



Toger Abo August Flemmer



Rosa Caroline Philips

TOGER ABO AUGUST FLEMMER 1842– 1913
ROSA CAROLINE PHILPS 1852 - 1908

Töger Abo August Flemmer was the third child and second son of Dr. Christian August Flemmer and his wife Betty. He was born at Kørsor in Denmark on the 5th October 1842. Being a healthy baby his christening was delayed until the following summer. On the 1st June 1843 he was baptised and named after his uncle, Töger Abo, a name that had been in his mother's family for 200 hundred years. I have used the English spelling of the name throughout. In South African documents the name was usually shown as Töger, but I am told in Danish it is more correctly Tøger.

The small port of Kørsor was a very pleasant place to grow up. His father had his medical practice in the town and the family were quite well to do. He had his older brother Christian Ludvig and sister Camilla and there were servants to help his mother with her growing brood. The house was right near the sea and in the short summer the boys spent hours playing with their friends on the seashore.

Toger's grandfather Hans Christian Flemmer was the much-loved vicar at nearby Stillinge, where he lived with his wife and son Carl. Carl also had children and the families saw each other often. The vicar gave Toger's father a monthly allowance which helped a great deal to supplement the doctor's earnings. Toger was five when the vicar died in 1847 and the monthly allowance ended. By then Dr. Flemmer and Betty had five children and another on the way and life became more difficult.

In 1852 when Toger was nine, his uncle Toger Abo came back from darkest Africa to marry his cousin Methea Sophia Kjeldberg. Sitting around the fire after dinner, Uncle Toger told the children, their eyes on stalks, stories of the

Cape, of hunting, the wild animals and the warlike tribes he had come across on his travels. Imagine the excitement of it all!

Toger Abo had become a successful businessman in Cradock, and soon realised the financial plight of his sister and brother-in-law. He urged them to leave Denmark and settle in the Cape Colony where the possibilities seemed so much more promising. He went further and offered to pay a major part of the considerable costs involved in the move.

And so it was that a month before his 10th birthday, young Toger Flemmer said goodbye to his cousins and school friends and set out on the long, long trip to the Cape. What excitement there must have been for the young boy – first to Copenhagen where his birthday was celebrated, then to London, a huge bustling city the likes of which the family had never seen before.

On 22nd November 1852 the whole party boarded the Corsairs Bride for the three month voyage to Algoa Bay and Port Elizabeth. Toger was 10 by now, his older brother Christian Ludvig almost 13 and his sister Camilla about to turn 12. These older children had their hands full on the long and tedious voyage out, amusing the other four children and keeping an eye on the small fry.

But finally, finally land was in sight and then it was the frightening, thrilling ride through the surf. Toger was plucked from the surfboat by a hoard of shouting black people and deposited at last on dry land. A whole rowdy carnival of hawkers, horsemen, people in exotic costumes and the strange and exciting smells of Africa quite simply overwhelmed the family that first day.

More adventures followed – the family met their other grandfather, Christian Johannes von Abo for the first time when he came to greet them on arrival; and for three weeks the family lived in tents on the beach – what more could any young boy ask for?

After a short stay, more excitement – the ox wagons were inspanned and the three-week trek inland to Cradock started. There was just so much to see and learn – about the wagons, the bush, the wild animals that made all those frightening noises just outside the ring of firelight at night. For the young boys the time flew by and in no time it seemed they arrived in Cradock. There was much to do, helping unpack and settle into the house that their Uncle Toger had had built for them, finding their way around town and being introduced to the towns social circle.

School for Toger was very different to what he was used to in Denmark. There is an account that gives a feel for how schools were run in Eliza Butler's Reminiscences of Cradock:

Mr. Jeffrey then started a Private School and many of the Scholars were removed from the Government School. But Mr. Jeffrey was not so popular. His punishment for boys and girls was a dose of Epsom Salts as well as the flogging. Our informant as a boy was made to kneel in prayer on the platform

before the whole school, and ask God's forgiveness, for making marks on a book, which crime he had never committed, so he knew God would not hear his prayer

When punished for some other offence, he had to receive 19 cuts, and the lad counted the strokes as they were administered. He could not help laughing at the end of the dose. On being questioned why he laughed he confessed he had only received 18 cuts instead of 19, at which Mr. Jeffrey laughed himself and asked "if he wished for the other?"

That things were a little uncivilised in the frontier schools of the time came as a nasty shock to the Danish children. The boys had a whole new world to explore; there was swimming in the Fish River, the wide-open veld, horses and hunting. Toger seems to have left school at a young age if his obituary is correct. It says that he went farming in Kaffraria in 1858 with his older brother Ludvig – he would only have been 16 and Ludvig 18 by then. This seems very young to me, but the frontier was full of stories like this. The boys were granted land at the mouth of the Gonubie River near present day East London that they farmed for about three years.

The land had been annexed by the British Government following one of the many Border Wars and the Government was keen to see it settled, the farmers forming a buffer between the warlike tribes to the north and the settlements further south. It may seem extraordinary to us that these two young men would set off with a wagon of provisions and their horses like this. They travelled through a very unsettled part of the country, to set up a farm on a piece of land they had never seen. They were surrounded by hostile tribes who were renowned cattle rustlers. Such was the way of life at this time in the Cape Colony – one took one's chances.

Things didn't go well for the brothers. Early on a fire, probably started by local tribespeople destroyed their ox wagon with 6 months supplies in it. This was not an unusual happening given that the settlers had simply taken tribal land. Further problems arose when a careless neighbour started a bush fire which killed most of their stock of animals. Their capital – probably given to them by their Uncle Toger - used up, they decided to move back to the Cradock District.

For the next several years we lose track of Toger, but I think he worked as an overseer on his brother-in-law's farm. This was *Kruidfontein* (now Stonehills) owned by Hans Michael Naested, a Dane who had come out with the Flemmer family and who had married Toger's sister Camilla in 1860.

On the 16th October 1873 aged 31, Toger married Rosa Caroline Philps aged 21, at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Cradock. She was one of nine daughters of the late Frederick Stephen Philps and his wife Emma Eliza Keen. Philps and his wife were born in England and he met her when visiting the Colony on a hunting trip. Swept off his feet by Emma he married her, aged 16, at Grahamstown. The couple moved to Cradock where he set up a thriving pharmacy business.



Six of the Philps girls with their mother (left). Rosa is seated second left.

The Philps were a very wealthy family and there is a vivid description of their beautiful home 'Mulberry Shade' at 38 Bree Street, Cradock in the *Outspan* of 1947. Without wishing to be unkind, Rosa was quite a catch for Toger. He was the son of a highly respected doctor, but was of very modest means himself. As Rosa's father had died two years before the wedding, it is quite possible that she had inherited a portion of his estate on reaching 21. I suspect that life was not easy for either of

them – Toger never earned very much during their marriage and the spinster Philps sisters were by all accounts pretty harsh judges!

Be that as it may, Toger, like the other Flemmers seems to have been a thoroughly decent, likable man. His obituary describes him well:

He was not only a gentleman by birth but also one of nature's gentlemen and was loved and respected by all who knew him.

As we will see, Toger seemed to have difficulty settling down in any one place and life must have been tough for Rosa. At this distance in time one can only draw on clues left behind, but the inscription on Rosa's gravestone at the St. Peter's cemetery perhaps tells its own story. Rosa is buried in the Philps family vault along with her sisters. While the sisters have religious inscriptions such as *Thy will be done* on their tombstones, Rosa's inscription has no religious connotation:



The Philps' house 'Mulberry Shade'

Patient in adversity

Perhaps this sums up her sisters' view of her life with Toger.

But I am jumping ahead of the story here. The young couple set up home in Cradock where Toger had his own shop. It was in Cradock that the first of their 10 children was born. He was Frederick Stephen Philips Flemmer, born 28th December 1874. Unfortunately like so many of this couple's children he was a sickly baby and was baptised at St. Peter's on 1st January 1875, dying days later on the 17th January.

Their next child Emma Betty Martha was born in Cradock on the 12th June 1876. Perhaps wanting to start afresh the couple moved to nearby Maraisburg (now Hofmeyer) where Toger set himself up as a storekeeper. Today Hofmeyer is a tiny town, more a crossroad on the road from Cradock to Steynsburg and was probably even smaller in 1876. It would not be an easy place to make a living. Toger was fortunate to have a gunpowder licence and in 1877 wrote to the local Justice of the Peace (his uncle Toger Abo) asking permission to supply gunpowder to local farmers, and permission was given. We are fortunate to have a picture of the shop, which I believe stands in Hofmeyer to this day.



