

# History of Clansthal Area

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## Clansthal 1930s - 1990s

Clansthal Rocks, South Coast, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Memories of Ted Beesley and Matters Arising,

Presented as a talk with slides at an Oceanographic Research Institute "Friday Forum" on 13 March 1992

### PREAMBLE

The whole of the following stems from my having joined Saiccor and Umkomaas in 1960 as Chemical Engineer, subsequently Development Manager, then Environmentalist in 1973 through to retirement in April 1991 and re-employment an Environmental Consultant.

It was in the period after 1973 that my personal knowledge of Clansthal was particularly important to me as private assurance that Saiccor effluent did no harm to the coastal ecology. It (the period) also enabled me to meet a most exciting band of people, coastal scientists and engineers.

One day a couple of years ago (say 1989) Dr Allan Connell and I were talking about coastal ecology in general when I mentioned having taken an anti-Saiccor member of the public along Clansthal rocks and shown him various places which were in effect unchanged from my knowledge of the area in the 1930s / 40s and why I could make such claims.

The particular matter I mentioned to Allan was the presence of small "kelp" (in actual fact sargassum) and Allan's comment was "You realize that that is 55 year of record and as you are aware, we don't really have much scientific work prior to the mid-50s (say 35 years)".

So this talk was born.

I believe I had a wonderful upbringing in that there was natural Berea bush say 300m from my home from my afternoons, Durban Bay for weekends and Clansthal for holidays all in the period from 1926 (my birth) to 1946 (my father's death).

As the subject is Clansthal I think it important to note that my parents lived at Isipingo Beach from 1912 to 1925 but at some time (1920?) they started spending a month (May) camping at Clansthal as annual holiday.

In these pre-World War II years the railway was of course present along the coast (since 1897) with a station at Clansthal but road access was some 2-3 hours of dirt along the old south coast road and then farm roads through the Crookes' estates. So, having got to Clansthal, Clansthal was where you stayed and no small boy spends his time sitting in a tent (later house or cottage) when the rocks are there. Hence my knowledge and love of Clansthal and particularly the one kilometer of rocks lying about half a kilometer north of the station towards Umkomaas.

That I was given the opportunity to address the Forum gave me great pleasure as did the size and composition of the audience.

The discussion which followed the presentation was I believe very useful and as certain matters have subsequently arisen out of both presentation and discussion and subsequent matters.

This I did in draft in May 1992 following which in classic fashion "the wheels fell off" and it is only now in 1998 that I have been able to return to formalizing the draft.

However, this delay has had a major benefit in that modern colour printing technology has made enormous strides hence instead of a one-off copy needing projector and overheads, any number of copies can be made as required.

So much for the Preamble.

## **PRESENTATION**

As the 1992 draft (mentioned above) referred to the graphic overhead and numbered 35mm projected slides, I have retained these terms and the text with no more than grammatical correction. Where I find an updated comment necessary it is given in square brackets and dated accordingly.

### The Overhead Graphic

This illustrates the stretch of coast south of Umkomaas and covers the area from Widenham Rocks in the north to Green Point Rocks in the south with the approx. 1km rocks in the middle.

The Graphic is marked up alphabetically to follow the talk and the slides, and numerically to try and keep me on track. Such being the case the Graphic was on display for the whole of the talk.

### Slide 1

This I pinched from Allan Connell's "Photographic Study of the Aliwal Shoal" (with grateful thanks) to show the position of Clansthal on the Natal South Coast and its position relative to other points of general interest - Saiccor pipeline, Aliwal Shoal etc. The numbered sites N1 to 4 and S1 to 4 are the standard CSIR beach meiofauna sampling sites. S2 is at Clansthal railway station. With the Overhead Graphic and Slide 1 arise my:

### Objects of the Talk

The Objects are to communicate to scientists and lay people my private historical knowledge of Clansthal rock life. And by five specific points of reference project this private knowledge that Clansthal rock life is as I knew it in the 1930s/40s and the corollary that provided certain constraints are observed the area may be taken as an example of pristine Natal coast.

### Historical

I have covered my historical association with Clansthal above but Slides 2, 3, 4 and 5 are very relevant.

Slide 2 shows the original camp site just off the beach at the mouth of a tiny stream at the south (Green Point) end of the station. (On the Graphic the station is A and the camp area B)

Slide 3 shows my father, Ted, and grandmother, Lilly, and great aunt Fanny Pattison in the dining tent.

Slide 4 shows the same three at the bathing pool which is situated at D on the Graphic

Slide 5 is a present day shot of the same bathing pool

As neither my mother nor I appear in the photos I conclude that she took the pictures and I had not been born, therefore the date is 1925 or earlier.

