle man; at age 39 he had his business to run, three young children and his wife expecting another, and yet he did not hesitate when the call to duty came. Although in truth not many men were killed in the volunteer forces, some of them certainly were and life on campaign could be very hard with inadequate supplies and shelter being the norm.

The fateful day came when Ludvig resplendent in '*his smart dark blue uniform and white helmet, from which waved a huge black tuft, like a horse's tail*', fell in on the Town Square. The whole town turned out to bid farewell and with the band playing, the unit trooped out of town en route to Basutoland. There were tears aplenty and many an aching heart that day. Communication with the troops was a hit and miss affair and Anna and the children had no idea how long the campaign would last.

Anna had her family's own problems to deal with. With her husband off to the front, she gave birth to another son, William (Willie), born on the 6th

September 1879. He was a sickly infant, needing lots of attention and if it had not been for the constant care given to him by Anna's mother, the baby would have died. It doesn't seem possible that things could get worse, but they did when the young Christian, aged about 18 months, went down with typhoid fever at the same time. The Basutoland campaign dragged on and Anna and her mother simply had to cope with the many difficulties that came their way during this period. Their role in life was their husbands and families, to be supported bravely and uncomplainingly through thick and thin. The two youngsters survived and regained their health although we are told the young William died 'tragically' just short of his second birthday.

Meanwhile out in the field Ludvig and his unit had dealt with skirmishes on the way into Basutoland. They were camped with over a thousand other men around the base of Morosi's Mountain as it came to be called. The chief and his people had retreated up the steep pathways to the plateau above where all attempts to dislodge them had so far failed. Duty in the field was mainly guarding the many paths down, a boring routine and a time waster to men who had farms and businesses to get back to. Winter came on and with it, the bitter cold and rain of the mountains. Finally after nearly 7 months of desultory attacks, the Cape Mounted Riflemen (of which my great grandfather Insp. John Nolan Neylan was an officer) used scaling ladders to launch an attack that took the defenders completely by surprise, ending all resistance.

News reached Cradock that the war was over and preparations began for a celebration to meet the men of the Cradock Bricks on their triumphal arrival. Every day Anna and the older children waited anxiously for news of Ludvig's whereabouts, longing to see him safely back with his family again. A horseman arrived with news and it wasn't good. Ludvig had been travelling in a buggy that had overturned and he had broken his leg! At this time these kinds of injuries could be life threatening or leave the injured permanently crippled. Many large military units did not even have rudimentary medical care. Ludvig was fortunate as his daughter explains

With wonderful courage and devotion, his men had carried him back to the Field Hospital, on an improvised stretcher, walking for miles over rough broken country. There he lay for weeks with his leg in plaster-of-paris.

In the end one of Anna's brothers drove a spring wagon all the way into Basutoland and brought him home, a long and uncomfortable journey for an injured man. But at least he was home again! He was carried into the house and laid on the living room floor. With his leg still in plaster and the beard he had grown in the field his children didn't recognise him at first and refused to go anywhere near him.

Being a loving father he knew only too well how to overcome their fears as Anna Louie explains:

Reaching for his stick, he gave his leg a tap, the plaster-of-paris emitting a hollow noise. The children were greatly intrigued, approaching closer at every bang. Little hands gingerly laid on the injured leg, were hastily withdrawn as

they gazed at their father with wide eyes of wonderment. Thereafter one could hear them tearing through the house shouting, "It's my turn to bang Daddy's leg. It's my turn."

Life began to return to normal for the family as Ludvig recovered from his injury and was able to become more involved in his business again. Of course life was never 'easy' as we would know it today. With young Christian having survived typhoid fever, his mother was soon confronted with another crisis. Louie (aged 6) and Jack (5) went down with rheumatic fever just after their father came back from Basutoland. After all the strain she had been under it is no wonder their doctor insisted that the family take a holiday at the coast as it *'was essential that the children should have sea bathing'*. Seawater was believed to have healing properties in the days before more sophisticated medicines, something we have perhaps lost sight of.

The railway had not reached Cradock yet and the only way down to the coast was by ox wagon. A great favourite of Karoo families was the Kowie River area (near present day Port Alfred) and arrangements were made to leave as soon as possible. Ludvig himself was to stay in Cradock and get his business going again, but made all the arrangements, for a wagon, tents, supplies and servants for the expedition. It says a lot for the peaceful nature of the Colony in 1880 that a party of women and children with servants could travel all the way to the coast in safety.

The children were in a fever of excitement at the thought of their first sight of the sea, seen at last after about 10 days' trek down via Grahamstown. The party consisted of Anna and her three children Louie, Christian and Jack; Anna's aunt with her daughter, the nursemaid Sannie and the wagon driver. They were soon all in the hotel near the beach, with the children playing in the water and exploring the rock pools. Being completely unfamiliar with the sea it's no surprise to find that within days five year old Jack was very nearly drowned. A wave caught the family unawares and they were all swept into the surf, a terrifying experience as anyone who has survived it knows only too well. They scrambled for the beach only to see Jack's head bobbing out to sea. And now young Sannie the maid, with no thought of her own safety, plunged fully clothed into the surf and just managed to reach him. To shouts of encouragement from his frantic mother Sannie struggled back to the beach and Jack was saved. There was no more swimming in the sea after that! For the rest of their stay local women were paid to bring seawater up to the hotel so the family could bath in it.

1881 proved to be another eventful year for the family. Ludvig's business was taking up much of his attention and there were regular advertisements in both the Cradock and Middelburg newspapers. On 1st June there were family celebrations when Anna and Ludvig's daughter Edith Selina was born. This joy was short lived as their son William (Willie) died a few months short of his second birthday. All we know is the he died *'under tragic circumstances'* which I would take to mean that he didn't die of one of the many childhood illnesses that swept through these small towns – but we haven't found out

what exactly happened. It does seem a little strange that he was buried on 21st June and the new baby, Edith Selina was baptised two days later, on the 23rd.

There was a welcome distraction when the long awaited railway finally reached Cradock after many delays. It's hard for us to imagine the excitement that this event caused. Brass bands played, the schools were let out to attend and a real festival of speeches and celebration took place as this huge, noisy machine arrived, terrifying the Flemmer children.

The arrival of the railway at Cradock meant the opening up of the country to development and settlement and the easing of trade and postal delays. At this time a fast cart took four days to reach Port Elizabeth, but a train a day was leaving Cradock for the coast. It was not long after this that the line was built through to Tafelberg and beyond. Ludvig and his daughter Louie were among the first passengers to travel on this line when he took her to see her Distin grandparents at Tafelberg Hall, a trip of nearly 50 kms. They travelled in an open truck and their 'ticket' was a blank playing card on which was written '*Pass Mr. Flemmer and party!*'

Early in 1882 Christian Ludvig and Hilton Barber, his CO from the Cradock Mounted Volunteers, took the train to Port Elizabeth for an historic meeting in the annals of South African horse racing. At the Phoenix Hotel they met other racing men from turf clubs in the Colony and the decision was made to form the Jockey Club of South Africa. On the 8th November 1882 the couple had another daughter, their eighth child, Olive. She was baptised at St. Peter's on 12th January the next year.

Just before the arrival of their last child Arthur Claude in July 1884 the decision was made to give up the trading company in Cradock and go back to farming at *Plat Rivier*. We don't know the reason for this, but again it may have been partly a decision made by Ludvig's aunt and uncle Camilla and Hans Michael Naested. As we saw earlier it is probable that the Naested's decision to go farming may have given Ludvig the opportunity to become a trader. After his return from Denmark Hans Michael Naested farmed at *Kruidfontein* but in 1884 decided to move back to Cradock, and I think that he took over Ludvig's business. Arthur Claude Flemmer was born on the 21st July 1884 and was baptised on the 16th August, again at St. Peter's. By now Ludvig was 44 and Anna 34; still a young woman she had had nine children in about 15 years of whom 6 had survived.

With their children Louie (10), Jack (9), Christian (6), Edith (3), Olive (2) and baby Arthur, money was very tight and the couple set about gathering the necessary funds to set themselves up as farmers. Anna owned some land in Cradock described as *erf Ld C Stockenstroom (properly called Beren) Street and Dundas Street Cradock in area 321 roods and 143 sq feet*. On this she took a mortgage of £1500 with interest at 6% per annum payable quarterly. The capital was to be paid in 6 equal instalments of £250 per annum from the first on 1st Oct 1886.

A further £1000 was raised for improvements to the farm by application to the trustees of *Plat Rivier*. It seems that when the couple married in 1869, Anna's father did not make an outright gift of the farm, but gave it to them in trust, the trustees being Thomas Charles Scanlen and Richard Coldrey. In the application the farm is shown to have been owned by G R Coetzee who had bought it in 1845 and it is described as:

'certain piece of perpetual quitrent land with buildings thereon situated in the Division of Middelburg field coronetcy of Brakke River being portion of part of the quitrent place 'Tafelberg' known as Plat River measuring together 1783 morgen 108 sq roods [about 3500 acres] as per transfer in favour of the said trustees on 27th October 1869 and certain piece of land situated as a bond (?) between the farm Zuiverkuil and Riviera measuring 898 morgen 494 sq roods as per quitrent lease in favour of said trustees dated 5th August 1875.

This second piece of land had been bought by Distin after the marriage for £404 11s. In addition Distin had spent a further £1200 on camps, fences and buildings on the property. The trustees had to make application to the Master's Office in Cape Town for the approval of the loan, which was duly granted.

Ludvig borrowed a further £600 under a personal bond:

in favour of the late Archibald Charles Stewart and William Hume trading as A C Stewart 'for goods sold and monies advanced to Christian Ludvig Flemmer. As security he pledges a second mortgage on Zuiver Kuil alias Zuur Kuil which was transferred to him by deed of transfer dated 18th Feb 1878 and a first mortgage on erven 160 and 203 Maraisburg (now Hofmeyer) each 46 sq roods 126 sq feet transferred to Christian Ludvig Flemmer on the 24th March 1875 and 27th March 1878 respectively

We see from this that although the couple owned other properties, they were starting their farming venture with the burden of at least £3100 of debt. Although men such as John Sweet Distin became very successful and prosperous, farming remained a very perilous way of making a living for most families at this time.

Many years later, writing *The Little Dane*, Louie gives us a vivid description of *Plat Rivier*

The children loved the wild, free farm life - the old Dutch house with its mud walls, three feet thick, and its thatched roof. In front of the house was a water furrow planted with trees, and beyond, a big garden with fruit and vegetables. They found the house rather small and Mr Flemmer made arrangements for a bathroom which, though primitive and unique, was very satisfactory. Under the trees a canvas structure was set up, in the roof of which was a tank. It was filled with water from the furrow. By pulling a string a torrent of water was released and one had a shower bath.

As Louie says it was a wonderful free and healthy life for the children. There was always something going on with the animals, with bringing in the crops and of course family and friends coming to visit. There were also practical matters, for instance the children's' education. A private tutor was hired for Jack and Christian, then about 10 and 7. These private teachers were often women who had not married and who had some educational training, but their ability to teach was by no means guaranteed. Add to this the informality of the home classroom and the varying ages of the children, and it is easy to see that most would not get much beyond the three 'Rs'. Louie meanwhile had her lessons with her mother, an arrangement that caused some concern. With a large family to see to and the farm to run, Anna was worried that she was not giving enough time to Louie's education. It was a great relief when her father visited one day to say that he was starting a farm school at Tafelberg Hall, and asked if Louie would like to go.

The Government couldn't provide schools for a population spread across the whole Colony, so it gave grants subsidising schools set up by farmers for children in the area. The proviso was that at least 5 children were enrolled, and in this case John Sweet Distin had four on his list so the addition of Louie completed his quota. The amount of the grant was very small - £2 a year per child if the teacher was certified. It is likely that Distin would have had to pay the teacher's salary supplemented by this grant. In any event, Louie's schooling was now taken care of and every Sunday the family set off in the Cape cart to take her to Tafelberg Hall collecting her again on Friday afternoons.

With the younger children growing up, Ludvig decided to apply for a grant to start a farm school of his own at *Plat Rivier*. In about 1890 a suitable teacher was found and Louie and her younger siblings were taught on the farm in a room which had been built on to the main building. Three years later, when Louie was about 17 she completed school and then went to Port Elizabeth to write a teacher's exam which she failed. This is not really surprising given that she says herself that she wasn't too keen on her lessons, and the fact that her teacher was only four months older than her! This young teacher always had difficulty keeping Jack (about 16) and Christian (about 13) hard at work, and we can imagine these teenage boys, full of fun, and bored with school work, using all the tricks in the book to avoid their lessons.

There was a very significant event in Ludvig's life in 1894 when St. Lawrence's Anglican Church was consecrated. Up until this time, the nearest church was St. Peter's in Cradock, too far away for regular attendance. Once a month a service was held at the Distin home, Tafelberg Hall, attended by farmers and their families from far and wide. With no minister available it is likely that a member of the community conducted this service. It was a great opportunity for catching up with family and friends and news of the district. As Ludvig was a churchwarden from the early days it is quite likely that he conducted some of these services. When the railway line was built through from Cradock in 1882, it was much easier for a minister to reach the area. For a while services were held in the goods shed at Tafelberg Station as it was more central.

In the early 1890's the ever-generous John Sweet Distin donated some of his farm so that a church could be built, even bringing in skilled stonemasons from Scotland so that a fitting monument could be created. Although Distin donated the land and made a considerable contribution to the costs the congregation had to raise funds as well, and we know that Ludvig was very much involved in this effort.

By February 1894 all was ready for the consecration of the new church and this is part of the report that appeared in the Grahamstown Diocesan Magazine in March that year:

Consecration of a New Church

On February 15th the quiet Railway Station of Tafelberg was visited by a goodly number of people from the immediate neighbourhood, and from more distant parts. The occasion of the gathering was the Consecration of the new Church - an event looked forward to by the farmers and railway employees as the completion of a good work.

Owing to the train from Alicedale arriving only about mid-day, the service could not begin earlier than half-past twelve o'clock. At this hour the Bishop and Clergy, who had robed at the Station Master's house, proceeded towards the church. On arriving at the door of the Church, which was shut, the Petition to consecrate was read by Mr C.L. Flemmer, churchwarden. The Bishop and clergy then walked in procession round the Church once, chanting the 24th Psalm.

After the service the Bishop and Clergy, and a good number who came from Middleburg and neighbouring farms, were hospitably entertained by Mr and Mrs C.L. Flemmer.



St. Lawrence's is a fitting tribute to the many people who worshipped there and who contributed to making its consecration possible. It is beautiful little church and can still be seen near Tafelberg Station.

*St Lawrence's
Tafelberg consecrated
1894*

Ludvig went to Cradock in September 1896 to see his mother Betty who was ailing, and at the same time attended a meeting of the Farmers Association. *Rinderpest* was wiping out cattle herds in the Transvaal and Free State. With

no cure available, there were very real fears that it would spread into the Cradock District. Fortunately for the family it caused no major hardship for farmers in the area. Betty's health continued to decline and she died aged 78 on the 16th September, comforted perhaps that she had seen her eldest son before she died.

At the beginning of 1896 Louie had managed to get a position as pupil teacher at Rocklands Girls School in Cradock, where her cousins Daisy, Hilda and Rosa Flemmer were pupils. At the end of that year she failed her teachers' exam again and came back to teach at the *Plat Rivier* farm school. By then her eldest brother Jack had left to seek his fortunes on the Witwatersrand. She taught Christian (then 18) for six months before he started working the farm with his father. Louie was 22 by this time and we can imagine her difficulty maintaining discipline with her younger siblings – Edith (15), Olive (14) and Arthur Claude (12) and with four other local children in the class.

There was trouble brewing in the Boer Republics and 1896 saw the disastrous Jameson Raid, a forerunner to the Anglo Boer War. Very little changed at *Plat Rivier* and the family would have had no inkling of the hostilities that caused so much hardship and loss of life a few years later. I am sure they could never have imagined that this rural community would be faced with Boer commandos operating in the hills and dongas of their peaceful farmlands.

On the 11th October 1899 war broke out and within days Kimberley was under siege, and fighting broke out in several areas of Natal. Ludvig, who was 59 and may have been ailing, decided to sell the farm. I don't think this had anything to do with the war that was still so remote. Farming was a hard life and he decided to retire and move back to Cradock. He sold *Plat Rivier* to a Mr. Gabb who changed the name to Springfield and Christian, then 21 stayed on as farm manager. Louie was 25 at this time and had gone back to teaching at Rocklands. Her youngest sister Olive (17) was a pupil at Rocklands and we see from the local paper that she gained a third class pass in the second elementary examination at the end of that year.



There was a great send off from farming and church friends for this well loved and respected family when they left the Middelburg District. The congregation of St. Lawrence's presented the family with a beautiful illuminated scroll which sums up the family's contribution to the community:

*Scroll presented to Ludvig by the
St Lawrence congregation*

The family settled into a very different way of life in Cradock compared to the freedom of the farm. The eldest son Jack had married

Maud Croxford in Johannesburg in 1899 and it was not long before they became refugees, fleeing the Transvaal like so many thousands of others. Jack brought his wife to Cradock in October 1899, leaving her in the care of his parents while he left almost immediately to join the Eastern Province Horse. These were difficult times indeed, with the war initially going badly for the Imperial forces. It was not long before Cradock was placed under martial law with curfews and a big military presence. This was exciting perhaps for the girls who would be much in demand for the officer's dances that took place in town, but very worrying for families who had their men folk off to war.

There was much joy at the birth of Jack's daughter Marguerite Distin Flemmer on the 12th of August 1900. This was Ludvig and Anna's first grandchild, and despite the cares of the war no doubt there was a big family celebration for the baby's christening at St. Peter's a few weeks later. Perhaps even more so as Jack had managed to get some leave from his unit and was in Cradock for the occasion.

Meanwhile, Ludvig's eldest daughter Louie had got engaged to Jim Rous in 1898. He was a farm manager at Tafelberg Hall where the couple had met. Like most young men from the English speaking community he had also joined up at the outbreak of hostilities. He was a remarkable young man and there are many stories of his bravery and adventures during the war in The Little Dane. Their plans for a big wedding were delayed several times with Jim's leave being cancelled at the last minute following yet another unexpected battle or skirmish with the Boers. At last Jim could get to Cradock, but as it was Holy Week the Anglican minister pointed out that he couldn't marry them. Jim was obviously determined that there would be no more delays, and after threatening to get married before the magistrate (unthinkable!) special permission was granted for them to be married 'very quietly'.

The wedding took place at St. Peter's at 8 a.m. on March 26th 1902, and despite the early hour, there was a big turnout of family and friends crowding the church. There is no report of the wedding in the local paper, which is filled with news of the war and of the last days of the great Cecil John Rhodes who died the same day. The couple had short honeymoon at Port Elizabeth, before going to Durban where Jim had been given the post of Recruiting Officer.

We can perhaps have some idea of the effect of the war on ordinary families like the Flemmers. As we have seen, Jack and Jim were already serving when the youngest son, Arthur Claude joined up just before he turned 18. He suffered great hardship bringing hundreds of horses up to the front from Port Elizabeth. For the womenfolk the quote "*They also serve who only sit and wait*" coined in a later war held very true. It is hard for us now who have no experience of war to imagine the worries and trials of the families at home.

The war finally ended with the terms of surrender being signed on the 31st May 1902 and life slowly began to return to normal, although I suppose

nothing was ever the same again. It was shortly after the war ended that Ludvig was elected to the Town Council.

The following year his daughter Louie arrived in Cradock with her husband Jim and their new born son Marcus and how proud Ludvig and Anna must have been of this, their first grandson. Anna went back with her daughter to the couple's farm near Pretoria, but had not been there long when a telegram arrived saying that Ludvig was very ill and that she should come back immediately. There was a desperate race by cart to the station and the anxious and slow train trip back to Cradock. All was in vain as her dearly beloved husband had died the night before she got back.

Christian Ludvig Flemmer died on the 13th October 1903 a month short of his 63rd birthday. Clearly a good man in the best sense of the word, he is one of many Flemmer ancestors I wish I had met. There can be no finer tribute than the obituary that appeared in the Cradock News:

Although there was a will all he left were *'effects of trifling value'* which were distributed among his family. He is buried in the graveyard of the church he served so faithfully, St Peter's, Cradock. On his gravestone is the second verse of the Danish poem by Adam Oehlenschlaeger 1779 –1850.

*Laer mig, o lille Traekfugl, du
At svinge mig med frejdig Hu,
Til ubekendte Strande!
Naar alt er Vinter her og Is,
Da skal et evigt Paradis
Mig hisset aabent stande.*

The first verse of this poem is on Ludvig's father's gravestone nearby. We are fortunate to have a translation from Otto Broholm our distant cousin in Denmark:

*Teach me, o little bird,
To soar with dauntless mind,
Away to unknown shores,
When here is winter and ice,
Then shall an everlasting Paradise,
For me hereafter be open.*

His wife Anna lived for another 21 years. Having no real assets she had lived with her children as was very much the custom. First she had gone with Olive to live with her son, Christian who was managing the old family farm now called *Springfield*. Her return there without her beloved husband must have evoked many memories of happier times. Several times she and Olive visited her daughter Louie farming in the Transvaal with Jim, and Jack and his large family near Johannesburg.

OBITUARY

MRS. FLEMMER.

By the passing away in Middelburg on the 20th. inst. of Mrs. Flemmer in her 75th. year, another link with the past in the Cape Midlands has been severed.

She was the eldest child of the late Mr. J. S. Distin who, at one time, was an extensive land owner in these parts, living at Tafelberg Hall, which was the family home and on the beautifying of which much effort and money were expended. It was this gentleman who when a member of the Legislative Assembly for Colesberg had the distinction of being committed to the dungeon of the House on account of his vehement denunciation of what he considered some party jobbing.

Mrs. Flemmer after her marriage lived for many years at Plat River (now Springfield) near Tafelberg Station, where she was famed for kindness and hospitality. She is survived by two daughters, Mrs. J. Cole Rous and Mrs. Garlicke, of Stradbroke and Middelburg respectively, and two married sons Christian and Claude. She will be greatly missed by relatives and friends as she had a most loving and unselfish disposition and was ever ready to sacrifice herself for the comfort and pleasure of others.

Anna seems to have spent the last few years of her life with daughter Edith who had married Percy Garlicke. I believe she was living with them in Beira when she made her will in 1918. She was probably living at the Garlicke home 1, Loop Street Middelburg when she died aged 75. She was buried in the Main Cemetery in Middelburg.

In her will Anna appointed '*Christian Ludwig Flemmer Executor and bequeaths arm chair, sofa, tables and such like furniture belonging to me but which has been in his care for some years past*'

There were no assets of any value and her children settled her liabilities such as they were. Although the Distin family's fame and fortune had long since declined and much else had changed Middelburg had not forgotten Anna and the following obituary appeared in the Midland News:

The obituary of Anna Flemmer, born Distin.

The story of Christian Ludvig and Anna's nine children follows:

1 Christian Augustus Flemmer 1870 – 1874

Christian Augustus was the first born son of Christian Ludvig Flemmer and his wife Anna and was born on the 12th June 1870. He was named after his Danish grandfather who had died in January of that same year. Although the child's place of birth is commonly recorded as Cradock, I think it more likely that he was born on the farm *Ruigtervlei*, just outside Steynsburg. As we have seen his mother and father had moved there when Dr. Flemmer died.

Christian Augustus was the first of the 'South African' Flemmer children to be born in South Africa and I'm sure his arrival would have been greeted with great joy.

When the little boy was two he moved with his parents to Cradock where he died at the age of four. As we will see in much of the history of the Flemmers, many young children died at an early age and the following appeared in the local paper: (they have his age wrong)

We regret to state the Mr. C.L. Flemmer, of this town, has lost a fine little boy of 5 years old through the prevailing epidemic. The child died on Monday morning last notwithstanding the unremitting attentions of Dr. Fehrsen, assisted by Doctors Lattey and Bond.

He almost certainly died of scarlet fever. There was a widespread outbreak which killed many children in 1874. This same year Thomas Scanlen (later Sir Thomas), the law partner of Edward Gilfillan, lost three of his children aged six to nine in the space of 15 days.

His gravestone is in the Municipal graveyard at Cradock with the inscription:

Sacred
to
the Memory of
Christian Augustus Flemmer
Born June 12 1870
Died June 22 1874

2 Selina Camilla Flemmer 1871 – 1872

We have Selina's birthplace as Cradock which may be correct, although her baptismal certificate shows that the family were still farming at *Ruigtervlei*. She was born on the 4th December 1871, 18 months after her brother and was baptised at St. Peter's in Cradock on New Year's Day 1872. She was named after her grandmother Selina Distin (White) and probably her aunt Camilla Naested (Flemmer). Sadly the infant was sickly and only lived for 6 weeks, dying shortly after her baptism.

It may well have been this loss among other things that prompted the family to leave the farm near Steynsburg and return to Cradock later in 1872.

3

Anna Louise Flemmer 1874 – 1941
James Cole Rous 1874 – 1931



*Anna Louise
Flemmer*



James Cole Rous

Anna Louise or Louie as she was known was born in Cradock on the 28th January 1874, not long after the family moved there from the Steynsburg District. She was baptised at St. Peter's in Cradock on the 11th February that year and named after her mother, Anna and probably her aunt Charlotte Marie Louise Gilfillan (Flemmer).

Later in life Louie wrote extensively about the family and of her own married life. This manuscript called *The Little Dane* gives us a wonderful insight into her life and the times in which she lived. With so little on record of the Flemmer women we are given a unique view of the life of a girl growing up in the Karoo. Louie herself comes across to me as a lively child, full of curiosity and sometimes in trouble for it – but intelligent and bright. She is a fine example of the 'frontier' women who were such hardy and resourceful mothers.

We have a description of Louie at age three, and the sort of clothes that a little girl would wear in the blazing summer heat of this outpost of Victorian England:

Louie was a thin little girl, small for her age; her people said of her that she only grew after she was ten years of age. She had black hair reaching to her neck, where it ended in slight curls; she had solemn dark eyes and a fringe across her forehead.

During the summer months her mother dressed her in the daintiest of muslin frocks. If the same consideration had been given to her underwear she would not have suffered so acutely from the heat; but unfortunately, the wearing of a flannel petticoat and thick homemade calico stays was as inevitable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, so in spite of her pretty muslin frocks, poor Louie could constantly be heard saying: "Oh I am so hot!"

She spent her early years at the house in Frere Street and it seems there were always friends and family around. There were times when Louie's independent nature got the better of her and she recounts the trouble there was when she cut her own hair aged three! Then there was the incident when she gashed her foot very badly in the stable, and when she very nearly fell down the 10m well in the yard. But one of her best stories is when she decided she had had enough of waiting for her mother to get home from Church one Sunday. Trying to slip through the yard railings she got her head stuck. Her Mom and Dad, rounding the corner were met with the sight of a large crowd gathered outside their house and Louie yelling her head off! All advice was useless and in the end the blacksmith had to be asked to come and saw the railings through to free her.

There is no mention of school in her account of the early years. Her mother may have taught her at home but it is more likely that she went to one of the schools in Cradock. When she was six Louie and her brother Jack both went down with rheumatic fever. At the time this was a potentially very serious illness, and could easily cause permanent heart damage in children. Their mother nursed them for weeks, until the family doctor insisted that the whole family take a holiday at the coast as it was essential for the children to have 'sea bathing'.

After weeks of being confined to bed there was huge excitement for Louie as the ox wagon was loaded and the trek to the Kowie and her first sight of the sea began. Days on the road, with every one a new adventure finally ended when they reached the coast. Safely installed in a holiday hotel the family enjoyed several wonderful weeks, exploring the rock pools and beaches of this beautiful part of the coast. At this time seawater was believed to have curative properties, but after young Jack was very nearly drowned all bathing was done with water carried up in buckets to the safety of their own bathroom.

When Louie was ten her parents decided to try their hand at farming again and they moved to their farm *Plat Rivier* near Tafelberg Hall. Louie was thrilled as she had spent some time on Tafelberg with her grandparents and loved the free and open life that children had on farms. She begged her father for a calf of her own and she became the proud owner of 'Buttercup', whose progeny would in due course pay for Louie's wedding trousseau.

There was great excitement when the day finally came to move, and with all of their belongings packed on to ox wagons, the family set out for the farm. By now there were six children – Louie 10, Jack 9, Christian 6, Edith 3, Olive 2 and baby Arthur Claude, and it took some time to settle them all into their new home. A tutor was taken on to teach Jack and Christian while Louie was

supposed to have her lessons with her mother, who would have had very little time to spend on teaching, given the size and ages of her brood.

It came as a relief when Louie's grandfather, John Distin told the family that he was going to have a Farm School at Tafelberg, and asked if they would like Louie to be one of the pupils. The family jumped at the offer and for the next few months her parents took her to Tafelberg in the Cape cart every Sunday afternoon, collecting her again on Friday.

It was just before this that Louie injured her back very badly and the story is worth the telling because it gives an idea of how tough she was, and of the medical treatment of the day. Unknown to her mother she had been throwing her year old brother Arthur Claude up in the air and catching him, to his evident delight. Because he was enjoying it so much she threw him higher and higher, until with him well up in the air, she realised he was going to go over her head. With arms outstretched she managed to grab his clothes as he fell behind her. Gathering him in her arms she collapsed on the floor with a shooting pain in her lower back. Creeping into bed, she decided not to tell her mother, enduring constant pain for months, especially when she was taken in the Cape cart to school. The truth only emerged when she literally couldn't walk and could no longer go to school. It was then she finally confessed what had happened. Of course her parents were more concerned about her back than anything else and she had to endure a painful train trip to Cradock where the doctor diagnosed curvature of the spine.

Louie describes having partial loss of vision and a lot of pain in one arm. It seems very likely that when she caught the baby, the weight ruptured a disc in her lower back; it's possible that there could have been a stress fracture of a vertebra. It must have been an agonising injury and the treatment prescribed was lying flat on her back for a year! How difficult this must have been for this active, lively child, and she says herself that many times when going to sleep she hoped that God would send an angel to take her to that 'Better Land' – it must have been a very difficult time for them all.

Things were made worse when the doctor said after the year was up that he would order a specially made surgical jacket so that she could walk. She had to endure hours wrapped in wet Plaster of Paris, so that the right size was made, and then the discomfort of having the complete cast cut off. After months of waiting the box arrived and excitement mounted. What a disappointment to find that the makers in Cape Town had misunderstood the order. Instead of making a surgical jacket, they had padded the cast and fitted buckles and straps to it. There could be no more waiting and like it or not, Louie had to wear the bulky and heavy cast, like a suit of armour, for another 12 months. Special clothes had to be made to fit over it, and of course girls being girls her schoolmates remarked how fat she had got when she finally went back to class!

It was not long after finally discarding her hated 'armour' that Louie's father decided that he would have a Government Farm School at *Plat Rivier*. A minimum of five children was needed to receive a government subsidy, and the six Flemmer children clearly fitted the bill. A room on the farm was

converted and a tutor who was only a few months older than Louie employed. It was not an ideal environment for learning with the young teacher having trouble disciplining the two older boys, Jack and Christian, and all the distractions of farming life around them. Louie had set her heart on becoming a teacher – she loved children and dreamt of becoming a teacher to a family of wealthy children in a grand and luxurious house. As I've said already she was clearly a strong willed girl with great determination and her wish to teach demonstrates this very well.

After three years of farm schooling she went to Port Elizabeth to sit the teacher's examination. The trip alone must have been an adventure, but she failed and returned home to be told by her father that she didn't have the 'examination temperament'. He wanted her to stay on the farm and teach her brothers and sisters – he really couldn't see the need to have a stranger in the house. A deal was made. If she was allowed to work as a Pupil Teacher at Rocklands High School in Cradock, she felt sure she would pass the exams and would then return to the farm. And so started a very happy year for Louie – she loved the life of a junior teacher, and there were many of the Flemmers in Cradock, including her cousins Emma, Daisy and Hilda who were at Rocklands.

By now Louie was about 17 and at the end of the year she sat her teachers' exams again – the result was the same – she failed. So it was back to the farm where she taught her sisters Edith 15, Olive 14 and young brother Claude 10 along with four local children. I don't think it is surprising that she failed twice given her lack of formal schooling for long periods of her childhood. She was obviously intelligent but had very little schooling when the family moved to the farm when she was ten, followed by two years of missed lessons with her back injury. Then three years of lessons from a farm teacher, probably with no formal qualification and only four months older than her!