Toger's shop - Main Street, Maraisburg

On 2nd August 1877, Rosa gave birth to their third child, Toger Ludvig in Cradock. She had probably gone home for the birth, to be near her family and medical attention. Again the infant was sickly and died aged 11 months on the 23rd June 1878.

Six months after the death of this infant another child was born on 1st January 1879. This was Daisy 'Dot' Ellen, again born at Cradock, although Toger himself had given up the store and was farming in the Maraisburg District. It was in this year that he decided like many others to try and make his fortune on the Kimberly diamond fields. The rush had started 8 years before and

thousands had flocked north, many of course lucky to come back with their lives and little else. But first a bit of background to this expedition, gleaned from various family stories.

Rosa Flemmer's sister Ellen Philips had married Samuel Jerrold Wilks on 26th December 1878. He was a railways engineer and after the wedding celebrations had taken his wife down to a bush camp on the Lower Fish River where he was working. It came as a nasty shock for young and genteel Ellen to move from her lovely comfortable family home to a tent on the banks of the river. Worse was to follow. Five weeks after the wedding the black work crew started some sort of riot one night and Ellen died suddenly of what was described at the time as brain fever. This term was sometimes used as a euphemism for suicide but there is a feeling she may have literally died of fright.

Sam Wilks went to pieces at the death of his wife and sank into a drunken depression. The Philips girls were very fond of him and to help get him out of it they suggested he join Toger on his expedition to the diamond fields. There is an interesting end to this story. Toger eventually came back to Cradock with ONE small diamond for his wife while Sam Wilks went on to become a multi-millionaire! He had an enormous house in Rondebosch and was a friend of Cecil John Rhodes. Many years later when the Philips women went to visit him in Cape Town they were met at the station by a magnificent carriage. The team of horses were resplendent in ostrich feather bridles, and the sisters were treated like royalty.

Toger had not made his fortune, but the diamond was set into a beautiful ring for his wife Rosa. This ring stayed in the family, handed down to the daughters in each generation. Unfortunately it was stolen from the home of Rosemary Fowkes (Heathcote) in a burglary at their home in Johannesburg during the 1980's.

In 1880, having given up farming and been unsuccessful in Kimberley, Toger, by now 37 and with two young children, got a job as pound master at the farm Greyston an hour's ride from Maraisburg. This was a government appointment and involved impounding straying animals until their owners paid a fine to reclaim them. It was not well paid and he probably earned about £100 a year in this role.

He didn't stick at it long and by the following year was farming in the Middelburg District, probably on his brother Hans' farm *Leeufontein*. Another daughter, Hilda was born at Cradock on the 29th March 1881, followed the next year by Rosa on the 22nd November 1882.

Toger continued to farm in the Middelburg area before going back to being an overseer on the Naested farm *Kruidfontein* near Cradock. His brothers and sisters had married and had children of their own by now and there were many happy gatherings of the families of Ludvig, Hans, Camilla and Charlotte.

In 1886 there was tremendous excitement in the Colony when gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand and another enormous rush started. Toger was not a man to miss an opportunity and in 1887 he was at the Gilfillan farm near Middelburg en route to the goldfields. His younger brother Salvator also headed north and became involved in the mad rush to buy shares in the mining ventures that opened and closed by the day. Toger appears to have had no luck with this venture and by the next year was back in Middelburg on his way to Cradock.

He went back to his position as overseer at Stonehills and over the next few years three more children were born in Cradock in quick succession. A son was born in December 1890, and as there are no details I assume he died at birth. Camilla was born 11th December 1891 and died five days later. There was more sadness the next year when another son, Alfred was born on the 26th December 1892 and only lived five days. One can begin to understand why *Patient in adversity* was the epitaph chosen for poor Rosa.

There was some small consolation for the family the next year when their eldest daughter Emma, then only 16, qualified as a teacher at the famous Rocklands High School for Girls in Cradock. Teachers' training at the school was in its infancy and Emma was one of the first three girls to qualify. More joy followed the next year when a son who survived infancy was born – he was Victor Wilks Flemmer born on the 2nd March 1894.

Cradock was by now a thriving town as we can see from a Directory of the time:

The population of the town itself, including natives, is 4 000 and of the entire division is 15 000. The pursuits of the farmers are sheep and cattle farming, ostrich and horse breeding. There are also large productions of wheat and other cereals. The town is a thriving business place, does a large trade in wool, mohair, feathers etc., and the mercantile establishments are carried on in a thoroughly English style. The morning market is well supplied in every respect.

By now Toger was 52 and Rosa 42, with an infant son and daughters Emma 17, Dot 14, Hilda 13 and Rosa 10. Times were tough for the family and it is probably for this reason that Toger applied for the job of Roads Inspector for the Cradock Division. It was not a well-paid job (about £150 a year) but at least it was a steady and reliable income. It is quite probable that he was appointed to the job with the assistance of his brothers-in-law Edward Gilfillan and Hans Michael Naested who were on the committees of the Divisional and Municipal Councils respectively.

The family were living in Bree Street Cradock near Rosa's sisters and the younger girls were all at Rocklands. There is a photo of the girls' 'Drilling Competition' class taken in 1896. It shows the three younger Flemmer girls among the thirty or so in the class. 'Drilling' was a physical education activity and we can see some of the girls are holding thin poles for the exercises. All are dressed in the English Victorian style, dark knee-length dresses with high

collars – they must have been so hot in the blazing Karoo summers! Their sister Emma was a teacher at the school, also attended by their cousin Louise Naested. By 1898 Dot, then 18 was also a pupil teacher.



This wonderful picture of the family taken at about this time shows them in typical stern poses – if only the picture could talk! All of this family, like many other Flemmers were quite short – Toger I believe to be about 5ft 4ins (1.62m) tall and his daughter Rosa, extreme right, was only 5ft 1in (1.55m) tall as an adult.

*Front: Victor, Toger,
Rosa, Rosie
Back: Hilda,
Daisy and Emma*

Needless to say Toger's job as Roads Inspector meant a lot of travelling in the District with weeks at a time away from home. He continued in this job despite the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War in 1899. There were many tales of encounters with British troop movements and with Boer commandos who moved in and out of the area. I have seen the original of a Martial Pass issued to him by the Resident Magistrate in 1902 which 'Permitted Mr. Toger Flemmer to be out until 11 p.m.', the rest of the town being under curfew.

The Anglo Boer War ended in May 1902 and did not directly affect Cradock in the sense that it was never under attack. But of course the town was affected by disruptions and shortages of supplies, by townsmen who went off to war and did not come back, by curfews and by alarms when Boer commandos were reported in the area. Like most towns it was placed under martial law and there was a major British military presence in the town, no doubt to the excitement of the Flemmer girls!

As the war ended, the Colony heaved a collective sigh of relief as life could begin to return to normal. The next ten years or so was to be a time of mixed joy and much sadness for Toger and Rosa and their families. Times were tough for everyone with the economy in ruins. Of all the Flemmers I have written about this branch seems to have been the most ill-fated. To get a

perspective on things I will set events out by years rather than in narrative form:

1902: On the 16th April of this year there was a big family celebration when Hilda aged 20, married Arthur Forbes a wealthy horse breeder in St. Peter's Cradock

1906: Having tired of the constant travelling his job entailed, Toger advertised himself as a "Market and Commission Agent in Bree St." As an aside here for those of us rugby fans – the Springboks were on tour in England and the 'Up to Date Bioscope Company' was showing films of the games in Cradock – 3/- for a seat and 1/- standing.

1907: Another wedding took place on 16th January when Emma, aged 29 married Geoffrey Pallister, 28 in Cradock. He was from York and worked for the Post Office in town. There was more joy in October when a grandson, Geoffrey Flemmer Pallister was born on the 1st of October.

1908: A year of great sorrow for the family when Toger's wife Rosa died aged 56 of broncho-pneumonia in Cradock on the 17th March. Toger himself must have been away when his wife died. Her death notice records that she was sick for four days and that her son-in-law, Arthur Forbes was present at her death. Worse followed when Emma, who been married just over a year and the mother of six-month-old Geoffrey, died less than month after her mother on the 24th April. Even more difficulty, if this is possible, followed when Emma's husband abandoned his infant son and left town never to come back.

1909: The heartbreak continued when Hilda aged only 25 died on the 23rd April, leaving her distraught husband with two young children. Despite this terrible run of events life had to go on and there was a wedding this year – the youngest daughter Rosa aged 27, married Oswald Beresford Lonsdale who worked for Standard Bank in Cradock. The family turned out in all its finery, perhaps to compensate for the last few dreadful years.