In about 1929 the above camp site was found to be flooded and a new campsite up in the bush on the sea side of the railway at about the north end of the station (actually on the site where the first house on Green Point Road now stands). We used this site until say 1932 after which we rented houses or cottages probably at the insistence of the old ladies!

The first two houses we used were owned by the brothers North, of North's Farm Supplies. These houses were situated on the inland and seaward sides of the railway between points E and F on the Graphic. The inland one still stands and is presently occupied by Clarence and Isobel Upton. [ 1998 Isobel now widowed lives in a cottage along Strathcoma Drive ]. The seaward house used to be double walled with a resident black mamba. It (the house) was bought and rebuilt by Benjamin Christopher of Ladysmith.

The North association may be significant as in 1920 (approx) my father was manager of their motor car division which may have led to his introduction to Clansthal.

Allan Connell's prompting, leading to the preparation of this talk, has been covered in the Preamble above.

## COMPARISONS

Before dealing with my specific rock life comparisons I stressed that the most severe natural hazard to rock life was sand movement and that I had over the years seen sand inundation of practically every section of Clansthal rocks including most of my points of comparison. Nevertheless the comparisons remain.

I used Slides 6, 7 and 8 which were all taken from the Graphic area Cloaking south to Green Point to illustrate sand variation. 6 and 7 were of Imboa wave action right into the coastal bush whereas 8 was a beautiful benign day with about average beach presence. However I recall that about 1942 I was able at low spring tide, to walk right out to where back line shows on Slide 8.

Slide 9 is a seawards view of Big Rock at C on the Graphic. This is now known as Hay's Rock which I find difficult to live with as Errol Hay only built his mansion here in the 1940's. The upward pointing arm of the flood debris tree trunk indicates the sites of Comparison 1 and Comparison 2.

### Comparison 1 (Slide No 10)

This very unexciting photo is of tiny periwinkle type mollusca which show as white spots on the blue grey rocks. The site of this photo is say below the tip of the tree trunk in Slide 9.

I can say with certainty that there was an abundance of these periwinkles in the 30's because of a shark that was landed at this site. I was very young as I recall being under the control of others while this long slim blue and white beast was in its death throes. After it was dead I found lots of the little shells stuck into its hide. The memory is clear - say 1930.

### Comparison 2 (Slides 11, 12 & 13)

This memory is from about 1940 when knives were a major fascination (I still have a Mark 1 303 cartridge from which I drew the bullet and cast a blade into the lead to make a pocket knife). I had read somewhere of someone making a knife handle from the hollow stem of giant kelp shrunk onto the haft of the blade. I thought this fascinating but of course we don't get giant kelp in Natal. However we do get sargassum which to a dreamer can be miniature kelp and so a secret substitute for the giant so much desired.

Well, Slide 11 shows sparse cover of sargassum on the front shelf of Big Rock (C on the Graphic). Then Slide 12 is a view north across Elephant's Back Bay (which includes the swimming pool D) to our next stop E which shows as the furthest point of rocks on Slide 12. And here we find a wonderful abundance of sargassum as shown on Slide 13.

These are the only two places on Clansthal rocks where sargassum presence impacted on me and its relative abundance at the two sites remains to the present.

### Comparison 3 (Slides 14 and 15)

We have now moved to H on the Graphic about 90 m north from E to just north of a wide and irregular gully, to show a very narrow 2 m deep L shaped slot in the rock structure.

This slot was (and is) not a safe place at all. The turbulence caused by the L is quite horrible. But it was and still is loaded with red bait and the memory of this abundance stems from bait procurement during neap tides.

Getting bait during spring tides was never a problem but neaps were another matter and my father made a powerful two talon claw on the end of a long Indian cane pole to hook and procure red bait (I still have the claw). During any holiday we used to locate stocks of red bait for low neap availability but we always knew this L shaped gully was there as an emergency reserve.

### Comparison 4 (Slides 16, 17 and 18)

We now move north about 140 m to a shallow irregular depression in the rough shelf area inshore of the big rock shown on Slide 18 as a location point (G on the Graphic).

The depression is shown on Slide 16 and its memory stems from the beautiful blue coral that was and is a feature of the place as shown on Slide 17. (Note: I always thought it was blue seaweed and Prof Jan Heeg's interjection that it was coral gave me a most peculiar feeling). In my youth, coral "did not happen on the south coast" - it was something of the romantic tropics though we did find the odd bit of bleached coral cast up on the shore - this was always exciting and was thought to have come from afar. If I could get all possessive about sargassum, I wonder how I would have felt about real live coral! [ See 1998 Addendum 4.1 ]

#### Comparison 5 (Slides 19 and 20)

The anticipation of a holiday at Clansthal was always tremendous, with crayfish for eating and bait figuring large in the equation. Equally so was the thought of getting there at high spring tide and not having the means to get crabs that evening. Hence a source of limpets accessible about high tide was of grave importance.