But Louie was determined to be a teacher – try, try, try again was her motto. The Cape Government realised that there was a shortage of teachers for the growing population. It announced that special classes would be held in the June school holidays for people wanting to become teachers. Once again she persuaded her father to let her go (he seems to have been a very kindly man) and off she went to Grahamstown where she stayed with friends and attended lectures every day. Again she sat the exams and then to her great joy, the results finally came through – she had passed and was a qualified teacher at last.

A deal was a deal and as had been agreed with her father, she gave up her dream of being a private tutor to a wealthy family and went back to the farm school at *Plat Rivier*. And such are the workings of fate – if she had not been there and so a regular visitor to her cousins at Tafelberg Hall, she would not have met the man who was to become her husband.

Jim Rous had been born in Pretoria, one of three brothers, and was the same age as Louie. His father had died when he was very young and his mother, the daughter of an English clergyman, had struggled to support her young

family. Jim had a quite extraordinarily tough early life that is well documented in Louie's book. From a very early age the boys had to stand on their own two feet and this had made him resourceful and determined. It's hard for us to believe but at the age of 12 Jim and his brother were transport riders on the Kimberley – Johannesburg route. Also at the age of 12 he entered an Open target shooting competition competing against 60 burghers and won - an unheard of feat of marksmanship for one so young. An uncle of his, H.W. Struben had bought Tafelberg Hall from the Distin's and Jim, aged 18 had been offered the chance to leave the Transvaal for the Colony so that he could learn farming.

Louie is quite clear that their first meeting was not 'Love at first sight' claiming to prefer platonic relationships, but the couple were obviously attracted to each other. They shared the same love of books and met often at the parties and dances held on neighbouring farms. It wasn't long before it became obvious that things were growing more serious, at least from Jim's point of view:

Jim had a very valuable and helpful friend in a Scotchman several years his senior. For a year he took night classes with this man who taught him Algebra and Euclid. He also worked out a course of serious reading for Jim, who much appreciated and valued this friendship and the knowledge and help thus gained.

One day when Jim returned from a visit to Plat Rivier, Scotty said: "Well, how's The Little Dane?"

"Who?"

"Oh! Don't pretend you don't know who I mean and don't imagine I'm blind. I know very well you are in love with Mr Flemmer's eldest daughter."

"Nonsense!" Jim said and hurriedly left the room on the pretext of attending to his work. Scotty chuckled to himself - thereafter whenever they spoke of Louie, she was always referred to as "The Little Dane".

After four years teaching at her father's farm school Louie decided that she wanted a change and applied for a post and was accepted as a teacher at Rocklands Girls High School in Cradock. Neither her father nor Jim was keen on this arrangement – in Jim's case it meant she was moving a good three hour ride away.

Louie had poor eyesight and wore glasses. In her second year at Rocklands she broke her glasses and it proved impossible to find her suitable replacements. She suffered a lot at this time even going to see an oculist in Grahamstown with no success. But all was not gloom at this trying time – as she herself says she realised she was in love - Jim proposed and the couple, by now 24, became engaged.

Conscientious as she was Louie felt she had to keep teaching at Rocklands, but Jim would have none of it fearing she would do lasting damage to her eyes. In the end he came to Cradock, determined to take her home. After a heated argument and to her acute embarrassment Jim went to the school principal and asked if she could be granted sick leave. The principal was very

sympathetic and readily agreed. Then followed a long and trying period as Louie explains in *The Little Dane*:

During the next nine months Louie sat, day after day, with a ribbon tied across her eyes, only opening them to eat, dress or undress. In all that time she did not read a single word, write a letter or sew. Every moment Jim could spare, he devoted to her. He read aloud for hours and would take her for long walks, when she would hold his arm and walk with her eyes bandaged. Two lots of spectacles had been supplied by the oculist in Grahamstown, but they only caused greater pain.

At the end of ten months an oculist arrived in Cradock, a very clever Frenchman who was only in Africa on account of his health. The glasses he prescribed were so wonderful that thereafter, Louie had no more trouble.

By 1899 Jim was missing the wide-open spaces of the Transvaal and he and Louie discussed moving there after they were married. He would rent a farm called 'The Pyramids'; It was about 20kms west of Pretoria and he even had the plans of a house that he would build for them there. And so it was agreed – Louie stayed at home, spending many happy months with her mother sewing her wedding trousseau, while Jim went to the Transvaal.

He and his brother lived in a tent on the farm while building started. With the wedding day in sight and the house nearly complete, the couple's plans were rudely interrupted by the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War in October 1899. Jim and his brother were Transvaal citizens by birth and were commandeered into the Boer forces. Reporting for duty in Pretoria they were met with a chaotic situation, all was disarray with Boers in their hundreds pouring into town. Realising there was a train leaving for Delgoa Bay and ever resourceful, Jim waited until the last minute and then simply bought two tickets which were handed over without question. Leaving on a train packed with armed Boers, the brothers waited nervously until the train crossed the border into Portuguese East Africa, finally arriving at Delgoa Bay. Their escape was complete when they immediately boarded the "Garth Castle" for Port Elizabeth where they joined the English forces.

Louie meanwhile, was on the farm, not knowing what had happened to Jim. All communications with the Transvaal had broken down completely. All she had to rely on were inaccurate newspaper reports and the tales of refugees who were arriving by the trainload, among them her brother Jack and his new bride Maud.

There was no word of Jim, and the anxious days dragged by until finally her brother Claude rushed in with a telegram from Port Elizabeth saying that Jim was safe and would arrive the next day! Jim had enlisted with Colonel Gorrings's secret service and for the next few months took over the management of Tafelberg Hall, awaiting a transfer to a field unit. The whole country was involved in a war that was to cause untold suffering and so many deaths on both sides. The wedding date was postponed, but by now Jim was on active service as Intelligence Officer of the Railway Pioneer Regiment.

Twice he had to cancel the arrangements as yet another skirmish or battle with the Boers broke out. He was a brave man, mentioned in dispatches, and seems to have thrived on the excitement and hardship of his intelligence gathering operations, regaling the family with stories of his adventures on his infrequent visits. The family still has a very interesting memento of Jim's field work. It is a fake Victorian penny which unscrews at the edges to show where a note or message could be hidden. Fortunately the original message addressed to the Officer Commanding any British unit he came across in the field is still there:

Mr. J.C. Rous has authority for self and horse and to telegraph clear the line to Col. Haig

It was while Jim was away that Louie's father decided the family should move from the farm to Cradock. Their many friends in the district were sorry to see them go. There was a farewell service at St. Lawrence's at Tafelberg where an illuminated scroll was presented to the family by the congregation. The scroll can still be seen framed at St. Lawrence's and Louie had a special mention:

We also take this opportunity of presenting Miss Flemmer with a souvenir of her association with the Church as organist and Sunday School teacher.

Besides being constantly anxious about her fiancé and her brothers and cousins who were all with the British forces Louie had to face the disappointment of yet another postponement. She had heard from Jim saying that he expected to be in Cradock on Christmas Eve of 1901 and that they would be married on Boxing Day – it was not to be - from The Little Dane:

Louie's trousseau was complete, even to the wedding dress, but she decided not to make any further preparations for the wedding until after Jim's arrival in Cradock. Alas, poor Louie, another disappointment was in store for her.

On December 20th she received a telegram from Jim which read "Boers have attacked Meyerton - leave cancelled." This was the second time her wedding had been postponed; some of her pessimistic friends had much to say about it, and when they heard that she intended wearing her wedding dress, which was a simple white frock, when she acted as bridesmaid to her dearest cousin and greatest friend on February 3rd, 1902, they were horrified. However, so much for superstition, for Louie's married life was one of the happiest.

As luck would have it I came across a report on this wedding in the Midland News when looking for something else entirely. Louie's cousin was Anna Betty Camilla Gilfillan who married local magistrate Launcelot Malcolm Harison at St. Peter's in Cradock. The family is fortunate to have a description of Louie's wedding outfit:

Miss Louie Flemmer wore a dress of white figured silk trimmed insertion and tucked chiffon. Her hat was made of white crinoline trimmed with ostrich tips and tucked chiffon

The anxious months dragged by with infrequent messages arriving from Jim until one March Sunday he unexpectedly walked into the family home in Cradock and announced that he had a month's leave and that they were going to get married right away! After a visit to the Rector he came back to say the wedding was set for that Wednesday! As it was Holy Week the rector had at first said they couldn't get married that week at all, but then agreed that they could have a 'quiet' wedding at 8 a.m. on Wednesday 26th March 1902. Louie describes her feelings and the wedding:

Louie felt very annoyed and vexed. She did not like the idea of a quiet wedding nor did she like being married at 8 a.m. However, on Wednesday, March 26th 1902, a perfect morning, she arrived at the church to find it crowded - in fact it was so crowded that her Danish Uncle and Aunt [Hans and Camilla Naested], who were a little late, remained at the entrance. This was fortunate because as Jim and Louie were leaving the Church, they received loving greetings from the couple, and had a good view of the fine old gentleman, wearing his beautiful medal, a gift from the King, Christian IX of Denmark. (The King had been pleased to honour him by presenting him with this medal when he re-visited the land of his birth in 1872. He had taken many articles of interest and trophies from South Africa, which he gave to his King.)

Jim had been posted as a Recruiting Officer and after a honeymoon near Port Elizabeth the couple sailed up the coast to Durban, where they remained until the end of the war in May that year. Jim was recalled to his regiment in Pretoria while Louie went back to the family in Cradock for two months. She then left for Pretoria where Jim collected her from the station. They set off in the late afternoon and she had her first sight of her new house and the farm – The Pyramids as the sun set.

Their early life on the farm was simple and happy – no electricity of course, or running water, no TV, radio or telephones to disturb them. We can get a feel for this simple life from The Little Dane:

Their evenings were spent reading aloud. Jim was an excellent reader; he read in a charmingly modulated voice, in deep, soft tones, most pleasing to listen to. He never seemed to tire and would read for hours on end. They did all their reading together. Both loved history and had many tastes and interests in common.

Many happy hours were spent in the shade of the orange orchard. On Sunday mornings Louie and Jim would carry their book, rug and cushions and spend the whole morning in this well-sheltered and pleasant spot.

"I have a letter from my sister Winnie," said Jim one day, "She is coming to stay with us and I am glad for your sake. Do you realise that you have been on this farm for eight months and not had an opportunity of speaking to a white woman?"

On 9th January 1903, their first son was born on the farm and they called him Marcus Cole Rous. A member of this child's family tells me:

Marcus had the Cole as a first name, but made it part of our surname as it goes back to the Cole sisters, one of whom married Harry Struben, who found Gold in what is now Johannesburg.

When the baby was still very young Jim and Louie decided to have a holiday and set off by cart and then train for her family home in Cradock. The baby was Louie's father Ludvig's first grandson and I am sure there was some celebrating in Cradock when the train finally arrived. We can imagine how the infant was fussed over by his aunts Edith and Olive and shown to all their Cradock friends.

It turned out to be very fortunate that Jim and Louie went to Cradock when they did. Her mother, Anna travelled back to The Pyramids with them and had only been there a short while when a telegram arrived saying that Ludvig was very ill. There was a frantic rush to get Anna on the Cradock train and a few days later they got the sad news that he had died.

On 26th August 1904 a second child, Marjory Merle Rous, was born at The Pyramids. It was soon after this that Jim decided to buy a portion of a farm about 15 kms. from Witbank. Their new property was bordered on three sides by the *Brugspruit* and Louie decided to call it Riverside.

With a new born baby and Marcus a toddler there was nowhere for the family to live while the new farmhouse was built by Jim and his brother Vassall. It was decided that Louie would travel with the infants, again by cart and train down to stay with her mother, brother and sisters for a few months. Off they set to be met by her brother Christian who was managing Springfield. Here they spent a happy few months catching up on all the family news and visiting friends in Cradock. It was during this time that Jim was very nearly killed. He had suffered from headaches for years and at Louie's insistence had finally gone to the family doctor, who gave him a prescription. He took this potion made up by the chemist as directed the first morning. By afternoon he was so violently ill that Vassall thought he was going to die. He set off to fetch the nearest doctor who on examining Jim, said that he had been poisoned. As the men were doing their own cooking they said this was impossible. When the doctor looked at the prescription he immediately said that '*a mistake had been made*' – by who is not clear – and one more spoonful of the medicine would have killed Jim. A very lucky escape; it took two years before Jim was completely recovered. It was only years later that his persistent headaches were cured by a doctor who told him not to eat porridge, bread, milk and other 'sloppy' foods, so it may be sort of allergy to wheat that caused the problem.

Once the house was complete at Riverside, Jim came to fetch his family. Fittingly Louie saw her new home, which she thought was wonderful, for the first time on New Year's Day 1905. On the 30th October that year she gave birth to twin boys who they named Graham and Leslie. I'm sure Louie's hands were full with Marcus just two, Marjory a year old and the twins to nurse, but these women were made of stern stuff. There is no mention at all in The Little Dane about anything other than the normal scrapes and scares associated

with such a lively brood. With all of our modern conveniences it is hard for us to imagine what life was like, but this gives us an idea:

Being two hours by cart from the nearest doctor made Louie and Jim very self-reliant and independent of medical advice. Though Louie was the mother of four children, none of them had medical assistance until they had measles, when Marcus was twelve years of age. Louie had been married for seventeen years before she had occasion to consult a doctor.

The twins were identical and I was told a very interesting story about them as infants:

The twins were so identical that a gold chain was placed around Graham's neck to ensure that they did not get mixed up. One day, rumour has it; his mother came into the room to discover the chain lying in the cot. Anna Louise put the chain over the head of who she thought was Graham but who will ever know if this was in fact her eldest son!

A strange thought – all of their lives no one knew if Graham was Graham or Leslie, Leslie!

Life continued very pleasantly on the farm. It was hard work but Jim thrived on it, planting trees and seeing to his flock of sheep and cattle herds. There was time for picnics in the surrounding area and every year the trek to the Bushveld to look forward to. All the cattle farmers in the area moved their stock down to the Lowveld in present day Mpumalanga during the winter months. They lived in bush camps until the rains came again, and for a family who loved the outdoors this was an enjoyable working holiday. One year they were joined by Louie's mother, her sisters Edith and Olive and another relative and her five children. They lived in tents and it must have been a real feat of logistics to make all the arrangements for a party of this size. Again we can get a sense of what was involved from Louie:

Louie was indeed a very busy person for the next few weeks, thinking and planning and making preparations for the day's trek and the two months' camping. There was no way of obtaining provisions once they were in camp. Every week a native would be sent on horseback, a distance of about fifty miles to Witbank to get the post - and would be able to bring some small item which he would carry in the saddle bag - otherwise they would have to do without things that were forgotten.

At last the day dawned and the wagon stood ready, packed with bedsteads, bedding, furniture, provisions and clothes for nine children and six grown-ups, besides provisions for two native servant boys for two months. The journey began in the very early hours of a winter morning because it was necessary to reach their destination before nightfall, as there was much settling in to do before dark.

It was while on one of these stays in the Bushveld that Jim's farming life moved on to a new course. He had become the elected leader of the local

farming community and had been involved in attempts to resettle Boer prisoners returning from Bermuda and St. Helena. While camping in the Bushveld he had inspected a resettlement farm owned by the Transvaal Estates and Development Company. It was from this initial contact that he had more dealings with this company. The Directors were so impressed with the report he sent them that they offered him a job as Farm Inspector in 1909.

Riverside was not doing very well as a farm and the economy was in a depression, still recovering from the War. Jim was concerned that the farm was in debt to the tune of £80 and he and Louie weighed up what he should do about the job offer. It meant he would be away from the farm a lot, making life difficult for Louie. She would not only miss him but would have to cope alone with the farm and the four children who were then aged six, five and the twins, four. The job paid £40 a month – a good salary for the time. A difficult decision but in the end they agreed that Jim would take the job. Louie's brother Claude had married in 1910 and it was agreed that he would be made a partner in Riverside and take on the duties of farm manager. Louie was comforted to have her 'baby' brother on the farm. Even when it was decided that Claude would manage the neighbouring farm, he and his family were still within walking distance. It was also in 1910 that Louie and Jim had their fifth child named James Cole Rous.

With Jim away much of the time, Louie often had her mother and sisters Edith and Olive for company. In addition to all of her household duties she also taught the children at home – her days must have been very full! In 1914 Jim was promoted to manager of the Transvaal Estate and Development Company and this meant a move to Johannesburg. What a change this must have meant in all of their lives. In 1914 they moved from the only life the children had known to the big, bustling and growing city of Johannesburg where they lived in Southerland Avenue, next door to J.H. Hofmeyer, the Cabinet Minister. Marcus 11, Marjory 10 and the twins 9 went to a formal school for the first time in their lives, with the boys all at King Edward's. It is interesting to see that they promptly went down with measles, scarlet fever and whooping cough. I suppose they had simply not been exposed to childhood illnesses on the farm. Again there is no complaint from Louie who had to cope with Jim being away on business frequently and the children often being sick at home. It could not have been an easy time for her, but she seems to have coped with her usual strength and determination.

The youngest boy, James was only about 4 when they moved to Johannesburg and died in a tragic accident the following year. He was taken downtown by an aunt who was visiting an office in one of the new 'skyscrapers' springing up. The little chap ran ahead of her and fell down an unguarded lift shaft and was killed instantly. A dreadful time of mourning for the whole family.

The First World War broke out and Jim immediately offered his services to General Smuts but it was felt that his management of the huge farm estates was vital to the war effort. It was in 1916 while on a trip in the Lydenberg district that Jim achieved local and international recognition as a remarkable

hunter and marksman. Using a .22 rifle he shot a kudu bull with horns an incredible 71½ ins. (1.8m) in length. This was a world record and as far as I know remains one to this day.



*The world record kudu
shot by Jim Rous in 1916*

The war dragged on and in late 1917 Jim felt he had had enough of being office bound – that he should get back to his real love of farming. They toyed with the idea of fruit farming in the Cape but then heard that Tafelberg Hall was on the market again. This news arrived at an appropriate time:

In 1917 Jim received a letter from Mary Struben to say that Tafelberg Hall was up for sale, the full 13000 morgen, and the only person who should buy it was Jim since he was related to both families – the Struben's through Alexa Cole and the Distins through Anna Louise. Jim could not finance the full amount and so asked Johnny van Reineveldt, a man Jim had met and made inspector for the TEDC, to come in as a partner and finance some of the amount required.

The whole family was delighted to be back on a farm again and Jim and Louie spent many happy hours walking around the property reminiscing about how they had met, and the many happy days they had spent as a courting couple. It was wonderful for the children to be back in the open air, on a farm where there was always something interesting to get involved in. They were given a pony each and spent a lot of their time riding and learning how to care for their horses. All was not fun and games for them however as for the first time they had to go to boarding school in Cradock. Marcus and the twins went to the Boys School and Marjory went to Rocklands, where so many Flemmer descendants had been taught over the years. It was a wrench for all of them, the children having to leave behind their ponies and other pets and Louie having to get used to a quiet and empty house.

In 1919 it was agreed that Jim and his partner would divide Tafelberg Hall with each of them taking a portion. Given a farm's resources of rivers, farming land and buildings this could obviously be a difficult business. Louie says in *The Little Dane* that the division was settled amicably by following what was called 'President Kruger's method' – really the same as Solomon's Judgement. One partner divided the farm and the other chose but in reality the division of the farm was not as simple. It is interesting to see another account:

The rule was to be "One divides, the other decides". However, this arrangement did not work as neither was satisfied with the way the farm was divided and so the matter went to arbitration. Old man Monty Gad arbitrated for Johnny and Willy Edwards for Jim; both were respected farmers in the community. The land was divided as follows:

Tafelberg Hall with the vlei, granary, blacksmith's shops, the waterwheel and the homestead. The second portion, later known as Stradbroke with the Dam built by the Strubens (with coco pans and rails), the artesian well below the dam, rooigrass plains, mountains and outbuilding but no home.

After the arbitration Jim got Stradbroke and Johnny Tafelberg Hall. It almost broke Anna Louise's heart to have to move from Tafelberg Hall. Jim farmed Stradbroke (named after the Earl of Stradbroke and one of the Rous ancestors) for 13 years and during this time put in windmills, water points, reservoirs and troughs and divided the 6 000 morgan farm into seven camps. He also put in enormous orchards of almonds and walnuts, a citrus garden and deciduous fruit trees such as pears, peaches and apricots.

There is a description of the farmhouse in The Little Dane:

The house, a stone building, was large and roomy, with a wide verandah on three sides, below the verandah was a terrace, on which grew masses of geraniums, verbena, heliotropes and carnation, making a lovely splash of colour. Not far from the house stood the little building where Louie and her companions took refuge when chased by the bull in those far-off school days.

On the South side of the house, at a little distance, was a narrow building in which were Jim's office and a bedroom for each of the three boys, with a bathroom. Running along the whole length of this building, at the back, lay the garage.

They laid out the site for a tennis courts and Louie set about creating the wonderful flower garden for which she received so much praise over the years. The schools in Cradock were found to be unsuitable and Marcus, Graham and Leslie were sent to the South African College (SACS) in Cape Town with Marjory going to the Collegiate School in Port Elizabeth.

The years at Stradbroke rolled happily by with Jim very much involved in the farm and in the affairs of the local Farmers Council. He had a flock of 3 000 sheep and a stud flock of 200. He was a founder member of the Cape Woolgrowers' Association and of the Merino Breeders' Association and won many prizes on local agricultural shows. The children completed their schooling with Marcus going on to the University of Cape Town and Marjory to Rhodes. Marcus was to distinguish himself as one of South Africa's leading surgeons – a renowned lecturer in the field and a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. During university vacations the farmhouse would be filled with the children's friends and Louie relates one holiday period when there were 19 of them in the house!

There is an interesting anecdote from this period. Jim had a letter from a friend of his who was writing on behalf of the Maharaja of Kutch as Louie calls him. I think this was probably the Maharaja of Cutch an Indian state to the north west of Bombay. For some reason the Maharaja decided he would like a herd of springbok and Jim was asked if he could oblige. Jim managed to find

20 tame buck and these were crated up, five to a crate and sent by train to Durban. Five buck died on this part of the trip but incredibly the rest survived the long sea voyage to Bombay where the Maharas himself was waiting to meet the shipment. After resting in an enclosure at the local zoo these animals continued their journey, finally arriving in the Cutch where they thrived and bred successfully – a remarkable trip. A few months later Jim and Louie received a letter from the Maharas expressing his sincere thanks and enclosing a beautifully ornate tea service wrought from silver from his own mines.

There was great excitement in the Middelburg District when it was announced that there were to be Royal Visitors. The royalists and Empire loyalists must have been in a fever of anticipation at the thought of a visit by the Earl of Athlone and his wife Princess Alice. The Earl was Governor General of South Africa from 1923 – 30. Louie, a confirmed royalist thought it would be a wonderful idea if the entire party came to lunch at Stradbroke after their visit to Middelburg. As I have said before she lacked nothing at all in spirit. The interesting thing about her account is that the whole District was invited to a tea with the Royal couple at the Middelburg Showgrounds on the Thursday and it was only then that was confirmed that they would come for lunch the following day.

Louie had gambled on her invitation being accepted but even so there must have been some scurrying around to get everything ready, including lunch for a big party when she got home that afternoon. It was a most successful visit, which began with a Good Friday service with the Royal visitors at the family church, St. Lawrence before the party moved on to Stradbroke. The Princess and Louie seem to have got on like a house on fire, discussing the farm, the children and admiring the lovely gardens. It seems to have been a welcome break in the round of formality that these tours entailed and I'm sure much appreciated by the Earl and Princess.

It was not many years after this visit that Jim died in Middelburg aged 56 on 9th May 1931. An obituary appeared in the Midland News three days later saying among other things:

By the death of Mr. J. Cole Rous at his farm Tafelberg on Saturday afternoon the Cape Midlands loses one of its best known and most progressive farming men. In recent years Mr. Rous was secretary of the Transvaal Land Owners Association and had the oversight of farming properties belonging to the Premier Diamond Mines. He was one of the founders of the Middelburg Wool Growers' Association and also took a prominent part in the work of the Cape Provincial Agricultural Association. He was genial in disposition, a hard worker and fluent speaker.

During the thirteen years that Jim had had the farm he had put in windmills, water points, reservoirs and troughs and divided the 6 000 morgan farm into seven camps. He also put in enormous orchards of almonds and walnuts, a citrus garden and deciduous fruit trees such as pears, peaches and apricots.

Louie stayed on a 'Stradbroke' after Jim's death and in 1938 agreed to sell the farm to her son Graham who continued the Rous farming tradition in the Middelburg District. Louie moved to Johannesburg and died at the home of her daughter Marjory in Frances Street, Observatory on the 22nd February 1941 aged 67.

Anna and Jim's had five children:

3.1 Marcus Cole Rous 1903 – 1955 – married (1) Laurine Alice Day 1909 – 1941 (2) Jean Jessie Walker 1913 – 1985 (3) Anita Jeanette van der Lingen 1922 –



*Marcus Cole
Rous*



*Laurine Alice
Day*

Marcus was the first child of Jim and Louie. The couple had moved to a farm near Pretoria shortly after they married and it was at The Pyramids that Marcus was born on the 9th of January 1903. I'm sure there was a celebration in Cradock when they heard the news of the birth of the first male grandchild in the family. Marcus was baptised in Pretoria on the 11th February 1903 and two of the witnesses were his Aunt Olive and Uncle Christian Ludvig Flemmer who came up from Cradock for the occasion.

It is interesting to see on the baptism certificate that Marcus' father's name is shown as James Cooper Rous; I believe it was in 1908 that he changed his name by substituting the Cooper for Cole, the maiden name of his grandmother.

When the baby was six months old Jim decided they needed a holiday - what better place than Cradock where they had so many friends. It would also be an opportunity to show off the new baby to his grandparents and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. After making the arrangements and packing, the couple set off in their cart for the station where they caught the train down to

'the Colony' as it was then known. The trip was a great success and a happy month was spent catching up on all the local and family news.

Back at The Pyramids they settled into the routine of farming life. They were far from medical help and in *The Little Dane* Louie describes what I suppose would be a fairly typical event. Jim had been measuring out blue stone used to dose the sheep. It was highly poisonous to humans and without thinking he had thrown a few surplus crystals out of the window. A child of a man who worked on the farm had picked up a piece and given it to one year old Marcus in his pram. Of course he licked it as any one year old would and it was not long before he started vomiting. Louie thought he was teething badly and Jim didn't want to tell her that he thought it was the blue stone so as not to worry her even more. The baby vomited for hours and cried for water continuously. With no medical help anywhere near them they could do little but wait it out. Eventually he calmed down and went to sleep at which point Jim confessed – we can imagine Louie's reaction to this – but at least the crisis was over. It was Louie's boast in later life that Marcus did not see a doctor at all until he caught measles at the age of 12. They were a tough and healthy lot, this early family!

When Marcus was about two the family moved to their own farm, Riverside, near Witbank. By then his sister Marjory had been born and shortly after settling in to their new home, the twins Graham and Leslie arrived. So we see from this that Marcus at two was the oldest of four children and one wonders how Anna managed to devote time to her brood.

These families were made of stern stuff of course and one simply got on with it. They all thoroughly enjoyed life on the farm, the wide open spaces, picnics and the annual trip to the Lowveld. One such picnic when Marcus was about four very nearly ended in tragedy for the young lad as his mother describes in *The Little Dane*:

The next day dawned bright and clear, though very cold. The picnic was enjoyed by everyone. In the afternoon the horses were inspanned and the family packed in. Jim, Marcus and the native boy on the front seat, Louie, Marjory and the twins and the little nursemaid on the back seat. The horses behaved very badly, because Jim said they were cold, one horse would not pull and the other pulled too hard. Over went the cart!

Fortunately Jim saw what was going to happen and as it capsized, he leaped out and dashed for the horses' heads, holding them firmly and keeping them from bolting. This, of course, saved the family, who were scrambling about in the tent, struggling under the rugs, cushion, picnic basket and what not! As Jim stood in front of the horses, he saw everyone scramble out and reach a place of safety, except Marcus, who lay quite still with the front seat on his neck and his leg under the wheel. Calling to the native boy to take charge of the horses, Jim dashed round, lifted the wheel and called to Marcus. Louie had also seen Marcus and was able to help him up. He had been stunned, and but for a few scratches he was unhurt.

Arriving home the children were tucked up safely in bed. The next day Louie noticed how listless Marcus was and realizing that he was probably suffering from shock, allowed him to lie on the couch in front of the fire. That evening when Jim came in, he put more coal on the fire and sat talking to Marcus. Noticing a blind still open Jim got up to close it and was at the window when there was a terrific explosion in the fireplace. He turned around to find the chair he had been sitting in destroyed and burning coals scattered all over the lounge. The whole fireplace had blown out when a mining detonator that had been left in the coal exploded. There is no mention how Marcus, shocked from the cart accident the day before, reacted to this!

At first Louie taught the children at home and they were fortunate that she was a trained teacher. When Marcus was about seven he went to a small private school near the farm for two hours a day. From an early age he showed a precocious intelligence for one so young. Louie mentions that even then she and Jim were disappointed to realize that he wouldn't be a farmer. He obviously showed signs of the great intellect that he was to develop later in life. Even as a young boy he was forever inventing things and Louie describes a drinking fountain he designed for her chickens when he was seven.

When the family moved to Johannesburg in 1914 Marcus was eleven had his first experience of a big city and of formal schooling. It must have been a real culture shock to move from the backwater of the farm near Witbank to big bustling Johannesburg and the famous King Edward's School. It's interesting to see a conversation Louie had with a friend about the boys' future given the career choice Marcus finally made:

The twins of course, will farm; there has never been any doubt about that. They are born farmers, which pleases Jim very much. We don't know what Marcus is going to do. Jim has described the different professions in great detail to him, wishing him to make a choice. He is not attracted to law or survey, and when he listens to a description of the medical profession, he shudders and says 'Oh no Dad! I will never be a doctor - I should hate to see a lot of sick people, or to have to cut off a man's leg!' he thinks the most attractive of the professions is that of an architect. So we really don't know what he is going to do.

By 1917 the family was again on the move, this time back to Tafelberg Hall which Marcus' father Jim had bought. While waiting to move to the farm the family stayed with friends, the Wilsons. Louie describes how Marcus sorted out their electric bells and even fitted a light for them. Bearing in mind how 'new' electricity still was his comment in the Little Dane perhaps gives an indication of the intellect he was to display later:

"Mother," said the fourteen year old boy a little later, "Mr Wilson asked me where I learned about electricity. Wasn't that funny? Because a person doesn't learn about electricity or electric bells; you just know."

The move to Tafelberg meant another big change for the children. They were packed off to boarding school at Rocklands in Cradock, a real wrench for the whole family. After a couple of years Rocklands was found wanting and the three boys were sent to South African College School (SACS) in Cape Town. By now Marcus was about 16 and I'm sure he would have thrived at Sacs, to this day one of Cape Town's top schools.

He completed matric in December 1921, with passes in English, Latin, Maths and Dutch. He was 18, and had only had about seven years of formal schooling - in three different schools. He then entered the University of Cape Town Medical School. Marcus was an outstanding student and graduated with Honours in 1927. He was the winner of the gold medal awarded to the year's top student. I gather that he didn't have a lot of support from his parents during his studies and had to struggle financially to survive. His graduation was to be the start of a glittering career in medicine and within 18 months he was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. It is difficult to fully encapsulate the many interests and achievements of this, one of the most remarkable men that I have come across in this family history. I will try to deal adequately with his many achievements and interests later in this chapter.

Marcus started his surgical practice in Cape Town in 1929 and not long after that married Laurine Alice Day. She was from a very well known Cape Town family, her father Percy being the manager of the famous Springbok rugby team which toured New Zealand in 1937. The couple divorced when their daughter Jill was five and their son James 18 months. It was in 1936 that one of Marcus' many life interests came to the fore and perhaps gives us an insight into his total focus when something caught his interest.

He had taken his pilot's license but now decided to build his own plane. Throwing all of his considerable energy into the project he imported a kit at a cost of £150. With the help of an air mechanic he started assembly in the back garden of the family home in Newlands Avenue, Claremont. These planes were nicknamed 'Flying Fleas' and you will understand why when looking at the picture!