Toger was 65 by now and the events of the last few years had been enough to break the spirit of anyone. He had virtually no money at all; two of his married daughters who would in the normal course look after him in his old age were dead and the other (Rosie) had moved to the Transvaal with her new husband. Toger's only son was still at school and Dot his unmarried daughter could only contribute her love and support.

Family ties were strong and he went to live with his sister-in-law Ida Heathcote (Philps) on her husband's farm at *Steenbokvlakte* outside Cradock where he was treated with great kindness. On 20th June 1913 he died of heart failure at his sister Camilla's house in Cradock, aged 70. A notice appeared in the Midland News the next day:

Deaths Column: Died- At Cradock June 20th 1913 Toger A.A. Flemmer age 70 years and 8 months, the funeral of the late Toger A.A. Flemmer will move

from his sister's residence (Mrs. Naested) in Frere St. on Saturday morning 11 o'clock June 21st 1913.

On the 24th June his obituary appeared:

Mr. Töger Flemmer

During the past few days death has removed two of Cradock's oldest and best known inhabitants, in Mr. Toger Flemmer and Mr. J.W. Stevens. The late Mr. T. Flemmer who died on the 20th June was an old and respected inhabitant of Cradock. Toger Abo August Flemmer was born at Koiser (sic) Denmark on the 5th of October 1842 and was one of 7 children of Doctor Flemmer who came to the Colony in 1853 and settled in Cradock. In 1858 a farm in Kaffraria was granted to Toger Flemmer and his elder brother. This they occupied for about three years but most of their stock died owing to a careless neighbour having set fire to the grass. A few weeks after their arrival a wagon containing 6 month's provisions was also destroyed. Mr. T. Flemmer was for many years overseer of his brother-in-law's farm Kruidfontein, now Stonehills, near Cradock. For a long time, including the period of the Boer War, he was Road Inspector in this district. In the year 1873 he married Miss Rosa Philips of this town. They had many children of whom only two daughters and a son are left to mourn the loss of loving and good father. The last four years of his life were spent with his late wife's relations, the Heathcotes of Steenbokvlaakte, who treated him with great kindness. He was not only a gentleman by birth but was also one of nature's gentlemen and was loved and respected by all who knew him.

His estate was quite simple but took many years to finalise for various reasons. When Toger died he owned the clothes he stood up in and these were of no value and were given to the farm servants. He owned a mortgaged property, inherited from his wife for which there was a life policy to cover the mortgage. This property was 1/3 erf 18 Adderly St Cradock 1/3 block B erf 18 and 1/3 erf 17 all in Cradock. It was held to be of little value and was sold for £210 to his sisters in law, Victoria Stock (born Philips) and Ida Sophia Heathcote (born Philips) in 1922. Claims lodged against the estate included one for £400 by Arthur Forbes who had been paying the costs of Victor's schooling and upkeep. This is a lot of money and shows that Arthur had been meeting the costs for several years.

The executor of the estate had been his brother-in-law Hedley Stock but by 1919, the estate still not finalised, his son Victor was appointed executor. This seemed to further complicate things, because by 1921 Victor was working for the Standard Bank in Nairobi. It was not until 1923, 10 years after Toger's death that the estate was finalised. The nett proceeds were finally calculated to be £778 8 11d and this amount was distributed among his surviving children, Dot, Rosa and Victor and among his grandchildren.

Toger had a life of great difficulty and much sorrow. He left little behind him in the material sense but I have met many of his descendants, all warm, lovely

people and that surely is his real monument. He is buried with Rosa in the Philps family vault in St. Peter's cemetery.

Toger and Rosa had ten children:

1 Frederick Stephen Philps Flemmer 1874 -1875

Frederick was baptised at St. Peter's on the 1st January 1875, three days after he was born. He died 16 days later.

2 Emma Betty Martha Flemmer 1876 – 1908
Edward Pallister 1879 –



Emma Betty Martha Flemmer



Edward Pallister

Emma was born in Cradock on the 12th June 1876, the second child of Toger and Rosa Flemmer and the first to survive infancy. She was a sickly baby and was baptised at St. Peter's six days later. Emma was named after her aunt Emma Philps and her grandmother Betty Flemmer. Her father moved the family around the district quite frequently in her early years but by the time she was of school going age they had settled in Cradock. By the time Emma was six her mother had had five more children and she had three baby sisters, Daisy, Hilda and Rosa competing for her mother's attention. She grew up as part of a very large family – there were her seven Philps aunts, some with families of their own, as well as numerous Flemmer, Naested and Gilfillan cousins in and around Cradock.

Emma started school at Rocklands as a young girl, an institution that was to remain part of her life for many years to come. The school did very well with limited resources at this time with teachers being mainly from England and Scotland. Discipline was strict but fair and twice a week the girls would be taken for a walk, the teacher doing her best to get them to march in step. It is not surprising to find one of these march groups being followed by a bunch of mischievous schoolboys chanting "*Three cheers for the Cradock Volunteers*" – a reference to the famous Cradock Bricks who had gained a reputation for bravery in the Border wars.

Emma was fortunate to be at Rocklands when a new headmistress was appointed in 1888. She was Miss Lilla Ross Hockly, then 27 years old – a woman who was to become a legend in teaching in the Karoo. It is interesting to see what Miss Hockly took over as it shows us the sort of schooling Emma and other girls were getting up until this time.

.....one teacher for Dutch, one for English, one music teacher, and a mistress for the Infant School. In the upper school there were 35 pupils, in the Infant Department 33 making a total of 68 of whom only 13 were boarders. The highest class was Standard VII. Both boarding department and schoolrooms were most insufficiently furnished. There were but three pictures, one pair of curtains, and one carpet in the house, and hardly any good school requisites at all.

Lilla Hockley revolutionised the school, doing the work of three teachers. She upgraded the levels of education available and introduced a teachers' training course among many other things. Emma Flemmer was one of the first three girls trained in the Karoo to get a teacher's certificate. By 1898 Emma was on



*Emma with a group of teachers in 1906 –
she sits extreme right*

Emma was a good-looking young woman as we can see from this picture taken in about 1900 when she was 23.

*Emma aged 23 in
about 1900*



She is severely dressed and unsmiling but of course this was very much in keeping with the times. It is seldom if ever that a photograph from this era shows a person smiling. There is a kind of intensity in her stare which is difficult to interpret, but I would imagine her to be a serious person, as befits

someone who is a matric teacher at the girls' school. She is slimmer than her sisters and a bit taller – I would think about 5ft 5ins (1.65m). With Cradock under martial law during the Anglo Boer War I am sure she was very much in demand for the entertainments and balls organised by the British officers.

By 1907 Emma was 30 and had risen to be Acting Principal of Rocklands. Her descendants have a wedding ring with the initials and date *E & E 1905* engraved in the band. It may well be that the ring was also an engagement ring given to her in 1905 by her future husband Edward Pallister. The couple married in Cradock on the 16th January 1907, Edward's 28th birthday.

Edward Pallister was the sixth of eight children of John Pallister, a poultry and game dealer who lived at 20 Goodroomgate, York for many years. Edward had arrived in the Colony with a flood of young British men seeking their fortune in South Africa and filling positions in the rapidly developing government infrastructure. He had been appointed an Assistant at the Cradock Post Office in 1900 aged 21 and in 1902 was the senior of 6 Post Office Assistants, earning £235 per annum.

Almost exactly nine months to the day after the wedding the couple's son Geoffrey Flemmer Pallister was born on the 1st October 1907. What followed next is hard to make out with any accuracy, lost as it is in the mists of time. We do know that Emma's mother Rosa had little time to enjoy her new grandson, dying the following year when the baby was six month old. Even worse, Emma herself died three weeks later on the 24th April 1908 aged only 31. I don't know the cause of her death. It seems strange perhaps that a woman who had filled a senior teaching position shortly before, should die so young. She may never have recovered from the birth of her son – an all too common problem at the time. Emma is buried with her mother and father, in the Philips family vault at St. Peter's.

What we do know is that either when Emma died or shortly before, Edward Pallister disappeared from Cradock and as far as we know never came back. It is hard to imagine anything worse than the abandonment of an infant son in this way. Certainly Emma's aunts, the Philips sisters, left no one in any doubt that they had always regarded Edward Pallister as a rotter who drank and gambled too much and ignored his young wife and son. All we can say with certainty is that in December 1909 Edward Pallister was working at the Kimberly Post Office where he tendered his resignation after pleading guilty to *'financial embarrassment and the use of drugs'*. No more is known except that he is said to have gone to Rhodesia where he worked for the Railways and eventually remarried.