So we now move to H on the Graphic and Slide 19 is taken looking seawards from a boulder right up at the beach edge. The flat shelf of rock seen with the surf beyond lies say 90 m north of the locating rock (Slide 18) for site G. [See 1998 Addendum 4.1]

The next Slide (20) is straight down from this boulder into a very shallow pool at the beach edge. And that little pool contains about a dozen crayfish sized limpets.

Other shallow pools in this restricted area were and are a good source of limpets even though it is subject to occasional beach cover.

So much for my specific memories of Clansthal in the 1930's / early 40's related to Clansthal of the present.

But before going on to Constraints and Conclusions I would continue to the north end of the rocks via Slides 21 and 22.

Slide 21 is a view north east from the top of the boulder referred to in Comparison 5 and Slide 22 shows the continuation of the rock formation to its termination at Cracker Bay (J on the Graphic).

The point I on the Graphic is on the south side of Cracker Bay and is interesting in that I have found three types of sheet coral in this area. Two were green in appearance and one grey and strangely touch sensitive in that at the touch an area of say 50 mm radius would react by withdrawal to show a brilliant green. Unfortunately sand has recently overwhelmed the pools containing this coral and I could only find one example of one of the green varieties on my last visit (1992). [See 1998 Addendum 4.1]

### **CONSTRAINTS**

I have used the then Constraints with hesitation but with the intention to stress that we are dealing with a varying but strangely constant environment and anyone who may be moved to use my memories should bear this in mind.

#### Seasons

As I have said, holidays at Clansthal in the 30's/40's were generally in the late autumn / winter period and my memories were fanned accordingly...

My experience is that rock life is seasonally affected and at one stage some years ago I tried to record colour changes by photography. A remarkably ineffective exercise due to processing variability.

However in the case of my memories it should be noted that sargassum growth is much more prolific in the winter than summer and the tiny periwinkles show a much higher bare rock cover in winter than summer (probably due to surface temperature).

#### Sand

I have mentioned sand movement and its destruction of rock life at various stages above and I find it fascinating that after sand has been and gone the same sort of rock life re-establishes in its former areas.

#### Substrata

The whole of the Clansthal kilometre is Dwyka Tillite. It is a hard rock but it does weather and I believe probably provides an excellent substrate for rock life together with caves, holes, crevices, gulleys, pools etc for various fauna.

But even the Dwyka of Clansthal shows a variation in form from the massif south end to the shelf like north end.

Extending our area a bit, note that Widenham rocks are dolomite whereas Green Point consists of an Eca shale shelf at the north end changing to dolomite at about half distance to the point massif.

Eca tends to weather, erode and fracture much more freely than Dwyka whereas dolomite is extremely hard and weather resistant.

I don't think either Eca or dolomite are as rock life friendly as Dwyka

### People

People pressure on the Natal south coast rose enormously with the opening of the old National Road (now R102) in the late 1940's however Clansthal and Green Point have remained relatively free from excessive presence of homo sapiens. [See 1998 Addendum 4.5]

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In recounting my memories of Clansthal rocks, I have specifically used examples of rock life about which I could be objective to allow me to say that my overall assessment of Clansthal rocks (which is necessarily subjective), is that they are as I knew them in the 1930's /40's. They therefore may be regarded as a pristine example of a Natal upper south coast Dwyka Tillite rock structure.

As a corollary I conclude that the Green Point rocks (Eca and dolomite) are also pristine though I have no specific examples for objective assessment.

I suggest that Clansthal and Green Point can be used as a basis to assess the rock life on the other upper south coast outcrops bearing in mind the Constraints when doing so.

## **The Blamey Family History at Clansthal**

### **By Gill Bartlett**

My grandfather, "Chookes" Blamey, had the original farm in Clansthal. My mum, Bridget Delpont, has a manuscript of his unpublished book on the family's history. I'll pass on details which may be of interest to Clansthal residents.

"Fardie Blamey" is my great-grandfather... our family's history in Clansthal begins with him.

Bernard Ludwig Schwikkard was given a government grant of a farm (approximately 3000 acres). He named the farm Clausthal after a town in Hanover, Germany, which is allegedly the town in which his wife lived before coming out here.