It is hard to believe that this minute plane, with a 38 horse power engine ever got off the ground. After work was completed at Wingfield airbase Marcus flew the plane several times before it was grounded because it couldn't pass the necessary airworthy certificate. Sold off and used as a small glider, it was destroyed in a crash the following year.



The Flying Flea is assembled in the backyard

When war broke out Marcus enlisted and saw service in East Africa where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the S.A. Medical Corps. Laurine had meanwhile enlisted in the S.A. Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS) and made her own valuable contribution to the war effort. She was a Section Leader of the transport section but was tragically killed when the car she was travelling in with other service people rolled four times near Caledon. As Marcus was still serving up North the two young children went to live with their grandparents.



Marcus had married Jean Jessie Walker in 1938. She was a brilliant dermatologist and the daughter of Prof. Eric Walker of UCT and Cambridge. They had one son, Galbraith (who changed his name to David) but the marriage didn't last. When Jean left, Marcus' daughter Jill describes how she was left in charge of the home and her two younger brothers.

Jean Jessie Walker

Marcus, who his daughter Jill describes as the most fantastic father, threw himself into his work and his many diverse interests. From what Jill has told me he did not have hobbies as other people do, he had absolute *passion* about the subject that interested him. We have seen how he was interested in flying, so built his own plane. He became interested in colour photography when it was in its infancy – teaching himself the difficult process of producing colour plates. Interested in astronomy he bought a powerful telescope and with his children learned all the names of the planets and constellations. Then it was carpentry – he bought his own lathes and woodworking equipment, teaching himself to turn beautiful pieces of woodwork. He became interested in different types of dogs – all breeds had to be studied and some bred at the family home. There were fishing trips at 4 a.m. to Simonstown and Rooikrans near Cape Point. When he studied musical appreciation it was under Prof. Gunther Pulvermacher; mushroom identification was studied with Edith Stevens. All of this while lecturing at UCT and practicing as one of the leading surgeons in South Africa.

Something had to give and inevitably it did, when he suffered a coronary thrombosis while lecturing students at UCT. A colleague, writing a tribute in the S.A. Medical Journal after his death described how Marcus coped:

This illness had a sobering effect on him. He realized that he had been burning the candle at both ends and he set himself with remarkable fortitude to remodel the tempo of his existence. He cultivated a love for philosophy, gave up watching the clock while operating, and found peaceful recreation by sailing a yacht in the blue waters of Table Bay.

Daughter Jill told me that at this time he bought himself one of the first Cadillacs in the country and taught her to drive (she was 14) on the basis that if anything happened to him she could take over the wheel!

At some point he had read one of famous author Neville Shute's books. With his usual full focus on a subject he came home with a box of all of Shute's books, which the whole family then read. Marcus wrote to Shute and there followed a correspondence for many years covering a range of philosophical issues. Marcus was a deep thinker and I have seen papers that he presented in 1952 which show a perception of the world and the direction it was taking which have echoes in what we see today. A man far ahead of his time.

Marcus married Anita Jeanette van der Lingen in 1947. Jeanette worked for the CSIR in Pretoria and later as a librarian at the National Library in Cape Town

In November 1955 Marcus suffered another thrombosis and died at Groote Schuur Hospital on the 18th November. He was only 52 and his family and the world had been deprived of one of the great men of his time. His achievements are the more remarkable when remembering that he was raised and educated on a Transvaal farm and didn't receive formal education until he was twelve.

Tributes and obituaries appeared in all the newspapers and in the medical press. I will quote only two here which can perhaps give us an inkling of the man he was.

From the Weekend Argus 26th November 1955:

The late Dr. Marcus Cole Rous ranked among the outstanding South Africans of his time. One Cape Town medical colleague expressed the opinion that his brain could be compared to that of General Smuts.

From the S.A. Medical Journal 24th December 1955:

Many men are intelligent but lack the courage to give the world the benefit of their reflections. Here was a man who did not allow fear to divert him from what he believed to be the right course. He often stood up for the underprivileged and the underdog, for with him colour, caste and creed held no prejudice. His courage enabled him to rise above the everyday difficulties of life and at all times to be cheerful and optimistic. I believe these two characteristics stem from the fact that he never bemoaned his fate nor did he ever say an unkind word about his neighbour.

As a footnote to the surname of this particular branch of the Rous family I am told that Marcus decided to incorporate the 'Cole' into the surname of his children, making the name Cole-Rous.

Marcus and his first wife Jill had two children:

3.1.1 Jill Anieta Cole- Rous 1932 – married Christopher Robin Rainier-Pope 1931 –

Jill attended Micklefield School and then went on to St Cyprians where she matriculated at the age of 16. At high school she played hockey, cricket and tennis. After her mother died very young her Dad often did not come home until the early hours and was very involved in his work. As a twelve year old Jill remembers in the evenings having to arrange operations for him at the Monastery Nursing Home, when he needed to have the theatre and an anaesthetist. After many phone calls, she would call him back at his meeting to tell him all the details.

She desperately wanted to do Medicine, but her father felt that this was not a career for a woman. She started with a B.Sc. hoping to change, and after a year at Varsity, where she represented Rhodes at hockey and cricket and played hockey for Albany province she started in Radiography. She qualified at Hammersmith Hospital in London.

Jill worked in Cape Town for many years in a private practice and then at Boston Children's Hospital after she married Chris, a paediatrician. She worked in Port Elizabeth and did tutoring at Baragwanath Hospital and in a private practice in Johannesburg, as well as at ISCOR at Vanderbijl park. The couple lived in Boston, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg before settling in Vereeniging for 27 years. They returned to Cape Town in 1997. Jill and Chris were involved with Rotary for many years and Jill is a Lay Minister of St. Paul's Church Rondebosch where Chris is on the church council.

Jill and Chris had three children:

3.1.1.1 Mark John Rainier-Pope 1963 - married Julie Williamson 1969 – two children

3.1.1.2 Nicholas Rainier-Pope 1966 - married Paula Simpson 1967 – one child

3.1.1.3 Paul Redvers Rainier-Pope 1968 - married Joanne Hudson 1967 – two children

3.1.2 James Antony Mark Cole – Rous 1936 – married Eulalie Gladys Rowena Franszen 1934 –

James started school at Rondebosch Boys Prep school and was then sent to St. John's College in Johannesburg. From there he went to Christian Brothers College Green Point with his final years of schooling at Paul Roos Gymnasium in Stellenbosch. He went into the South African Air Force Gymnasium and trained as an Air Gunner/Radio operator. After an honourable discharge he went to work in Johannesburg and after a couple of years in sales, married Eulalie Gladys Rowena Franzsen on the 13th July, 1957 at Brakpan Transvaal.

The couple attended South African Bible Institute in Brakpan and were ordained together on the 16th of September 1958. They served as Pastors of five churches in South Africa, and then joined Mission Aviation, an Interchurch service agency providing air transport to missionaries and doctors in third world countries.

In 1973 Jim and Rowena were sent to Zaire where he did about 100 hours a month of jungle flying in a single engine six seat Cessna 185 tail dragger. After a stint in the Transkei the couple was asked to go to the USA on a sabbatical so Jim could get a degree in Aerospace Maintenance and get the FAA licenses for Airframe and Powerplant. He graduated Magna cum laude and they were preparing to return to South Africa when the Church decided to close the Transkei operation.

It was then that the Church asked them to take a position in Los Angeles which needed Multi Ethnic experience and Children's' Ministry experience. Kids work had been their hobby and they accepted, spending five years building up a large and successful Children's Work for the Church in LA. They resigned to start on their own as Children's Evangelists and now live in Springfield, Missouri.

They have two adopted children:

3.1.2.1 Sylvia Joy Cole-Rous 1963 – had one child with her partner Hilton Myburgh

3.1.2.2 John Timothy Cole-Rous 1970 – married Lorina Renee Ambriz 1977 – three children

Marcus and his second wife Jean had one child:

3.1.3 David Galbraith Cole - Rous 1942 – married Norma Greenberg 1947

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Originally christened Galbraith he subsequently changed his name to David. He started school at Bishops in Cape Town and then went to Union High in Graaff Reinet. After studying medicine for a year he gained a degree in Marketing from the University of Natal in Durban. He worked for Johnson and Johnson in Port Elizabeth before moving to the USA, where he lives in Boston

Marcus and his third wife Anita had one child:

3.1.4 Jennifer Cole- Rous 1951 –

Jenny has lived in Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Hermanus, Pietermaritzburg, Rome and for the past 32 years, in Cape Town. Through part time study she obtained degrees from UNISA - a BA French and Linguistics and an Honours in Linguistics. She works as a translator - mainly French and English but also some Italian. Jenny works at conferences and does other translation work, mainly for big international companies dealing with wine, petrochemical topics and civil engineering. She also works as a Tour Guide and has worked in the wine industry and in marine research - spending some time at sea - and in media.

3.2 Marjory Merle Rous 1904 – 1964 married Walter Warden 1894 – 1982



Marjory Merle Rous

Marjory Merle Rous was the second child and only daughter born to Jim and Louie. She was born on the farm they were leasing – The Pyramids about 20 kilometres from Pretoria on the 26th August 1904. She was only three months old when her mother took her and her older brother Marcus on holiday down to Cradock. Here they spent a happy month with Louie catching up on all the news and showing her babies off to family and friends.

In January 1905 the family moved to their own farm, Riverside near Witbank. With Marjory little more than year old the twins Graham and Leslie were born in October of that same year. Marcus, the oldest child was only about two and half. Marjory as the only girl in a family of boys would, I'm sure have had to 'stand up for her rights' when growing up. At first Louie taught the children at home. For a while a governess, detested by the children was employed to teach them, before they were sent for a few hours a day to a small farm school nearby.

There is little about Marjory in her mother's book although when she was five and on holiday in East London her mother described her to a friend:

"Marjory is such a joy - an aunt of mine named her 'Little Serena' because she is never out of temper; she loves books but not dolls. I am sorry, as I loved my dolls so dearly!"

In 1914 there was the big family upheaval when they moved to Johannesburg. Like the boys Marjory went to a 'real' school for the first time and like them would have had to have adapted after the free and easy life on the farm. It is an interesting sign of a girl's place in the scheme of things at this time to look at a passage from The Little Dane. When having tea with a friend Louie is asked what the children are going to do after matriculating. She says that the twins will farm and Marcus is undecided – there is no mention of Marjory at all. Girls' lives were more or less mapped out at birth – an education, perhaps a teaching position or nursing and then marriage and children.

In any event, as we have seen in 1917 there was another move, this time to the farm Tafelberg Hall near Middelburg in the Cape Colony. It was a very exciting time for the family and I'm sure Marjory, 13 by then, would have enjoyed being shown many of her mother's favourite haunts around the farm.

There was a brief lull in schooling before Marjory was taken down to boarding school in Cradock. She went to Rocklands, where her mother had been so happy teaching before her marriage and where so many Flemmer girls had been educated. Her stay at Rocklands was only about two years before going off as a boarder to Collegiate in Port Elizabeth. She matriculated and then went to Rhodes University where she majored in Latin and Greek. I am told that to the end of her life she read a chapter of the Bible in Greek every night – though she said her Greek was very bad! Back on the farm Louie remarked how fast the years were rolling by:

To Louie the children seemed to be growing up as fast as the trees. Many happy holidays were spent, in which bathing, tennis and riding filled the time, making it pass all too quickly.

On one occasion the household, for a fortnight, numbered nineteen. Men and girls from the South African University - Marcus' friends, and men and girls from Rhodes University - Marjory's friends, made up the happy party. Louie felt it to be one of the most enjoyable and interesting holidays she had ever spent. She much appreciated the kind thought of her young guests in sending her an album containing snaps taken during the holiday, each snap described by a witty or amusing remark.

After Rhodes Marjory took a teaching diploma and taught at a school in Eshowe, Kwa-Zulu Natal. On the 1st February 1934 she married Walter Warden who had been born in Edinburgh in 1894. He was educated in England and although rejected by the South African military at the outbreak of World War II, he subsequently served as a captain in the Royal Artillery. Marjory and Walter's first child, Jane was born in 1935, but died the following year. Their second Judith 'Vicky' was born on the 21st October 1936. With Walter away on military service Marjory went to live in Cradock for three years with Vicky. They stayed at the Hilton-Barber's resort Halesowen, before renting a big house in Cradock from old family friends, the Garlakes.

Walter came back from the war and took up a job as sub-editor at the Star newspaper and the couple divorced shortly afterwards. Marjory then rented a house on a large plot at Parktown North, Johannesburg where she and Vicky lived for many years. Marjory continued to teach; she had a wide circle of friends and her house always seemed to have visitors staying over in the spare room or sleeping on the couch. She died aged 60 in April 1964.

Marjory and Walter had two children:

3.2.1 Jane Warden 1935 – 1936

2.2 Judith Plesance 'Vicky' Warden 1936 – married Hugh Richard Canning 1922 – 1967

Vicky grew up in Parktown North, Johannesburg. Unable to afford a pony as a young girl she bought a donkey for 10/- and rode it to her school Parktown Girls' High every day! She went to the University of the Witwatersrand where

she majored in logic and moral philosophy. She married a civil servant, Hugh Richard Canning, who died in 1967. Vicky went to live in the then Salisbury (Harare) where among other things she started The Rhodesian Society for Parapsychology. She began an Honours Degree in psychology and economics at the University of Rhodesia but completed only two years before leaving in 1982 as the political heat started to increase.

Back in South Africa Vicky started the Sandton Literary Agency and over the years has met many interesting authors and publishers.

3.3.3 Graham Cole Rous 1905 – 1981 married Joan Bedford Visser 1910 – 1997



*Graham Cole
Rous*



*Joan Bedford
Visser*

Graham and his twin brother Leslie were born to Jim and Louie on the family farm Riverside near Witbank in the then Transvaal on the 30th October 1905. His mother says that *'they were fine, healthy boys and so alike it was impossible to tell them apart'*. In fact they were so alike that Anna found she would sometimes feed one of them twice, and starve the other! Jim and Anna discussed how they could solve this problem. Jim's remark that if they were lambs an earmark would be the answer didn't help. In the end a coin was tossed – Graham was heads and so a gold chain was put on the infant.

Anna must certainly have had her hands full with the new farm, miles away from the nearest town and any sort of medical help. By now she had four children under the age of three and it is difficult for us to picture how she coped. Life was hard on the farm although she did have some support when her mother and sisters visited from time to time. There were breaks in the routine too, with the annual trek down to the Lowveld camp, visits to the family back in Cradock and even a much needed holiday in East London. When the children were very young Louie taught them at home. When Graham was four she found a small school near the farm where he went with his brothers and sister for an hour in the morning. I suppose young twin boys will always be a handful and these were no exception as we see from The Little Dane:

The twins are terrible little pickles - they were born farmers and really their worst troubles have been in their efforts to farm. They killed numbers of chickens in their anxiety to make them stay in the coop with the hen, and ducklings because they came off the water; they have had to be severely whipped.

In 1914 their lives changed completely when the family moved to Johannesburg and Graham then eight, went to King Edward's School with his brothers. I suppose there must have been a fair number of farmers' sons at the school but it must have been difficult to settle into this disciplined regime after the freedom of the farm. The twins must have been delighted to hear in 1917 that the family was moving back to a farm – this time to Tafelberg Hall in the Cape Colony. There was all the excitement of packing and moving; better still when they arrived Louie declared a three week holiday from all school work. The children had a wonderful time exploring their new home and sharing their mother's early memories of Tafelberg Hall. For the remaining five months of 1917 Anna taught the children at home and then the dreaded day came when they were all taken to Cradock to start the new school year. This was not an easy time for Anna or the children:

On Sunday afternoon Louie engaged a taxi and drove the three boys to the Boys' School and Marjory to Rocklands, and on Monday morning she returned to Tafelberg by an early train. Her courage was taxed to the uttermost as through that long day she attended to various household duties and tried to be brave; but it was a sore trial as her heart ached for herself and her children, she knew how homesick they would be, how dreadful for them to be cooped up and have strict rules after the free farm life; how they would be missing their dogs and their horses and all the other interests which kept their little lives so busy and joyous. Her heart longed and yearned over them - if only she could hear the rush of their feet and the sound of their merry voices! The deathly stillness of the house seemed more than she could bear during that long, long afternoon.

Jim and Louie decided that the Cradock Boys' School wasn't up to scratch so in 1919 Graham, then 16 was enrolled at South African College School in Cape Town. School really didn't suit him and with the many changes he had already had in his young life it is no surprise to find that he did not complete matric. He went back to farm on the family farm Stradbroke where I'm sure he had a thorough grounding in farming from his father who proved to be a hard task master.

During the 1929 General Election Graham met his future wife Joan Bedford Visser, the daughter of Johnny Visser, then Chairman of the United Party. That same year Joan went to England to study Physical Education. During the three years she was away she received two or three letters a year from Graham. He sent her a telegram welcoming her home in 1932 and three weeks later proposed to her at the top of number eight camp on Stradbroke. Joan must have been a remarkable woman and it is thanks to her that we have some wonderful stories about their lives on the farm. She was deaf and because of that had apparently never considered herself 'marriage material' –

she reminded Graham that her deafness would only get worse. Undaunted he suggested a pact – he would help her with her deafness if she helped him with his irritability and quick temper. And so it was agreed and the pact was the basis of a long and happy marriage.

The couple had three children, Michael-Jon ('Don'), Elizabeth Ann ('Lizann') and Jolyon between 1934 and 1937. It was at about this time that Graham suggested to his mother that he buy the family farm Stradbroke which she had run herself since Jim's death in 1931. She agreed and in 1938 he sold a farm he owned called *Beeshoek* for £3000 and paid his mother out. Louie moved to Johannesburg taking all of the furniture with her! In Joan's words the couple with their three young children were left with:

'only the stove, dining room clock, the world record kudu horns, four chairs and petrol box furniture'

A tough start certainly but these were hardy folk. I should just mention here that the kudu horns mentioned were from a bull kudu shot by Jim Rous in 1915. The horns were an incredible 72 inches (1.83m) long, a world record – beating that held by the great hunter and explorer Frederick Courtney Selous. Such trophies were highly regarded at the time and I'm told that the horns were offered for sale to President Roosevelt who had shown a keen interest.

But to get back to Graham and Joan and their young family. They had no sooner moved to their new home when the Second World War broke out. Graham, like most men in the district, enlisted and left for military training. Joan was left to run the farm more or less by herself. To make her life even more difficult a huge road building project in the area drew off many of her labourers. These were tough times for a woman on a big farm, as Joan herself says:

Joan ran the farm spending most of her time on horseback with Jolyon [about two] on the front of her saddle. She recalls how they made their own soap using burnt asboss as lye, mixing this with fat and pouring it into cups to form cakes of soap. She also made their own coffee, eider downs, raisins and dried fruit, vinegar and candles. She would slaughter a pig and smoke it up near the fountain thus ensuring they had bacon, hams and sausages. Hanneport and Walton cross grapes were grown, harvested, dipped in caustic soda to crack the skins and then placed on wire racks to dry. Once dry they were washed before being packed away as raisins.

In 1941, with Graham 'up North' his mother Louie died in Johannesburg and Joan was faced with another problem. She needed to raise the funds to pay out the other heirs and this she did with the help of a local attorney and the Guardian Loan Company. She must have been a remarkable woman:

Her father helped to plan how to pay off their debt through the sale of fruit, eggs, skins and wool. When Graham returned from the war they had no debt at all, save the money loaned from the Guardian Loan Company.

Graham was with the DMR as a sergeant and fought along with thousands of other South Africans at El Alamein. Because of the desperate need for the Commonwealth to produce food for the war effort, many farmers were released from active service early. Graham arrived on New Year's Day 1943. He was met at Tafelberg Station by Joan and the three children who had of course changed and grown so much in the years he had been away. It must have been such a difficult transition for all of these families to get back to 'normal' after all they had been through.

Things slowly settled down again; Joan had done a wonderful job with the farm but there was much to do. In 1947 their last child Peter Graham was born. In 1951 while at the wool sales in Port Elizabeth, Graham, at 46, had his first heart attack. Over the following years he was to have another major and eight minor attacks between 1951 and 1968. Despite this he was a successful sheep farmer and like his father took part in many shows. He was also a founder member of the South African Sheepdog Association, and soon qualified as a senior judge. Joan too, qualified for her 'ticket' and judged many dog trials with him.

On 24th January 1981, Graham got up as usual at 5 a.m. and made his way to the milking sheds where he suffered a final heart attack, dying in the arms of his beloved wife Joan. In his will, down to earth man that he was:

"Regarding my burial place, I want to stay on Stradbroke and choose Meerkatvlak Camp. The site at the foot of the koppies overlooking the Red Land. I have shown some of the place. No high class tomb stone, just an upright "Ysterklip" please". He was buried on Stradbroke on Meerkatvlaktes overlooking the expanse of rooigrass with a large ysterklip as a headstone, just as he had requested.

Joan left the farm later that year and lived in Middelberg until her death on the 21st of August 1997. She is buried alongside Graham amongst the Karoo bushes, *rooigras* and *ysterklip* that they both loved so much. Stradbroke had changed in the time Graham farmed it. He had divided it into smaller camps in order to practice rotational grazing. Unfortunately the water dried up and much of the wonderful orchard was lost.

Stradbroke was inherited by their son Peter who had a manager Mick Milligan to assist in managing the farm. The farm was later sold to a distant relative, a Gilfillan who renamed it Thorny Springs. Today there is no orchard at all and most of the magnificent gardens put in by Anna Louise and later developed by Joan Rous are a distant memory. Graham and Joan had four children:

3.3.1 Michael-Jon 'Don' Cole Rous 1934 – married Rosemary Pringle Russell 1938 – they had three children:

3. 3.1.1. Russel Cole Rous 1966 – married Janet Elizabeth Tyson 1969 – three children

3. 3.1.2 Lazelle Rous 1967 –

3.3.1.3. Sharedene Molly Rous 1970 – married and subsequently divorced
Clinton Aubrey de la Mare 1970 – one child

3.3.2 Elizabeth Ann 'Lizann' Rous 1935 – 2000 married Leon Vercueil 1931 –

Lizann was born at Stradbroke and was sent to boarding school in Cradock as a five year old. She matriculated from Collegiate in Port Elizabeth and went on to study Microbiology at the University of Cape Town obtaining a B.Sc. She did research work at Onderstepoort and was involved in the first heart transplants on animals. She later worked at the Polio Research Institute in Johannesburg. She married Leon Oliver Vercueil, a mechanical engineer, on the 17th of December 1960. Leon matriculated from St. Johns College and attained his B.Sc (mechanical engineering) at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1952. Lizann then studied part time and obtained an M.Comm from Pretoria University in 1956.

Lizann was an avid sportswoman, playing provincial hockey and squash. She was awarded Springbok colours for squash in 1960 and was the South African Woman's Champion in 1960 and 1961. She was also an excellent speaker and won the International Toastmistress award for South Africa. She joined the staff of Rosebank Bible College in about 1975 and taught on both the Old and New Testament for over 20 years. She later taught at Rhema Bible College for a number of years.

Lizann died on the 12th of February 2000 after a long fight against breast cancer. Lizann and Leon had three children:

3.3.2.1 Kim Vercueil 1964 – married Robin Ballantine 1960 – three children

3.3.2.2 Graham Vercueil 1966 – married Alison Muldoon 1967 – one child

3.3.2.3. Pierre Mentz Vercueil 1968 – married Tamara Bridgeford 1971 – two children

I have not been able to get any information on the following children

3.3.3. Jolyon Cole Rous 1937 – married Jennifer Russell 1942 – they had one child

3.3.3.1 Katherine Rous 1975 – married Rick Bertossi

3.3.4 Peter Graham Cole Rous 1947 – married Jo Sem 1949 – 1992 – they had three children

3.3.4.1 Lisa Jo Cole Rous 1974 – married Peter Baker

3.3.4.2 Joshua Cole Rous 1977 –

3.3.4.3 Luke Cole Rous 1981 –

3.4 Leslie Cole Rous 1905 – 1966 married (1) Nancy Fanshaw Patterson 1914 – 1990. He married (2) Laura du Plessis 1913 – 1994



Leslie Cole Rous

As we have seen Leslie and his twin brother Graham were born to Jim Cole Louie on the family farm Riverside near Witbank in the then Transvaal on the 30th October 1905. The twins were identical and to this day no one knows which came 'first'. I have already related some stories about how difficult Louie found it to know which one was which. Here is one from

Leslie's family:

The story goes that they were so identical one wore a chain around his neck. At bathtime the chain was taken off and each twin has his side of the tub to sit in. There was a crisis in the kitchen and both Mrs. Rous and the nanny rushed out. On returning the twins were crawling around on the floor. They tried to follow the spoor and in the end said 'You Graham, you Leslie' and no one knew if it was actually so!

Louie must certainly have had her hands full with the new farm, miles away from the nearest town and any sort of medical help. By now she had four children under the age of three and it is difficult for us to picture how she coped. Life was hard on the farm although she did have some support when her mother and sisters visited from time to time. There were breaks in the routine too, with the annual trek down to the Lowveld camp, visits to the family back in Cradock and even a much needed holiday in East London. When the children were very young Louie taught them at home. When Leslie and Graham were four she found a small school near the farm where they went with their brother and sister for an hour in the morning.

In The Little Dane there is an interesting description of a serious illness Leslie had as a young boy. For a whole year Louie had been very worried about him as he had been diagnosed with an 'internal chill' (whatever that was):

For four months Leslie lay on his back, never allowed to sit up. He had a little wagon in which he lay, and the children used to drag it about wherever they were going to play. The sad and trying part of it all was that he had to be fed like a baby, boiled milk taken through a feeding cup every hour, no sweets or fruit. Poor little boy! He was as good and patient as an angel. Jim nearly quarreled with the doctor about the treatment, and had it not been for Jim's common sense and determination, Leslie would never have made the recovery he did.

As we have seen there was a big change in Leslie's life when the family moved to Johannesburg in 1914. Gone was the free and easy life of a farm

school – King Edward School was huge by comparison; it was a big adjustment for all of them. There was better news in 1917 when Louie and Jim decided to buy Tafelberg Hall and go back to farming. For the remaining five months of 1917 Louie taught the children at home and then the dreaded day came when they were all taken to Cradock to start the new school year. This was not an easy time for Louie or the children:

Two years later Anna and Jim decided that the school in Cradock wasn't up to scratch and Leslie and Graham were sent as boarders to South African College School (SACS) in Cape Town. I don't know if Leslie completed matric but he was a very keen sportsman – particularly good at boxing and cricket. He and Graham were good tennis players and opponents often didn't know if the right one was actually serving!

After school Leslie went sheep farming near Victoria West and married Nan Patterson in Durban in 1936. The couple lived in Cape Town where their children were born. He and Nan were divorced and he married Laura du Plessis in Cape Town in 1945, moving to Graaff Reinet where the couple's son was born. Laura was a nurse and became Matron of the local hospital.



Laura du Plessis

Leslie and Laura eventually settled in Colesberg where he opened a stock remedy store. Like his brother Graham, Leslie was a very keen sheepdog breeder and trainer. His dog 'Skipkie' was South African Champion sheep dog for three years and another dog, 'Carmen' also won the South African Championship. Leslie died of a heart attack in Colesberg aged 59.

Leslie and his first wife Nancy had two children:

3.4.1 Robin Cole Rous 1937 – 1992 married Margaret Lindsay 'Lyn' Graham 1942 –

Robin was educated at Union High in Graaff Reinet where he was a prefect and won his school colours for tennis, rugby and cricket. He qualified as a vet at Onderstepoort and set up a successful veterinary hospital. He is credited with performing the first equine caesarean operation in the South Africa. He was also one of the first veterinary surgeons to perform operations on rams for brain cysts and renal calculi. Robin and Lyn had four children:

3.4.1.1 Karen Rous 1962 – married Mike Trenor 1960 – two children

3.4.1.2 Gavin Rous 1963 – married Charmaine Dumas 1964 – two children

3.4.1.3 Trevor Rous 1965 – married Judy Meyer 1967 – two children

3.4.1.4 Edwin Cole Rous 1968 – married Nicole Dart 1968 – two children

3.4.2 Sandra 'Snoeks' Rous 1941 – married Harry van Rensburg 1930 –
they had three children

3.4.2.1 Ingrid van Rensburg 1965 – married DuToit Neethling 1960 – three children

3.4.2.2 Anita van Rensburg 1966 – married Bernard Uys 1966 – three children

3.4.2.3 Pierre van Rensburg 1969 – married Tania Deyzel 1969 – two children

Leslie and his second wife Laura had one child:

3.4.3 Rodney 'Korky' Cole Rous 1946 – married (1) Patricia Le Roux 1948
– they had two children.

3.4.3.1 Justin Rous 1968 – married Ray van Dort – one child

3.4.3.2 Anthony Rous 1968 – married Samantha Dowler – two children

Korky married (2) Barbara Ireland 1948 – they had two children

3.4.3.3 Nicholas Rous 1983 –

3.4.3.4 Adam Rous 1986 –

3. 5 James Cole Rous 1910 – 1915

We know very little about James. He was the baby of the family and was born in 1910 on the farm Riverside. He would have been about four when the family moved to Johannesburg in 1914. I have been told that he was taken into the big city by an aunt and that they went into one of the new multi – storey buildings then springing up down town. It had a lift and in those days the lift had a folding lattice door that did not open and close automatically. In any event lift engineering was still new and they were not altogether reliable. Young James ran ahead of his aunt to the lift opening. The lattice door wasn't closed and there was no lift – he fell head first down the shaft and died instantly.

A real tragedy and we can imagine the distress of the aunt who had the boy in her care that day. There is no mention at all of this boy in The Little Dane and I can only assume it was a memory that was simply too painful for Anna Louie.

4

John Distin Flemmer 1875 – 1920

Maud Croxford 1873 – 1949



John Distin Flemmer

Maud Croxford



John Distin Flemmer, known to his family as Jack, was born in Cradock on the 8th August 1875. He was the fourth child of Ludvig and Anna but by the time he was born, only his older sister Louie (18 months) was still alive. Jack's arrival was cause for great celebration in the Flemmer household in Frere Street. He became the oldest boy in the family as his older brother had died aged five a year before. There was a big family gathering to celebrate Jack's christening at St. Peter's in Cradock on the 9th September that year where the infant was named after his grandfather John Distin.

When Jack was four he watched his father dress in his army uniform, fall in on the Town Square with the Cradock Mounted Volunteers and march off to loud cheers to fight in the Basuto campaign. Although he had uncles in and around Cradock it must have been a difficult time for the little boy, as the family waited anxiously for news from the front. The year before his mother had had another son, Christian Ludvig and then baby William arrived. To make things worse, Christian went down with typhoid and William, a sickly infant, needed constant attention. I would think his mother had very little time for young Jack, and he was much in the care of his "big" sister Louie, herself only five!

It was to be many months before his Dad came home again, carried into the house on a stretcher, his leg broken and with a big beard. At first Jack didn't recognise his father at all and it was some time before the children could be persuaded to come near him. It was at about this time that Jack himself went down with rheumatic fever. This was a dangerous illness for children who could easily suffer serious heart damage.

This illness may well have been just about the straw that broke the camel's back as far as Jack's mother was concerned and who could blame the poor woman. At the doctor's insistence it was decided that they all badly needed a holiday on the coast. For the time they lived in this would have been a very rare treat. Ludvig, back from the war and getting his business going again, made all the arrangements for the wagon trek to the coast although he couldn't go himself.

The trip down to the Kowie was itself a big adventure for the children. At his first sight of the crashing noisy waves Jack, by now five was terrified. Without further ado his mother and aunt grabbed him by the hands and dragged him into the water. Poor little chap! As they tried to get him under it was only his cries of "Oh! God save, God save me!" that persuaded the women to have mercy on him and let him play in the rock pools. It was a few days after this that we come across a good example of the workings of fate or providence that are in the history of all families. I leave it to The Little Dane to describe the scene:

One day Jack was playing in the pools; Sannie, in charge of the youngest children, sat on the beach watching the rest of the party, who were enjoying the bathing. Suddenly the sea came towards them like a huge mountain. "It is the tide," shouted Aunt Annie, "All clasp hands and we must run for our lives!" They were swept onto the beach - the tide almost reached Sannie and her charges. As they picked themselves up and turned to watch the receding

water, what was their horror and dismay to see a little head far out, bobbing about in the waves.