Emma and Edward's son was:

2.1 Geoffrey Flemmer Pallister 1907 – 1983 married Marie le Caux van Schalkwijk 1917 – 2005



Geoffrey Flemmer Pallister



Marie le Caux van Schalkwijk

As we have seen, Geoffrey jnr. had a difficult start in life. He was born in Cradock on the 1st October 1907 and his mother died when he was only six month's old. At the same time his father disappeared from Cradock, never to return, effectively leaving the baby an orphan. At first his aunt, Dot Flemmer nursed him on the farm *Kruidfontein* where she worked as a governess to the Moolman family. When Dot left, the Moolmans brought the young boy up and there has been much speculation over the years as to why the Flemmer family would have 'abandoned' one of their own in this way. I am not sure this was the case at all. Firstly Dot was there to look after him, and the boy's grandfather Toger may well have been on the farm during the child's early years. His aunt Hilda Flemmer died when he was young and Rosa Flemmer left Cradock with her husband shortly after. The Moolmans may have had another connection to the Flemmers as a Moolman married one of Geoffrey's cousins, Elizabeth Maria Naested.

Whatever the case the boy had a difficult start in life, made no easier by his Philips aunts constantly telling him that his father was a no-good who had 'thrown him away'. This is a dreadful thing to say to any child and needless to say it was to have an effect on Geoff's whole life.

His education was paid for by his aunt Ada Philips who was always kind to him and to whom he remained close all his life. When he left school he worked in Metcalfe's attorneys office in Cradock for a year before going to Grootfontein Agricultural College. Ada financed the purchase of the farm *Petersburg* near Somerset East for him, probably out of his inheritance. But inexperienced as he was, he sold the farm and went into a partnership with an older man in a farm near Graaf Reinet. There had been a five-year drought in the area and this combined with the hardship of the Great Depression in South Africa, and some questionable dealings by his partner caused his insolvency. It was about this time that Geoff met his wife-to-be. She was Marie le Caux van Schalkwijk, a 16-year-old matric student at Union High in Graff Reinet. She was the daughter of a prominent doctor, a very bright girl with a lively personality. Her unusual second name 'Le Caux', was given to her in memory

of her mother's younger brother, John Le Caux Balliene Payn, who died of meningitis when young. When I started writing this Marie was 87, and was the source of so many family stories and legends – she has been a huge help to me in writing this history. Marie died in 2005 and I'm sorry I never met her; she was clearly a larger than life character.

With his farm gone and the Depression making jobs very hard to come by Geoff headed to the Reef, training as a miner. The pay was only £2 a month – a pittance even by the standards of the times, but it was better than nothing. Marie, who was studying at the University of Cape Town joined him on the Witwatersrand. She tells me that she gave him an ultimatum "*Marry me or the engagement is off!*" They were married before a magistrate in Brakpan on the 18th February 1937, three days before Marie turned 20. She was of course a legal minor, but overcame this by telling the magistrate she was 25! By this time Geoff was an official at E.R.P.M. earning £9 7s 6d a month - their room cost £4, but they managed.

Like so many other young men, Geoff joined the army when the Second World War broke out and was posted north. The couple's son (also Geoff) was born while he was away, and not being able to discuss names with her husband, and fearing that he may never come back, Marie named him after his father.

After the war Geoff went back to E.R.P.M and on his first shift was gassed! Having been brought up on a farm, Geoff loathed the mine, a deep and dangerous one – he was twice buried by rock falls. He bought a small farm, *Finaalspan* near Boksburg and Marie ran the dairy. After a serious appendix operation, which meant Geoff couldn't go underground the farm was sequestrated with assets of £10 200 and liabilities of £7 136 in 1951.

The family moved to an asbestos mine in Bechuanaland (Botswana) on the edge of the Kalahari, where Geoff was acting manager, and from there they were transferred to Barberton to develop a small asbestos mine. Geoff became an expert on short fibre asbestos and did prospecting work at other mines. There was a move to Alldays in the then Northern Transvaal before the couple retired to a small farm in the foothills of the mountains at Barberton. Having lived at close quarters with different Black tribes, Geoff was fluent in many of their languages, as well as *fanagalo* the pidgin language spoken on the Reef mines. For many years Marie wrote articles and short stories for magazines and newspapers, finally giving up in 1976. She told me she found she couldn't write after giving up smoking 50 Springbok cigarettes a day! Geoff's upbringing had left him embittered about his family ties and he was only really close to his uncle and aunt Vic and Molly Flemmer having met them when Vic was living in Nelspruit.

Geoff died aged 75 after a short illness when he and Marie were visiting Johannesburg on the 20th August 1983. Marie continued to live on the farm by herself for another 9 years, a lonely life; sometimes she didn't see a white face for two weeks at a time. But as she told me she was quite content and was looked after very well by a family of Swazis, the Vilikazis, who showed

her much kindness. Aged 74 she moved to her daughter Estelle's home in Port Elizabeth. Geoff and Marie had three children:

2.1.1 Marie le Caux Pallister 1938 – married Cecil Lorimer Tarr

Marie went to Union High in Graaf Reinet and graduated from Rhodes University. She met Cecil Tarr when he was teaching at Grey High School and she was teaching at Alexander Road High School in Port Elizabeth. Cecil was appointed principal of the Peddie Secondary School. They had a wonderful life in this farming community until 1972 when the government announced that they were going to purchase all land belonging to whites in the Ciskei for black consolidation. The farm which had been in the Tarr family for three generations had 6 miles of river frontage on the Keiskama River. To replace this sweet veld farm was nigh impossible. However, they bought ground just out of Grahamstown and their family have enjoyed growing up in the 'bush'.

Marie works as a Librarian at the South African National Library for the Blind in Grahamstown, having done a postgraduate diploma in Librarianship at Rhodes. Her husband Cecil taught Accounting at Graeme College and later was appointed as a lecturer at Rhodes. Marie and Cecil had four children:

2.1.1.1 Anne Lynn Tarr 1966 – married Wayne David Ford 1966 –

2.1.1.2 Rowland Geoffrey Tarr 1968 –

2.1.1.3 Christopher John Tarr 1974 –

2.1.1.4 Alan Sandy Tarr 1976 –

2.1.2 Geoffrey Flemmer Pallister 1942 – married (1) Valerie Wynne Matthews 1943 – He married (2) Erica Longo

Geoff went to school in Boksburg until the middle of 1953 when his parents relocated to Moshaneng Asbestos Mine, situated some 60 km north of Lobatsi in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate (Botswana). With his older sister Marie he went to boarding school at Union High in Graaff Reinet and after matriculating in 1959 he enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand studying for a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering. He went on to do a Master's degree (M.Sc.) in Engineering. He is now Technical Director at Barloworld Robor, the largest tube and pipe manufacturer in South Africa. He met his wife Val Matthews at Wits where she obtained a B.A. in 1963 and her Teacher's Diploma in 1964. On 19th December 1986 tragedy struck the family when their son Garth and his cousin Wayne (Geoff's sister's son, and like Garth also 16 years old), were tragically killed in a motor accident.

Geoff played Rugby, Cricket and Tennis at the highest level while at school and at the Naval Gym. At Wits he played only Rugby and in his fourth year played at fullback for Wits in the then Pirates Grand Challenge. He also played league tennis for Parkwood Tennis Club. He is also an active road cyclist. Geoff and Val had two children:

2.1.2.1 Garth Geoffrey Pallister 1970 – 1986, killed in a tragic accident with his cousin Wayne Reginald Walker, also 16

2.1.2.2 Cheryl Lynne Pallister 1973 – married David Stead

2.1.3 Estelle Rosa Pallister 1944 – married Derek Graham Walker 1943 –

After matriculating at Union High School in Graaff Reinett Estelle went to Rhodes University where she graduated with a Social Science Degree. Her husband Derek also matriculated at Union High School and later joined the Hide, Skin and Wool Industry in which he has been in ever since.

Not able to get a post in Social Work in Johannesburg where the family spent three years, Estelle did Vocational Guidance and Aptitude Testing for what was then the Department of Labour. They were transferred to Durban where their children were born before finally moving to Port Elizabeth. Estelle has been a "Home Executive", nursery school teacher and part time sales merchandiser since the children were born. Estelle and Derek had three children:

2.1.3.1 Wayne Reginald Walker 1970 – 1986 as we have seen above tragically killed with his cousin Garth Geoffrey Pallister.

2.1.3.2 Marcelle le Caux Walker 1971 – married Christopher Brian Duigan 1968 –

2.1.3.3 Jeanne-Marie Walker 1977 – married Jerran Don Broadhurst 1976 –

The Pallister descendants are a close family and all tell me how fortunate they are to be able to meet every Christmas at the Wilderness family beach home *Far Niente*, built by their grandfather Dr Van Schalkwijk in 1933. The photos I have seen show big groups of smiling family and friends, reminding me very much of our own childhood 'gatherings of the clans' at Bonza Bay near East London.