The farm was referred to as "Clausthal" in the title deeds, but owing to the fact that the 'u' was indistinct it was obviously mistaken for a 'n' thereafter. In 1951 the South African Place Names Commission changed the original name Clansthal on the railway name board to 'Claustal'. Apparently, in modern German the 'h' is dropped. However, Clausthal became Clansthal for posterity.

On 13th May 1870, the Natal Land Colonization Company Ltd bought the entire farm from Schwikkard. "Fardie" Blamey was appointed agent of their property, as well as others in the Park Rynie area. This meant that "Fardie" had grazing and shooting rights over the whole area. The Company evidently had ideas of establishing a settlement of small holdings at Clansthal. On studying the original title deeds, a compact block of approx. 270 acres was subdivided into nine separate holdings on the north eastern corner of the farm. The combined beach frontage would have been more than half a mile.

"Fardie" bought his first holding in 1899, also securing an 8 acre block for an old family friend, Mrs. Helena Otto at about the same time. "Fardie" subsequently bought another 4 subdivisions, giving him a total of 235 acres, with a beach frontage of several hundred yards. The original title deeds describe the seaward boundary as "bounded south east by the Indian Ocean". "Chookes" writes: "This means that all beacons on that boundary were on the high water mark, but many of them have been scoured out and washed away by heavy seas. When litter-bugs foul Clansthal beaches, they are guilty of trespass as well. They are guilty again when they commit the same unpardonable offence anywhere on the verge above the sands"!

One of "Fardie's" holdings was registered as "Charnwood", after his maternal grandfather's home near Verulam on the North Coast. The total price paid for 235 acres amounted to the sum of £681.63. In 1910 John Crookes bought the remainder of Clansthal. Then in 1924, what the directors of the Natal Land Colonization Company foresaw began to materialize. Over a period of years numerous subdivisions were surveyed and sold.

## Shipping

"Many years ago, it used to fascinate us to stand on the rocks watching the mail boats traveling along the coast inside the shoal. They passed so close in that with the naked eye we could see people walking about on the decks and clearly hear a bugle giving the call for breakfast."

In 1963 the American cargo liner, the Aimee Lykes ran aground on the Aliwal Shoal. After jettisoning much of her cargo, tugs pulled her off the reef 49 hours later. For weeks afterwards vast patches of black oil drifted up onto the rocks and sand. A Durban-based salvage company was able to repair her whilst she was still afloat.

In the 1970's the Produce went down on the shoal. Fortunately most of the sailors were able to board a passing ship. Brave volunteer ski-boat fishermen from Umkomaas were able to conquer high, dangerous seas to rescue those who remained.

For many years remains of another shipwreck could also be seen at low spring tides on Clansthal beach at Blamey Bay. Apparently it was a favourite crayfishing haunt.

I quote the story my grandfather was repeatedly told - he was too young to remember the incident. It must have taken place before the lighthouse was built, following one of "Fardie's" beach parties:

"After one of the beach parties had broken up, Aunt Madeleine and my sisters Medie and Bertha were left behind in one of the cottages to do the clearing up. Our faithful old chef Mvutuza also remained behind to assist, and to act as watchdog because a night would have to be spent in the house. Mvutuza, also known as Jim, slept in the kitchen instead of the native hut so as to be on call in case anything untoward happened. Clansthal was an isolated place in those days and the three young women were nervous (*some things do not change!*).

At about three o'clock the following morning Aunt Madeleine awakened with a start, hearing loud knocks on the front door of the dining room. Sitting up in bed she called out nervously, "Who's that?" "We're shipwrecked sailors. We are cold and wet, can you please make some coffee to warm us up?" came the reply. Terrified out of her wits Aunt Madeleine feebly replied, "Go away, go away, don't disturb us at this time of night."

Convinced that the intruders were tramps come to some sort of devilment, she had every reason not to believe a word of their story. So throwing on her dressing gown she went into the kitchen to wake Mvutuza. "Jim, Jim," she called, "Vuka, vuka," and no doubt had to prod him. She told him that there were some very bad men at the front door and he must chase them away. "Go out the back way," she ordered, "And after they have gone, stay awake because they are sure to come back."

Having given these instructions she then wakened Medie and Bertha. Expecting the tramps to return at any minute they sat up until dawn anxiously awaiting further developments.

Meanwhile old Mvutuza picked up his sticks just in case they would be needed and went out to the front of the cottage where he saw three or four men standing on the verandah. What was said we never knew, because the chef couldn't speak a word of English and apparently the sailors didn't understand him any better than he did them. However, the men must have realized that no help was forthcoming, so they quietly walked off down the path and according to later reports along the railway line to Umkomaas.