"Jack, Jack!" they all shouted. They knew that Jack was being carried out to sea and no one there to save him. Before Mrs Flemmer's cry of agonized distress had left her lips she was watching Sannie, the little black nursemaid, plunge into the boiling surf, clothes and all, going to what seemed certain death. Will she reach him in time? Those were moments of cruel uncertainty. She has got him! Here she comes, carrying him in her arms, treading with difficulty through the water, her clothes heavy and soaked. Brave little Sannie, you deserve well of life! One wonders whether she was adequately rewarded for so noble and self sacrificing a deed!

Living on the coast as I do, I can easily imagine how close Jack was to drowning – how different the family tree would look if he had not been saved!

Despite these dramas, after a wonderful restful holiday the family loaded up the wagon and travelled back to Cradock, where Anna had another baby, Edith the following year. By now Jack was six and was going to school in Cradock. By the time he was nine his mother had had five more children – nothing unusual for the time. It was then that the family decided to go farming; the whole house in Frere Street was packed up and much to the children's excitement they moved to the farm *Plat Rivier* near Tafelberg.

The farm was a paradise for children with its big garden and all of the farm activities – there was always something to see and do. Then there was the veld all around and especially for the boys, hunting and camping trips where they could really run free. There were some practical issues too, schooling being one of them. A tutor was employed to teach Jack and his younger brother Christian. These tutors were often young women, and there was no system of qualification required. Often the result was that teaching was a bit of a hit and miss affair – especially for young boys who had all the farm's distractions around them.

When Jack was about 14 his father decided to take advantage of a subsidy from the Cape Government and set up a Farm School for his six children. A teaching governess was employed and the six children – Louie 15, Jack 14, Christian 12, Edith 8, Olive 7 and Arthur Claude 5, were all taught in one class. By the time Louie was 18 and ready to write her own teacher's exam it turned out that the tutor was only four months older than her. Needless to say this young teacher was having some trouble controlling the teenaged Jack and Christian!

By chance I came across some brief diaries kept for many years by Edward Thornhill Gilfillan of the farm Conway which is about 15kms south of *Plat Rivier*. As both farms were on the railway line it's clear that the families saw a lot of each other, with frequent mention of visits to the Flemmer farm, dinner and parties in each other's homes. In 1892 there are several entries referring to Jack, or Johnny as Edward calls him. He mentions that Jack had chosen a pointer pup called Norah from a new litter. Apart from a bit on buying and

selling of butter there is also a running total of the number of buck Edward and Jack shot. Over a period of two months between May and July they had shot a total of 53, so game must have still been quite plentiful.

Jack was confirmed at the Holy Cross Anglican Church in Steynsburg when he was 18. His uncle Hans Christian Flemmer lived there with his family and it had become quite easy for the families to visit each other once the new railway lines had been built. Farming was a difficult way to make a living and it is no surprise to see that Jack joined so many other young men in going to the 'City of Gold' – Johannesburg. He was only about 18 when he set off on this great adventure and it must have been quite a transition for him to go from the quiet of the farm to this wild boom town. The gold rush had only started six years before and the Reef was attracting fortune hunters from all over the world. It was a rough, tough place teeming with bars, gambling dens and fortune hunters of every stripe.

Jack had some contacts there, as his Uncle Salvator Flemmer was investing in mining ventures springing up all over the Reef and his lawyer cousin Douglas Flemmer Gilfillan was also in Johannesburg. There was constant friction between the Boers and the *Uitlanders* and trouble was looming. There is no doubt the British Government wanted to gain control of the fabulous wealth being produced by the gold mines. In 1896 the Empire was shaken by the disastrous Jameson Raid, engineered by wealthy 'Rand Lords' - Cecil Rhodes, then Prime Minister of the Cape among them. Looking at these events in hindsight it was inevitable that war was coming.

Jack had found a job on the Rose Deep Mine in Germiston where he lived in a rented mining house. He was an amalgamator, supervising an area where rock ore was melted and the molten gold run off into moulds – hard and very hot work. He met Maud Croxford who lived in Berea, Johannesburg with her Aunt Janie Rhodes. Maud was born in Grahamstown on the 21st of July 1873 and her mother was a Rhodes, her father being a cousin of Cecil John Rhodes. They were a very wealthy family and Maud had been well educated in the genteel arts. Part of her education in music and art was in England where she attended the Royal College of Music and I am told, performed before Queen Victoria. Maud was a talented musician, the piano being her favourite. She was also an artist and the family still has paintings that were done by her. Jack Flemmer was a well educated man who came from a good family, a very important consideration in society at this time. He had very little money though and it would be interesting to know how the couple met. I think it is quite possible that they were introduced by Douglas Gilfillan, Jack's cousin, who was already making his mark among Johannesburg's rich and famous. In any event the couple were married in 1899; Jack was 24 and Maud 26. They had a wide social circle, including the General Manager of Rose Deep who often visited their house.

The political troubles that had been simmering since the Jameson raid in 1896 boiled over shortly after the couple married. Britain was spoiling for a fight, and with tension mounting on the Reef, Jack and Maud locked up their home and fled with thousands of others on the 1st October 1899. Ten days later war

was declared and the Anglo Boer War began. The couple were fortunate that they had family to go to in Cradock. Not as fortunate were the 25 000 refugees who poured into Cape Town in cattle trucks after an uncomfortable two day journey from the Transvaal and Orange Free State. They were of all colours and nationalities, many without money or possessions and with no relatives in the country. Women and children suffered particular hardship with many separated from their husbands.

Having settled his wife in with the family in Cradock, Jack immediately signed up with the Eastern Province Horse in January of 1900. He was a Lieutenant in this unit of 107 men that saw service in the Free State and Transvaal. In August of 1900 he was in Cradock, but Maud had gone to her family near Grahamstown for the birth of the couple's first child Marguerite 'Madge' Distin Flemmer who was born on the 12th August 1900. Shortly after the birth Maud brought the infant back to Cradock where Madge was baptised early in September. This must have been a very difficult time for Maud. She was far from her own family, with an infant daughter and her husband in the forces with the ever present risk of being wounded or killed. The fact that many other women were in the same boat wasn't much comfort, although Maud was fortunate to have many of the Flemmer women in Cradock for support.

The dreadful war dragged on with Jack making infrequent visits to see Maud when he could get leave or when his unit was operating in the Cradock area. Finally after two long years that devastated the country, the war entered a guerrilla phase and the smaller units of Colonial volunteers were disbanded. Jack managed to get to Cradock for the birth of his second daughter, Doris Distin Flemmer on the 16th February 1902.

In May the previous year Lord Roberts had led the British forces in the capture of Johannesburg. It was important that the Transvaal economy and in particular the gold mines be brought back into production as soon as possible. Shortly after the birth of Doris Jack made his way back to Germiston and to the gold mine where he had worked at Rose Deep. As we have seen the couple had started their married life in a small mine house on the Rose Deep compound. After being welcomed by old work colleagues he made his way to the couple's house and received a nasty shock. It was standing empty, looted of everything during the war. As he so aptly put it in the compensation claim that he submitted "*I lost practically everything I possessed.*" This bald statement sums up the situation of so many people, British and Boer alike by the time hostilities ended.

Life went on of course and people had to get on with it and rebuild their lives. In September 1902 he and Maud completed a claim form for submission to the Compensation Board, set up with British Government funding to deal with the thousands of claims for loss whether by looting or commandeering.

The claim is full of interesting details and show what a young, reasonably well off couple would have owned at the start of their married life. I set this list out in full:

Dining Room

Sofa	£ 5 0. 0
Sideboard	10 0. 0
6 chairs @ 10/-	3 0. 0
Metronome	110. 0
Music Stand	5 0 0

Music & songs	10 0 0
12 oil paintings	36 0. 0
Linoleum	3 0. 0
Side Table	1 10. 0
Armchair	4 0. 0
Lamp	2 0. 0
Blinds & rods	3 0. 0
Table cloth	18. 6
Household linen	5 0. 0

First Bedroom

Bedstead	£ 15 0. 0
Dressing table	3 10. 0
Washhand stand	5 0. 0
Toilet set	3 0. 0
Looking glass	2 0. 0
6 Oil paintings @ £3	18 0. 0
Blinds & Rods	2 0. 0
Linoleum	3 0. 0

Kitchen

Stove	£ 7 0. 0
Dining Service	6 10. 0
2 tea services	4 0. 0
Saucepans etc	5 0. 0
India rubber	
Footwarmer	18. 0
Table	1 0. 0
Cupboard	3 10. 0
Box of tools	2 10. 0
2 baths @ 15/-	1 10. 0
Linoleum	15. 0
Door mat	5. 0
Bin for flour	2 10. 0
Meat safe	2 0. 0

Second Bedroom

Bedstead	£ 5 0. 0
Chest of drawers	4 0. 0
Washhand stand	2 10. 0
Table	15. 0
Toilet set	2 10. 0
2 chairs @ 10/-	1 0. 0
Blinds & Rods	2 0. 0
2 mats and carpet	2 0. 0

Some interesting points:

- There is no mention of clothes or of carpets for the dining room and main bedroom so they had probably taken them to Cradock when they fled. They also probably took other valuables including cutlery and glasses
- The most valuable things in the house are the 18 paintings valued at £54. These were painted by Maud who said they were worth at least the amount claimed. They must have been small as there were 12 in the lounge.
- The next most valuable item is the metronome, music stand and music. The Flemmers were a musical family and this investment in music was our equivalent buying of TV's, music centres and the like. There is no claim for instruments, which must have been removed when they left
- Although there were 6 chairs in the dining room there is no mention of a dining table – perhaps it had been moved somewhere safe

The total claim was for £206 1s 6d and after much bureaucratic to-ing and fro-ing the amount paid was £127 – a substantial difference. Items were simply knocked down in value, for instance the value of the music by 50% and I suppose one had to be grateful for what one got.

With the thousands of claims being sent in at this time there would, no doubt have been a fair proportion of charlatans out to make a few bob with doubtful claims.

In Jack's case the assessor was able to confirm that *"Claimant is a very respectable man and had his house very well furnished. Mr. Hamilton, Manager, Rose Deep, who had often been to the house states that it was very nicely furnished."*

There is also confirmation from Jack's cousin Douglas Gilfillan who is quoted as a reference. Douglas was a well known attorney in Johannesburg and the fact that he was arrested in 1896 following the Jameson Raid as part of the Reform Committee, did not affect his *bona fides*. The assessor confirms

"Mr. Gilfillan, Johannesburg knows claimant very well and had often been in his house which he says was well furnished."

With the settlement of their claim the couple had £127 plus any pay Jack had from his military service – not much to start again with their two young children. It was some time shortly after this that they decided to get away from the Reef and all of the turmoil after the war. Jack went back to farming and they moved to a farm at Morokweng. Family records show this to be in Bechuanaland (now Botswana) but on present maps it is in South Africa and it may be that the borders were redrawn at some stage. In any event, it was a big upheaval for the family as this part of South Africa is particularly hot, dry and inhospitable – it must have been a difficult life.

Jack was sheep farming and it was here that the first of many twins born into the South African Flemmer family were born. Ludvig 'Lolly' Christian and John 'Jack' Sweet Distin Flemmer arrived on the 15th January 1905. If bringing up small children was a trial in the relatively civilised area of Middelburg and Cradock, we can only admire Maud out in this harsh and unforgiving part of the world. Before her marriage she had lived with her aunt as a wealthy young woman in a huge house on Johannesburg's Berea; I would imagine it was a genteel existence with servants and the social whirl of the bustling mining boom town. Five years later she had been through the Anglo Boer War, had given birth to four children and here she was, a farmer's wife with four small children in one of the hottest, harshest parts of Southern Africa. These women were made of stern stuff! We have this description of Maud from one of her granddaughters:

She was a big-hearted, happy, loving Granny, who taught me to knit and listened to my shy attempts to play the piano.

Another boy, Neville 'Nick' Distin Flemmer was born on the 6th October 1906 and his place of birth is given as Vryburg. Again Vryburg is shown in family records as being in Bechuanaland although it is now in South Africa. Nick was followed two years later by Gwynneth Grace Maud Flemmer born on the 28th September 1909 at Morokweng Bechuanaland. It was around this time that

Jack and Maud had a welcome visit from his mother Anna and sister Edith. Given the difficulties of travel to so remote a place they made the most of it and stayed for 3 months. It must have been wonderful to have news of home and family and some help with the growing family. By now beside the infant Gwynneth there was Madge 8, Doris 6, the twins Lolly and Jack jnr 3, and Nick 2 – a handful in anyone's reckoning!

Jack was working as a manager on a leased sheep farm called *Reitzdale* near Vryburg owned by Herbert Ainsworth. Things were not going well and the grazing was not really suited to sheep. At about this time young Jack jnr. contracted polio, a potentially fatal illness. Given the lack of medical care in this remote area it's no surprise to find that the family moved back to Boksburg, near Johannesburg. Jack found a job back in mining and for a while worked for the Anglo Gold Mining Company.

It was now that he brought a civil case against his former employer, Ainsworth, suing him for cancellation of his management contract. He must have felt he was on strong grounds and the amount involved was £1500, a huge amount for the time. Ainsworth then launched a counter suit against Jack. The papers on this case are in the Cape Town archives and the file runs to over 350 pages. It was an ugly affair with claim and counter claim of negligence and bad faith – witnesses were subpoenaed from as far away as Rhodesia. I gather from the papers that Ainsworth was wealthy and could afford to fight the case to the bitter end. After a protracted legal wrangle Ainsworth withdrew his case and Jack was ordered to pay costs of £630 0s 3d.

Jack now found that he and his family were in dire financial straits. Not only was there the matter of his opponent's costs to pay, but his own legal fees came to £466 10s 0d. It must have been a very difficult time. A sequestration order was granted when Jack was found to have '*no goods, chattels or money*' which could be attached and his estate was then sequestered. To add to the couple's worries another daughter, Barbara Anna Flemmer was born in Boksburg on the 23rd July 1910.

Things must have been very difficult for the family and it seems that for a while Jack kept working on the mine. I'm sure he hated the job, but at least it was a source of income. In 1913 when Jack applied for the rehabilitation of his estate his address is shown as '*Vogelfontein*', Boksburg so it seems that the family had stayed in this area over these few years. It may have been now that things took a turn for the better. Maud's uncle, Porter Rhodes had died leaving her some money and I think this is what enabled Jack to settle his debts and rehabilitate his estate.

It was about this time that the family moved from Boksburg, leasing a farm in the Vereeniging District, south of Johannesburg. Shortly afterwards with the money Maud had inherited, they bought the 261 hectare farm *Schoongezicht* and the adjoining homestead. Before the industrialization of the Vereeniging area this was a pleasant part of the world; there were extensive fruit trees, and onions were farmed on a big scale. In 1918 when the world was hit by the

great flu epidemic, and thousands died in South Africa the family swore that they were spared because of the health giving properties of their onions, and who is to say they were wrong?

This wonderful picture of Jack and Maud's children was taken during their happy years at *Schoongezicht* in about 1916



Barbara, Gwynneth, Neville, Ludvig, John, Doris, Madge

Jack was an excellent horseman and participated and judged local gymkhanas in the area. Farming was a difficult business and it was decided to divide *Schoongezicht* up into 25 hectare plots. He then became an estate agent and auctioneer, selling off the farm plots. Maud's Aunt Janie meanwhile paid for some of the children to go to private schools.

In early 1920 the family decided to move again and then lived at 8 Eloff Street in Boksburg. Here Jack suffered an attack of appendicitis and peritonitis set in. He died after an operation at the Boksburg Hospital on the 7th November 1920. This was a tragedy for the Maud and for the family. Jack was only 44 when he died and his children still young: Madge was 19, Doris 17, the twins Lolly and Jack jnr. 15, Nick 14, Gwynneth 13 and Barbara 10. So for Maud there was not only the great sorrow of having lost her husband so unexpectedly, but the added burden of consoling her children. Then of course there were the worries she must have had for all of their futures.

The boys were boarding at St. Andrew's in Grahamstown when their Dad died and after the funeral Maud took the girls down to Durban for a while before going back to live in Johannesburg. Once again Maud's Aunt Janie came to the assistance of the family. She continued to pay the children's' school fees and let the family live in a house in Yeoville, which had been owned by her

late sister Ada. This great kindness of Aunt Janie's was repaid later in life when Maud nursed her through the long and painful illness that ended her life. The story of Jack and Maud's children follows but I will meantime write here about Maud's life as a widow. Over the years following the death of her husband, Maud saw her family grow up and in the way of children, move on. Her oldest daughter Madge went to live in Kenya, as did Lolly and Nick. Doris qualified as a teacher and moved to the Lowveld. Gwynneth married and moved to the Free State and it was only Jack jnr. and the youngest daughter Barbara, who remained in the Johannesburg area.

As I mentioned earlier, Maud nursed her beloved Aunt Janie through her illness. Maud's granddaughter Joan remembers Aunt Janie being very kind, and being taken for rides in her big chauffeur driven car. When Janie died Maud had the usufruct of her beautiful home 'Rhodesia' at 13 O' Reilly, Berea and with it an income for as long as she lived. She was always ready to help her children and gave Jack land at *Schoongezicht* and also helped Doris to buy a house.

By 1946 Maud was ailing and went to live with her daughter Barbara who had by then married Bill Mast and had four children of her own. They lived at Rivonia and Maud paid for a flatlet to be built on to the house. When Barbara and Bill moved to Pietermaritzburg she moved with them. Maud died aged 74 at the Garfield Convalescent Home, Pietermaritzburg on the 8th of December 1949 following an operation. When she died, the provisions of her Aunt Janie's will came into effect. Maud's four girls inherited the house at O'Reilly Road with its beautiful furniture and book collection and her money was divided between 21 residuary male heirs. So ended the life of a woman who judging by what I have recounted here was a quite remarkable person.

In 1972 one of her grandsons was contacted about land still registered in her name at *Schoongezicht*. This caused quite a stir among the family but it was found that when the farm was subdivided all those years ago, a portion was retained as grazing land by the Peri-Urban Council. By 1972 they wanted to use this land for an oil pipeline and still had it registered in the name of Maud Flemmer. The transfer had never been registered and the mistake was then rectified.

As mentioned Jack and Maud had seven children:

4.1 Marguerite 'Madge' Distin Flemmer 1900 – 1988 married Frederick William Charles Body 1900 – 1974



*Marguerite 'Madge'
Distin Flemmer*

*Frederick William
Charles Body*



Madge was the first child of Jack and Maud and was born in the Grahamstown District on the 12th August 1900 where I believe Maud's family lived. The infant was brought back to Cradock where she was baptized at St. Peter's on the 2nd September 1900. As we have seen, as a young girl the family moved around, first to Bechuanaland and then to Boksburg before settling on the farm *Schoongezicht* near Vereeniging when Madge was about 13. By then she was the oldest of the seven children and would have been a big help to her mother in looking after this brood. The family loved life on the farm with its orchards of fruit trees and the horses which they were all taught to ride.

Madge was sent to board at St. John's School for Girls at Frere, Natal paid for by her Mom's Aunt Janie. The Flemmers were a close knit family and she was very unhappy as a boarder and longed for home. After school Madge trained as a nurse, but despite obtaining high pass marks, decided to go to Normal College to train as a teacher. She started her teaching career at Barnato Park School, Berea in Johannesburg

During one of her holidays Madge went to stay with her Uncles Marius and Salvator Flemmer on their farm near Nakuru in Kenya. Her brother Lolly was also farming in the area and it was while Madge was in East Africa that she met her future husband. He was Fred Body, born in London where his father had a furniture business. Fred had served in the Royal Naval Flying Corps during WWI and after the war, joined a Dutch shipping company. He was based in Tanga, a small port on the coast opposite the island of Pemba in Tanganyika (Tanzania) where the couple married in January 1931.

Their first and third children, Joan and Pam were born in Tanga. The middle child, Ron was born in Arusha below Mount Kilimanjaro where Madge had gone to escape the extreme heat of the coast. It seems that Madge's brother Nick was living in nearby Moshi, as he married there at about this time. The house at Tanga was right on the coast and daughter Joan remembers their life there well:

There was a large verandah, right across the front of the house where we could sit and watch the Arab dhows coming into the harbour. Very often the brass tray-topped table was piled high with fruit like mangoes, litchis or bananas or with ice-cold drinks. The windows were screened against mosquitoes and we slept under mosquito nets. On the few occasions when it rained, we children excitedly dived into bed to listen to the pitter patter on the iron roof. We enjoyed watching the Swahili men climb up the coconut trees in the garden, their feet tied together with a thong which caught on the nodes of the tree to lift them up.

An idyllic life but with the children growing up, schooling became a problem so in 1936 Fred and Madge decided to move to Durban. He joined Carst and Walker, an indent agency, studying Mercantile Law at night and becoming a director of the company. The family lived in Durban North for many years with

a short stint in Johannesburg. They moved to Claremont in Cape Town in 1951 where Fred retired as Chairman. The couple moved to Pietermaritzburg to be near Joan where Fred died in 1974. Joan tells me:

He was a man of great integrity, with a sense of humour and a good understanding of human nature. He was a loving and caring husband and father. When my mother became very ill, he did everything he could to get her better including deep and earnest prayer.

Madge lived with her daughter Pam at Hillcrest until Pam's death in 1981. She moved to a flat in Pietermaritzburg and then to a home Joan and John had built for her on their farm 'Preston' near Howick. Her brother Nick lived with her for about a year until his death in 1983. Madge died of a heart attack at her home on the 15th August 1988, three days past her 88th birthday.

Madge and Fred had three children:

4.1.1 Joan Gwendoline Rhodes Body 1931 – married John Anthony Reginald Warren 1929 –

When Joan was five the family moved from Tanga to Durban North, where she started at the Junior School right next to the family home. After living in Bryanston for a short time the family moved back to Durban and Joan started at the Durban Girls' High School, going by two double decker buses right across Durban. This was too tiring so she asked to become a boarder at Pietermaritzburg Girl's High. Joan was Head Prefect in 1949 and Captain of the netball team.

She went to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, to do a BA, majoring in English and Psychology, with a view to doing a one year Diploma in pre-primary school teaching. This she did at Berkley House, Claremont, Cape Town where her parents were living at the time. Joan tells me she finished her thesis in the British Museum while travelling abroad. She joined the staff of Berkley House demonstration school and lectured at the training college in the afternoons.

Joan married John Warren who she had met at University, on the 5th March 1958. John was born in Kimberley and attended Western Province Preparatory School in Claremont Cape Town and St. Andrew's College in Grahamstown where he was a prefect and Head of House. John read a BSc. Agriculture Degree at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, majoring in Animal Husbandry. He played rugby for the university for three years and was Vice-captain for a year.

The couple lived on Burnside Farm in beautiful Balgowan, dairying and running sheep. A lack of available water to irrigate the pastures necessitated selling and John then managed *Bosch Hoek* for Punch Barlow, from 1964 to 1969. They left *Bosch Hoek* for John to take up lecturing and research at Cedara Agricultural College in 1970.

In 1973 they bought their own farm, Burnside near Howick farming vegetables at first but later moving in to dairy farming. 1974 was a very sad year for the family with Joan's father dying and the loss of their son Anthony six months later. After being approached by an inspector of pre-primary schools late in November 1977, Joan agreed to convert a play-school in Howick into a proper pre-primary. Although very rewarding, Joan felt she needed to get back to being a farmer's wife and a mother, so she only stayed for a year.

Joan and John still live on Burnside now managed by their son Grant. Joan and John had four children:

4.1.1.1 Carolyn Jane Warren 1959 – married Neil Robert Burchell 1959 – two children

4.1.1.2 Anthony Charles Reginald Warren 1960 – 1974

4.1.1.3 Grant Andrew Warren 1965 – married Inma Guillot-Montaner 1963 – three children

4.1.1.4 Diana Louise Warren 1969 – married Ross Charles Lewin 1968 – two children

4.1.2 Ronald Alister Frederick Body 1933 – married Heather Rose Margaret Maxwell 1935 –

Ron was born at Arusha in the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro where his mother had gone to escape the terrible heat of coastal Tanga. As a young boy he moved to Durban attending Durban Prep School and then Durban High. He enjoyed horse riding and swimming and played the piano accordion.

He completed a B.Sc Honours degree at the University of Natal, doing his Masters in Chemistry and an MBA at the University of Cape Town. Ron married Heather Maxwell who had gone to school at Kingsmead in Johannesburg before completing a BA at the University of Natal.

Ron worked in Pretoria, before moving to the UK and then to Sarnia in Ontario. They moved back to South Africa before finally settling in Oakville Ontario, where he specialized in plastics. Ron has retired in Oakville where he enjoys gardening, tennis and golf.

Ron and Heather had five children:

4.1.2.1 Laura Catherine Body 1956 – married Paul Gibbon – two children

4.1.2.2 Christopher Ronald Body 1958 – married Janet Campbell

4.1.2.3 Stella Mary Body 1958 – married Henry Feineman – two children

4.1.2.4 Michael Douglas Body 1968 –

4.1.2.5 Helen Christine Body 1970 – married Michael Schelfhauf – two children

4.1.3 Pamela Valetia Body 1935 – 1981 married Terrence Brian Edwards 1938 –

Pamela matriculated from Girls High School in Pietermaritzburg as Head Girl and went on the University of Cape Town where she read a BA degree. She worked for the Old Mutual in Cape Town and then returned to Pietermaritzburg where she took up a teaching post at the Girls Collegiate School.

In 1961 she married Terrance who had attended Merchiston Prep School and Maritzburg College in Pietermaritzburg. He worked as a journalist for the Natal Witness, SABC, Cape Times and then returned once again to the Natal Witness where he rose to the position of Assistant Editor. From 1973 to 1974 Terrance worked for the Christian Science Monitor in Boston in the USA. He worked finally for the Daily News before retiring in 1982 to freelance, write, and to edit papers and magazines. He published a book: "Seasons of Change" in 1991 which is a history of the Natal Agricultural Union.

Pamela died in Durban in 1981. The couple had three children:

4.1.3.1 Paul Edwards 1961 – married Helga Nel

4.1.3.2 Rhys Edwards 1963 – married (1) Allison Hogg – two children. He married (2) Maryke Theunissen 1975 – one child

4.1.3.3 Anthea Bridget Edwards 1980 – married Justin Abrahams – one child

4.2 Doris Distin Flemmer 1902 – 1977 married James Mowtell died about 1945.



Doris Distin Flemmer



James Mowtell

Doris was the second child of Jack and Maud Flemmer and was born at Cradock on the 16th February 1902, during the closing months of the Anglo Boer War. She was baptized at St. Peter's in Cradock on the 16th March 1902. Very little is known about her early life. As a little girl of about three she went through the upheaval of the family move to Bechuanaland. She would only have been the baby of the family for a short time before the arrival of her twin brothers Jack and 'Lolly', followed shortly after by Nick.

By the time she was about eight the family had moved to Boksburg and then to the homestead farm adjoining *Schoongezicht* near Vereeniging. This seemed to have been the happiest time for the family. The farm with its lovely fruit trees was a wonderful place to grow up after the harshness of the Vryburg district. We know nothing about her schooling, although the family story recounts that her Mom's Aunt Janie paid for private education for the children.

When Doris was 17 the family was living in Boksburg again when her father died suddenly at the age of 44. As far as we know Doris completed her training as a teacher and moved to a school at Sabie in the Lowveld. It was here that she met and married James Mowtell on the 7th February 1927 when she was a few days short of her 24th birthday. We know little about James. He was born in England and was about 10 years older than Doris. It is thought he was miner and he had two children Kitty 16 and Herbert 15 from a previous marriage.

The couple had one son and at some point they moved to Johannesburg where James died in about 1945. We know that Doris's mother Maud helped her buy a house in Johannesburg in about 1938. Doris would have inherited a quarter share of Aunt Janie's house when her mother Maud died in 1949. After James' death Doris moved with her son to a flat in Johannesburg's Joubert Park and Joan Geyser (Flemmer), her sister Maurine and their brother Ludvig stayed with her during this period.

Doris and her son then moved to Durban where they lived in a flat on the Berea. From what I have been told Doris was a very nice and warm person and we are fortunate to have the following from two of her nieces:

Doris was my favourite Aunt. She was as round as she was tall and spent most of her time doing handcraft. Doris was born left handed but at school they forced her to write with her right hand – it affected her whole life (my Mother used to say).

And

Doris was an avid knitter, and she taught me the finer points, especially how to knit quickly. I don't think I ever saw her without her knitting, along with the cigarette which she also was never without. I really enjoyed Doris, she had a great sense of humour; though she didn't create humour, she did enjoy it and always had a ready smile and a kind heart. (Sounds like a eulogy, but that's how I thought of her...) She worked in the Museum in Durban for donkeys' years - until she retired, as a "counter", which was ideal because she sat there all day knitting, pressing the counting button.

Doris died in Durban in 1977. She and James had one child:

4.2.2 Leslie Mowtell 1928 –

Leslie was born at Sabie in the Lowveld on the 10th December 1928. He grew up in Johannesburg where he would have been close to the Flemmer family, with his aunts and uncles staying with his mother for some time. When his mother moved to Durban Leslie worked as a bus driver for the Municipality for many years. The only other information I have found about him is that he served as a Gunner in Prince Alfred's Own Cape Field Artillery and took part in a field camp at Oudtshoorn in 1950.

He was apparently devastated by his mother's death, and aged nearly 50 he moved to Johannesburg. He made what many in the family considered to be an unsuitable marriage. It took place at the Johannesburg Magistrates Court in 1978. There were severe financial and other problems and the couple moved to Port Elizabeth. The family never heard from him again, much to their regret as they were very fond of him.

4.3 Ludvig 'Lolly' Christian Flemmer 1905 – 1984 married Mildred Kate Smith 1902 – 1986



Ludvig Christian 'Lolly' Flemmer

Mildred Kate Smith



Lolly and his twin brother Jack were the first recorded twins born into the South African Flemmer family. They were born on the 15th January 1905 at Morokweng in what was then Bechuanaland. Their mother and father had moved to a farm in this dry and dusty part of South Africa after all the upheavals of the Anglo Boer War. All twins have a special bond and the infants would have been oblivious to the difficulties of living in this part of the world and of the financial hardships the family was going through.

Shortly after Lolly was born the family moved to Vryburg where another boy, Neville 'Nick' Flemmer was born 18 months later. In 1909 when Lolly was four the family had moved to Marquin in Bechuanaland and it was here that his twin brother went down with polio. Given how close most twins are it must be

something of a miracle that one boy escaped unaffected. With the lack of medical care in this farming community the family moved back to Boksburg near Johannesburg, where Lolly's father got a job on the mines again. By this time young Lolly was part of a large family – there were his older sisters Madge, 10, Doris 8, his twin Jack 5, Neville 4, Gwynneth 2 and new born Barbara. They were a close and loving family and life was not easy. There was very little money, a big family to support and at this time Jack snr. was sequestered.

Things took a turn for the better when Lolly's mother Maud inherited some money and bought the farm *Schoongezicht* near Vereeniging in about 1913. It was a lovely place with huge onion fields, beautiful fruit trees, sheep and cows. His Dad was farming again, something he loved. He was an excellent horseman and taught all of his children to ride well. I would think the years at *Schoongezicht* were among the happiest the family had but farming was a difficult business. The decision was made to subdivide the farm into lots to be sold off and the family moved back to Boksburg in late 1919. Lolly's great Aunt Janie had agreed to pay for the boys' education and they were packed off to St. Andrew's in Grahamstown for the start of the 1920 school year. It couldn't have been easy for the twins to leave this close knit and loving family for the rigours of boarding school. The boys had just turned 15 and I am sure that Lolly went out of his way to protect and help Jack who of course had a weak leg following the attack of polio. It must have come as a terrible shock to the boys when the news was telegraphed to them that their father had died so unexpectedly in November of that first year at school. One wonders if they were able to get up on the train for the funeral.

Despite any difficulties Lolly may have had, he thrived in the St. Andrew's environment. The twin's brother Nick started there the following year, 1922, by which time Lolly was well established. He was a very good sportsman, a member of the 2nd Cricket XI and played in the 1st Rugby XV. In 1922 his twin Jack left school and it was probably the first time the twins had been separated since they were born. Lolly meanwhile involved himself in many school activities, swimming, athletics and acting. He was a good student too, and by the time he completed his schooling in 1924 he was Senior Prefect and a Lieutenant in the Cadet Corps.