3 Toger Ludvig Flemmer 1877 – 1878

Toger was born in Cradock and died there aged 11 months

4

Daisy 'Dot' Ellen Flemmer 1879 –
Christopher Willard de Swardt died 1921
Alex van Breda



Dot was born on New Year's Day 1879, the fourth child of Toger and Rosa Flemmer and only the second to survive to adulthood. She was baptised at St. Peter's nearly two months later, on the 24th February. Her older sister Emma was two when she was born and by the time Dot was three, two younger sisters, Hilda and Rosa had arrived. Her mother had her hands full when Dot was young with four girls to look after, the oldest being only six. As we have already seen her mother's life was not made any easier her husband's frequent moves between Cradock, Hofmeyer and Middelburg.

Daisy 'Dot' Ellen Flemmer

Up until more or less this time, girls may have had some rudimentary schooling but their training mainly centred on the genteel of arts, music, sewing and singing. Change was afoot as structured education for girls spread through the Colony. Dot followed her older sister Emma to Rocklands Girls School in Cradock. By the time she reached senior school, lessons were aimed at a matriculation certificate involving maths and sciences in addition to the 'girls' subjects. It is interesting to see from school prize giving reports of the time that Dutch (Afrikaans) was not taught as a subject although surely spoken by many people in the area. Careers for girls outside the home were very limited still and the main source of security was very much finding a 'good' marriage. Thus girls schooling and upbringing leant towards training that would make a girl a good wife – felt to be the main point of her life at the time.

Pictures of Dot show that she was the image of her mother, and she didn't really look like her sisters at all. In later life she seems to have been



something of an eccentric – for instance she would not get on a train until she had walked down to make sure the engine driver had an honest face! As a midwife she crossed the palm of every child she delivered with a gold sovereign and would tell fortunes if her palm was crossed with silver. She also claimed to have second sight. She would annoy her brother-in-law 'OB' Lonsdale who would come home from the bank saying, "You'll never guess who I saw today" - by promptly telling him!

Dot at age about 13

By 1898 aged 18 Dot had finished school and was a pupil teacher at Rocklands where we see her with her contemporaries in this wonderful dramatically posed photograph.



Dot (back row left) with other pupil teachers

Teaching although poorly paid, was one of the few professions open to girls and Dot followed her older sister Emma as a trainee teacher. The family finances weren't strong and teaching would give the girls something to fall back on. Dot may have worked as a junior teacher at Rocklands but did not pursue this career. The Anglo Boer War came to

Cradock during this time and what excitement there must have been for the unattached Flemmer girls. The town would have been swarming with dashing young officers (one would not look at a trooper!) and despite the hardships of the war there were frequent balls and other social events held in Cradock.

Dot was 28 when she had to cope with the terrible events of 1908 when first her mother and then her sister Emma died within weeks of each other. To make things worse Emma's husband disappeared effectively leaving his infant son Geoffrey an orphan. Dot doted on the baby and family legend has it that the Moolman family of *Kruidfontein* raised Geoffrey. There seems to be a belief that the Flemmer family simply abandoned the child but I don't think this is very likely. I think that as the unmarried sister it made sense for Dot to see him through infancy and that she happened to be working as a Governess on the Moolman farm *Kruidfontein* at the time.

At some stage Dot trained as a nurse and midwife and there is a family story that she followed the baby Geoff's absent father Edward Pallister to Rhodesia. She tried to persuade him to marry her, so that they could bring up the baby in a proper family. Whether this is true or not she did go to Rhodesia, a real frontier colony at the time. On the 21st June 1921 aged 41 she married Christopher Willard de Swardt, a bookkeeper in Bulawayo. Tragically he died three months later – apparently he was decapitated when he had his head out of a train window as it crossed a bridge.

By 1923 she had married again to Alex van Breda, probably a farmer near Bulawayo. There is virtually no information about Dot and her husband from this time on but I am told that she lived a very difficult life. They were dirt poor and he was a violent man. I am told he was jailed for 7 years for beating one of his labourers to death and that during his jail term Dot had to support

herself before divorcing him. She was a qualified midwife in Bulawayo, and never had much money.

She visited family members in South Africa from time to time over the years and they helped her when they could. She had great affection for Geoffrey all her life and was in her 60s when she visited him and his wife Marie in Bechuanaland.

Daisy died at the Government Hospital in Umtali (now Mutare) in Rhodesia on the 21st of February 1944. Her death notice gives her address as 87 Wilson St. Bulawayo. Her sister Rosa and brother Victor were with her when she died.

5

Hilda Flemmer 1881 – 1909Arthur Forbes 1877 – 1952*Hilda Flemmer**Arthur Forbes*

Hilda was born in Cradock on the 29th March 1881, the fifth child of Toger and Rosa, and the third to survive infancy. She was baptised at St. Peter's as a three month old on the 23rd June. At the time her father was still farming in the Middelburg area and she probably spent her early life in Cradock. Her sister Emma was 5 and Daisy 2 when she was born. Before Hilda was two years old another sister, Rosa was born. Hilda grew up very much in the company of women with her father away a lot of the time and mainly her mother, sisters and aunts for company. We have a picture of her taken in about 1888 when she was seven

Hilda, standing with sister Rosa in front.

This photo, taken from a family group is interesting as it shows Hilda and her younger sister Rosa with cropped hair. This was not the fashion for young girls and is almost certainly because of a typhus outbreak in Cradock. Typhus



and cholera were all too frequent visitors to small towns in the Colony and many young lives were lost to these and other illnesses. Lice carry typhus, and schools where the cleanliness of some of the other children may have been rudimentary were prime breeding grounds. Hair would be cropped in the way shown to make washing and nit combing easier.

Hilda grew up in Cradock and followed her sisters to Rocklands which had become a major centre of learning for girls by the time she reached high school. A prize giving report in 1900 shows that the girls were taught reading, recitation, dictation, writing, geography, Latin, and algebra as well as the 'girls' subjects of sewing, singing, drill and drawing – a very full education indeed. In 1900 Hilda, like her older sisters before her, qualified aged 18 as a Junior Teacher and was awarded a certificate for drawing, although she left school the same year.

The Anglo Boer War affected everyone and was an exciting time for the girls of the town with all those English officers around. But there were difficulties and hardship with some parents too scared to send their children to school at times because of commando activities in the area. As the Rocklands Governor's report for the year says:

.... yet the unsettled state of the country has had a bad effect upon school work, bringing as it has, much anxiety, many changes, much irregularity. The number on the school roll varied from week to week. This was a state of things unknown before, and class work was much hampered by incessant changes.

There was great excitement among the Flemmer sisters in 1902 when Hilda became the first of the girls to marry. She was 20 by then and married Arthur Forbes in Cradock on 16th April. Hilda's mother must have been very pleased at securing her daughter's future. Certainly the ante nuptial contract Arthur signed shows that he was a wealthy man. It provided that she could keep control of her own assets and that he would deposit £1500 in cash into her account, provide £1000 worth of furniture and in addition take out a life policy for £1000 on his own life. These were substantial sums of money at this time.

We know a little of the background of Arthur Forbes. He was born in London in 1877 and it seems his parents had died when he was a young boy. He was possibly adopted or certainly fostered by John and Enrequita Rylands with whom he was living in London in 1881. They seem to have been a very wealthy couple – Enrequita founded the John Rylands Library in Manchester in memory of her husband.

Arthur probably came to the Colony for health reasons in 1894 and is said to have run the first milk wagon round in Port Elizabeth. In 1899 Enrequita Rylands bought two farms, one at Newport the other Temple Farm at Schoombie near Middelburg. He founded a stud at Temple Farm and was famous for his horses, among them Red Ronald one of the top racehorses of its time. A newspaper report in 1906 shows that he had just come back from England and '*is offering various horses for sale*'.

When Enrequita Rylands died she left these farms to Arthur, along with £35,000 and some jewellery for his wife Hilda.

We are lucky to have a photo of the couple and their children, probably taken in 1909.



Hilda holds a niece in her arms. Arthur stands behind her and sister Rosie next to her. In the cart is Töger with Hilda and Joe Forbes.

I say lucky because, having been so saddened by the loss of both her mother Rosa and sister Emma the year before, Hilda herself died on the 23rd April 1909. She had just turned 29 and I have not been able to find out why, sadly she died so young. The finalisation of her estate was delayed as her husband Arthur was overseas again in October 1909. He was back by November when Hilda's jewellery was valued at £200 and the estate finalised.