It was a great relief to Aunt Madeleine and her two companions when they saw the first light of day. Medie happened to unlock the front door and walked out onto the verandah. Looking out to sea, then along the shore to the south, she was amazed and horrified to see a small ship close inshore trembling under the impact of the breaking waves. With an astonished cry she rushed back into the house to tell the others.

Overcome with remorse because of their unsympathetic reception to the unfortunate sailors, they tried to make amends by hurriedly packing a basket containing a jug of coffee and sandwiches which they instructed Mvutuza to take them to the men. However, Mvutuza returned a short while later to report could not find a soul on the beach. Aunt Madeleine and my sisters returned to Umzinto that morning so were not able to get further details of the mishap."

## Lighthouses

The Green Point Lighthouse was first exhibited 1st October 1905. Prior to that there had been 2 lights situated 5 miles apart - the North Light, on the northern bank of the Little Amahlongwa River and the South Light, about half a sea mile south of the Mpambinyoni River. These were first exhibited 1st October 1892.

## The first houses at Clansthal

After acquiring his first block of land in 1899, "Fardie" Blamey had 3 cottages built - there were no houses in Clansthal before that. The first house was built on ground which is now National Road Reserve (*now the Provincial Road Reserve, the R102*), bordering on the present caravan park. This was expropriated and demolished when the road was built in (*does anyone know the date?*)

There was a rough private farm road (*leading to the beach*). The only right-of-way to the railway halt and beach was a sandy wagon track. Motorists were able to drive down the track but on the return journey, had to be hauled up the hill by a team of oxen. The second building was immediately above the railway halt, just across the southern boundary of the present caravan park. The third house was built for Mrs. Otto on her ground, under "Fardie's" supervision. All 3 were built by Bennet, a coloured man from Umzinto.

Sand and stones for foundations were quarried and carted from a ridge on "Fardie's" farm, about 2 miles inland. Walls were constructed of burnt clay bricks laid in mud mortar and plastered with building lime. Clay was dug from a quarry next to a trickle of water in a nearby valley.

There was an abundant supply of wood to burn the bricks, but what a job to make 1000's with hand moulds. When the first house was demolished, the bricks were used to build a retaining wall behind our house and are still there, clearly visible, today. The roofs were of corrugated iron over 6 inch ceiling boards. The original roof of the Otto's home was only renewed in 1961. Each of the 3 houses had more or less the same pattern, each with 4 or 5 bedrooms, a dining room, a kitchen and a pantry,. No bathrooms, people were expected to bath in the sea. Rain water from the roofs ran into 1000 gallon tanks which overflowed into 4, 1000 gallon underground wells, built of bricks and plastered. If the water dried up earth wells were occasionally dug deep into the clay and buckets were used to haul the water out. There was a well within 50 yards of each house.

Wonderful shooting was held on John Crooke's farm in 1910 onwards. Game, including bushbuck, common grey duiker, red duiker, and blue duiker; was plentiful.

Cooking was done on medium sized coal or wood stoves. Although wood was plentiful, coal was better. Some imaginative person made an Aunt Sally next to the railway line near the halt. As the trains slowed down the engine drivers could not resist having pot shots at it and the coals were collected.

"Fardie's" wife, "Goggie" Blamey, entertained large parties of friends, family and those with no-where else to go. "Goggie" had huts built as extra accommodation for younger people (over and above the 9 bedrooms in the 2 cottages.) Food was obviously plentiful!

The privy was hidden behind clumps of palms. The walls were built of homemade bricks, but instead of building a pit as they normally did in those days, a bucket was used. The sides of the pit would have collapsed because the soil was so sandy.

Until 1910, when John Crookes bought the remainder and major part of Clansthal, "Fardie" used to run a substantial herd of cattle on the farm. They roamed with herd boys during the day and were rounded up in the evenings to be kraaled in a large enclosure, on the site of our present house! Herdsmen and their families lived in huts situated a few yards behind the cottages. They kept fowls and Muscovy ducks, free range (*bet they were not as expensive as our organic ones nowadays*).

"Chookes" Blamey, "Fardie's" son came to live permanently on the farm and he built our house (as it is today) in 1921. He cleared much land to cultivate sugarcane. After fighting in the 2nd World War and needing to find a

more lucrative income, he converted to dairy farming. His son, Ross, eventually joined him and they supplied Umkomaas with milk for many decades.

The farm was sold in 1973 to Mr. George Rolls and a partner, at which time it reverted to sugarcane. Mick and Bridget Delpont subdivided and took over the old farmhouse and now we live in it. Our children are the 5th generation of the family in Clansthal!