Moving back home to Johannesburg Lolly found a job with Hunt Leuchars and Hepburn and settled into the life of a young bachelor about town. He joined Diggers Rugby Club and was very good player, being called for a



*Lolly is sitting to the left
of the man with the ball*

Springbok trial, the pinnacle of rugby achievement in South Africa. He didn't make the team, mainly because he was simply too small – I am told that he stood 5ft 6ins (1.67m) and weighed 8 stone (51kgs). It perhaps puts things in perspective when looking at the 2005 Springboks where the lightest player weighs 81kgs!

The financial situation in South Africa was becoming more and more difficult – in fact the world was about to enter the era of the Great Depression. The boys' uncles, Salvator and Marius had been farming in Kenya for some years and Nick had moved to Kenya in 1927 to join them. In June 1928 Uncle Marius died at Nakuru and this may have prompted Lolly to join Nick and to help his Uncle Salvator with the farm 'Mereroni'. Their older sister Madge also moved to Nakuru at about this time. For a short time Lolly worked for William Prentice – who unable to pronounce Ludvig [pronounced the Danish way *Loyvee*] called him George, a name he was known by everyone in Kenya except his family for the rest of his life.

For the next few years Lolly farmed at Nakuru but with the Depression causing great hardship he moved to the newly discovered gold fields at Kakamega, near the north eastern tip of Lake Victoria in 1932. A gold seam had been discovered in about 1930 and it was touted as the next Johannesburg. At one time there were as many as 1000 prospectors hoping to make their fortunes before the seam petered out. I am told this is a wonderful place to live, sitting as it does at an altitude of about 1600m. Lolly's prospecting efforts were unsuccessful although he did find enough gold to have wedding and engagement rings made for his future bride – a nice romantic touch.

She was Mildred Kate Smith, born at Harrowgate, Yorkshire on the 2nd of October 1902. She came from a family of dairy farmers who had lost their farm following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. She had trained as a nurse and midwife at the Hope Hospital in Manchester where she became sister in charge of surgery. She emigrated to Kenya in 1929 – a brave decision for a young girl - and was posted to the Nakuru Cottage Hospital where I am sure her skills were sorely needed. I have no proof of this but think the couple may have met when Lolly's brother Nick was mauled by a lioness in 1929. The brothers played for Nakuru and were driving down to Nairobi for a match when they stopped to shoot some birds. When quite far off the road a lioness suddenly attacked Nick and mauled his leg before being scared off by Lolly. A lucky escape, and Nick was taken to Nakuru Hospital – perhaps this is where Lolly and Mildred met – a good story anyway! To complete the rugby story, Lolly then drove down to Nairobi and played his game as scheduled – sport was important to the Flemmers!

Lolly and Mildred were married at Nakuru on the 6th August 1933 and moved to Kakamega where they were to live for most of the rest of their lives. At first he worked as a labour recruiter for the Brooke Bond Tea Company, a job that entailed a lot of travelling. He then bought a garage and trading store and

also had a concession to supply firewood to the East African Railways and mine props to various gold mines in the area.

Housing was a problem in this remote part of the world. Their first two children were born in the couple's mud and wattle house with thatch roof and verandah. There were about a dozen hotels in Kakamega, abandoned after the gold rush. Ever resourceful, Lolly bought one which he had moved to a new site. He modified it into the family home, one they were to live in until it was sold in 1980. I am told it was a lovely old home even though the family had to rely on rainwater and paraffin lamps as water and electricity services didn't exist. I am sure it was a happy and peaceful community, so far from the world and its troubles – everyone knew everyone and life centred around the Golf Club. It had tennis courts and a swimming pool and there were wonderful parties over the years. Lolly as I have said was a good sportsman, so it is no surprise to find that he scored holes in one in both 1937 and 1939.

This quiet idyllic life was all to change with war looming in Europe. Lolly was to play his full part having joined the Kenya Defence Force - subsequently restructured into the more organized Kenya Regiment - in 1935. In 1939 he was commissioned into the East African Services Corps, being posted to the Abyssinia Campaign in the Transport Division. He served in Abyssinia and Somalia for three years and was mentioned in Despatches in 1942

After a brief two weeks home leave he was sent to India. Travelling in convoy he saw a hospital ship packed with equipment and with 150 nurses from Kenya, Rhodesia, South Africa and the UK sunk by a Japanese submarine. He served over two years in the Burma Campaign, remaining in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) after the war to help oversee the repatriation of men and machinery from that theatre of the war. He was on the committee set up to deal with men who had been POWs of the Japanese and he had to cope with the horrifying sight of these emaciated Allied prisoners. Lolly was a brave man, one of many Flemmings who saw service in WWII. He was finally discharged at Kakamega on 30th October 1945 with the rank of Major, his pay and a 'Civilian Clothing Grant' of £15.

It is hard to imagine what it must have been like for the families of the men who went off to do duty for King and Country. When Lolly left Mildred would have had to cope with him being away and with children - Beryl 3, Eric 2 and new born Avril. I have a copy of his discharge papers which show that he served a total of 5 years and 124 days – a lifetime for children so young. The fact that there were many others in the same boat didn't make life much easier. While he was in service the garage had been left in the care of a woman friend who did not really make an effort to run it and that, combined with the war meant hard financial times all round.

Picking up the threads of civilian life must have been so difficult for these men who had seen and done so much. Their children had grown up while they were away and by the time Lolly came back, his were all at boarding school, so that he only saw them in the school holidays. Everyone was affected by the war and so it was no use complaining, life simply had to go on and he threw

himself into his business interests again. In 1947 his twin brother Jack arrived with his wife Muriel and two of their children. Life had been tough in South Africa and Jack had been offered a job by his brother Nick, which didn't in the end materialize. The twins hadn't seen each other for 18 years and there must have been a lot of catching up to do. Jack worked at the garage and as an overseer in the plantations, but they missed their other children too much and went back to South Africa after a year.

Lolly and Mildred stayed in Kakamega for many years, the children growing up and moving off to jobs in Nairobi. In 1980 the couple sold their home and business and moved to Limuru near Nairobi where Eric was living. They finally left Kenya amid mounting Black nationalism, moving to New Zealand where their daughter Beryl was living with her husband Dale. Lolly died at Hunua, Papakura on the 20th May 1984 aged 79 and Mildred died two years later on the 8th April 1986

Lolly and Mildred had three children:

4.3.1 Beryl Mildred Flemmer 1935 - married Sterndale 'Dale' Todd Matthew Pickford 1933 –

Beryl went to boarding school at the age of six, a quite normal practice growing up in remote Kakamega. When she finished school she moved to Nairobi to earn a living and in 1958 married Dale Pickford. He was related to founders of the famous Pickfords transport company. In 1963 the couple moved to New Zealand where Dale tried his hand at everything from factory work to farming. They live on a 10 acre block of land up in the hills near Papakura. They had three children:

4.3.1.1 Sarah Yvonne Pickford 1960 – married Geoffrey Ross Taylor 1963 – four children

4.3.1.2 William Andrew Sterndale Pickford 1962 – married Megan Davies 1960 – one child

4.3.1.3 Murray Christian Pickford 1965 – married Jennifer Houston 1966 – two children

4.3.2 Eric Ludvig Flemmer 1936 – 2003 married Enid Morgan 1934 –

From an early age Eric was a budding handyman as his sister Beryl explains:

Eric was about 2 then and Dad had to employ a young Black to follow him around because he kept picking up tools and after imitating the builders for a while he would discard them where he was and they got lost. The minder's job was to return them to the rightful owner. Perhaps his love of woodwork and mechanics stemmed from that time, for he certainly was very good at both.

As a boy of six he started his school life at boarding school - the Convent in Eldoret and after about a year he was moved to Kitale Primary School. Passing his Kenya Preliminary Exams in Standard 2 he went on to the Prince

of Wales High School in Nairobi. After passing Matric he was called up for Military Service but was not accepted because of the effect of a childhood illness. He was conscripted into the Kenya Police Reserve where he served for a year during the Mau Mau Emergency. Like his father, Eric was a good all round sportsman enjoying golf best and playing off a four handicap. He married Enid Morgan in 1964 at St Francis Church, Karen, on the outskirts of Nairobi.

Eric's working life was very diverse and he could put his hand to anything that came his way. The thing he enjoyed most was working in the motor trade and he spent a number of years with both British Leyland and Mercedes Benz. Although in a managerial capacity with these companies his grounding in all things mechanical, taught to him by his Father, served him well.

The couple spent a short time in New Zealand and Australia and settled in England in 1990. They lived in the Cotswolds and Eric became General Sales Agent for a long time friend, organizing holidays and safaris to East Africa. He died in England on the 24th July 2003. I am sorry I never met the man his wife of nearly 40 years described as:

"A truly great man of enormous integrity, very loving, caring and thoughtful in every way."

4.3.3 Avril Jennifer Flemmer 1939 – married (1) Henry Neville 1937 – She married (2) Nigel Clarke –

Avril, the baby of the family was an infant when her father went off to war at the end of 1939. Lolly served for over 5 years as we have seen and like so many 'war babies' of that era it was difficult for Avril to get used to having a Dad around when he finally came back.

Her mother taught her at home for a few years before she was sent off to Kitale Primary school, like her brother before her. From there she went to the Kenya Girl's High School in Nairobi. When she finished school Avril worked as a florist for a couple of years before going on an extended holiday to South Africa. She stayed with her Flemmer aunts, first with Madge and then with Aunt Doris who was living in Durban. Avril married Henry Neville an artist and restorer at the Durban Museum where Doris worked in 1963. They had one child:

4.3.3.1 Stephen Michael Neville 1964 – married Noelene – three children

Avril divorced Henry Neville and married Nigel Clarke. They had three children:

4.3.3.2 Julian Clarke 1965 – married once with one child. Married a second time – two children

4.3.3.3 Anthony Clarke 1967 –

4.3.3.4 Quinton Clarke 1971 –

4.4 John 'Jack' Sweet Distin Flemmer 1905 – 1980 married Muriel Bentall 1902 – 1994



John Sweet Distin Flemmer

Muriel Bentall



Jack and his twin brother Lolly were the first of the many recorded twins born into the South African Flemmer family. They were born on the 15th January 1905 at Morokweng in what was then Bechuanaland. After all the upheavals of the Anglo Boer War his mother and father had moved to a farm in this dry and dusty part of South Africa. All twins have a special bond and the infants would have been oblivious to the difficulties of living in this part of the world and of the financial hardships the family was going through.

Shortly after the twins were born the family moved to Vryburg where another boy, Neville 'Nick' Flemmer was born 18 months later. In 1909 when Jack was four the family had moved to Marquin in Bechuanaland and it was here that the young boy had the great misfortune to contract polio. Given how close most twins are one can only say that it was the workings of fate that decreed that Jack should be so affected for the rest of his life. There were few medical services in this remote area so the family moved back to Boksburg near Johannesburg, where Jack snr. got a job on the mines again. By this time young Jack was part of a large family – there were his older sisters Madge, 10, Doris 8, his twin Lolly 5, Neville 4, Gwynneth 2 and new born Barbara. They were a close and loving family and life was not easy. There was very little money, a big family to support and at this time Jack snr. was sequestered.

Things took a turn for the better when the family leased a farm near Vereeniging. Jack's Dad was farming again, something he loved. He was an excellent horseman and taught all of his children to ride well. It was not long after this that Jack's mother Maud inherited some money and bought the adjoining farm *Schoongezicht* near Vereeniging in about 1913. It was a lovely place with huge onion fields, beautiful fruit trees, sheep and cows. I would think the years at *Schoongezicht* were among the happiest the family had, but farming was a difficult business. The decision was made to subdivide the farm into lots to be sold off and the family moved back to Boksburg in late 1919.

The boys' great Aunt Janie had agreed to pay for their education and they were packed off to St. Andrew's in Grahamstown for the start of the 1920 school year. It couldn't have been easy for the twins at 15, to leave this close knit and loving family for the rigours of boarding school. Jack of course had a weak leg after his polio bout and boys being boys I have no doubt he was picked on at school. Judging from stories I have of his later life he was the

sort of person who never let his disability get in the way of living a full and active life. It must have come as a terrible shock to the boys when the news was telegraphed to them that their father had died so unexpectedly in November of that first year at school. One wonders if they were able to get up on the train for the funeral.

Jack didn't complete his schooling, leaving when he was 17 after less than two years, in August 1922. During this time among other things he had studied the violin, and was in the Cadet Corps where he was a Quarter Master.

Returning to *Schoongezicht* he tried his hand at poultry farming before getting a job as a clerk at the Village Deep Gold Mine. Jack was always a farmer at heart and I'm sure he hated the job, but times were very tough in South Africa. Again the fates took a hand because it was while working here that he met the woman who was to become his wife. She was Muriel Bentall who had been born in Quthing, Basutoland (Lesotho) in 1902. Even today this is a tiny little town in the mountains of Lesotho and we can imagine how remote it was in 1902. Her father, Oliver had come to South Africa from Essex and had fought with the Cape Mounted Rifles before marrying Molly Clough and settling in Quthing. He had become a road builder and Muriel was the first of eight children. She went to the small multiracial Church school in Quthing and was fluent in Sesotho, Xhosa and Zulu. In 1920 Muriel, aged 18, had moved to Bloemfontein as a governess and then to Johannesburg to join her sister Mary.

She probably met Jack in 1925, when she was 23 and he 20. They married the following year, on the 30th January 1926 at the St. Augustine's Church, Johannesburg. The couple spent the first two years of their married life in Johannesburg. In 1927 Jack's great aunt Janie Rhodes died and he and his mother Maud inherited from the estate. Maud gave Jack Plot 9 *Schoongezicht*, perhaps as a late wedding present.

He was delighted to be out in the country again and immediately set to work building a shop, butchery and house for his family. By now they had two daughters, Maurine born in 1926 and Joan born in 1928. In hindsight of course, this was the very worst time to be starting a business and by 1929 South Africa and the world had been hit by the Great Depression. To make things worse, the couple were expecting their third child and so decided to lease the store and house to an Indian trader and move to Bloemfontein. They lived with Muriel's sister Mary who was running a boarding house. Muriel helped in the kitchen and Jack tried to make some money buying and selling scrap metal. Their third child Ludvig was born during the year they were in Bloemfontein.

Going back to *Schoongezicht*, the couple found things had gone from bad to worse. The Indian trader had left the house and store and had also burnt all the stock. Things must have been very tough indeed with three children to provide for and the Depression meaning hundreds of thousands of people eking out an existence.

Borrowing £100 from his mother Jack restocked the store and tried to survive. They had the farm of course which would have provided the basics of living, but no one had much money in the district – there were few ways to earn any. Basically you bartered with the fresh produce you produced, but this would not have helped Jack trying to make a living from his trading store. Despite heroic efforts to keep afloat we see that in 1932 the ‘Schoongezicht Cash Trading Store’ was insolvent, and Jack surrendered his estate to the courts as an insolvent. The cause is given as *“falling off and loss of trade through bad times and over competition.”* Debts were £312.12.8d and total assets £65 including a Ford Mk 4 lorry valued at £50. Gloomy times indeed. The family stayed on the farm for the next few years and another son, John was born there in 1934.

In 1935 Jack sold the trading store and plot and the family moved to 69, 9th Avenue, La Rochelle where they had a large plot and Jack, ever the farmer started growing mushrooms in the stables. In 1936 he worked for his brother-in-law Bill Mast, husband of Jack’s sister Barbara, at the fledgling Mast Industries. In December of that year, when earning a salary of £12 10s a month he applied for his estate to be rehabilitated – most of the debt had been settled – and the court granted the order.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Jack decided that the family could be in danger if Johannesburg was attacked – they would be a lot safer in the country. This coincided with his mother Maud giving him the use of plots 21 and 22 back at *Schoongezicht*. Jack, a born farmer, had a great love of the land and I’m sure he and the family were delighted to be back on a farm.

Whatever his reason for the move, he set out with a will and spent months alone on the farm supervising the building of a house, cowsheds and farm buildings. He went into dairy farming during the war years, getting up at 2 a.m. to supervise the milking and then going in to the depot in Johannesburg. These were good times for the family – they loved the farm life. There were donkeys to ride and animals to feed – there was always something going on. They were a very close family and it was a happy, simple life. Like several of the Flemmers of this era Jack was very musical and would recite Shakespeare and play the piano and banjo at family sing songs. He never let his disability get him down and taught the children to ride and swim, and would take them for walks up a nearby hill on Sunday mornings.

In 1944 another girl, Grace was born but tragically died at birth. In 1946 when Muriel was 44, their last child, Joyce was born. Joyce was the only child born in hospital and it is interesting to see son John’s explanation for this:

Dad had a 'thing' about doctors, having been disabled at the age of 4 by polio. Whooping cough was cured by being near a goat and home remedies. Ludvig's six months in hospital with double pneumonia was a total deviation. Joyce was the only child born in hospital ... and that was because mother insisted, having lost the baby Grace, born two years before Joyce.

The following year his brother Nick wrote from Kenya, suggesting that Jack come up and help him with his farm and business. The house was let and Jack and Muriel set off with two of the children, John 13 and baby Joyce. The other three children were by then making their own way in the world. Things did not go as planned in Kenya and Jack and Muriel were missing their other children badly. He sold a portion of his land and paid for the return tickets to *Schoongezicht*. They lived there for a while, but could not make a living, so Jack went into a partnership in a greengrocer and they moved to a rented house in Rosettenville.

In 1950 Jack finally gave up the farming life and got a good job with the Public Works Department. It may not have been what he wanted to do but it must have been a relief to Muriel to finally have a steady income. Theirs was a big and close family and over the following years there were many happy get-togethers with the children and grandchildren. Jack died aged 75 on the 13th July 1980 and Muriel died 14 years later on the 15th March 1994 aged 92. Jack had faced many obstacles during his life and had never let them get him down. A warm, caring man, I wish I had met him. Perhaps he is summed up best by this tribute from daughter Joan:

"I have such happy memories of our Dad. He had a nice smiling nature, always putting on a good smart front. Dad spent hours with his children helping them with homework or reading them stories. We weren't ever reminded of his disability. If the roof needed painting, Dad would scramble up the ladder and paint for hours. One year Dad rode on his bicycle to Durban to visit Gran Maud (600 miles). He was a hard worker and we loved him dearly."

Jack and Muriel had six children:

4.4.1 Maurine Violet Flemmer 1926 – 1994 married France 'Frank' Robert Barretti 1916 – 1980

Maurine's early memories were of living at La Rochelle near Johannesburg, and of nearby Wemmer Pan and Pioneer Park. She was about 13 when the Second World War broke out and the family moved back to *Schoongezicht*. Like her brothers and sister she rode the 10 kms to the station to catch the train to school every day, come rain or shine. During the war years her parents entertained airman at the farm and also had two Italian POW's working for them.

By the time Maurine was 20 she was living with her sister Joan and Aunt Doris in Johannesburg. It was here that she met her future husband. In 1946 she married Frank Barretti in Durban when he was discharged from the Air Force. Maurine worked as a secretary for Five Roses Tea and Frank was a professional photographer. The family moved to Johannesburg in about 1957 where they lived in the same block of flats as Maurine's parents, Muriel and Jack. Family ties were very close and there were many happy get togethers over the years.

Frank died in 1980 and Maurine in 1994, three months after her mother.

They had one child:

4.4.1.1 Jeanette Joan Barretti 1953 – married Martin Graves Todd 1951 – they have twin sons

4.4.2 Joan Olive Flemmer 1928 – married John Geyser 1919 –

Joan is one of the first Flemmers outside my own family that I came into contact with when I started this project in 1992. Over the years she has been invaluable as a source of encouragement and of information about the family. Her greatest contribution has been the painstaking transcription of Anna Louie Rous (Flemmer's) manuscript *The Little Dane*.

Joan was born in the Depression years and grew up in hard times. At age about 10 she became ill and it was some months before it was diagnosed as diphtheria, at that time a potentially fatal illness. When the family moved back to the farm in 1939 the three older children were boarded with an Afrikaans woman at Meyerton. They didn't like this arrangement so it was agreed that they would ride the 10kms to the station and catch the train every day. Joan well remembers riding in bitterly cold Transvaal winter mornings and pouring summer downpours. The children grew up fit, strong and independent. She started work in Johannesburg, living with her sister Maurine and brother Lu at her Aunt Doris' flat.

It has been a great pleasure to me to meet Joan on several occasions. Her sense of family is so important to all of us and she has contributed so much. In 1949 Joan married John Geyser. He had returned from the War having been captured in North Africa, escaping in Italy before being recaptured and imprisoned near Munich. John worked at Nampak retiring as Chief Storekeeper in 1983.

Joan and John had two children:

4.4.2.1 Bruce Geyser 1955 –

4.4.2.2 Lindi Geyser 1963 – married Francois Christiaan Etsebeth 1961 – two children

4.4.3 Ludvig Austin Dean Flemmer 1930 – married Margo Estellemay De Stoppelar 1934 –

Lu was celebrated as 'The Flemmer' at the 150 year Flemmer Reunion in Cradock in 2003. This is because he is unique in being the eldest son of the eldest son going back to Christian August Flemmer – ancestor of the South African Flemmers. It is a title that Lu bears with great calm and dignity!

Like his older sisters, Lu grew up in the Depression years. When he was 8 he very nearly died, spending seven months in hospital with double pneumonia. Life on the farm, and riding to the station every morning made him fit and strong again.

Lu moved to Johannesburg and started work with the S.A. Railways as an apprentice Telephone and Telegraph electrician. He stayed in this industry for the rest of his working life, moving into senior positions with several of the major companies in this field before setting up his own company – Telephone Installation Management.

As a young man Lu met his wife Estelle when he organized a dance for the Anglican Church in Bez Valley.

Lu and Estelle have two children:

4.4.3.1 Peter Dean Flemmer 1956 – married Laurette Rode – two children

4.4.3.2 Dennis Patrick Flemmer 1960 – married Yvonne Sylvia Jeanes 1960 – two children

4.4.4 John Oliver Flemmer 1934 – married (1) Ruth Rathbone 1934 – He married (2) Joan Jenkins 1941 –

As John has said he was '*born in a trading store house at Schoongezicht. It stood at the base of a kopje which was to be the backdrop of many youthful adventures*'. When he was old enough to go to school he joined the daily cycle with his older sisters and brother, being helped along the way when the sand was too thick or the wind too strong.

His high school education was at the Vereeniging Technical College. At 13 he went with his parents and younger sister Joyce to Kenya for a year. Back home again he completed his education before becoming an apprentice electrician. He ended his working career as Managing Foreman Electrician at Howden Safanco in Johannesburg.

He married (1) Ruth Rathbone and they had two children

4.4.4.1 Allen Ludvig Flemmer 1956 – married June Stokes – two children

4.4.4.2 Gregg Flemmer 1957 –

He married (2) Joan Jenkins and they had two children

4.4.4.3 Jehane Flemmer 1967 – 1996

4.4.4.4 Warren Flemmer 1970 –

4.4.5 Grace Flemmer 1944 – 1944

Grace was born at *Schoongezicht*. It was a difficult birth attended only by a midwife. By the time the doctor got there it was too late and the beautiful baby girl had died – a great tragedy for the family

4.4.6 Joyce Annette Flemmer 1946 – married Glenn Campbell Ransome 1946 –

Joyce was the only child born in a hospital. Her safe arrival after the great sorrow at the loss of baby Grace was a source of joy for the whole family.

She went to Barnato Park High School for Girls for two years, then Commercial High School where she matriculated. She later enrolled at the Johannesburg College of Education and trained as a teacher. After two years of teaching, Joyce left for London where she worked as a shorthand typist for the Building Centre in Holborn. She resumed her teaching career, this time at Parkview Senior School before getting a permanent post at Forest Hill Primary School.

She met Glen Ransome at a church guild. They married in 1972 and live in Randpark Ridge. Joyce and Glen had three children:

4.4.6.1 Suzette Ransome 1977 – one child

4.4.6.2 Andrew Ransome 1979 –

4.4.6.3 Michelle Christine Ransome 1986 –

4.5 Neville 'Nick' Distin Flemmer 1906 – 1982 married Daisy Marguerite Allison about 1894 – 1977 The couple did not have children.

Neville Nick Flemmer

Neville 'Nick' Flemmer was born at Vryburg on the 6th October 1906, the fifth child of Jack and Maud Flemmer. He is the only one of the children I found a baptism record for. The family came down to the Middelburg area on a visit and Nick was baptized at St. Barnabas Church in Middelburg on the 9th December 1906.

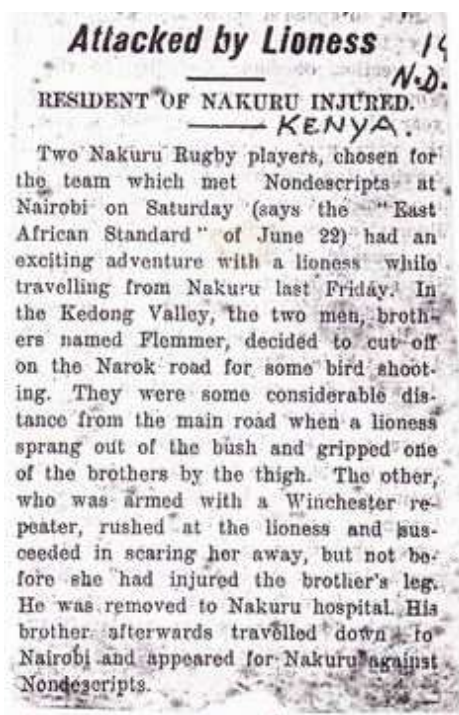


In 1909 when he was three the family was living at Morokweng in Bechuanaland. It was here that his brother Jack, only 18 months older than Nick, contracted polio. The family moved back to Boksburg near Johannesburg, where his father got a job on the mines again. By this time young Nick was part of a large family – there were his older sisters Madge, 10, Doris 8, the twins Jack and Lolly 5, Gwynneth 2 and new born Barbara. They were a close and loving family and life was not easy. There was very little money, a big family to support and at this time Jack snr. was sequestered.

Things took a turn for the better when the family leased a farm near Vereeniging. Nick's Dad was farming again, something he loved. He was an excellent horseman and taught all of his children to ride well. It was not long after this that Nick's mother Maud inherited some money and bought the adjoining farm *Schoongezicht* near Vereeniging in about 1913. It was a lovely place with huge onion fields, beautiful fruit trees, sheep and cows. I would think the years at *Schoongezicht* were among the happiest the family had, but farming was a difficult business. The decision was made to subdivide the farm into lots to be sold off and the family moved back to Boksburg in late 1919.

Nick's father Jack died suddenly in 1920 when Nick was 14. After the family had got over the shock it was agreed that his Great Aunt, Janie would pay for him to go to boarding school. At the start of the 1922 school year, aged 15 Nick joined the twins at St. Andrew's. Perhaps he was a bit behind with his schooling which would not be surprising given the moving around the family had done because he was 19 when he finished school at the end of 1925. He had been a sergeant in the Cadet Corps and was not as good a sportsman as his older brother Lolly, only playing Third XV rugby.

Going back to Johannesburg Nick got a job with the National Bank. In about 1928 his Great Aunt Janie died and Nick was the only brother to inherit property. This was her house in Yeoville and shortly afterwards he sold it – times were tough with the country in the grip of the Great Depression. The boys' Uncles Marius and Salvator Flemmer had farmed at Nakuru in Kenya for some years and Nick's older sister Madge had gone to stay with the old uncles. Marius died in 1928 and this may have prompted Nick to move there with brother Lolly to help Uncle Salvator, then 78 with the farm. We know the boys were playing for the Nakuru Rugby Club in 1929. While on a trip to



Nairobi they stopped, as one did at the time, for a spot of hunting. When some distance from the road Nick was attacked by a lioness and his thigh badly mauled. Fortunately Lolly was able to scare the animal away and get his brother to hospital, where he was nursed back to health by his sister Madge.

An interesting trip to rugby!

I am told that Nick carried large scars on his leg for the rest of his life.

In 1933 Uncle Salvator died and this coincided with the Kakamega Gold Rush. Up to a 1000 prospectors from all over the world headed for what was touted to be the new Witwatersrand. Of course it was not as easy as that and

neither Nick nor brother Lolly had any success as a gold miner. There was however a wedding in Kakamega in 1934, when Nick married Daisy Marguerite Allison. She was from a well known Nakuru family, related by marriage to the Nolan-Neylans, Hopleys and Flemmers. At the time Nick was 28 and Daisy about 40. I am told that she had had many suitors over the years – to be expected in a country where there were so few eligible women. All had been rejected by the patriarch of the family – Daisy's grandfather.

When it became obvious that there was no real money to be made on the gold fields Nick went back to farming near Nakuru. He bought a farm at Linette and farmed mainly wheat, maize and pyrethrum. This last, a member of the chrysanthemum family was a crop reputed to be 'better than gold'. The powdered flowers were a powerful insecticide before the days of synthetics and the main producers were in Dalmatia and Japan.

When war broke out in 1939 he enlisted with the Kenya Regiment and fought in the Abyssinian campaign. It was felt that his contribution to the war effort as a farmer was essential and he was discharged quite early in the war. In 1946, hearing that his brother Jack was not doing too well in South Africa he wrote to him suggesting he move to Kenya to help with the farm and business. I am told that when Jack arrived in Kenya with his wife and two of the children he stopped en route to Nick's farm to see his twin brother Lolly, who he had not seen for 18 years. For some reason Nick took offense at this and telegraphed to say the offer of a job had been withdrawn!

In 1954 with Kenya in the grip of the Mau Mau insurgency Nick and Daisy left their farm in a hurry. I am told they were warned by their faithful servant about a planned attack by the Mau Mau. As they drove out, they saw their servant hanging from a tree for "betraying" them. Such incidents were not uncommon in Kenya during this period.

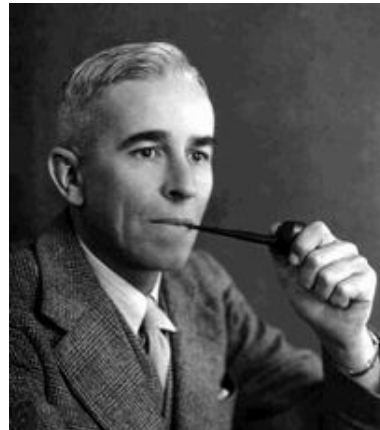
Nick and Daisy sold up and moved south. They tried Rhodesia but then moved on the Barberton in the Lowveld. They were living there when Daisy died in 1977, aged about 81. Nick's nieces, Maurine and Joan helped him move to Johannesburg for a short while and he also lived in Grahamstown and Durban. He was living with his sister Madge at her daughter and son-in-law's farm near Howick when he died in 1983 aged 77. A farmer to the end, one of the last things Nick did was to ask to drive one of the tractors to plough a field. It seems typical of this kind hearted man that his will divided his estate among the less fortunate. Although John Warren had a small bequest, he also made provision for two small fatherless girls he befriended in Grahamstown with the bulk of the estate going to the Durban Community Chest.

4.6 Gwynneth 'Gwynne' Grace Maud Flemmer 1908 – 1981 married Charles Ross 1894 – 1965



*Gwynneth Grace
Maud
Flemmer*

Charles Ross



Gwynne was born at Morokweng in then Bechuanaland and was a babe in arms when the family moved back to Boksburg. As a five year old she moved to *Schoongezicht* with the family, and like her brothers and sisters thrived on the carefree farming life.

She was only 12 when her father died so unexpectedly. Like older sister Madge, Gwynne was sent as a boarder to St. John's School at Frere in Natal. She completed her education, majoring in domestic science at Mary Higham College in Johannesburg. As was the case with some of her brothers and sisters I think her schooling was paid for by Aunt Janie Rhodes.

Gwynne was appointed as a domestic science teacher at a school in Bethlehem in the Orange Free State. It was here that she met her future husband, Charles Ross. She was a keen tennis player and I'm told that they partnered each other at a tournament – such are the workings of fate! The couple married in Johannesburg in 1929.