Some time after Hilda's death Arthur married Ruth Tirzah Munday Maxwell, and it is believed they ran The Forbes Transport Company Ltd. from Temple Farm. They had a son – also Arthur (later doctor) Forbes. In 1918 Arthur sold Temple Farm and moved to *Kromdraai* near Standerton where he founded the Whittington Stud. He lived near Johannesburg where he had a huge house at Turfontein and continued to be very involved in horse breeding, training and racing. Other members of the Flemmer family were in contact with the Forbes family over the years and he was particularly good to Dot when she fell on hard times. Waldemar and Yula Flemmer stayed with him when they were children and apparently he was a larger than life character. I was told that at one point he gave Wal a pellet gun with an order to shoot as many *mossies* as he could. If Wal could shoot more than Arthur, he would get a prize. Wal duly came back with his bag of six birds to be shown Arthur's bag of 12. So off

Wal went the next day coming back with even more, again Arthur had shot more. It was at this point that Wal's sister Yula pointed out that Arthur was using a shotgun!

Arthur remarried Edith Getrude Orsmond in Durban where he died in 1952.

Hilda and Arthur had two children:

5.1 Hilda Flemmer Forbes married John Arthur Morris and they divorced around 1931. I believe she remarried someone by the name of Richards but I have found no other information.

5. 2 Joseph Toger Forbes died about 1968 married Mordue Rosabella Ann Myers

'Joe' Forbes was Chief Executive of Hippo Holdings and Pioneer Crushers. He was very well known in racing circles for many years. He was a leading force in the racing community. He was Chairman of the Owners' and Trainers' Association in the 1940's, a member of the Executive of the Jockey Club and Chairman of the Johannesburg Turf Club from 1956-57. In the 1960s his horse Nightjar won the famous Durban July. He married Mordue Rosabella Anne Myers who, after Joe's death applied for a trainers' licence in 1974 and became one of the few women trainers in the then Transvaal. Joe and Mordue had twins:

5.2.1 Josephine Mordue Forbes 1936 - married Elijah Singer – they had at least one child

5.2.1.1 Mark Singer

5.2.2 Toger Joseph 'Joe' Lesley Forbes 1936 – 1997 married Audrey Derris Jackson – died 1992

'Joe' Forbes jnr. ran a successful financial advisory business in Durban where he died in 1997. He married Audrey Derris Jackson in Johannesburg in 1959 and they had three children:

5.2.2.1 Barbara Lynn Forbes 1960 – married Alan Jellis 1947 – two children

5.2.2.2 Ashley Joseph Toger Forbes 1967 – married Bronwyn Lucy Hawkes – two children

5.2.2.3 Jennifer Ann Forbes 1969 – married Raymond Theron – one child

6

Rosa 'Rosie' Flemmer 1882 – 1953
Oswald Beresford 'OB' Lonsdale 1878 – 1943



Rosa Flemmer



Oswald Beresford Lonsdale

Rosa or Rosie as she was known was the sixth child of Toger and Rosa, and the fourth to live past infancy. We don't have any record of her birth but she was almost certainly born and baptised in Cradock. She was named after her mother. As a baby she was surrounded by her sisters, Emma five, Daisy three and Hilda one, as well as her numerous Philips aunts.

Rosa Flemmer dressed for the stage

Like her older sisters she went to Rocklands and it is quite possible that like them she matriculated there and studied as a pupil teacher. Very little is known about her early life. I am told she was clever and bright, was very vain and could be 'dramatic' – I wish I had met her! She was petite and very pretty and was interested in amateur dramatics as we see in this photo from a Cradock stage production

Of course no self-respecting girl could make the stage her career at this time, it was simply not done. On the 15th November 1909, aged 25, Rosie married Oswald Beresford Lonsdale, 28 at St. Peter's in Cradock. The wedding was an opportunity for the whole family to lift the shroud of sadness that had dropped over them during the past 18 months with the deaths of Rosie's mother and her sisters Emma and Hilda. This wonderful wedding photo is included not only because it shows the couple surrounded by Rosie's family, but also because it shows the magnificent clothes and hats worn by the women. I am



told that 'OB' Lonsdale was 6ft 4ins (1.93m), so we can judge how tall Rosie and her father Toger are from this picture



Seated: Front - Joe and Hilda Forbes.

Standing - left to right: Frederica & Emma Philps, Toger, OB Lonsdale, Rosie, Charlie, Victor.

At right: Ada Philps, Baby Geoff Pallister, Dot Flemmer

OB Lonsdale was born in Kingwilliamstown and had joined Standard Bank, a company that many Flemmers seem to have had an association with. He was a man on the rise and met Rosie when he was transferred to the Cradock branch. I am told he was a big, calm, kindly man, well able to cope with his wife's sometimes theatrical outbursts. She was probably an excellent choice for a man on the rise – pretty, bright and witty – she was a charming hostess.

By 1911 OB had been transferred to the Witwatersrand where the couple's two children were born. In 1927 when daughter Rosemary was about 16 and Phyllis 13, OB was promoted to the Bulawayo branch of the bank – a considerable step up the corporate ladder. It was a senior management posting; men appointed to these positions in banking had a major public relations role and there was a lot of status attached to the position. Bear in mind that until probably the 1990's the most important people in any *dorp* in Southern Africa were the local minister, followed closely by the bank manager. Much of their success was judged on how well they promoted the

bank and there would be much wining, dining and entertaining, a role to which Rosie was very well suited.

The family have a newspaper cutting describing OB's send-off by the staff of his branch in Johannesburg. They presented him with a silver tantalus as he was going '*to the land of the sundowners*'. Of even more interest is the fact that several of the bank's clients had taken up a collection and OB was given a substantial cheque in recognition of his service to them. How things have changed! The family left on the night train to Rhodesia, seen off by a large crowd of friends and staff who sang 'For they are jolly good fellows' as the train pulled away from the station – a different world indeed.

I heard an amusing story about Rosie from this period. She was wont to wear a beauty spot on her cheek, a fashion at the time, and applied it with an indelible pencil. She was about to leave on the three day train trip to South Africa when the beauty spot became infected, and developed into an open sore on the way south. Apparently there were all sorts of histrionics on the train, not because of the infection, but because it made her look so ugly!

But there was trouble afoot. One of OB's staff had been embezzling bank funds and a major investigation was launched. There was never any suggestion that OB was involved, but he was the man in charge and the bank had to take firm action. They left Bulawayo in about 1931 and again there was a big send-off from staff and friends for this popular couple.

He was transferred back to the President Street Branch– a major change of position in banking and social circles and an embarrassment not easily accepted. Despite this OB was well thought of by Standard, and later became manager of their Jeppe Street branch. I have several pictures of the family at their house 'Oswald' in Yeoville where they had family gatherings with Rosie's cousin Waldemar.

OB suffered from a heart condition which he was reluctant to admit to, preferring to try and relieve the pain by hanging from doorframes. He died of heart failure aged 66 at his house, 21 Wantage Rd Parkwood on the 23rd of December 1943. He had made a will in 1911 when his first daughter was born, naming his brother Edgar Grenville Lonsdale as executor. Among OB's assets were a 1935 Hudson motor car valued at £37 pounds, 133 West Spaarwater shares at 3/6d, 100 SA Townships shares at 25/- and 3 life policies worth £2000.

His wife Rosie developed diabetes later in life and died of complications following pneumonia aged 69 at the home of a friend in Bloemfontein on the 13th August 1953. OB and Rosie had two children:

6.1 Rosemary Hilda Beresford Lonsdale 1911 – 1980 married (1) Harry Dixon Carter 1901 – She married (2) John Albert 'Jack' Heathcote 1916 – 1982



*Rosemary Hilda
Beresford Lonsdale*



Harry Dixon Carter

I know little about Harry Carter who was born in England. At the time he and Rosemary married he was living in Bulawayo so I assume they met there. The wedding in Parktown was a grand affair. Newspaper reports note that Daught's cousin Joe Forbes was best man and another cousin, Waldemar Flemmer, who had a wonderful voice, sang a solo in the church. After a honeymoon at Umkomaas the couple went to live in Bulawayo. Harry and Daught as she was known to her family simply did not get on, divorcing after the birth of their son Kit who was born in Johannesburg in 1935.



Jack Heathcote was Daught's second husband. Born in Cradock he was her cousin and like so many of the Heathcote men, charming and handsome. He had joined the 2nd Transvaal Scottish at the outbreak of WWII as had other young men in the family. Jack was wounded at Sidi Rezegh and was sent back to South Africa. At the end of the War he was discharged as a sergeant. He came to stay with OB and Rosie after the war. Daught and her baby son were living with her parents following her divorce – the rest as they say is history.