## Greenpoint Lighthouse, Clansthal, KZN

Please Note: Lighthouse Tours (incl. other places of interest) are conducted by appointment. Contact Mike Gower on 082 406 9891 for more information and bookings.

The three-mast Aliwal, commanded by Captain James Anderson was the first to report the Shoal's hazard to shipping in 1849. The Shoal was subsequently named after the ship.

Shipping Intelligence

### To the Editor of the Natal Witness, Port Natal, Jan 14, 1850

Sir, - I feel it right, before I leave this colony, to communicate to the public, and particularly that part connected with the shipping interest trading, to this port, the following extract of a letter from Captain Anderson, of the barque Aliwal:-

"From the great interest you appear to take in this place and the coast in general, I think you would like to know that about 30 miles S.W. of Natal, and distant from the land about two miles, I observed a very large and dangerous rock or shoal, with heavy breakers. I do not find this rock on any chart or alluded to in any directory. I hope therefore, you will speak to the captains of coasting vessels, and inform them of it when opportunity offers."

I am, Sir, yours, &C.,  
Hardy Wells

### Ships that have sunk or been damaged on the Aliwal Shoal:

SS Nebo, 20 May 1884  
HC Richards, 02 November 1947  
Aimee Lykes, 26 October 1963  
Eugenie Livanos, 21 September 1971  
MV Produce, 11 August 1974

<b>Date of installation</b>	1905
<b>Character of light</b>	Group flashing two every 15 seconds
<b>Type of light</b>	Revolving electric
<b>Candlepower</b>	4 750 00 C.D.
<b>Range</b>	30 sea miles
<b>Height of focal plane</b>	86 meters
<b>Structure</b>	21 m. circular cast iron tower with red and white horizontal bands
<b>Position - latitude</b>	30°14'56.1"S
<b>Position - longitude</b>	30°46'38.9"E
<b>Other features</b>	Equipped with a red sector light displaying an arc of red light over the Aliwal Shoal

## Remarks

The lighthouse is fully automatic and is equipped with a VHF radio monitoring system monitored from the bluff Signal Station at Durban. Mains supply with two standby diesel / alternator sets.

## History

Greenpoint lighthouse, familiar to thousands of holidaymakers traveling to the KZN South Coast holiday resorts is situated almost exactly between Umkomaas and Scottburgh and marks the Aliwal Shoal.

The previous two manned lighthouses in this area were transferred to Port Shepstone and Cape St. Lucia when the Greenpoint Lighthouse was commissioned. When in use, these lights used to mark the extremities of the Aliwal Shoal and exhibited fixed red and white sector lights having a range of approximately 10 miles.

The apparatus installed at Greenpoint Lighthouse is a 700mm focal distance group flashing optic, exhibiting two white flashes every 15 seconds. The original petroleum vapour burner produced a beam intensity of 240 000 candelas. This was increased to 4 750 000 on 28 November 1961 when the light was electrified and a 4 kW incandescent electric lamp was installed. Presently a 1.5 kW incandescent lamp is used. The lighthouse is fully automatic and is linked via VHF radio telemetry to the Bluff Signal Station at Durban.

The lighthouse is equipped with a red subsidiary light which exhibits a fixed red light over the arc subtending the extremities of the Aliwal Shoal.

The cost of the installation completed in 1905 was £6 877.11.1. The main structure of the lighthouse was made in England out of cast iron.

Greenpoint Lighthouse was earlier referred to as Clansthal and was at one stage a two-man station and later a three-man station.

The Greenpoint lighthouse is now a national monument. It is used by ships, in conjunction with the lights at Ifafa Beach and Port Shepstone to steer a safe passage past Aliwal Shoal.

Two ships which did not make past the Shoal were the Nebo in 1884 which sank with its cargo of railway tracks. The ribs of the ship are still visible and in the right conditions is a good dive at approx. 25m. The Produce, a molasses tanker struck the reef in 1974 and is a great dive in the right conditions for its population of shy Brindle and Potato Bass. The wreck took a real pounding in the March storms two years ago and is now too dangerous to attempt entry.

Word taken from two unknown publications - with apologies.

The following is an extract from a book of personal experiences which occurred in the 19th century. Please note that there are some words in this extract that may cause offence. We decided to leave these words as they were in common use in those times and to serve as a reminder of how we have changed as a country and as a people.