Charles Ross came from a wealthy Orange Free State farming family and had an outstanding WWI career. He had served first with Botha's Scouts in the German South West Africa campaign before going to England where he served in the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. I can do no better than include a quote from a supplement to the London Gazette of 2nd November 1919:

"The Distinguished Flying Cross - D.F.C. awarded to Group Capt. Charles Ross" Gazetted 1917Jul14. "Since October last this officer has carried out 240 hours service, flying mainly on long solo photographic reconnaissance at very low altitudes. In this arduous and trying service he has shown exceptional skill, perseverance, and courage; notably on one very important reconnaissance, when he was attacked by ten enemy aeroplanes. Engaging one at close range, this officer shot it down in flames, and in the face of the hostile attack he completed the reconnaissance. It is noteworthy that during W.W.1 only 10 D.F.C.'s were awarded, and Group Captain Charles ROSS was one of the heroes who received that honour".

The Ross family had huge farming and business interests in the Bethlehem area. Charles had been running the trading operations and after the birth of the couple's first child Daphne, the company head office was moved to Durban in about 1932. Charles was by all accounts a shrewd business man and A. Ross and Company flourished. He maintained his farming interests throughout his life and had various farms in Natal and the Transvaal. He comes across as an entrepreneur, always looking for new ideas. He established market gardening at Inchanga and experimented with new concrete housing construction methods. He also had a belief in a perpetual motion machine. He had lent money to Mast Industries, started by Gwynne's

brother-in-law Bill Mast, and this amusing account of the *quid pro quo* for this debt is worth repeating:

.....his knowledge of business was excellent but his knowledge of mechanics was abysmal. And he had an obsession to produce propellers that would be far more efficient than anything that had ever been done. He also had the idea that it would be possible to produce a machine which by gearing it in a certain way would keep it in perpetual motion. I remember very clearly spending hours and hours building such a machine for him knowing quite well that it was a mechanical impossibility. The idea of course was quite simple - it was that it was in the form of a little boat with propellers or paddles rather, that were geared - a large one connected to the smaller one on a ratio of two to one in the drive and the larger one being quite as big as the smaller one was. The idea being that when it was in the water, the water would activate the large propeller which in turn would convey its energy to the smaller one which would generate energy. And it would gradually go faster and faster and it would maintain itself. I remember very clearly the day when the little creation was completed Charles Ross came round to 204 Avondale Rd and insisted that we pack this very securely in a cardboard box and we went round in his car to the paddling pond at the beach. Before opening it up he looked around to see that nobody was nearby to steal his invention and surreptitiously this thing was taken out and put in the water and given a good shove. With inevitable results it stopped. Charles was very, very crestfallen with this but hope springs eternal in the human breast and I continued to make many, many more propellers of various descriptions none of which even remotely worked. So eventually he reconciled himself to the loss of the money - .perhaps one day it could be returned to him.

Gwynne and Charles' three other children, Nevil, and twins Jennifer and Jillian were born in Durban. The family lived in a magnificent 14 bedroom house that Charles had built at 515 Currie Road, occupied by Daphne to this day. As a matter of interest the light fittings for this house were made by Mast Industries.

The family interest in A. Ross & Co. was eventually sold off and Charles died at his home in Durban in 1965. Gwynne died in Pietermaritzburg in 1981.

Gwynne and Charles had four children:

4.6.1 Daphne Fleur Ross 1930 – married Denis Duncan Birrell Dold 1916 – 1998

Although born in Bethlehem Daphne grew up in Durban and like her siblings often visited her father's farms in Natal – where each of the children had their own horse. Daphne went to school at Marie Stella and then to Durban Girls' High School. She completed a BA Ed. Degree at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg and taught at schools all over Natal. She met her husband Denis Dold in Amamzimtoti when she was a teacher there. He was a sales rep. with Rembrandt, ending up as a manager. As a young man he had

farmed sisal with his father in Tanganyika. Daphne and Denis had four children

4.6.1.1 Christopher Harold Dold 1960 – married Claudette Wheeler 1962 – two children

4.6.1.2 Rosanne Susan Dold 1962 – married Barry Duke 1961 – two children

4.6.1.3 Judith Alexandra Dold 1963 – married George M Johnson 1958 – three children

4.6.1.4 Victor Edward Dold 1965 – 2001

4.6.2 George Nevil Ross 1932 – married (1) Shirley Anne Moore. He married (2) Valerie Agnus Meikle 1936 –

Nevil spent his early life in Durban. After Tree Tops Primary School he completed his schooling at Durban High. He went on to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg and Durban completing a BA Economics degree in 1956. Apart from rugby, tennis and cricket he took a keen interest in small bore rifle shooting and was a Natal champion ballroom dancer.

Nevil decided not to join the family firm, instead opening his own country trading store while still at university. He also managed farms in the Pietermaritzburg and Hammarsdale areas, and ran a metal water tank business. After undertaking a major safari through Africa he decided to join A. Ross & Co. in Durban. He did his compulsory military service as a radar specialist, something that was to prompt his interest in the technology and in the emerging field of computers.

In 1960 he decided to immigrate to Canada where he has lived ever since. Nevil credits his parents with developing his innate and ongoing curiosity. He has believed in a process of ongoing education his whole life. He studied at the London School of Economics under Sir Arnold Plant and completed two MBA's at the University of Western Ontario. He is still involved in distance education, mainly in computers. After working for 3M and in investment management he became the President of four computer companies in Ontario before retiring. Nevil was also active in local politics, serving on his municipal committee.

He has maintained his interest in ballroom dancing and his love affair with motor bikes – something that started when he was 17. He is involved in charity work related to his expertise with computers. Nevil's wife Valerie was born in Scotland where she qualified as an Occupational Therapist in Edinburgh. She emigrated to Canada in 1959 and was for many years a Mental Health Therapist at the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Orillia, Ontario before retiring.

4.6.3 Jennifer Patricia Ross 1936 – 1998 married Peter McCall Robinson 1924 –

Jennifer and her twin sister Jill were born in Durban where they grew up. With her sister she matriculated at Durban Girls' High School. She was head of class, a prefect and a good all rounder at sport. Jennifer and sister Jill were a formidable partnership on the tennis court. After school Jennifer went to Rhodes University, reading Latin and History, but did not complete her degree. She completed a secretarial course in Durban before marrying Peter, an Anglican Minister in 1954. He grew up and was educated in England serving in the army in WWII. After graduating at Oxford and training at Wells Theological College he came to S Africa in 1950 where he was ordained in Durban.

The couple left for England shortly after they married, returning to South Africa shortly before the birth of their son. They moved to various parishes both in South Africa before going back to England in 1971. Jennifer and Peter had two children

4.6.3.1 Andrew Robinson 1957 –

4.6.3.1 Catherine Ann Robinson 1959 – married Clive Fletcher 1957 – two children

4.6.4 Jillian Gwynneth Ross 1936 – married John Rupert Moffett 1936 –

Jill was born and grew up in Durban. Like her siblings she often visited her father's farms where she had her own horse. She went to Durban Girls' High School before going to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. She read a BSc. degree majoring in botany and geography and in her fourth year completed a University Diploma in senior school teaching. She played tennis for the university first team.

Jill's husband John had gone to school at St. Andrew's Bloemfontein where he was Head boy and had played SA School's cricket in 1953. He completed an Agriculture Diploma at Cedara and a BSc. Agric. at Natal University, Pietermaritzburg where the couple met. After their marriage in 1958 they moved to the farm Kirklington in the Ficksburg district. Jill has collected flora specimens for about 50 years and has her own private herbarium - working in close corroboration with the Botanical Research Institute in Pretoria. Apart from farming John was Director of the Ficksburg Co-op then the OVK Co-op. He is now semi-retired and has taken up bowls as a hobby. Jill is an avid bird watcher. Jill and John had four children:

4.6.4.1 Karen Elizabeth Moffett 1961 – married Arnold Du Plessis 1955 – one child

4.6.4.2 Clive Rupert Moffett 1962 – married Winsome Mortimer 1964 – one child

4.6.4.3 James Charles Moffett 1964 – married Vanessa Claire Norgarb 1966 – three children

4.6.4.4 Robert John Moffett 1968 – married Karen Mary Taylor 1969 – one child

4.7 Barbara Anna 'Bobby' Flemmer 1910 – 1984 married Theodore Maurice 'Bill' Mast 1900 – 1996

Bobby was born in Boksburg in 1910, the last child of Jack and Maude. I'm sure as the baby of the family she was much loved. Her arrival came at an inauspicious time from a financial point of view – as we have seen it was at about the same time that a sequestration order was granted against Jack. The family was used to hard times and simply made do, after all what else could they and thousands of other struggling families do?

When Bobby was three the family moved for a few very happy years to the farm *Schoongezicht* near Vereeniging, to what was by all accounts a pretty idyllic life from a kids' perspective. It was shortly after Bobby turned 10, with the family by then living in Boksburg, that the sudden death of her father Jack shook them all.

She went with her mother to live in Durban for a short while before coming back to live in Johannesburg. As we have seen Aunt Janie Rhodes paid Bobby's brothers boarding school fees and I think it quite likely that she also paid for the girls' education as well. As a young girl she went to Durban's Addington Hospital to complete her nurses' training. It was while in Durban she met her future husband Bill Mast who one of their daughters describes as '*a persistent, if not entirely romantic suitor*! Everything I've read about Bill seems to indicate a very unusual person, and hopefully one of his family will get around to recording his eventful life. Bobby would not be diverted from her goal to become fully qualified and it was only after she had completed her training that the couple married in 1934.

By 1935 they were living at The Hill, south of Johannesburg and the fledgling Mast Industries had its remarkable start in the big time. Space doesn't permit me do the story of this company justice, suffice to say that it became central to the lives of several branches of the Flemmer family as we will see.

Phyllis' daughter, Fay has a wonderful recording done by Hal Mast-Ingle of the story of Mast Industries. It is an invaluable piece of family history and I can only give an outline here. First I will record the family 'cast' that were involved at various times in the company history.

- Barbara 'Bobby' Flemmer [cousin of Phyllis] married Bill Mast – founder in 1924
- Gwynneth Flemmer [Bobby's sister] married Charles Ross who provided some of the early funding
- Jack Flemmer [Bobby's brother] worked at Mast Industries in 1936
- Phyllis Flemmer [cousin of Bobby] married Harold Mast-Ingle [nephew of Bill Mast] who worked at the company for many years.
- Kenneth Flemmer [brother of Phyllis] married Marge Young. He also worked at Mast Industries. One of their daughters
- Lynnette Flemmer married Lin Meyers, son of a long standing foreman of Mast Industries

Far more than just a business, the company was central to the lives of the family for many many years. From what I can see Bill Mast was an energetic, hard working, inventive man, who from an early age was interested in 'making things'. With virtually no money, he bought and modified machines that he could use to turn out a variety of metal products. This theme of '*maak 'n plan*' comes through strongly in the history of Mast Industries. The willingness to take calculated risks and to 'go for it' saw the company taking on huge orders and working out afterwards how to get the machines and materials to fill the order. There was hard work and it seems, a lot of humour over the years.

After moving the company to Johannesburg in about 1930, Bill and Hal set about finding whatever work they could. Bearing in mind that the Depression had started, it is a testament to their hard work and ingenuity that the company prospered. Over the years they were major makers of light fittings; during the war years they took on huge orders from the army for tin mugs, heel tips, plates and mess tins.

They tried their hand at leather place mats, but it was in glass jewellery that their big breakthrough came. Like a lot of good ideas the glass jewellery seems to have been discovered more or less by accident by Hal. Within a very short time the shops were buying as many of the earrings, bangles and necklaces as they could produce and a separate, profitable company was set up for production. Bill moved to Durban in 1949 and Mast Industries went through several financial changes over the years before finally being sold in the 1970's when Hal retired.

But here I am jumping ahead of the story. Bill and Bobby lived first at The Hill. They then bought a house at 46, 5th Avenue in Highlands North and then at 12th Avenue Rivonia.

He left Mast Industries in about 1948, trying his hand at house building and wattle farming in Natal on a farm owned by Charles Ross. There was a further move to Field's Hill in 1952. Needing to be in Durban because of the children's schooling, the family bought a house at 60 Cherry Avenue Overport in 1960. Here Bill worked for Dorman Long until his retirement and the move down to a retirement cottage they built and shared with Harold Mast - Ingle and Phyllis.

Bobby in all this time had been very active too. She was by all accounts a warm and loving mother and aunt. She knew what hard times were all about and when things were tough in the 50's had set up her own 'factory' at home making knitted clothing and jewellery from sea shells she picked up on the beach. I am told that at age about 50 she took up belly dancing – the only member of the family I have ever come across to do so!

When the couple retired to Umzumbe they created a wonderful holiday home for their children and grandchildren, the source of many happy memories to this day. Ever active, Bill and Harold continued in their home workshop, making glass fibre classical figures which Bobby turned into beautiful lamps

for sale in Durban. Bobby died at Umzumbe in 1984 at the age of 83 and Bill in at the remarkable age of 95 in 1996.

Bobby and Bill had four children:

4.7.1 John Arthur Mast 1935 – married Atholie Flora Coulthard 1935 –

John was born in The Hill, Johannesburg with primary schooling at Rivonia followed by Rosebank Primary. He went to Parktown Boys High, Pietermaritzburg College and Durban Technicon. He studied Civil Engineering at Howard College with bursaries from SA Breweries. John has been a Construction Engineer at Titan Products Umbogentwini, Big Bend Sugar Mill [Swaziland] and Triangle Sugar Mill [Zimbabwe]. He worked in the Design Office at Dorman Long, and was Data Processing Manager at OK Bazaars.

John took up a career in computers with Computer Sciences and CAB lasting some 15 years. He formed Laser Medical with Brian Smith which was sold to Draeger. The science and art of wood bending has occupied John's interest in recent years and he is currently with Woodbender.

In 1978 he and his wife Atholie moved to Somerset West where John was able to indulge his lifelong interests in motorbike riding, mountain walking and carpentry. John and Atholie had three children:

4.7.1.1 Charles John Mast 1962 – married Shirley Jones 1964 – two children

4.7.1.2 Jane Laura Mast 1968 – married Alfred Sieni 1961 – one child

4.7.1.3 Anne Belinda Mast 1971 – married Chris Orton 1972 – one child

4.7.2 Patricia 'Paddy' Elaine Mast 1937 – married Michael Briant 1936 –

Paddy was born at The Hill and when she was eleven years old, the family moved to Durban where she grew up. Her parents had many money problems and Paddy had to go to work at a very young age to help the family financially. As she says - this was hard on her but looking back, it gave her a good idea of how to look after money and live within her means. In 1960 Paddy had a son who was adopted by the Phillips family. He was given the name Timothy and as an adult met Paddy in 1988.

Her future husband Michael Briant sailed into Durban harbour onboard his authentic Chinese junk in 1962 and they were married a few months later. So her sailing days began. Paddy and Mike cruised for 6 years on 'Ying Hong'. Their two sons, John and Paul were born in Grenada, British West Indies.

The couple returned to South Africa and ended up building another Chinese Junk in East London and then Cape Town. The 'Chin Lin' was launched in 1982 and they sailed from there in 1995. By 2003 they were living in America having crossed the Atlantic three times on this boat. Paddy and Mike sailed, with crew, to Ireland, England then back to America via the Caribbean. They applied for American permanent residence and hope to make their home

somewhere on the West Coast of the States. Paddy and Mike had two children:

4.7.2.1 John Steven Briant 1964 – married Joelle Paquette 1965 – two children

4.7.2.2 Paul Stafford Briant 1965 – married Monta Zelinsky 1965 – two children

4.7.3 Noel Richard Mast 1938 – married Josephine Warne 1938 –

Noel was born at the family home at Highlands North. Because of the moves his parents made when he was young his school career was somewhat varied. He completed schooling at the Natal Technical High School in Durban where he was a member of the victorious shooting team. He tried his hand at game ranging and with NCR before settling into a career in the oil industry with Socony Mobil (now Engen). He joined Sapref where he rose rapidly thorough the ranks before being headhunted by Moss gas.

Eventually he took a retirement package and continued to work for Moss gas as a consultant. He and Jo live in George which they thoroughly enjoy and where they take an active part in Wildlife, Probus and the ARP&P. Noel and Jo had two children:

4.7.3.1 Clive Jeffery Mast 1966 –

4.7.3.2 Michelle Noelle Mast 1969 – married Bruce Alexander Patterson 1967 – two children

4.7.4 Wendy Mast 1944 – married David Evan Griffiths 1942 –

Wendy was born in Johannesburg but moved to Pietermaritzburg for a short time where she started school at age 4 before living at Gillitts. The nearest school, at Kloof, said she had started her education too young so there was a slight pause in the learning process! When Wendy was 11 the family moved to Durban, into a lovely double-storey house which had a fish pond in the garden, before her parents finally settled in a little place in Cherry Ave.

When she left school at 19 she became a shorthand typist – a job Wendy has done all her life. She and her husband Dave love music and when their kids were old enough, they each learnt an instrument. Gavin and Travis did really well on classical guitar; Paula got going with the flute and Jene on clarinet. Dave is now doing water colour painting quite seriously. Wendy and Dave had four children:

4.7.4.1 Gavin Boyd Griffiths 1968 –

4.7.4.2 Paula Dayle Griffiths 1969 – married Gary Langford Williams 1972 – three children

4.7.4.3 Travis Rodga Griffiths 1971 – married Angela Franklin 1973 – two children

4.7.4.4 Jene Nicola Griffiths 1972 – married Craig Kenneth Lubbe 1969 – one child

5

Christian Ludvig Flemmer 1878 – 1935
Ethel Winifred George 1890 – 1964



*Christian Ludvig
Flemmer*

Ethel Winifred George



Christian Ludvig Flemmer, known to his family as Christian, was the fifth child of Christian Ludvig and Anna. He was born in Cradock on the 25th January 1878. By the time of his birth only his sister, Anna Louie and brother Jack had survived early childhood. Christian was baptized at St. Peter's on the 13th February 1878. After the church ceremony uncles, aunts, cousins and friends gathered at the family home in Frere St. for a celebration as was the Danish custom.

The first few years of young Christian's life were very eventful. He was barely a year old when his father went off to fight in the Basuto campaign. His father was gone for months and when he finally came back he looked so different he scared the youngsters at first with his big beard and broken leg in plaster.

When Christian was 18 months old, another baby boy arrived – this was Willie, a sickly infant who needed constant attention from Anna. It may have been because she was so distracted that Christian went down with typhoid at about this time. The couple's first son Christian Augustus had died, probably of scarlet fever four years before. We can imagine the fears of the parents, beset as they were with a brood of young children and a sickly baby who needed constant care. The family doctor, Dr. Ferhsen, was in almost constant attendance at the Flemmer home and young Christian pulled through after a lengthy convalescence. Piling problem on problem he had no sooner recovered when his sister and brother, Anna and Jack went down with rheumatic fever!

The following year, given all of the strain Anna had been under the doctor insisted on a complete break and a holiday at the seaside. Although Christian was only two by now he would have been caught up in all of the excitement of this adventure. Anna and an aunt of hers set out with the children, a wagon

driver and a nursemaid for a holiday at the Kowie. It was a wonderful time for all of them, and all returned safely to Cradock much refreshed.

When Christian was six the family moved to the farm *Plat Rivier* near Tafelberg. The farm was a paradise for children with its big garden and all of the farm activities – there was always something to see and do. Then there was the veld all around and especially for the boys, hunting and camping trips where they could really run free. There were some practical issues too, schooling being one of them. A tutor was employed to teach Christian and his older brother Jack. These tutors were often young women, and there was no system of qualification required. Often the result was that teaching was a bit of a hit and miss affair – especially for young boys who had all the farm's distractions around them.

In 1890 his father decided to take advantage of a subsidy from the Cape Government and set up a Farm School. A teaching governess was employed and the six children – Louie 15, Jack 14, Christian 12, Edith 8, Olive 7 and Arthur Claude 5, were all taught in one class. By the time Louie was 18 and ready to write her own teacher's exam it turned out that the tutor was only four months older than her! Needless to say this young teacher was having some trouble controlling the teenaged Jack and Christian. Things changed a bit in 1893 when sister Louie took over the teaching duties – there was far less opportunity to 'get away with it' with Louie in charge!

Christian turned 18 the following year and putting school books behind him started working the farm with this father. As we have seen it was decided to sell the farm in 1899 and the family returned to Cradock. *Plat Rivier* was sold to a Mr. Gabb who changed the name to Springfield. Early in 1900 Christian applied for a loan of £300 from Arthur Edward Hammond secured against his household furniture and stock. His address shown in these papers is *Lonelif Middelburg* and I believe that this was his own farm. I assume that the loan was to purchase more stock for his farming activities. As we know the Anglo Boer War started in October of this same year. Like most young men who were British subjects, including his brothers, Christian fought in this long and bitter conflict.

With the war over life in the Colony for the young men who had fought in the war started to get back to normal. Christian was offered the position of farm manger at Springfield. His sister Louie tells us more in *The Little Dane* after she received a letter from him:

"I must explain to you that Christian has left his farm in charge of a man and has gone as farm manager to a neighbour. He rides over to his farm every Sunday for an inspection, and to leave instructions for the week's work. So his house is closed during the week and opened on Sundays and his dinner served at his own table. He tells me in this letter that after having finished his dinner, he went to his bedroom and lay down. Thinking how badly the bed was made, he kept digging his elbow against his side where there seemed to be a lump. After a

while he turned on his back. As he slept, he felt an oppression on his chest and when breathing became difficult he decided to open his eyes. It was a snake. A snake was coiled up under his waistcoat and just had its head sticking out within a few inches of his nose. He leaped off the bed, jumping about and calling for help, but nobody heard him, the snake meanwhile, dangling about his legs as he leaped and pranced around. At last it slipped through the waistcoat, glided along the floor and disappeared into its hole."

A close shave indeed!

In 1903 Christian's father died and his mother and sister Olive came to live with him at Springfield – I'm sure he welcomed the company. There were visits too from sister Louie with her two small children and it seemed there were always family coming and going. He was also involved with the Midland Farmers' Association, attending regular meetings at Tafelberg. The community was a close knit one and although farming was a hard life there was still time for the social side – Christian played for the Tafelberg Cricket Team for some years.

In 1910 when Christian was 32 he married 19 year old Ethel Winifred George. She was a teacher whose parents came from Rochester in England. The couple's first child Christian Aubrey Flemmer was born at Springfield on the 23rd January 1911.

By chance I came across some diaries kept for many years by Edward Thornhill Gilfillan of the farm Conway which is about 15kms. south of Springfield. He was a cousin of the Flemmers and although the entries are frustratingly brief, we are able to glean some hints as to some of the family activities. As both farms were near the railway line it's clear that the families saw a lot of each other, with frequent mention of visits to the Flemmer farm and dinners and parties in each other's homes. There are also some entries showing the frustrations of a farmer's life:

Wednesday 1 June 1910

Christian came down as a plucking witness and plucked Rajah's new (ostrich) hen.

Thursday 2 June 1910

Hen which was plucked yesterday to try for the Stud Book killed itself in the fence.

The Gilfillan and Flemmer families were very close and saw a lot of each other. From the diaries we can even see that if you left the Gilfillan farm at Conway by ox wagon at 4.30 in the morning you arrived at the Flemmers at 10.30 – six hours to cover about 15kms. – say under 3kms an hour. What a wonderfully leisurely way to travel!

The years rolled by and Christian and Ethel had another five children. We are lucky to have a lovely picture of them

Claribel Whitehurst born 30th July 1912
 David Christian born Springfield 13th February 1916
 Nancy Mary born Springfield 4th July 1918
 Rupert Christian born Middelburg 11th April 1920
 Margaret Ethel born Springfield 15th September 1922

back: David & Rupert
front: Claribel, Margaret & Nancy



Over the years Christian was a regular visitor to Conway, bringing mares to the farm to be serviced and buying breeding stock from his cousin. In 1922 the diary mentions that Christian had held a dance at his home. This would be a big social occasion and parties passed through Conway from Glen Heath and other farms on their way to Springfield. Of course a dance at this time involved far more for the host and hostess than would be the case today. Most of the guests would arrive some time during the day and nearly all would stay over. A major feat of organising and feeding – but such was the wonderful hospitality of the countryside.

In 1924 Christian's mother Louie died in Middelburg. He was the Executor of her estate and was bequeathed *'arm chair, sofa, tables and such like furniture belonging to me but which has been in his care for some years past'* There were no other assets in his mother's estate and her children settled some minor liabilities. It was not long after this that Christian and Ethel were forced to give up farming. I am told that he was insolvent but there are no archive papers to show this. It may just have been that with six children growing up and the Great Depression squeezing the economy the couple decided to give up farming. It must have been a very difficult decision to accept – after all Christian had been on the land for most of his 45 years.

The family moved to Graff Reinett where Christian got a job with an insurance company. What a different life this must have been for all of them but he stuck to it. He was made a manager of the company and the family moved to Somerset East where they lived in New Street. In about 1934, aged only 55 Christian suffered a severe stroke. He lived for another 18 months before dying on the 26th August 1935 aged 57.

He had left a will which stated that all assets were to be invested in landed property with the income derived for the benefit of his wife to pay for the upbringing and education of the children.

Ethel was faced with a very big problem. Although her sons Christian Aubrey and David were 24 and 19 and Claribel was 23 – the other children, Nancy 18, Rupert 15 and Margaret 13 were still dependant on her. I am told by Rupert that his mother Ethel did a wonderful and courageous job making sure that the children were well educated and self sufficient.

In October 1935 she sought the Court's permission to remarry and the Master had no objection. I don't know when she remarried. Two of her sons' military records show that in 1940 she was 'Mrs. E.W. Flemmer' of Schoeman St. Pretoria. In 1943 the record had been changed to 'Mrs. E. W. McLean c/o Mrs Elliott, Pembroke Farm, Cato Ridge Natal'. Ethel died in Pinetown in 1964.

Christian and Ethel had six children:

5.1 Christian Aubrey Flemmer 1911 – 1986 married Hope Hermene Gertrude Clulee 1912 – 1989

Aubrey, the first child of Christian and Ethel was born on the farm Springfield, near Tafelberg Station in the Middelburg District. He was about 18 when his parents moved to Graaff Reinett, and had probably gone to school as a boarder in Cradock.

After his father died in 1935 he found a job at Iscor (SA Iron and Steel Corporation) in Pretoria. He worked for them in a clerical capacity in Vanderbijlpark and Pretoria most of his life, interrupted only by his war service.

In 1940 he signed up with the SAAF and his military records give us a brief description at age 29. He was 5ft. 7ins. (1.70m) tall, weighed 140lbs. (63.5 kgs) with grey eyes and fair hair. He trained as a wireless operator on Blenheim and Boston bombers and was promoted to sergeant in 1942. His great adventure began when he flew to Cairo the same year to begin active service, along with so many other Flemmers who were 'up North' by then.

These were brave men and I have an extract from a book, author unfortunately unknown that describes the sort of dangers they were exposed to:

By this time the enemy A.A. gunners had had plenty of practice and were on top of their jobs. The air over Castel Benito on successive nights was not at all comfortable for air crews during their bombing runs.

Lieut. 'Cobber' Weinronk was wounded in three places, including a crack on the nose from shrapnel which temporarily blinded him and, not knowing the extent of the damage to himself or his aircraft, he ordered his crew, Lieut. Bear and F/Sgts. C.A. Flemmer and C.R. Thompson, to bale out. This they did and were eventually taken P.O.W. Lieut. Weinronk, still very dazed, started an approach on the [enemy] landing ground even to the extent of switching on his landing lights. The enemy A.A. gunners obviously taken aback, ceased firing, at which stage Lieut. Weinronk 'came to', switched off his lights and made rapid tracks for home. He was successful in reaching

base but had to make a belly landing because the nose wheel, held back by the observer's door, would not lock out.

Aubrey too would have made it back of course but he had to follow orders. Having survived the jump he was taken prisoner by Arab tribesmen near Tripoli in January 1943. They handed him over to the Italians and he ended up in a German POW camp. He spent the rest of the war in Germany, surviving the end of hostilities and a 500 km. forced march as the Germans moved prisoners ahead of the Allied advance. Aubrey was finally repatriated and discharged with the rank of Warrant Officer in June 1945.

He went back to work at Iscor and in 1948 married Hope Clulee. She was born near Bethal and was from a farming background but was living in Johannesburg when Aubrey met her. The couple set up home in Pretoria – I am told Aubrey was always an avid reader, and loved walking and playing snooker with his brother David. Hope was mainly the homemaker but a various times worked at Dept. of Statistics and in the Library. The family moved to Iscor, Vanderbijlpark for a time before settling back in Pretoria.

Aubrey died in Pretoria in 1986 and Hope at the home of her daughter Stacey in Johannesburg in 1989. Aubrey and Hope had two children

5.1.1 Marion Hilary Flemmer 1949 – 1988 married Rudolph Ohse 1930 – 1984

Marion was a young girl when the family moved to Vanderbijlpark. She completed her matric at Pretoria Girls' High School. Her husband, Rudolph was born in Germany and had his own driving school which Marion helped him with. When Marion died aged 39 the couple's daughter was brought up by her sister Stacey. Marion and Rudolph had one child:

5. 1.1.1 Gisela Stacey Ohse 1975 – married (1) Johann Jurgens Siebert married (2) Werner Taljaard 1971 –

5.1.2 Winifred Stacey Flemmer 1952 – married Erich Herms Essmann 1951 –

Stacey was born at Vanderbijlpark and moved to Pretoria when she was five, where she went to Sunnyside and Arcadia Primary Schools. She completed matric at Pretoria Girls' High School and then went to the University of the Witwatersrand for a year. It was here she met her husband. Erich was born in South West Africa and moved to Thabazimbi and Venderbijlpark as a young boy. At Wits he was known as the 'Wits Blitz' as he was a top class sprinter, gaining his Springbok colours for athletics. Stacey gained a BA in maths and French through Unisa.

Erich has a Bsc, Engineering from Wits and a MBL from Unisa. After living in Benoni and Johannesburg the couple moved to Cape Town in 1990 where Erich started his own company – Speedwell Engineering. Stacey works part

time in the business and the couple's main interests are going to the gym, reading and their family. Stacey and Erich had four children:

- 5.1.2.1 Heinz Erich Essmann 1982 –
- 5.1.2.2 Max Christian Essmann 1984 –
- 5.1.2.3 Erich Charles Essmann 1987 –
- 5.1.2.4 Rosemary Stacey Essmann 1990 –

5.2 Claribel Whitehurst Flemmer 1912 – married Jack Spears



Claribel Whitehurst Flemmer

Unfortunately I haven't had any contact with this branch of the family and know very little about them. Claribel was probably born at Springfield and would have been about 12 when her father had to give up farming and move to Graaff Reinett. I believe she went to school at St. Winifred's in George as a young girl.

I am told Claribel emigrated to Salisbury in the then Southern Rhodesia where she met and married Jack Spears. Jack held a senior government position as Secretary of Mines.

Although I was told members of the family were living in the Durban area I wasn't able to trace them. I believe Claribel and Jack had three children:

5.2.1 Jain Spears

5.2.2 Elizabeth Spears

5.2.3 Patricia Spears

5.3 David Christian Flemmer 1916 – 1978 married (1) Rosemary Veronica Musgrave 1922 – 1958 He married (2) Jean Mary Gordon 1925 – 2001



*David Christian
Flemmer*

*Rosemary Veronica
Musgrave*



David Flemmer was born on the farm Springfield near Tafelberg Station in the Middelburg District on the 13th of February 1916. He was the second son and third child of Christian and Ethel. When he was about 13 the family left the farm and moved to Graaff Reinett and then to Somerset East. Here he was enrolled at the famous Gill College where he completed his education.

In 1936 times were hard with the Great Depression putting so many people out of work. David moved to Pretoria where he found a job with (SA Iron and Steel Corporation) – Iscor where he worked for the next 42 years. I have not found any record of military service and it is quite likely that he was in an essential job and could not be released for war service. His brother Aubrey also joined Iscor and the brothers remained close throughout their lives.

I am told that like many Flemmers I have come across David had a great sense of humour and was a practical joker. Although he could be strict, I am told by one of his children that he taught them how to laugh! He loved soccer and cricket and was a staunch member of Berea Sports Club for many years. He was also something of a crossword buff, entering cryptic puzzles in the Rand Daily Mail and occasionally winning prizes.

In 1942 David married Rosemary Veronica Musgrave and they had two children. After Rosemary died in 1958, David married his sister-in-law Jean Mary Musgrave (Gordon) and they had two children. As this is one of the more complicated family trees that I have come across I will try to explain it a little more clearly in tabular form:

David married Rosemary Veronica Musgrave and their children were Christian John and Roger Christian 'Jock' Flemmer
 Rosemary's brother Victor Musgrave had married Jean Mary Gordon and they had three children – Gordon, Rodney and Colleen Musgrave.
 These five children were, of course cousins.