John Albert 'Jack' Heathcote

When he married Daught, Jack effectively adopted her son Kit and treated him as his own. His daughter tells me he was a wonderful man, but like many so affected by the War, couldn't settle down to anything and worked at many different jobs. They farmed at Airfield Farm, Kempton Park for some years – it is under one of the runways of Johannesburg Airport now, and at other farms near Johannesburg. He tried his hand as a salesman in farming equipment,

as an estate agent and was for a time was MD of an Italian tractor company, Sani, which did not survive in South Africa. Jack was politically involved with the old United Party and was a founder member and treasurer of SA Bond Party in 1954. He had heart problems in later life which he would not admit to and finally had a bypass. He died in Port Elizabeth aged 65 on 4th December 1982 when he didn't take his medication.

Rosemary – Daught – had died two years before in Johannesburg aged 68. As a young girl she had gone to Barnato Park Primary School in Johannesburg and to St. Peter's in Bulawayo when the family lived there. She was much taller, about 5ft 7ins (1.70m), than her mother Rosie and an excellent seamstress. Her daughters told me she was very vivacious with a bubbly sense of humour. With Jack's frequent changes of job she concentrated mainly on being a homemaker. Significantly though she was a member of the Black Sash, a women's organisation founded to help the oppressed majority. Membership of this organisation required commitment to the cause and real courage. Apart from taking part in silent demonstrations where women were commonly abused, members of the Black Sash would find their social circle very restricted as the majority of whites simply did not want to see any change in the *status quo*, regarding the Black Sash as dangerous subversives. Daught was a brave woman – she suffered terribly from arthritis in later life and was nearly crippled by it.

Rosemary and her first husband Harry Carter had one child:

6.1.1. Christopher 'Kit' Beresford Dixon Carter 1935 – married Carol Anne Slater 1944 –

Kit grew up in the Transvaal and went to boarding school at Dale College King Williams Town. After leaving school he worked on a farm in the Cradock District and worked on several other farms in Natal and the Eastern Cape. In 1961 he decided to go farming on his own and hired a small farm in the Port Elizabeth District. Struggling to make a living he started a 'milk round' delivering milk door to door and this brought in a bit of much needed cash which enabled him to hire a bigger farm.

He married Carol Anne Slater, a daughter of the Slater family of the farm Winlton in the PE district. Kit and Carol run Jersey cows, have a small herd of Red Angus and run a flock of Dormer sheep on their lovely farm at Greenbushes. He was a good rugby player and enjoyed his rugby days but says he found that dairy farming and sport are not compatible.

Kit and Carol had three children:

- 6.1.1.1 Trevor Stewart Carter 1966 – married Lisa Cooper 1965 – one child
- 6.1.1.2 Christopher Niel Carter 1970 – married (1) Susan F. C. Mostert – one child. He married Hayley Louray Simpson 1970 –
- 6.1.1.3 Jennifer Anne Carter 1972 – married Ian Lindsay Whitfield 1954 – two children

Rosemary and her second husband Jack had three children:

6.1.2. Phyllis May Beresford Heathcote 1945 – married Laurence Arthur Green –

‘Phydd – May’ as she is known in the family went to six different schools as the family moved around South Africa. She qualified as a teacher at Johannesburg College of Education and was a primary school teacher in the Western Transvaal and Johannesburg. Her husband Laurence is with the Nedcor Banking group. They had two children:

6.1.2.1 Timothy Laurence Green 1968 – married to Lisa Jane Stamm – two children

6.1.2.2 Catherine May Green 1970 – married to Guy John Tillett 1967 –

6.1.3 Charles John Beresford Heathcote 1949 – married Ana Kristina Cywinski –

Charles attended Klerksdorp Primary, Milner High and went to Potchefstroom University as an external student. He has a CA from the University of the Witwatersrand. He as a financial practice in Parys and is a good long distance runner. Charles and Ana had three children:

6.1.3.1 Krysta Rose Heathcote

6.1.3.2 Lindsay May Heathcote

6.1.3.3 Stephanie Ann Heathcote

6.1. 4 Rosemary Alice Beresford Heathcote 1953 – married Christopher John George Fowkes – they had two children.

6.1.4.1. David Charles Fowkes 1982 –

6.1.4.2. James Edward Fowkes 1984 –

Rosie Flemmer and OB Lonsdale’s other daughter was:

6. 2 Phyllis May Beresford Lonsdale 1914 – 1989 married Richard Alfred Southey 1915 – 1990



*Phyllis May Beresford
Lonsdale*



Richard Alfred Southey

Phyllis May started school at Barnato Park Primary School before moving to Rhodesia as a 13 year old. She probably completed her education at St. Peter’s Diocesan School for Girls in Bulawayo where as we have seen she was a very good swimmer. She was a

championship level tennis player. Later in life when in her 50s she was asked by Ewie Cronje (father of SA cricket captain Hansie) to partner him in the OFS Championships, an honour she declined.

Phyllis met her husband, the son of old family friends when he came to Johannesburg, like so many young men, to 'make his fortune'. He stayed with Phyllis' parents and the couple fell in love and married in 1939. Richard was from a well known Middelburg farming family and had been educated at St. Andrews. He tried his hand at farming and in the words of his daughter, at the end of a year's effort had '*a horse, bicycle, 2 pair of boots and £30*' to show for his efforts. He moved to Johannesburg and studied mining – working as a shift boss at the Robinson's Deep Mine at Booysens.

Richard signed up for the army when war broke out and served 'up North' with so many others. On his return he vowed "*he could never work underground again*". He worked for Tractors and Farm Tools in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Bloemfontein as a salesman. He also worked for John Roderick and Botha selling cars before starting his own tractor sales company, John Roderick and Southey in Bloemfontein. Like his wife he had been a championship level tennis player when he was young and was a keen golfer in later life. Phyllis and Richard had three children:

6.2.1. Rosemary June 'Jet' Southey 1940 – married Christopher Denys van Selm 1942 –

Jet and her sister Cookie obviously inherited a sporting gene as we will see. She went to school at Eunice High School in Bloemfontein, swimming for the OFS Provincial Schools Team from 1955 -1959, and was the school's swimming Victrix Ludorum. Jet also played First Team hockey for the school.

While studying at the OFS Teachers Training College she was the swimming and diving champion from 1960 – 1962. She qualified as a teacher and sports specialist. Jet taught for many years, marrying Chris van Selm – they had five children:

6.2.1.1 Richard Christopher van Selm 1966 – married Kerry Lynne McIlarth – three children

6.2.1.2 Almarie Phyllis van Selm 1968 – married Ivan Voigt – three children

6.2.1.3 Reginald Denys van Selm 1970 – married Judy Patricia Fuggle – one child

6.2.1.4 Quentin Malcolm van Selm 1973 – married Carol Ladbrooke – one child

6.2.1.5 Kim Amanda van Selm 1978 –

6.2.2. Phyllis Ruth 'Cookie' Southey 1942 – married John Peter Turvey 1944 –

While her sister Jet was a great swimmer Cookie took up athletics. She went to Eunice High School in Bloemfontein and was in the OFS Schools Athletics Team in 1958 and 1959. She was school Athletics Victrix Ludorum.

Cookie studied for a Music Teachers Diploma at the University of the OFS and taught at various schools, marrying John Turvey – they had three children:

6.2.2.1 Sally-Mae Turvey 1965 –

6.2.2.2 Caroline Elizabeth Turvey 1968 – married Graeme Anthony Vorster – one child

6.2.2.3 Kirstin Frances Turvey 1969 – married Marcel Phillip van Niekerk – two children

6.2.3 Rex Lonsdale Southey 1948 – 1983 married Linda Dawn D'Oliveira

Rex went to St. Andrew's School in Bloemfontein before going to St. Andrew's in Grahamstown. He studied accountancy and was killed in a car crash in 1983. He and Linda had two children:

6.2.3.1 Belinda Gay Southey 1973 –

6.2.3.2 Richard Southey 1974 – married Chrisna de Waal – one child

7 In December 1890 Toger and Rosa had a son. He is recorded in the family Bible without a name, indicating that he died at birth

8 Camilla Flemmer 1891 – 1891

Camilla was born at Cradock on the 11th December and died five days later

9 Alfred Flemmer 1892 – 1892

Alfred was born a year after his sister Camilla, on Boxing Day 1892. Like her he died five days later.

