

## Newsletter 12b

### The passing of an aunt in Finland.

I was informed of the passing of Eira, born Bjoerklund. She was born 2 August 1917 in Sortavala (Karelien), Finland and passed away on 31 August 2011, aged 94, in Helsinki.

She hails from the Finnish missionary Bernard-Botolf Bjoerklund (1844-1902) who married Catherine (Kitty) (1847-1917), the third child of missionary Heinrich and Hanna (Johanna) Kleinschmidt.

Some of you may remember the "Dear Kitty" letter, the letter from her sister who informs Kitty of the death of her father after fleeing with members of the Rooi Nasie in Rehoboth from the raiding party of Jonker Afrikaner, from Windhoek. Kitty died in Helsinki.

Eira was the granddaughter of Bernard-Botolf and Kitty. She was born to the youngest son of the missionary couple, Theodor (1882 – 1942) and his wife Aino Maria (born Raunio, 1888 – 1971).

I met Eira's sisters, Riita and Kirsti in April 2010 in Finland when I also visited the Rautanen branch of the family.

We share in the sorrow of Eira's passing.

Eira (1917 -2011)



## **A recent trip from Cape Town to Swakopmund.**

On 9<sup>th</sup> November my sister Heidi with three friends (all from Oregon USA) and I set off on a history tour that traced the missionary family history and the wider context of slavery, colonialism both British and German, the Nazi era's impact on the region, apartheid rule and the post apartheid and liberation problems in South Africa and Namibia. I served as their amateur historian.

Our destination was Swakopmund to visit our mother. She is well over 95 years of age, is content and clear of mind, though ever more frail, every time I visit.



Heidi Eidler-Kleinschmidt with mother Eva – 15 November 2011 in Swakopmund.

Our trip to Swakopmund took us from Cape Town north to Malmesbury. From there we went east to Riebeek Kasteel, over

the Bothmans Kloof pass. I wanted to ascertain that the site we had found for Zara's grave late last year was not a mistaken location. The confusion arises because of a pass leading to Riebeek Kasteel that has the name Bothmans Kloof. We visited the museum and tried to get information. Like everywhere else our research was stunted because all recorded information outside of Cape Town only starts after 1850. The Schmelen history pre-dates this. Zara died in 1821 in this area.

The reasons I am inclined to discount the Riebeek Kasteel area as the site of Zara's grave are the following:

- There is no evidence of a farm known as Heuningberg or Bothma's Hof here. The only pointer is the Bothmans Kloof (different spelling).
- The mountains around the Bothman's Kloof pass are not called Heuningberg (specifically mentioned in the reports

relating to Zara) but Kasteelberge (Castle mountains), known as such a century prior to Zara's death.

- The Bothmans Kloof Pass is not close to the Berg River, also mentioned in the letters relating to Zara's death. Tholdest road from Riebeek Casteel (named after Jan van Riebeek in 17<sup>th</sup> century) does eventually lead to the Berg River but at the point of crossing is called Sanqua's Drift, presumably the place of a Khoi-khoi settlement. If Schmelen had crossed at Sanqua's Drift it is very likely that there would have been reference to this.

My conclusion was that the place Ursula Trueper and I identified last year is still the most likely place of Zara's grave.<sup>1</sup>

We then proceeded to the Heuningberg. Due to the winter rains the place was overgrown with bush and shrubs, and our fear of puff adders (!) stopped us from clambering into the precinct of the cluster of graves. But we saw the weathered headstones. At some point the clearing of the site has to be done. These graves, adjacent to another cluster of graves (post 1850 and maintained by a local farmer), remain the most likely place of Zara's grave.

From there we travelled north over the Piekenierskloof Pass and along the Olifantsrevier. Eventually the river turns west to the Atlantic Ocean where the former mission stations of Lutzville, Ebenezer and Papendorp are located, now neglected poor communities live there. At the adjacent Doringbaai we spent our first night. North of the river an arid and desolate countryside takes you through the Knersvlakte, best translated as the gnashing of teeth plains. The signposts tell a tale of their own: Bitterfontein, Soebatsfontein (begging for mercy fountain), Soutfontein (salty fountain), Brakfontein and Moedverloor (Lost hope). But this is also the gateway to the Namaqualand daisies – the succulents that bloom briefly every spring. Our visit was too late and the flower season was already past. This year the carpet of orange, purple and white, from crevices in the broken rocks to the open plains to the verges of the road, we were told, was especially rich.

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<sup>1</sup> Further corroboration comes from Pastor Walter Moritz, who in his series on Namibia, edition 17, researched the history of the Albrecht brothers, the first LMS missionaries who tried to settle beyond the Great Gariap at the Bondelswarts settlement at Warmbad. This predates the Schmelen, but he writes that:

Aufgrund seiner schwachen Gesundheit mußte Abraham Albrecht am 14. Mai 1810 Warmbad verlassen. Sein Bruder Christian begleitete ihn zum Kap, doch bevor sie nach Kapstadt kamen, und auf der Farm Honingberg bei den Bothma's verweilten, starb er und wurde dort begraben. - Dort liegt auch Schmelen's Frau Zara (vgl. Gedenkboek S. 10; Moritz, Heft 17. S. 41).