Victor died and in 1958 his sister Rosemary died, leaving David and Jean with five children between them.

David and Jean married in about 1961, taking their collective five children on honeymoon with them! By this marriage these five cousins had become step brothers and sisters.

Then David and Jean had two children, Clive and Beverley Flemmer, so that these last were half brother and sister of the five children of the first marriages. I did say it was a bit complicated.

Jean was by all accounts a wonderful, caring and energetic woman – she would certainly have had to be energetic to bring up seven children! One of her granddaughters describes her in later years

Granny Jean was a nurse and an excellent seamstress. She made my wedding dress for me as a wedding gift to Anton and myself and wow did she make it well! She also nursed my Grandmother Rosemary [Flemmer nee Musgrave] through her cancer and I think that's where the romance between herself and David blossomed. She was an incredible woman, with such

energy and stamina, she gave so much of her time to people in need and lived on a frugal pension but still used to have us all around for roasts and the most delicious scones with jam and cream you've ever tasted !

David died following a stroke in 1978. Jean died tragically when she was brutally murdered in 2001.

David had four children as we have seen:

5.3.1 Christian John Flemmer 1945 – 1994 married Linda Ann Clur 1947 –

John matriculated from Pretoria Boys High in 1964. He was a prefect in his matric year and was also the Drum Major of the Cadet Band.

He was a good cricketer and squash player, and in later years was a very keen golfer. He married his high school sweetheart – Linda Ann Clur in 1967. Linda was born in East London but moved to Pretoria as a girl where she matriculated at Pretoria Girls' High. The couple moved to East London in 1969. John worked in the accounting field and studied part-time to obtain his CIS.

He was a loving, generous and honest person – often referred to as “the salt of the earth”. He died suddenly in 1994. John and Linda had three children:

5.3.1.1 Wendy Ann Flemmer 1970 – married Anton van Bergen 1964 – two children

5.3.1.2 Caryn Ann Flemmer 1976 – married Grant Leuthardt 1974 – two children

5.3.1.3 Angela Flemmer 1978 – married Ian Sheard 1975 – one child

5.3.2 Roger Christian ‘Jock’ Flemmer 1947 – married Toni Anne Gough 1951 –

Jock was born in Pretoria where he attended Pretoria Boys' High, playing 1st team cricket. He also played professional football and is a golfer. He completed his ACIS and B.Comm (Hons). He was very involved in the South African Defence Force and was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Citizen Force. In 1971 he married Toni Anne Gough. She was educated at Potchefstroom Girls' High School and was a keen swimmer. The couple have two children:

5.3.2.1 Tracy-Lee Flemmer 1975 – married Kevin John William Herbert 1970 – one child

5.3.2.2 Russell James Flemmer 1980 – married Maria Catt – one child

5.3.3 Clive Christian Flemmer 1962 – married Corrinne Macneil 1968 –

Clive attended Waterkloof Primary School, excelling at football and cricket. He went to the brand new Glen High School and although at that time it didn't have much in the way of sporting facilities he was selected to play soccer for Northern Transvaal.

He raced motocross for many years and started work at a motorbike shop in Pretoria with his brother-in-law Rob Allanson. In 1991 Clive married Corrinne Macneil. He started Zambesi Glass in Pretoria, now run by Corinne and now runs Classic Aluminium with his sister Bev. Clive and Corinne had two children:

5.3.3.1 Christian Justin Flemmer 1996 –

5.3.3.2 Jamie Flemmer 1999 –

5.3.4 Beverley Flemmer 1964 – married Robert Allanson 1961 – 2001

Her parents built a house in a suburb in Pretoria East called Ashlea Gardens and they moved there when Bev was five years old. Like her brother she went to Waterkloof Primary School and completed her schooling at Glen High School. She married Durbanite Rob Allanson in 1983. He shared a great interest in motorbikes with brother-in-law Clive as we have seen.

Bev and Rob bought a glass and aluminium business in Benoni in 1992. After Rob died Bev had so much union trouble that she sold the business and started Classic Aluminium in Pretoria with brother Clive. Bev and Rob had two children:

5.3.4.1 Jessica Allanson 1983 –

5.3.4.2 Candice Allanson 1984 –

5.4 Nancy Mary Flemmer 1918 – 1967 married Cornelius Horatius Nelson 1918 – 1979 – there were no children



Nancy Mary Flemmer

Very little is known about the life of Nancy Flemmer. She was born on the farm Springfield, Tafelberg Station, in the Middelburg District. As we have seen, when she was quite young the family moved to Graaff Reinett and then to Somerset East. She went to Bellview School there and was 17 years old when her father died.

She probably moved to Pretoria with her mother Ethel where they lived with brothers Aubrey and David at 774 Schoeman Street. I believe that Nancy worked for the Post Office in Pretoria. In 1946 she had a daughter, Mary who was adopted by the De Vries family. While single mothers are accepted members of society in the 21st century things were very different in 1946. The first that any of this branch of the family knew about Mary was when she contacted us in 2004, having looked up the Flemmer website. We were very

pleased to welcome her to the family and put her in touch with her mother's only surviving sibling, Rupert.

By 1949 Nancy was working for the Post Office in Windhoek and at that time she married Cornelius Horatius Nelson, who was born in Odendaalsrus. I know nothing more about them, except that Cornelius was transferred and they moved to Pietermaritzburg in about 1964. Nancy died at their home 165 Boom St. Her death notice shows that she was a civil servant. Cornelius died in Durban in 1979.

As we have seen Nancy had one child before she married:

5.4.1 Elsa Mary De Vries Flemmer 1946 – married (1) Georg Frederik Vivier 1946 – She married (2) Johannes Hendrik Visser 1942 –

Elsa and Johannes had two children:

5.4.1.1 Johannes Hendrik Visser 1976 – married Mareza Louw – one child

5.4.1.2 Petrus Wilhelm Visser 1978 –

5.5 Rupert Christian Flemmer 1920 – married (1) Lorna Louvain Strauss-Smith 1918 – 1997. He married (2) Barbara Ann Watling (nee Bartlet) 1938 –

Rupert was born at Middelburg on the 11th April 1920, the fifth child of Christian and Ethel. I was fortunate to meet him and Barbara when they came to the first Flemmer Reunion in 2001 when he was 81. He reminded me a lot of my own Flemmer uncles, of whom I have so many happy memories.

As we have seen the family moved to Graaff Reinett when Rupert was about nine and then to Somerset East where he was educated at the famous Gill College. His father died when he was 15 and the following year Rupert matriculated. Times were tough and jobs scarce with the world still feeling the effects of the Great Depression. Rupert signed up with the Special Service Brigade for a year before going to Pretoria and working as a draughtsman. He then worked on the mines and was employed as an Assistant Sampler when the Second World War broke out.

In 1938 he had met his bride to be, Lorna Louvain Strauss-Smith. She had been educated at Lichtenberg Girls High and had qualified as a nurse. An interesting aside here is that the couple's fathers had fought on opposite sides during the Anglo Boer War. Like so many other young people at this time, any plans they may have had for their lives together were put on hold while the great world conflict unfolded. Aged 21, Rupert enlisted in the S.A. Signals Corp, and left by train for East Africa on the 5th November 1940, arriving at Nairobi 18 days later. He spent 6 months in Kenya and tells me that he met up with one of his Flemmer cousins (probably Neville 'Nick' Flemmer) for some hunting near Nairobi.

In April 1941 Rupert embarked on the SS Johan de Witt for Port Said and service as a Dispatch Rider in the North African campaign. He tells me that

desperate for ammunition for a salvaged Browning, he forged the signature of another well known Flemmer serving up North. This was my uncle – Lt. Col. ‘Ossie’ Flemmer, and it worked because Rupert managed to get a case of desperately needed .300 ammunition!

He was away for two long years before coming back to South Africa in 1943, where he married Lorna in Florida on the 6th February. Rupert was finally discharged as a Lance Corporal on the 25th of August 1945, having given 5 years and 91 days of his life in military service. His discharge papers record: *Character: Very good; Sobriety: Sober; Efficiency: Good* – all very true I’m sure!

After the war he was given a Governor General’s Grant to University. He went to Wits where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree. During his student years he had to take on many varied part time student jobs to support his family.

He was a school master in the Transvaal and also taught for a short time in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. Rupert finally settled in Natal where he was an Inspector of Schools and finally became the Chief Planner for Education for Natal. Rupert and Lorna had been married for 54 years when she died in 1997. In 1998 he married Barbara and they live on the Kwa-Zulu Natal South Coast. Rupert and Lorna had five children:

5.5.1 Peter Christian Flemmer 1945 – married Louise Barker –

Peter was educated at Durban High School and completed B.Sc and B.Ed. degrees at Durban University. He taught in Natal and married Louise – a nurse - before going into plastic recycling. In 1994 they emigrated to New Zealand where Peter is teaching again. They had three children:

5.5.1.1 Timothy Christian Flemmer 1973 –

5.5.1.2 Nathalie Flemmer 1974 –

5.5.1.3 Alexandra Flemmer 1976 – married Richard Truelove

5.5.2 Rory Ludvig Christian Flemmer 1947 – married (1) Marleen Neuper – He married (2) Claire Mansel –

Rory was educated at Empangeni and at Durban High School. He completed a Bsc. Mech. Eng., a Masters in Chemical Engineering and a Ph.D at Durban University. I about 1988 Rory immigrated to the USA where he lectured at Albuquerque University for a few years before becoming involved in robotics. He now lives in New Zealand where he is lecturing at University.

Rory and Marleen had two children:

5.5.2.1 Luke Christian Flemmer 1971 –

5.5.2.2 Jake Christian Flemmer 1976 –

Rory and Claire had three children:

- 5.5.2.3 Sarah Flemmer 1988 –
- 5.5.2.4 Mary Flemmer 1991 –
- 5.5.2.5 Matthew Flemmer 1991 –

5.5.3 Dain Lesley Flemmer 1950 –

Dain lives at the Sherwood Institution in Durban

5.5.4 Keryn Punch Christian Flemmer 1951 – married (1) Janine Rosalie Nordier 1951 – He married (2) Leonora Carrol Adams 1957 –

Punch was educated at Durban High School and completed Bsc.Mech Engineering at Durban University. He worked as an engineer for 10 years before moving into financial services. The family immigrated to Australia in 1989.

Punch and Janine had three children:

- 5.5.4.1 Kathryn Nicola Flemmer 1978 –
- 5.5.4.2 Sarah Talullah Flemmer 1980 –
- 5.5.4.3 Robyn Bonnie Syke Flemmer 1985 –

5.5.5 Mark Christian Flemmer 1955 – married (1) Elizabeth Barker who died in 1999 He married Kari Rodseth

Mark was educated at Durban High School and completed his medical degree at Wits University before qualifying as a Specialist. He immigrated to the USA and is a Specialist Physician at the Norfolk Teaching Hospital in Virginia.

Mark and Kari had three children:

- 5.5.5.1 Dirk Flemmer 1989 –
- 5.5.5.2 Noel Flemmer 1991 –
- 5.5.5.3 Roy Flemmer 1993 –

5.6 Margaret Ethel Flemmer 1922 – 2004 married Jack Fletcher 1931 –

Margaret was born on the farm Crowboroughvlei near Middelburg, the last of Christian and Ethel's children. As she wasn't born at Springfield it seems that Christian had already run into financial problems. It was soon after Margaret was born that the family moved to Graaff Reinett.

Although I have been in contact with members of this branch I have found out very little. I am told she met and married Jack Fletcher in Durban. He was an engineer on the Railways and the couple moved to Pretoria. Margaret and Jack had two sons:

- 5.6.1 John Fletcher 1955 – married Lizelle – two children
- 5.6.1.1 Maxine Fletcher 1989 –
- 5.6.1.2 Agnes Fletcher 1992 –

5.6.2 Andrew Fletcher 1957 – married Marianne

I was told that John and Andrew both have B.Sc. Mechanical Engineering degrees, and live in Pretoria.

6 William Flemmer 1879 – 1881

'Willie' was born in Cradock and was baptised at St. Peter's on the 5th November 1879. There is a mention of him in The Little Dane:

Her third son, Willie, was born and he was so delicate that had it not been for her grandmother, Mrs Distin, he would not have lived. He grew to be a fine strong little chap, but died under tragic circumstances when he was eighteen months old.

Wille died in Cradock on the 20th June 1881. Whether he died in an accident or in one of the epidemics that swept through the towns in the Colony we don't know. He is buried in the graveyard of St. Peter's.

7 Edith Selina Flemmer 1881 – Valentine Percy Garlicke 1879 – 1950

Edith Selina Flemmer

Edith Selina Flemmer, the seventh child of Ludvig and Anna was born at Cradock on the 1st June 1881. It was a sad time for the family as shortly after Edith was born there was the tragedy of the death of her brother, 18 month old Willie on 19th June. Probably because family had come to Cradock for the funeral, Edith's baptism was held at St. Peter's on the 23rd June 1881. She was named Selina after her grandmother Selina Distin.



Very little is known about Edith's life, records are scanty and even that wonderful source of family information, The Little Dane makes very little reference to her. I have the impression of a quiet girl, who grew into adulthood as her widowed mother's companion and in the shadow of her sisters Louie and Olive. From what we have it is at least possible to know something about her life before she got married – but here I am jumping ahead of the story!

Although she was the seventh child in the family, only three others were still alive when Edith was an infant - Louie was 7, Jack 6 and Christian 3. When she was 18 months old Olive was born, followed 18 months later by baby brother Arthur Claude. Her mother would certainly have had her hands full with this lively brood. Edith was four when the family left Cradock and moved to the farm *Plat Rivier* and with the rest of the children she grew up in

the free and easy life of the farm – something they all grew to love. Like the other children she was taught by the tutor hired by her father, and then in the Farm School that he set up. The education provided was a bit of a hit and miss affair and it is possible that Edith was sent to Rocklands in Cradock when she was about 16. I have found no record of her at the school although I know her sisters Louie and Olive were there, as were her Flemmer cousins Emma, Rosa, Hilda and Doris.

In 1900, shortly after the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War the family left the farm and moved back to Cradock. Edith was 19 by now and, like the rest of the family, would have had to get used to a very different way of life in town. With the hundreds of British troops in the area she and her sisters would have been in great demand for the dances and social events organized by the officers. Despite the worries and hardships of the war it was not a bad place to be a young girl!

Everything changed for the family in 1903 when Edith's father Ludvig died suddenly aged only 62. He left no money or assets of any value, and given the times in which they lived this presented a real problem for the woman of the family. Anna was still young at 52, Edith was 21 and Olive 20 when Ludvig died. Apart from working as a teacher or as a governess, there were no avenues for girls to earn a living or to have an independent life. The requirement was for girls to find a suitable husband who would provide a home and a 'place in society'.

It is here that the extended families of the time, together with family obligations came into their own. It was a given that older brothers and their wives would support the widow and unmarried sisters for as long as was needed. After her father's death, Edith moved back to *Plat Rivier* with her mother and sister. By then it was being managed by her brother Christian, still a bachelor and this made a very convenient arrangement for everyone. Over the years that followed the three womenfolk lived on the farm but also took extended trips to Bechuanaland to see Jack and his growing brood and to the Transvaal to spend time with Louie and Jim Rous. Life was very tough for the farm wives, often not seeing white people for months on end and long family visits were welcomed for the company they provided.

In 1909 when Edith was 28 she went with her mother, Louie and her children for a three month stay in East London. This must have been a welcome break and a rare trip to the coast for the family who spent most of their lives inland. There is a wonderful anecdote in *The Little Dane* when Edith took her twin nephews Graham and Leslie Rous to church:

The first Sunday after we arrived, Edith insisted on taking them to church. She gave them each threepence and told them they were not to talk. Of course, this was their first experience of town life - they had never been inside a church. When the plate came around they refused to part with their money. She whispered again and again, 'Put it in the plate!' The service was being held up, she got quite angry and said, 'You must put it in the plate, you are giving it to God!' Reluctantly they parted with their coins. After they returned I

overheard one saying to the other, 'I don't like the guard in the Church, you give him a threepence and he doesn't give you anything. I like the guard in the tram, you give him a penny and he gives you a long ride!'

We know that in 1912 Edith, then aged 31 was staying with her mother and sister Olive at Louie and Jim's farm Riverside near Witbank. It was at about this time that Olive formed her relationship with 'Daymon', the drama more fully described in Olive's history. It caused the whole family much heartache and seems to have distracted Louie from mentioning Edith again the The Little Dane.

British Consular records show that Edith aged 34, married Valentine Percy Garlicke in Lourenco Marques (Maputo) in about 1915. She was 34 and he would have been about 36 at that time and may have worked for one of the banks. The couple moved around quite a bit and as far as we know there were four children born of the marriage. Thomas was born in 1915, and his sister's Ruth's birth is shown in a small prayer book:

*To dear Mother
from
Edith and Percy
Lourenco Marques
Nov. 3rd 1916
Ruth D. Garlicke.*

In 1918 another son Paul Flemmer Garlicke was born. It is possible that the family was living in Beira at the time as Edith's mother Anna had her will drawn up there that year. Another son, Michael was also born although we didn't find the year of birth.

In 1924 the family was living at I Loop Street, Middelburg, Cape when Edith's mother Anna died. For the next 25 years the records are silent, and nothing is known about the family at all until 1950.

In that year, Edith's husband Percy died of peritonitis aged 71 in Somerset West, following a ruptured appendix. He was in an hotel there and his estate papers show that he was a retired bookkeeper. His bank accounts were in Somerset West, so he was probably living there – he is buried in the English cemetery. At first his family could not be traced. Eventually his son Paul was traced to Johannesburg and Thomas to Port Elizabeth. Edith was also living in PE as was Ruth who signed her name Simmons. Besides his bank accounts he had with him an HMV bedside radio valued at £10 10 0d and a Harley Davidson with side car valued at £30. Edith inherited his estate valued at £275 18 4d. Apart from this rather sad record no other information on the family has been found.

Edith and Percy had four children as far as we know:

7.1 Thomas Percy Garlicke 1915 –

7.2 Ruth Donna Garlicke 1916 – married Simmons**7.3 Paul Flemmer Garlicke 1917 –****7.4 Michael Garlicke**

8

Olive Flemmer 1882 –

Olive was born into the Flemmer family of Cradock on the 8th November 1882. She was the eighth of Ludvig and Anna's children and the third surviving daughter. Like many Flemmers before her she was baptized at St. Peter's the following year on the 12th January 1883. Her later life turned into an extraordinary tale of sadness and mystery as we will see. There was certainly nothing in her early years to suggest anything out of the ordinary.

She arrived into a family of lively children – there was Louie nearly 9, Jack 7, Christian nearly 5 and Edith then 18 months old. When Olive was 18 months old baby brother Arthur Claude was born. The family moved to their farm *Plat Rivier* shortly after this and although Olive's mother had a lot to cope with this was nothing unusual for this time.

With the rest of the children she grew up in the free and easy life of the farm – they all loved being out there. Like the other children she was taught by the tutor hired by her father, and then in the Farm School that he set up. This was all a bit of a hit and miss affair and when Olive was about 12 she was sent to Rocklands in Cradock. There was a strong Flemmer connection to this school, her sister Louie was a junior teacher there as was her cousin Emma Flemmer. Her Flemmer cousins Rosa, Hilda and Doris were also pupils. In 1899 when she was 17 the Midland News noted that Olive had completed her Second Elementary Examination with a third class pass

The following year the family gave up farming and moved back to Cradock. With the Anglo Boer War very much a reality the town was swarming with British troops, and pretty young girls would be very much in demand for the many social events and balls organized for the officers. Shortly after the war ended, Olive's father died in 1903 and circumstances for his wife and two unmarried daughters changed significantly. Ludvig left no money and there was little option but to rely on the extended family for support and shelter. Apart from working as a teacher or as a governess, there were no avenues for girls to earn a living or to have an independent life. The requirement was for girls to find a suitable husband who would provide a home and a 'place in society'.

Edith and Olive moved back to *Plat Rivier* with their mother Anna, where their brother Christian was working as farm manager. Christian was still a bachelor at the time and although money was tight I'm sure the arrangement suited everyone. There were visits by married older sister Louie with her babies to look forward to, and trips to visit brother Jack and family in Bechuanaland.

Much of what is known about Olive's early life is found in *The Little Dane*. In trying to make sense of the strange events that happened I have tried to form

a picture of what Olive was like. There seems no doubt that she was Louie's favourite sibling – she is referred to frequently in *The Little Dane*. At one point Louie is more specific:

She is such a sweet girl and everybody's favourite. In our family of six, I am sure everyone loves her best.

We even have a description of her, the only one I found of any of the Flemmers. It is a real pity we have no photograph:

Olive made a lovely picture. In spite of the long night's vigil, her complexion could only be described as 'milk and roses'. Her large blue eyes were kind and trustful, fringed with long black lashes, the eyebrows dark and perfectly arched. Her hair was light brown, she wore it parted in the middle, lying smoothly on either side of her pure white brow, and braided in two long plaits which circled her hair like a crown. Her teeth were the joy of her dentists who always commented on them, and to whom she only went for cleaning and polishing; just a row of perfect pearls flashed between those rosy lips. When she was being measured by a tailor for a riding habit, he said, "Had she been one inch taller, hers would have been an ideal figure."

A beautiful girl, with a lovely nature, even allowing for family bias, Olive had led a sheltered and unsophisticated life, first on the farm and later as her mother's close companion. As the youngest girl and the family favourite I don't doubt that with the best will in the world she had been indulged by everyone. Louie leaves no doubt about her own feelings when Olive came to stay aged 25:

Happy days for Louie with this dear sister, nine years her junior and still regarded as a child to be taken care of.

It is at this point that we find out more about the dark presence who played a central role in the family tragedy that unfolded. Jim and Louie were farming at Riverside near Witbank in the Transvaal. Jim's brother Vassall farmed nearby and they visited each other frequently. Vassall was interested in theosophy, at that time a popular religious and philosophical system that was attracting much discussion and debate. Briefly a Theosophical Society had been founded in London in 1875 and was spreading, with branches forming throughout the world. Its teachings were based on Buddhism among other beliefs and it followed the principles of Karma and reincarnation. For its time it would have been far from the main stream of religious belief in South Africa where of course Christianity was the dominant Colonial religion.

One day in 1908 Jim came back from a visit to Vassall and told Louie that he had met a very interesting character, who shared Vassall's interest in theosophy. I leave Jim to explain:

Well, he has a kindred spirit, a very clever man, staying with him. They are coming over to dinner tomorrow. This man, Daymon, knows four languages, is a wonderful musician and at one time intended making music his profession.

Louie gives little on the background on the person she refers to as Daymon, but I have been able to find out something about him. His name was Henri Dijkman and he was born in the Dutch Colony of Java in 1877 – so he was 31 at this time. I think it is likely that he was referred to by his surname, pronounced *Daykman*, which is why Louie uses Daymon in *The Little Dane* as I will do throughout this tale.

In 1898 Daymon had become a burgher of the Transvaal Republic and I believe worked as a translator of legal documents for the Transvaal Government. During the Anglo Boer war he was taken prisoner and sent with thousands of others to the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic. At war's end in 1902 those prisoners who swore an Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown were repatriated to South Africa on the first returning ships. Daymon, like many others took this option. By October of that same year he was back in Pretoria working as a sworn translator for the Colonial Government. They noted that he was fluent in English, Dutch, French and German. Daymon had married in 1903 and lived in Pretoria with his wife and two small children. His salary was £400 a year and he was allowed to use Government offices to work for other departments, earning another £300 a year in the process. It was a substantial amount of money for the time.

This was certainly someone out of the ordinary to meet on a farm near Witbank and Louie was only too happy to welcome Vassall and Daymon into her home one Sunday afternoon in 1908. At first she and Jim were quite captivated – they were intelligent and well read people, quite starved for the fine things of culture:

Sunday came - and the interesting visitor. He talked. He played. He and Vassall stayed for the afternoon, supper and the evening. How he played! Louie had never heard such music. Grieg, Listz, Chopin - and how he talked!

"I understand you know four languages," said Louie, "in which of these languages do you think?"

"I am beyond thought," answered Daymon unctuously, "I will lend you some of my books; I have the lives of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Alcot. Another author whom I would advise you to read is Ralph Waldo Trine.

Vassall and Daymon became regular Sunday visitors for a few months. Although Louie and Jim did not subscribe to his theosophical beliefs they enjoyed the intellectual discussions and the books that he lent them. It was at this time that Olive and her mother came for the extended stay that was to set in motion the events that came close to tearing this close and loving family unit apart.

It is an understatement to say that Olive was completely swept off her feet by Daymon who Louie describes:

He was a big strapping man of about six feet in height with black hair and beady black eyes, and a powerful personality.

Olive was mesmerized and fell totally under his personal power. She became a convert to the theosophical philosophy that he had become fanatical about. Trying to break up the relationship, Jim suggested Olive go with Louie and Edith on a three month trip to East London – it was too late. She refused to go, and worse, she left Riverside and moved in with Daymon and his wife in Pretoria. I can do no better than again quote Louie in The Little Dane:

Olive was completely carried away by his teachings and became his most enthusiastic disciple. Louie studied her Bible as never before, that she might be able to meet Olive's arguments. But alas! How futile it all was! Daymon had a wife and two children and Olive went to his home the better to study Theosophy. Olive's leaving her hurt Louie very much.

"The Olive Flemmer you knew is dead," she declared, "If you will not receive my master, Louie, I will have nothing more to do with any of you."

"But Olive," protested Louie, "how can you treat Mother as you are doing? Since father's death four years ago, you and she have shared the same room and you have been everything to her. Poor little Mother, with her snow white hair and her sad eyes - how she weeps over you! Oh, Olive! I cannot think how you can find it in your heart to leave her."

Olive promptly quoted from St Matthew XIX verse 29 - 'And everyone that have forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children or land, for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.'

The re-incarnation of the soul was one of Daymon's strong points - it was rather fascinating to be told you possessed a beautiful soul or an old soul. His influence over Olive was complete and she believed every word he said.

We know from divorce papers in the archives that at this time Daymon and his wife had 'ceased to live as man and wife'. Olive's name is never mentioned but it is sad to see that Daymon's wife says in the papers 'He turned into a Theosophist which made things very difficult. He said I was too stupid to understand when I asked him to explain but he always had time for other people. He really neglected me.'

For the close knit and loving Flemmer family the pain and heartache were to last for many years to come. It was of course a scandal for the time that an unmarried woman should leave home and move in with a married man – in the process rejecting her family and the Christian faith which was a cornerstone of their lives. On a personal level it caused Olive's mother understandable anguish to lose her beloved daughter this way. It was a situation to which the years could bring no closure. This year, 1908, didn't see the end of all contact with Olive and her family, that final break lay a few years in the future.

As far as I can tell Olive and Daymon moved out of his home in Pretoria but continued to live in the city. For some reason the Deed of Separation granted to his wife gave him custody of their daughter, then only six. A curious arrangement and I have no doubt Olive acted as 'mother' to this little girl. A year later, in 1911, we see that Daymon returned the girl to her mother and at the same time stopped paying the maintenance granted by the courts. We know that at about this time he travelled extensively, visiting England, Holland and Egypt probably with Olive. By 1912 he had got into a spat with his employers, the Colonial Government, over his pay and resigned. The pensions committee gave him two months to reconsider, but he rejected this offer and left the service and it seems, Pretoria.

A year later, in the bitterly cold Highveld winter of 1913 Olive and Daymon reappeared at Riverside. In the weeks preceding their arrival Louie had had a premonition that they would turn up. She had gone so far as to discuss with Jim what they should do if in fact, the couple came to the farm. Jim, who had very strong views and could have a short fuse was adamant. They were not to be allowed into the house under any circumstances. With the unwritten rule of the time being that no traveller in need be turned away, Jim's absolute refusal to let the couple stay shows how strongly he felt about Daymon's religious and moral conduct.

As these things usually happen Olive and Daymon turned up when Jim was away, leaving poor Louie to handle a very difficult situation. One cold winter morning one of the children ran in to say that he had seen a man and woman walking from the direction of Witbank which was 15 kms. away. This alone was enough to set off Louie's alarm bells – white people simply did not walk anywhere – and she realized her missing sister was about to arrive. She invited them in for breakfast before the start of a confrontation that went on for week:

As they gathered round the breakfast table, Louie nerved herself to say, "Neither Jim nor I wish to have you in our house, so you cannot stay here."

A shadow of anger passed across Daymon's face. "When we reached Cape Town," he said, "I sold my watch and chain and with that money I bought our tickets to Witbank. We have had nothing since yesterday morning, not even a cup of coffee. We reached Witbank about midnight and sat in the waiting room until it was light enough for us to walk down." Taking a copper from his pocket, he flung it on to the table, saying, "That is all we have in the world."

The travellers had spent the night in a freezing cold waiting room at the station before walking the 15kms to the farm – clearly they were starving and frozen to the bone. Jim had made his views quite clear, there was to be no compromise and Louie, so fond of her 'little' sister had no choice but to stick to her guns. Even worse of course was that the girls' mother, heartbroken about her missing daughter was there and witness to what followed:

Olive looked defiantly at her sister, daring her to turn out these two chosen of God. In the stillness, Louie felt that everyone must hear the quick thumping of her heart.

The grating of Daymon's chair, as he flung himself out of it and strode up and down the room, jarred on the overstrained nerves of the women. Louie looked across at that dear little Mother, her white face, pain in her sad blue eyes - but what could she do? Every time the dogs barked or the children came dashing in, her heart seemed to stop beating. Wasn't it Saturday - the day of all days that she might expect Jim? If he were to walk in now! Oh! Cruel fate to place her in so difficult a situation!

We can get a clear idea of Daymon's state of mind when Louie quotes him:

*"We have found the Eternal City! I have chained Satan for a thousand years!" shouted Daymon in a frenzy of fanatical fervour. "We come with all the knowledge we have gained for your home, for you to be the first to receive the benefits we are able to confer. If Jim will not hear me speak, it is because he is a coward. **I MUST, I SHALL** be heard. I insist on a hearing, even a condemned criminal is allowed to speak. The message that I bring is that there must be no more souls born into the world! Sex, the greatest sin of condemnation, must be rooted out of our lives. If you do not listen to my words," turning fiercely to Louie, "you will be re-incarnated again and again, with the curse of wedlock on you."*

Olive herself was completely brainwashed:

"But Louie," said Olive, "can't you see the likeness to Christ? This is the Second Christ; he is the re-incarnated Christ!"
"Oh! Olive you poor child; you are completely mesmerized. Christ would not have a wife and children, such as this man had!"
"That is the cloud spoken of in the Bible. Oh! Louie, don't let such a thing mislead you."

With Jim not there, Louie had little choice but to let the couple spend a few nights on the farm. As Louie had to visit a relative she sent Jim a telegram and arranged to meet him at Germiston station. There the couple discussed their dilemma. Jim's only compromise was to let the couple camp on the farm for a month at the end of which time they had to go. Louie carried on with her journey and Jim went back to Riverside where Daymon was ready to confront him with his fanatical beliefs:

"That is all I want - a hearing," said Daymon, with all the confidence in the world, fully believing that he would convert Jim and enlist his sympathy. "Give me a fortnight and there will be such a cataclysm of nature, and you and your family will be the first to share my discoveries. I have found the Eternal City! I have chained Satan for a thousand years! I am the re-incarnated Christ!"

Jim looked at Daymon's flashing black eyes, his long black, wavy hair and beard, and he thought nothing could be further from his idea of Christ.

"Olive is my heavenly bride, she is the re-incarnation of Mary of Bethany. Ours is a spiritual union."

"I think you are both mad," interrupted Jim, "I am willing not only to give you a fortnight, I am going to give you a month. I will not go back on my wife - she said you might camp in the trees above the fountain. Tomorrow we will pitch your tent and you may remain for one month, after that you get off my farm. I do not believe a word of anything you have said, and how you can carry on as you are doing, breaking the heart of this dear grey-haired lady....."

"What are tears or grey hair to ME; I cannot stop a soul in its flight," shouted Daymon, with all the fervour of the mad.