10 Victor Wilks Flemmer 1894 – 1985 Mary Harbottle



Victor Wilks Flemmer

Mary Harbottle



Victor was regarded as the *laatlammetjie* of the family, and was born on the 2nd March 1894 in Cradock. He was baptised at St. Peter's on the 3rd April 1894 and his godfather was his uncle by marriage Samuel Jerrold Wilks. A *laatlammetjie* is really a child born as an 'afterthought' but this was not really

the case with Victor. As we can see his mother Rosa had had three children in the three years before he was born, all of whom had died at birth. There must have been great joy after the deaths of these babies when Victor came along and survived, the only son of Toger and Rosa Flemmer. Perhaps this was the 'victory' for which he was named.

He was born into a family of women; apart from his mother, his sisters were Emma 16, Daisy 14, Hilda 11 and Rosa 10 and I am sure he was the centre of attention in the household. From everything I have read about him, and from talking to people who knew him I regret that I never got to meet him. I am told he was a kind, warm-hearted man, a great storyteller – a real character.

As we have seen his father was a Roads Inspector when Victor was young and would have been away from home frequently. The first reference I have of Victor is a newspaper report of him in the school play at Rocklands when he was only seven. He was already a confident young boy, well able to 'play the part' for effect:

Victor Flemmer also did exceedingly well, entering into the fun with great zest; the way he escorted the fair maidens about, and winked the other eye at the particularly nice ones causing roars of laughter.

By 1906, aged 12 he was at the Cradock Boys High School in High Street and joined the Cadet Corps as a private. He was still in the Cadet Corps two years later when he was packed off, like his cousins, to St. Andrew's in Grahamstown, probably at the time his mother Rosa died. At St. Andrew's he played 2nd XV rugby and left the school in 1912 aged 18 before completing Form VI. As we have seen, his father was ailing and his uncle Arthur Forbes had been meeting the school bills, so it was decided that he should come back to Cradock.

When his father died in 1913, Victor was 19 and left '*with the clothes he was standing up in*' according to the estate papers. He needed a job as soon as possible and started with Standard Bank in Cradock as a clerk. He had joined the Cradock Commando and in 1914, along with many other volunteers served with the Union Forces in the German South West Africa campaign. When discharged at the end of hostilities he immediately signed up for the South African Field Artillery at Wynberg in Cape Town in August 1915. We are fortunate to have his military records as it gives us a good description of Victor, who was then 21. He was much taller than his parents and sisters at 5ft 11ins (1.80m) with a 36½ins (.927m) chest; he had dark brown eyes and very dark brown hair. Amid great excitement and to the hurrahs of the cheering crowds, his unit embarked on the Saxon and sailed from Cape Town on the 8th November 1915. He was to see 14 months service in the appalling conditions of the battlefields of France where so many thousands of young men lost their lives.

One of the many lovely stories I have about Victor is from this time. He was serving in one of the great battles of the Somme and was brought before an inquiry on a charge of being a possible traitor or German spy. There were

suspicions about the loyalties of some of the South African after the Anglo Boer War besides which Flemmer could well be a German name. His duties on the battlefield had been as a spotter for the artillery, recording the accuracy of shells fired based on a system of red and green signals. He was being investigated for misdirecting fire, the suspicion being that he was doing it deliberately to aid the enemy. It was only when the military doctor examined him that it was discovered that he was colour blind, something he himself hadn't realised. Like other colour-blind family members in the present generation, he couldn't distinguish red from green – a real problem when the signals were given in these colours! Needless to say the charges were dropped.

There is another wonderful story about Victor when he was on leave in England. He had been told by one of his Cradock aunts to visit his godfather Samuel Wilks, then living in very grand style with his second wife. Victor had never met his godfather and I quote in full this account from Marie Pallister:

All Vic's pals of course knew about this rich godfather and much teasing and speculation went on in the regiment about the prospective visit. He arrived by train and had to find his own way to wherever the place was. He was ushered in and introduced to his host and hostess. Vic said the latter was charming and friendly but Sam didn't seem overjoyed to see his godson. My own opinion is that if Sam was moving in upper class circles, he probably expected Vic to be an officer at LEAST. In any case he was asked to sit down and unfortunately Vic chose a chair which collapsed under him completely. It seems that this particular chair was a very valuable piece of furniture. Vic was a tall man but certainly not overweight. Sam seemed not pleased with this incident. They had a meal and that was that. No gift or fat cheque as had been expected by the family back in SA. As he left the wife sneaked one slab of chocolate into Vic's hand and whispered "Don't let Sam see this". Maybe Sam thought Vic would become a parasite or something. Vic was furious and would never have wasted the money on a train ticket and would never have approached the Wilks ménage without the family telling him he MUST see Sam!

In July 1917 Victor was hospitalised with neuritis caused, according to the military doctor by an inflamed sciatic nerve. He had apparently been in pain the last two years and had become partially disabled. He spent 62 days at Richmond Hospital near London in July and a further 28 in September. During this time his condition was judged to have improved under treatment which consisted of *having the nerve stretched by forcible movement under gas*. Sounds pretty painful! He was sent back to Wynberg and after further treatment, including time spent at the Caledon hot springs, was discharged as medically unfit in 1918.

He went back to his job at Standard Bank in Cradock – how dull it must have all seemed after what he had seen and been through. Throughout his life he had a great love of the outdoors and as a young man went hunting regularly on the Gilfillan farm, Conway near Middelburg, where he had moved as bank manager. By 1921 he was Manager of the Standard Bank in Nairobi and

spent several years in East Africa where he was known by his hunting guides as Bwana Bankee. I was also told that at a meeting of bank managers from East and Central Africa there was a language problem as some of them were French speaking, and that everyone resolved it by speaking Swahili!

While Victor was travelling in East Africa he met and married Mary 'Molly' Harbottle at Moshi in Tanganyika (Tanzania) on the 6th May 1927. Molly was a governess who had come out with some cousins and there is some mystery about her. She would never talk about her past or her family in Scotland. I am told that she was a warm and lovely woman, well educated and obviously from a good background. When Victor's older sister Rosie felt that marrying a governess was beneath him his answer was that "*he had met a girl with a terrible surname and was going to change it!*" They never had any children and remained devoted to one another throughout their many years of marriage.

In 1938 Victor was back in South Africa at the Bank's Head Office in Cape Town, where his name can still be seen on the War Service memorial in the foyer of the Adderley Street building. By 1945 he had managed to get transferred to the Manager's job in Nelspruit, much nearer his beloved bushveld.

In 1949 at the age of 55 he decided he had had enough banking and became a tour and game guide, taking tourists through the nearby Kruger National Park. This was his real love and he and Molly spent all their spare time in the bush. He became an institution in the Lowveld with his uncanny knack of being able to predict when and where animals would appear on his tours through the park. He was a great raconteur and when he died Molly had literally hundreds of letters from all over the world from people who he had entertained and guided over the years.

There is one other story about Victor when he made the local papers in Nelspruit. Again I am grateful to Marie Pallister for this account. Victor had been found to need a pacemaker, something never heard of at that time in the Lowveld:

The Dr. said he had to have a pacemaker at once. No one had ever HEARD of these things then – not in the Lowveld at least, so the Johannesburg doctor would send it down by special charter plane. As bad luck would have it, there was a bad mist that night. The visibility was about nil, and the local aerodrome was just a small stretch in the only flat space amid hills and rivers etc. I don't know who organised that landing, but literally hundreds of cars arrived at the landing place and all had their brightest lights on to help the poor pilot who circled round and round for ages before landing. But it was safely done and Vic got his pacemaker. When he was strong enough they went to Johannesburg to see a specialist. I believe the doctor who inserted it at Nelspruit had never done it before. Well you can imagine all the publicity, as Vic as an ex – bank manager was very well known, apart from his fame at the Park.

Wild-life fundi dies at age 91

ONE of Herfsakker Old Age Home's oldest residents, Mr Victor Flemmer, died on Valentine's Day, February 14, at the age of 91.

Mr Flemmer, who lived in Nelspruit from 1945, was manager of a local Bank until 1949, when he retired prematurely to devote himself to guiding tours through the Kruger National Park.

Grateful tourists

He received hundreds of letters from grateful tourists and famous people from all over the world, thanking him for imparting his unique wild-life knowledge to them while acting as their guide.

Mr Flemmer's love of the outdoors and animal life started in the open spaces of the Karoo in the Cradock district, where he was born, and continued when he lived in East Africa for 12 years.

Mr Flemmer leaves his wife, Molly. The couple had no children.

Victor died aged 91 on the 14th February 1985 at the Herfsakker Old Age Home in Nelspruit where he and Molly had lived for some years. The couple had always lived very frugally and when Molly died a few years later, the family were surprised to find that many of them received legacies in terms of her will.

Victor's obituary from the local paper