## Extract Taken from: **PORTRAIT OF A PIONEER** by **SIDNEY TURNER**

### **PROSPECTING FEVER**

Towards the end of 1867 Sidney Turner and his partner, Walter Compton, bought 600 acres of undeveloped Crown land on the Natal South Coast (between the modern town of Umkomaas and village of Clansthal) and called the property 'Ellingham', a name that it retains to this day. It was situated on the Mahlongwa River, a few miles inland from the sea, and was no great distance from two of the largest sugar-mills in Natal. The Deed of Grant 3532 / 1867 was dated 10 December 1867. Ellingham was later to pass into the hands of Samuel Crookes, founder of the celebrated Crookes family of Renishaw.

It took the two young men about eight months to establish themselves, but by the middle of 1868 the farm was in good working order and Sidney was in a position to marry his fiancée, Bella Compton. He was twenty-

two years old, and she was eighteen. The wedding took place at St Patrick's Anglican church, Mzinto, on 18 June 1868.

Sidney planned to take his bride to England early in 1869, to introduce her to his relations, but the thrilling news that gold had been discovered on the Natal South Coast caused him to put off the trip for the time being, as he did not want to miss his chance of making a fortune. A gold rush to the South Coast had begun after George Parsons and Walter Compton claimed in August 1868 that they had made rich strikes along the Mtwalume and Mahlongwa rivers; many parties of diggers, including a group of Australians joined in the search.

[ To his parents ]

Ellingham  
February 15th, 1869

"... Our news is as yet so uncertain from the Gold Fields that it is hazardous doing anything in a hurry just now, as by immediately leaving [ for England ] one might throw away a chance and it might be years before having such another; on the other hand, the gold may turn out not in paying quantities. ... By September it will be well known (or before) whether or not these goldfields are the great success that people imagine than to be\*... We are just completing a sort of wing to this house, of brick with an iron roof, so that our house is now this shape [ L-shaped ]. Our new rooms are a dining room, [ extra ] bedroom, kitchen and pantry. It will make the place quite a substantial house now. We shall have our barn and workshop up by the end of two months, as the bricks are all carted up and the iron ready for the roof. I have been busy making pigsties all this month, we have now about 70 pigs, and shall cure about two tons of bacon this winter time..."

On 20 April 1869 Bella gave birth to her first child, a daughter who was given the names Florence Alice (Flora). The confinement almost certainly took place at the Comptons' home at Mtwalume.

"... I brought Bella down two days ago, and she and Flora are both quite well after their trip down. I have made arrangements for a trip of a month to the source of the Umzimkulu, where there is lots of game to shoot. I must start in a month, if I go, and during the next month have to salt and pack forty pigs, make three wagon sails, tents, etc, for one working wagon, break in a lot of young oxen, mend wagons, make trek-touws, etc, *ad infinitum*. This will give you some idea of how I am situated ..."

[ To his parents ]

Ellingham  
July 7th, 1869

"... I am all ready for starting [ for the source of the Mzimkhulu in the Underberg area ] ... I expect to be away a month at least, on my trip, and in the meantime one of Bella's brothers and perhaps her sister will stop here with her. We had intended to have taken a wagon and both of us to go, but there have been such severe frosts lately that the Berg is sure to be covered with snow, and it would be too much for Bella and the baby which latter, I must tell you, is growing finely. I wish very much that Bella could have gone, but sleeping out at night and the many discomforts of a shooting trip would be too much, I fear.

You must imagine me with the cart, tent, three oxen, two horses, three dogs, two Kaffirs, a pot, kettle, saucepan, frying-pan, sugar, tea, salt, etc, four guns, that is a double smooth-bore, my double-barreled rifle, my buffalo rifle and the Kerr rifle, off to explore a part of the Drakensberg mountains which no-one else has as yet, I believe, ever crossed over. The game likely to be met with are buffalo, eland, gnus, quaggas, blesbok, springbok, pigs, and they say there are one or two elephants in a big bush at the source of the Umzimkulu, also some lions but the latter are scarce. I have one white companion... I look forward to plenty of sport. It is said that there are lots of Bushmen in the kloofs of the Berg, so when I get there I shall have to look out for the horses and oxen and keep watch..."

Sidney was away for six weeks, and thoroughly enjoyed his hunting trip. He shot 120 head of game of various sorts. On his return to the Mkomasi he set to work with fresh enthusiasm, and for a time his farming and trading enterprises were very successful; by June 1870, he could report that he and George Compton had five different

trading-stations and a salt-meat businesses.

A month or two later, however, the situation in Natal, as in the rest of South Africa, was entirely altered by the news that rich diamond-fields had been discovered in Griqualand West (a frontier area on the Northern Cape / Orange Free State border, bounded to the south by the Orange River) and Sidney found himself in a state of uncertainty, facing possible ruin.