What an extremely unpleasant situation for the family and particularly Olive's mother. Over the month that followed Olive came to the house many times, the family bonds were still as strong and loving as ever – Daymon of course was not welcome. At the end of the month, needless to say, Daymon refused to move. Jim was understandably furious and in the end dismantled their tent and ordered them off his land. They headed for Vassall's farm – he had long since disassociated himself from Daymon. When Vassall saw them coming he rode off to Witbank and at midnight the police arrived with a warrant for Daymon's arrest.

On this sad note the family record ends:

She wrote to her mother during the following week, telling her that she had successfully rescued Daymon from the long arm of the Law, and that they had left Witbank.

During the next six months Mrs Flemmer received about half a dozen letters from Olive and then came a letter in which she said - 'Do not write until you have our new address

The new address never came, and although Mrs Flemmer lived for another ten years, no word of, or from, Olive ever reached her. Poor misguided child! Lost to her family for the last twenty years - no word of her has reached them in all that time, so they know not is she dead - or does she live?

Although as Louie says twenty years passed without the family even knowing if Olive was alive, recent research has unearthed a lot more information. The clue lay in the Death Notice of Louie and Olive's mother, Anna. She died in 1924 and among the children listed we find '*Olive de Roosen married to Henri de Roosen*'. From this single piece of information we have been able to piece together several more years of Olive's life.

As I said earlier there are several files on Henry (or Henri) Dijkman in the Pretoria archives. Nothing was found under the name de Roosen but it turned out to be a misspelling. Several files exist under the name de Rosen and from Olive's point of view these do not point to a happy ending to this tale.

Daymon changed his name to de Rosen and as required this was published in the Government Gazette of October 1913. It was shortly after his arrest at Witbank and a week after his wife divorced him. I can only assume that the change was made in an effort to cover his tracks.

The mystery of where Olive vanished to is answered by an exchange of telegrams starting three years later, in April 1915. The South African High Commissioner in Cairo wrote to the Governor General's Office in Pretoria enquiring about Henri de Rosen. de Rosen and his wife were reportedly destitute in Cairo and the enquiry is whether the Government will pay him his pension. The couple was in dire straits and if the Government is agreeable, they are asked to advance £100 for the fare, repayable on return to South Africa. There is a bit of to-ing and fro-ing between departments but the answer is a categorical 'no'. I am reading between the lines when I say that I can't help the feeling that there was more to this refusal than the fact that the request did not fall within the rules. I think that the Government had decided that this man was not to be helped for reasons that don't appear in the file.

Another three years went by and another request arrived, this time via the Cairo based brother of a Member of the Legislative Assembly. He telegraphed that *'Mr. & Mrs. de Rosen, formerly known as Dykman in desperate circumstances here'*

The file refers to Olive Flemmer as his 'partner out of wedlock' – poor Olive, thousands of miles from home, destitute and living with a man who would not give her the 'protection' marriage afforded. Was she still so mesmerized by Daymon and his religious views that she would put up with anything? Did she feel powerless and lost in a strange country? Why didn't she contact her family in South Africa to help her get home – surely she must have known they would not have turned their backs on her?

Many, many questions but unfortunately we will probably never know the answers. All we do know is that in 1928, thirteen years later, Henry de Rosen contacted the British Consul in Cairo asking for a confirmation of his British citizenship and for a passport. Both requests were granted – there is no mention at all of a wife. We can only speculate that Olive had died by this time, but there is no record of her death in the British Consul's files in Cairo. No other records have been found.

A sad end to a sad story.

Arthur Claude Flemmer 1884 – 1951
Millicent Constance Kerr 1892 – 1961



Arthur Claude Flemmer, known to his family as Claude, was born at the family home on the corner of Frere and Victoria Streets, Cradock on the 21st July 1884. He was Ludvig and Anna's ninth and last child and was baptized at St. Peter's on the 16th August 1884. I believe that his first name was taken from that of his uncle, Arthur Distin.

Arthur Claude Flemmer

The year he was born the whole family moved out to the farm *Plat Rivier* near Tafelberg where they were to live for the next sixteen years. Although eight other children had been born, only five had survived; they were Louie 10, Jack 8, Christian 6, Edith 3 and Olive 18 months. As we have seen this lively brood thrived in the free and easy farm life and I have no doubt that Claude as the youngest was the favourite of his older sisters. In *The Little Dane* we are fortunate to have a brief description of baby Claude:

She proved herself to be very helpful with the children. One day Mrs Flemmer said, "Louie, I am going to be very busy and I want you to take charge of Claude. It is too hot for you to go out and I don't want father to be disturbed as he is reading his paper so take baby to your room and keep him amused."

Louie walked off proudly carrying Claude, a lovely boy a year old, with rosy cheeks, blue eyes and fair hair. She was devoted to this baby brother and nothing pleased her more than being put in charge of him.

Growing up on the farm was wonderful for children, there was always something to see and do. As Claude got older there was the veld to explore and its wildlife to hunt. The need for an education intruded on this idyll of course and he was taught with his older siblings by the tutor hired by his father. When he was older he had his lessons at the Farm School at *Plat Rivier* from sister Louie.

By the time he was 12, Claude was a boarder at the Cradock Boys' High School, and his sisters Edith and Olive were at Rocklands. The Cadet Attendance Register shows he had become a bugler in the cadet corps in 1899 when he was 14 and by 1903 he had been made a sergeant. His

parents had moved back to Cradock in 1900 and like all the young boys in town he was very much taken up by the excitement of the big military presence and of the news of skirmishes with the Boers in the district.

Louie mentions in *The Little Dane* that Claude saw military service when she quotes a letter from her mother:

'Claude, as you know, has at last got his wish and has been taken on at the remount depot'. Being only eighteen, explained Louie, it was the only military service the authorities would allow him. But to continue her mother's letter: 'He has had some trying experiences and endured hardships; taking horses back and forth to Port Elizabeth and sleeping in open trucks amongst other things. On his last trip he spent his only shilling on two very gaudily coloured prints for you, one of King Edward and the other of Queen Alexandra, because he says you are so fond of royalty and he feels sure you will like these pictures. I am sure you will value them when you know that he was starving – this because he was delayed in Port Elizabeth and ran out of rations. He was very tempted to change the pictures for food or money, but did neither because he did not want you to miss having them. I am sending them under separate cover.'

He turned 18 in 1903, after the war had ended but there was still a huge army in South Africa and the supply of horses had proved a major problem for the British forces throughout. I found a brief description of the remount depot at Cradock at about this time:

Many horses passed through Cradock. In April about 500 at a time were loaded – eighteen in the long trucks and fourteen in the smaller ones, yet not a single one died. Horses bought from Australia for about £3 16s 3d each frolicked on the station platform. They kicked and fought with each other over the fodder and jumped over the platform onto the line and back again. The soldiers struggled to keep them in the trucks. In May about 6 000 horses passed through receiving water and fodder while provisions were being loaded.

I think Claude was a man who strongly believed in duty to King and Country. He seems an unlikely warrior but he is the only Flemmer I have come across who gave service in the Anglo Boer War, the German South West Africa Campaign (1914) and in the First and Second World Wars – a remarkable achievement.

After the excitement of his service in the remount depot, Claude settled into his life's work, farming. We know that he spent the next few years mainly involved in ostrich farming, working for among others, Charles Southey at Schoombie. By the time he was 25, he had moved to Hatherly in the Transvaal from where he applied to the Government for the job as an 'expert' in the newly established ostrich farms of the Transvaal. His letter of 1909 to the Director of Agriculture includes two references, one from Southey, and the other from acknowledged ostrich expert J.M.P. Bowker. Bowker notes that he has known Claude *"a good many years and know him to be capable and*

hardworking." Southey, for whom Claude had worked for two years is very complimentary. *"I can recommend you as a most trustworthy, hardworking, competent manager of ostrich, sheep, cattle and other work on a big farm such as this."* Perhaps his youth counted against him, because we know that he did not get this job. Instead Louie's husband Jim offered to make him a partner of his own farm, Riverside, near Witbank. Jim had started work for the Transvaal Estates and Development Company and would be travelling a lot, so this seemed an ideal solution. Louie was delighted:

'Jim has decided to carry on with his billet as Farm Inspector - he says £40 a month is not to be sneezed at - I am very sorry he cannot give it up, but agree that 'beggars can't be choosers'. Now for the exciting news. Jim has arranged to take Claude as a partner; he is to carry on the farming. It will be so nice having dear old Claude [he was only 25!] in the house; so much nicer than having a stranger or being alone. Jim has arranged with the Company that his headquarters will be in Riverside, his weekends and any spare time will be spent at home. He does his travelling by train when he can and for country work he has an American buckboard, four mules and a native boy. I am glad to think my dear Claude will be with us.'

On 18th October 1910, Claude married Millicent Constance 'Connie' Kerr before L. A. McCormick, Assistant Resident Magistrate in Pretoria. They went back to Riverside to start their married life – one which was to be a difficult, nomadic existence as Claude struggled as a farmer to provide for their growing family. The partnership with Jim at Riverside didn't work out and it's not difficult to see why. He and Claude were as different as chalk and cheese – Jim the hard working, impatient, driven man with a short fuse; Claude, by all accounts a very nice, easy-going, tolerant person. There doesn't seem to have been any animosity about the split because by 1911 when Claude and Connie's first child was born, he was managing the farm next door and was within walking distance of Louie on Riverside. This first child was christened Phyllis Elaine Flemmer Flemmer. Claude used the 'Flemmer' Christian name with all of his girls so that they would keep it even when they married. It shows how proud he was of his name and Danish heritage.

The second child, Robert Claude was born in 1914 in Port Elizabeth - it may be that Claude was there to embark for the German South West Africa Campaign. A year later, aged 31 he signed up for service with the 9th SA Infantry Regiment. We are fortunate to have found his military file as it gives a description of Claude and of his service. He stood 1.53m (5ft 5ins), had a chest measurement of 35ins (89cm) with a 'fresh red' complexion, blue grey eyes and brown hair. His address is Pretoria where Connie was left with the two small children when Claude amid great excitement, embarked for East Africa in February 1915. By now he was a machine gunner paid an extra 1/- a day. By October of the following year he had been hospitalised with malaria like so many other troops. He was shipped back to South Africa and spent months recuperating. He was granted recuperation leave in Pretoria from April to July of 1917 and presumably went home to Connie and the children. In what I can only believe was a typical Army botch-up he was tried in his absence as a deserter, found guilty and discharged with forfeiture of pay! This

was subsequently corrected; Claude was in fact discharged as 'permanently unfit for further war service' in July 1917 – his 'Military Character' is shown to be 'Very good'.

He left the army with some discharge pay – but what to do now? In April 1918, Claude and Connie had another son - Kenneth Christian Ludvig Flemmer, who was born in Pretoria. Four years later in 1922, the family was living in Somerset East when a second daughter Dené Constance Flemmer Flemmer arrived. By 1928 when daughter Lorna May Flemmer Flemmer was born the family was living at Baroda 20 kms north of Cradock. By now there were five children – Phyllis 17, Robert 14, Kenneth 10, Dené 6 and baby Lorna and times were very tough indeed. The world was on the brink of the Great Depression and working as a farm manager was not a well paid job. I am told that money was so tight Connie used to make hats for the children by stitching mielie leaves together. She was a great knitter and seamstress, making all of the children's' clothes. Education was a problem and the children had to be up well before dawn to feed the animals before riding donkeys to school in Cradock – a journey that would take at least 2 hours.

By 1930 the family had moved from Baroda and were living in Cradock when the last son, Edward Lawrence was born. Life was a real struggle now - to feed the children and stay ahead of the creditors. It tells us a lot when we see that only one child, Dené, completed her schooling, I assume as a boarder at Somerset East. The family were still living in Cradock in 1937 when the eldest daughter Phyllis, married Harold Roydon Mast-Ingle at St. Peter's.

*Claude in WW2 uniform
with Connie*

Little is known about the pre War period – but family military papers give us details from 1940 – when Claude once again signed up for service. He was nearly 56 by now, far too old for active service. Once again, we have some detail of him at this time – he stood 1.53m (5ft. 5ins), weighed 71kgs (157lbs), his complexion was fair, with blue eyes and by now, grey hair. As an old hand in the Army his experience was very useful in the Remount Depot, where he had served shortly after the Anglo Boer War. Although I am sure he was motivated by patriotism, there is no doubt that his army pay, meagre as it was, was a welcome regular source of income.

It seems that shortly before going into service the family was living on a farm Claude had bought, near Benoni. He called it Denmark and the address is given as Putfontein. It was probably while at Putfontein that he ran the brickfields shown in this photo:





*Claude and Connie at
the brickfields*

During his service there are various addresses shown in the records, in Hillbrow and in Parkhurst, Johannesburg. During his military service Claude was hospitalised with mitral stenosis and angina. In 1944 he was discharged as

medically unfit, diagnosed with a serious degeneration of the heart. After the war Claude and Connie lived at 33 2nd Street Linden in Johannesburg and he worked as an insurance agent. His financial problems continued and in 1950 his estate was sequestrated after he could not meet his debts and the mortgage on the farm near Benoni. Claude died aged 67 at his home, 61 3rd Linden on the 12th November 1951. His death notice records that he was an insurance agent for African Homes Trust and was a military pensioner. It had been a hard life, but I have this picture of Claude the farmer, happy doing what he really loved:

Claude had the most beautiful tenor voice and when they were rounding up sheep on horseback he used to sing and it could be heard all around the farm.

His wife Connie moved into the Queenshaven Old Age Home in Linden after his death. She was visiting her daughter Lorna when she died in Port Elizabeth on 1st January 1961 aged 87.

9.1 Phyllis Elaine Flemmer Flemmer 1911 – 1998 married Harold ‘Hal’ Roydon Mast-Ingle 1912 – 1994.



*Phyllis Elaine
Flemmer
Flemmer*

*Harold Hal
Roydon Mast-
Ingle*



Phyllis moved around with the family quite a bit as a young girl. There was very little money and by the time she was a teenager the family were living at Baroda. Life was tough on the farm and education was a problem as they were at that time a good 20kms outside Cradock – a long donkey ride as we have seen! Her schooling was paid for by her aunt Louie Rous who also helped with clothes. Phyllis remembered being invited to a grand dance at Tafelberg Hall as a young girl – arriving in a donkey cart.

She never finished school and worked as a governess for the Kelly Patterson family in Cradock for some years. She got a job working at the Katberg Hotel near the Hogsback and it was through this and the workings of fate that she met her future husband. She had been sent to the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg to buy catering equipment for the hotel. Staying in a boarding house with her brother Robert, he was worried about her safety in the big city. He introduced her to Hal Mast-Ingle who would show her around and, so I am told, it was love at first sight.

Hal visited her several times in the Katberg and the couple were married at St. Peter's on the 4th September 1937. The couple lived in Johannesburg where their first child, Edwin Wren, was born in 1939. Hal had been working with Bill Mast for some years in their company Mast Industries. This company was so central to the lives of so many of the Flemmers in this branch of the family that I include here an extract from the story of Barbara 'Bobby' Flemmer and Bill Mast:

'Phyllis' daughter, Fay has a wonderful recording done by Hal of the story of Mast Industries. It is an invaluable piece of family history and I can only give an outline here. First I will record the family 'cast' that were involved at various times in the company history.

- *Barbara 'Bobby' Flemmer [cousin of Phyllis] married Bill Mast – founder in 1924*
- *Gwynneth Flemmer [Bobby's sister] married Charles Ross who provided some of the early funding*
- *Jack Flemmer [Bobby's brother] worked at Mast Industries in 1936*
- *Phyllis Flemmer [cousin of Bobby] married Hal Mast-Ingle [nephew of Bill Mast] who worked at the company for many years.*
- *Kenneth Flemmer [brother of Phyllis] married Marge Young. He also worked at Mast Industries. One of their daughters*
- *Lynnette Flemmer married Lin Meyers, son of a long standing foreman of Mast Industries*

Far more than just a business, the company was central to the lives of the family for many many years. From what I can see Bill Mast was an energetic, hard working, inventive man, who from an early age was interested in 'making things'. With virtually no money, he bought and modified machines that he could use to turn out a variety of metal products. This theme of 'maak 'n plan' comes through strongly in the history of Mast Industries. The willingness to take calculated risks and to 'go for it' saw the company taking on huge orders

and working out afterwards how to get the machines and materials to fill the order. There was hard work and it seems, a lot of humour over the years.

After moving the company to Johannesburg in about 1930, Bill and Hal set about finding whatever work they could. Bearing in mind that the Depression had started, it is a testament to their hard work and ingenuity that the company prospered. Over the years they were major makers of light fittings; during the war years they took on huge orders from the army for tin mugs, heel tips plates and mess tins.

They tried their hand at leather place mats, but it was in glass jewellery that their big breakthrough came. Like a lot of good ideas the glass jewellery seems to have been discovered more or less by accident by Hal. Within a very short time the shops were buying as many of the earrings, bangles and necklaces as they could produce and a separate, profitable company was set up for production. Bill moved to Durban in 1949 and Mast Industries went through several financial changes over the years before finally being sold in the 1970's when Hal retired.'

Hal and Phyllis lived in Linden in Johannesburg for most of their married lives. Although she had three young children, she not only found time to lend a hand when needed at Mast Industries, but made a major contribution over many years to her community. Phyllis worked tirelessly on the Roosevelt Primary School PTA and was one of the driving forces behind all the fund raising – cooking endless pots of curry and rice to make money to plant trees and develop the bare piece of land set aside for the school. She was completely self taught and became a nursery school teacher in about 1954 going on to become an Akela in Cubs around 1957, taking every exam available.

She and Hal were involved in the founding of the Lincliff Scout troop and the Linden Bowling club and as Fay says *“Committee meetings were part of our everyday lives”*.

When Mast Industries was sold in the 1970's Phyllis and Hal built a house at Umzumbe on the Kwa Zulu Natal south coast with Bill Mast and Bobby, where they all retired. Hal died at Margate in 1994. Phyllis died at Claremont in Cape Town in 1998 and fittingly her ashes are scattered on the graves of her Flemmer ancestors at St. Peter's in Cradock.

Phyllis and Hal had three children:

9.1.1 Edwin Wren Mast-Ingle 1939 – married (1) Carol Mona Smith 1938 – He married Teresita Lepiz van Gaalen

To say that Wren has had an interesting and varied life is an understatement, and one has to read his 'Who's Who' to fully appreciate it. I can only give a brief summary here. He was educated at Roosevelt Park High School and trained as a journalist. After adventures up and down Africa and in Europe he returned to South Africa in October 1964. He married in 1965 and during the

course of the next 35 years had three children, published six books, travelled to Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Costa Rica, Taiwan and several other African countries.

Wren and Carol had three children:

9.1.1.1 Julian Charles Mast-Ingle 1965 – married Jodi Campher 1977 – they have one child

9.1.1.2 Baras Arthur Mast-Ingle 1970 – married Caroline Anne Brunton 1970 –

9.1.1.3 Cija Mast-Ingle 1974 – married Keld Bech-Nielsen

9.1.2 Charles Arthur Mast-Ingle 1942 – 1964 married Lynnette Eleanor Tyrrell died 1993

Charles died aged 21 in a motor accident and I cannot help but think that his was a talented life cut short. Although he had a mild attack of polio as a boy he was an exceptionally good mile runner. The record he set at Roosevelt High stands to this day. He represented Southern Transvaal, winning the junior championship mile, and also set a Natal record when representing Natal University.

He was also a talented rock musician, forming his own band at school. Although he never completed his B.Comm degree he started work in the life assurance industry and was an instant success. Before he was 21 he was Vice President of the Federated Employers Quarter Million Rand Sales Club, an amazing achievement in his first year with the company.

He had the world at his feet when he was killed in a car crash in Johannesburg. His wife Lyn was a nurse who moved to Tasmania where she died in 1993.

Charles and Lynnette had one child:

9.1.2.1 Meggan Mast-Ingle 1963 –

9.1.3 Fay Mast-Ingle 1944 – married (1) Murdo John MacRae 1937 – She married (2) Brian Robert Lea 1933 –

Fay was born in Johannesburg and attended Roosevelt High School. Having worked her way up in various companies to the position of National Credit Manager she retired in 1992 after a career which spanned thirty years. It was at this time that she finally received a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis after struggling for several years with mysterious bouts of ill health.

Fay and Brian live in a retirement village at Noordhoek and she is one of the major contributors to the Flemmer History project, an unfailing source of information and support to me in the production of this book.

Fay and John had three children:

9.1.3.1 Harold Gordon MacRae 1962 – married (1) Charmaine Cora-Ann Brown 1966 – one child. He married (2) Jessica Ann Wright 1961 – one child. He married (3) Georgina Lois McMillan 1968 – one child
 9.1.3.2 Colin John Macrae 1965 died as an infant 1965

Fay's third child was adopted by Brian:

9.1.3.3 Debbie-Jean Lea 1966 – married Dietrich Ulf Ridge Putter 1970 – two children

9.2 Robert Claude Flemmer born 1914 – married Delva Francis Distin 1916 –



Robert Claude Flemmer



Delva Francis Distin

Very little is known about Robert. He was born at Port Elizabeth shortly before his father Claude went off to the South West Africa campaign, and the following year to service in the First World War.

As we have seen, he was working in Johannesburg in 1930 when his sister Phyllis arrived from Katberg. He married one of the Distin girls, Delva Francis in 1938. She sued him for divorce in 1943, but later withdrew the application. At that time Robert was working at Crown Mines and the couple owned a house in Lang St. Rosettenville, Johannesburg. No more is known of Robert and Delva who I am told were alienated from the rest of the family.

9.3 Kenneth Christian Ludvig Flemmer 1918 – 1971 married Margaret 'Marge' Florence Young 1920 – 1987



*Kenneth Christian
Ludvig Flemmer*



*Margaret 'Marge'
Florence Young*

Ken was born in Pretoria and as we have seen, by the time he was four the family had moved to Somerset East. They were living in Cradock when he left school in Standard VI aged about 14, to work at his grandfather's coal yard – times were very tough.

When he was 22 he was living with his parents in Hillbrow, Johannesburg and like many other Flemmers, signed up for military service in 1941. His military records show that he was unemployed at the time, but more importantly they give us a brief description of him. He was 5ft. 6½ ins. (1,70m) and weighed 140lbs. (63.5 kgs) with fair hair and grey eyes.

He was with the Imperial Light Horse Armoured Corps and left within three months of signing up on the journey 'up North'. This great adventure for all these young soldiers involved a train trip to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), a road convoy to Mombasa via Nairobi and by sea to Suez – a journey of nearly 3 months! He drove trucks and armoured cars, achieving the rank of Lance Corporal, before being sent back to South Africa in 1943. I'm told that despite his army driving experience he was very frustrated to find he couldn't pass his civilian test in the Union!

Ken was finally discharged from military duty in January 1946 by which time he had married Marge Florence Young. He was working as a spray painter at the family business Mast Industries. His discharge papers confirm his Character and Efficiency as 'Very Good'.

He stayed at Mast Industries for many years leaving when there was a change in the management. He then became a meter reader with the municipality. He had many hobbies and a lot of sporting interests. He bred rabbits and birds; coached the girls' softball team and played league darts and badminton. I am told by his niece that he was a wonderful ballroom dancer.

Ken died at Turfontein in 1971 and Marge died in Johannesburg in 1987. Ken and Marge had two children:

9.3.1 Lynette Margaret Flemmer 1946 – married William Lincoln 'Lin' Meyers 1941 – 1994

Lynn was born in Johannesburg and went to Craighall Park Primary school before going on to Hyde Park High and Forest High School. She loved sport and played Netball, Tennis, Softball and Badminton. She also enjoyed sewing, knitting and embroidery.

In 1966 Lynn married Lin Meyers who was also connected to Mast Industries as his father, Boet was a foreman with the company for many years. Lin died in 1994 and in 2003 Lynn started her own successful bookkeeping company. Lynn and Lin had two children:

9.3.1.1 Gavin Wayne Meyers 1970 –

9.3.1.2 Charmaine Sylvia Meyers 1972 –

9.3.2 Dené Claudia Flemmer 1951 – 1995 married Brian McLennan Fisher 1948 – 1994

Like her sister Lynn, Dené went to Craighall Park Primary school before going on to Hyde Park High and Forest High School. It was at this last school, aged 14 that she met her husband-to-be Brian Fisher – I am told it was love at first sight! The couple married in 1971 at which time Brian was working with diamonds at Caress Jewellers. By 1974 he was a successful estate agent in the south of Johannesburg and was one of the first people selling land in what is now Glenvista.

The family moved to the Natal South Coast in 1990 where Dené was, in the words of her daughter Elaine, *'probably the best housewife and home mom we could ever have asked for!'* Sadly Brian died suddenly of pancreatic cancer in 1994. Worse was to follow when Dené was tragically killed in a car crash at Hibberdene nine months later.

Dené and Brian had three children:

9.3.2.1 Dianne Lesley Fisher 1972 – married (1) Grant James Pelser – two children. She married (2) Leslie Fraser McMartin 1962 – one child

9.3.2.2 Brenda Leigh Fisher 1974 – married Barry Lovell Du Plessis – two children

9.3.2.3 Elaine Lynn Fisher 1975 – lives with her partner Mirko Castellani 1973 – one child

9.4 Dené Constance Flemmer Flemmer 1922 – 2001 married (1) Donald Graham Gill 1914 – 1953 She married (2) Louis De Lancey 1910 – 1978



Dené Constance Flemmer Flemmer



Donald Graham Gill

Dené was the fourth child and second daughter of Arthur and Connie. She was born while the family was farming near Somerset East. Like her sisters she was given the first name Flemmer. As a child of six she moved with the

family to Baroda and then as an eight year old to Cradock. As we have already seen money was very tight and life was tough for the family. We know that the children's aunt, Anna Louie Rous, helped with some of the children's schooling costs. From descriptions I have of Dené, I think she was a bright, feisty girl, very like Anna Louie in fact. It is quite probable that because of this her boarding school fees were paid. She completed her schooling at Somerset East, the only one of the six children to matriculate.

By the time she finished school the family had moved to Johannesburg. By all accounts Dené was a highly intelligent person with an adventurous streak. She was also very good looking as we see from a description by her nephew Wren:

She was the epitome of a Dane with her blonde hair, piercing blue eyes and Roman nose that accentuated the slight air of belligerence that always enveloped her.

Dené joined South African Airways as an air hostess in the early 1940's. This was a prestigious job in the early days and only the very best of many applicants were selected. She saw service on the flying boat service between Johannesburg and London and was selected for the first SAA jet service in 1949. An exciting, glamorous life – Dené travelled the world. She had a keen eye for detail and a wonderful turn of phrase that made her stories of Khartoum, Cairo and other exotic cities come alive for her family on her return home.

In 1951 Dené married Don Gill, an accountant born in Bulawayo, Rhodesia. Shortly after the birth of their son, Don took his own life at the age of 39.

In 1957 she married Louis de Lancey a Johannesburg born estate agent and they had a son in 1959.



Dené started selling Happiness for the Handicapped and Homes & Orphans diaries and the advertising in them. This was an early example of telephone selling and with her natural charm she was a great success. From time to time her nephew Wren Mast-Ingle worked with her, first on the phone and then travelling South Africa seeing clients and prospects face-to-face. He has many stories of the fun and adventures they had on these epic trips to Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

Louis De Lancey

In the early 70's having separated from Louis, Dené moved to Cape Town. For many years she was head of the Actuary College for Old Mutual. Always an avid reader, it was during this time that she wrote a romantic novel based

on Xhosa fables. Two years were spent trying to get the book published without success. In the late 1980's she moved back to Midrand near Johannesburg. She died in 2001 following major surgery.

Dené and her first husband Don had one child:

9.4.1 Graham Kenneth Gill 1952 –

She and Louis had one child:

9.4.2 Sean Dillon De Lancey 1959 – married Marianne Stockenstrom 1959 – they had two children:

9.4.2.1 Mark Stephen De Lancey 1990 –

9.4.2.2 David Patrick De Lancey 1994 –

9.5 Lorna May Flemmer Flemmer 1928 – married Frank Mervyn Derrick Howard-Browne 1924 – 2005



Lorna May Flemmer Flemmer

Lorna was the second last of Arthur and Connie's children. She was born at Baroda, near Cradock, a leap year baby, on the 29th of February 1928. Like the other girls 'Flemmer' was one of her Christian names. Lorna spent her early years growing up in Cradock. As we have seen the family had financial problems and Lorna can well remember her Godmother May Gilfillan giving her a very welcome 2/6d for birthdays and Christmas. For 6d she could buy a yard of material at the local shop and in no time her mother would run up a dress for her.

In about 1943 Lorna was 15 and her parents were farming at Putfontein near Johannesburg. This meant schooling was a problem so Lorna went to live with her sister Phyllis and her family in Parktown North. I am told that Lorna had the Danish Flemmer genes and was 5ft (1.52m) tall with beautiful blue eyes and black hair.

Unfortunately I know little about this family, but in 1946 Lorna married Frank Mervyn Derrick Howard-Browne. They had a son Mervyn in 1947 and Gillroy was born in 1949. Twelve years later Rodney was born in 1963. The family lived in many different places and Derrick ran brickworks in Port Elizabeth and Butterworth. Lorna ran one of the first crèches open to all races. The family moved to the USA in the 1980's and Derrick died in Tampa, Florida in 2005.

Lorna and Derrick had four children:

9.5.1 Mervyn Morgan Howard-Browne 1947 – 1978 married Norma Marilyn Morris. They had three children:

9.5.1.1 Garry Marc Howard-Browne 1969 –

9.5.1.2 Deborah Joy Howard-Browne 1971 – married Anthony Fox – four children

9.5.1.3 Sharon Wendy Howard-Browne 1972 – married Josh Holm 1979 – two children

9.5.2 Gillroy Morgan Howard-Browne 1949 – married Loraine Denise Viviers 1951 – they had two children:

9.5.2.1 Jeremy Howard-Browne 1975 –

9.5.2.2 Jilleen Howard-Browne 1978 –

95.3 Rodney Morgan Howard-Browne 1961 – married Adonica Shan Weiers

What I know about this family I found on the website of Revival Ministries International and I quote as follows:

Dr. Rodney M. Howard-Browne is President and Founder of Revival Ministries Int. RMI, as it is commonly known, is a ministry that crosses denominational boundaries and geographical borders to fulfill what the Lord has called it to do – to stir up the Church, telling her to get ready for the coming revival. In December 1987 Dr Howard-Browne, along with his wife Adonica and their three children, Kirsten, Kelly and Kenneth, moved to the USA to be a part of what the Lord had told Rodney in a word of prophecy; The Lord said, “As America has sown missionaries over the last 200 years, I am going to raise up people from other nations to come to the USA” He also said He was sending a mighty revival to America.

Dr Howard-Browne and his family have been travelling as missionaries in North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, England, Scotland, Wales, Holland, Singapore, Germany and the Philippines.

Revival meetings conducted by Dr Howard-Browne last from one to four weeks and are reminiscent of revivals of the past, with unusual and powerful demonstrations of the Holy Spirit in every meeting. Salvations, rededications, water baptisms, and baptisms in the Holy Spirit are often accompanied by miracles, signs and wonders.

If you are hungry for a touch from God, then join the thousands who are experiencing this great Book of Acts outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Ministries have addresses in Randburg and in Tampa, Florida.

Rodney and Adonica had three children:

9.5.3.1 Kirsten Adonica Howard-Browne 1982 – married Brynn Bendixen – one child

9.5.3.2 Kelly May Howard-Browne 1984 – 2002

9.5.3.3 Kenneth Rodney Howard-Browne 1987 –

9.5.4 Bazil Morgan Howard-Browne 1963 – married Ann Margaret Robertson 1966 – they had four children:

9.5.4.1 Bradley Morgan Howard-Browne 1986 –

9.5.4.2 Kayley Ann Howard-Browne 1988 –

9.5.4.3 Jessica Jane Howard-Browne 1992 –

9.5.4.4 Makenzie Howard-Browne 2001 –

9.6 Edward ‘Ted’ Lawrence Flemmer 1930 – 1981 married Sarah Margaretha ‘Rita’ du Toit born 1929



Ted, the last child of Claude and Millicent, was born just after the family had moved to Cradock in 1930. He joined the Air Force in 1946 and I am told he saw service in the Korean War. He was based at Langebaan for many years. The couple were living there in 1966 when Rita was a telephonist at the Air Force base and Ted a storeman. He was a Warrant Officer II when he died of a heart attack in Pretoria in 1981

*Edward ‘Ted’
Lawrence Flemmer*