[ To his parents ]

Ellingham  
August 4th, 1870

"...The great news from this part of the world are the diamond discoveries in the Free State. I have kept from saying anything concerning them till authentic news came down, but there is now little doubt but that they are a glorious success. Skilled men from the greatest diamond merchants in the world are on the spot, buying up for gold all they can get, and that is the best proof that they are genuine. A thousand white men are already on the spot, besides some 800 Kaffirs employed by them, and diamonds of great value are being daily turned up, a Natal man (by the latest news down) finding one that sold on the spot for £2,000.

All Natal and the Cape have the diamond-fever badly, and I don't believe I shall be exaggerating in saying that half the Natal people will be there in a month or so. Magistrates, doctors, parsons, and people of all professions and trades are throwing up their situations and making ready for a start, and such is the excitement that nothing else is talked or thought of in Durban and Maritzburg. Bella and myself are but just back from a pleasure trip to those two places, and diamonds were to be seen in Durban the day before we left. I saw them all at Mr. Evans's; one party of officers of the 20th Regiment are said to have got £17,000 worth. I send you the last papers on the subject, to judge for yourselves. Take my word for it that this will completely revolutionize all this part of the world, and from what I can see, if it really is only a quarter true we shall have to shut up and be off, as every white man in the country will go.

It will be a dreadful bad job for all the planters, as plantations will go to the bad for want of overseers. Cattle are rising in price, transport will treble in price in the next three months, and in fact no-one knows what will be the end of it. It is sure to shut up our salt-beef business, as if cattle go up it will not pay to salt. All our traders will be off, and that will leave us terribly in the lurch. I would give anything to be completely out of business just now. It must eventually benefit us all, but it will dreadfully hamper many for a time like ourselves who have our businesses depending on white labour, as at present we employ about eight white men besides ourselves, and these we know too well will leave as soon as ever they come to how the facts..."

Sidney's partner, Walter Compton, was keen to try his luck at diamond-digging, and in October 1870, he left for the Fields. Sidney carried on farming and trading alone for a year, then let Ellingham and moved with Bella, Flora and the new baby, May, to a trading-post in Alfred County. Bad weather made the journey from the Mkomasi district a nightmare experience.

[To his parents]

Alfred County.  
November 9th, 1871

"When I last wrote, I think I was going to town, and on my return we were to start for Alfred, bag and baggage. After some delay (as we had our whole establishment to move 130 miles by ox-wagon, no trifle, I can assure you, all bad road and everything to pack with grass), we got off on 1st October and got as far as the Ifafa, about 25 miles from Umkomaas. Here began our troubles; we had to bridge a bog-hole, three wagons got over, the fourth smashed down and we had to off-load and send it back to be repaired. This delayed us two days, then it began raining and rained every day for fifteen days; nice this was for poor Bella and the children, cooped up in a wagon. The veldt was a perfect morass.

We left Ifafa, and at Umtwalume the wagon carrying our crockery, stores and other household goods capsized and lay all four wheels in the air, the rain still pouring down. We left that to its fate and trekked on about four miles to a good halting place, I then went back with a Kaffir, picked up our traps, right sided the wagon, loaded up, and trekked (it was then pitch dark, raining hard, and an awful thunderstorm) for where I had left Bella. Three or four

times lightning struck close to us... Just before we got to Bella we got out of the road. In went the wagon into a hole, and stuck. We left it for the night and got on to the other wagon, nearly dead with wet and cold. Next day we got the stuck wagon out and trekked, it was still raining and the roads like glass. We had to gallop down hills, as the oxen could not hold their feet sufficiently to keep the wagons back. We nearly capsized a dozen times.

Next day we commenced by capsizing one wagon on a slippery hill. I had to offload that and pick it up, and about sundown three wagons having got safely across a frightful swamp at the Umzimayi the fourth went in over the hub of the wheels and although we put in sixteen oxen they could not move it. After working till night, up to our necks in mud, we had to give it up and set out for the wagons. On reaching them we found a man there who told us a large vessel had come ashore the night before and he had lost his way and in wandering had come to our wagons; that the rest of the crew had left him behind as he was knocked up. They thought they were cast ashore in a savage country, and all expected to be eaten. He did not know how far he had walked, but thought his ship must be about twenty miles further on.

Next morning we saddled up and rode along the beach, and after going fourteen miles found a fine, full-rigged ship, the *Defiance*, of Liverpool, ashore. She had 6,000 bales of cotton aboard. We stayed there for a few hours, and I was just stripping to have a swim out to her as she lay only about 200 yards from the beach, when we saw about twenty large sharks come up. They were after the beef and pork that came out of her. I did not care to go in after that, so we rode home. After several more days of incessant rain we reached and crossed the Umzimkulu River at my old place..."