

Newsletter 20.1

Komaggas September 2014 Celebration

January 2014.

Dear relations and friends,

I trust you had a good festive break and that you have renewed energy for the year ahead. Here in the south people are gradually getting back from their summer vacations.

In September 2013 you received Newsletter 20 which announced the Komaggas gathering to be held on 20th, 21st and 22nd September this year. (Newsletter 20.1 augments number 20) I have received very many responses to the invite, indicating either that you will attend or might attend. Many are not able to be firm about coming as yet. Please let me know if it is yeah or nay in due course. Some wrote that you are unable to come to Komaggas but wish to be part of the correspondence involving the event. You are gladly included.

So far we have 69 reasonably certain and about 45 'maybe' visitors to Komaggas. That is great! The numbers provide a basis for the Heritage Committee in Komaggas to plan for the event.

Newsletter 20.1 is sent to update you on the preparations thus far. It is sent to all who want to be included in news about the event. The address box above provides the email addresses of this group. The Excel spreadsheet attached tells you a little more about who is on the address list. It will be augmented and improved in time. Your advice and help is welcome.

A number of you are planning additional trips linked to the Komaggas visit. Some have indicated that you will rent cars from Cape Town¹. Others, if there is sufficient support, want me to rent minibuses in Cape Town to take you to Komaggas and back. Kenneth, Noel, Malcolm and Horst are willing to drive the buses. The distance from Cape Town to Komaggas is about 600 km depending on little meanders en route. Other than in Komaggas itself, the roads are generally tarred. The journey can be done in a day but you might want to break the journey into two days or possibly more days if for example, the Namaqualand daisies are in season or you

¹ There no longer are scheduled flights to Springbok or Port Nolloth, towns near to Komaggas.

want to spend time at the fishing villages up the West Coast. You might Google 'Namaqualand Daisies' to get a foretaste of this brief spectacular annual phenomenon. I'm holding thumbs that this year's season coincides with your visit.

In Komaggas.

The five-person Heritage Committee of Komaggas are making the Schmelen/Kleinschmidt/Bam event their major undertaking this year. I have had several meetings with them and hope to be with them again in coming weeks.

The Heritage Committee is representative of the Reforming Church of South Africa, the Calvinist Church of South Africa and the Anglican Church of South Africa.

There will be a separate Newsletter to inform you of the events and activities during our stay in Komaggas.

Accommodation.

From Friday night 19th to Tuesday morning 22nd you will be provided with accommodation in Komaggas in the homes of local people. I will inform you of the cost per night for bed and breakfast later. Due to the economic problems caused by the closure of the nearby diamond mine, many breadwinners or whole families have moved to work on mines far away. Their elders are looking after their houses. These houses or rooms are being opened to us. There is no guesthouse, B&B or Hotel in Komaggas. If for whatever reason we run short of accommodation we will advise you of places in the vicinity.

I will keep you briefed about the accommodation arrangements in future Newsletters.

N.B. If any of you have special dietary or other requirements, please advise me.

Who is coming?

A number of people have asked if they can come along even though they are not related to the Schmelen/Kleinschmidt/Bam family. I have welcomed them. Some people of Khoi descent wish to partake in the event as it is in

part, an affirmation of Khoi history – a history largely obliterated by colonial events. Paul Swartbooi, a Khoi leader from Steinkopf has indicated he would like to recite a poem dedicated to Zara when we gather. Others have asked to come because they have been students of the area over long periods or because they consider our gathering unique in the South African landscape. It is not often that families divided by race, legislation and prejudice come together as we intend to do, to explore reconciliation or healing of the wound that the past has inflicted on the whole of this country. In a small way we may be setting an example for others in South African and in Namibia.

So far the biggest contingent attending are family and friends from Finland. They will be at least 10 and possibly 20 in number. They include Juha and Martina Rautanen, Sari and Anu Rautanen. Missionary Dr Martin Rautanen married Friederike – the 6th child of missionary Heinrich and Hanna Kleinschmidt. Olle Eriksson, who is organising the Finnish trip, is not a relative. The Finnish contingent will travel north all the way to Northern Namibia, after our gathering. Olle taught in Northern Namibia for most of his life and now back in Helsinki, organises tours for Finnish congregations to the missionary sites in Namibia and South Africa.

The second most numerous and distinct indication of attendance is from the Uirab family in Namibia. They are descendants of Ludwig Kleinschmidt, the 7th child of missionary Heinrich and Hanna Kleinschmidt. They may be 15 in number.

The attached Excel spreadsheet provides names and information about the participants. There will be errors and my interpretations may be wanting. Please will you get back to me with corrections and I will amend and send out a new and possibly expanded spreadsheet. The more information we have on everyone in advance, the better the interactions when we meet – I think.

If there are people I have inadvertently left off the list, or if there are others who should yet be invited, please let me know.

It might be a thought if each of each of you wrote a small piece about yourselves to all whom this email is addressed, to indicate what your connection to the family is and maybe what your expectations of the gathering are – or anything else. Feel free to write in the language of your choice.

Accommodation in Cape Town.

For many of you the road journey to Komaggas will start in Cape Town. Cape Town is the best place from which to get to Komaggas, when you come from abroad. You might want to plan a few days in Cape Town.

There are two Guest Houses I recommend if you wish to reside near Christine and I. We stay on the beautiful False Bay coast high up against the mountain. We are a 40-minute train journey or 30-minute car journey from the heart of Cape Town.

1. Sunny Cove Manor in Fish Hoek. It is run and owned by Peter and Solveig Kjeseth. They may come along to Komaggas. They are knowledgeable on a range of matters that probably interest you: Peter has a PhD in Theology. Solveig worked for the National Namibia Concerns when they lived in the USA. After Namibian Independence they moved to Namibia where Peter taught at the Paulinum and the University of Namibia. They have travelled with me to Komaggas and to Windhoek. Look them up at <http://www.sunnycovemanor.co.za/home.html>. Their place is 15 minutes by car from us, or 7 minutes by train.
2. Sonnekus Guest House in St. James is a four-minute walk from our house. I have known the owners over several years. This too is a very nice place, a stone's throw from the beaches and also in walking distance to Restaurants. Look them up at: <http://www.sonnekus.co.za/>

Shuttles to and from the airport pose no problems and can be booked through your guesthouse. September is not yet high season in South Africa but beautiful places get booked early. You might want to communicate with your place of choice well in advance.

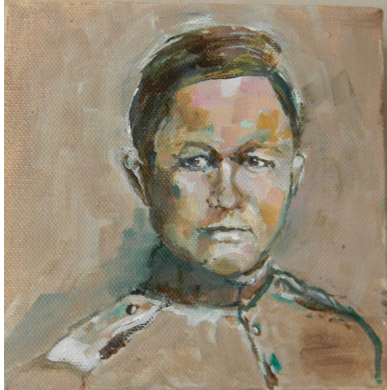
With some luck the first Southern Right whales should be visiting False Bay from Antarctica when you visit. Given the steep coastline around here, they are easy to get a good view of. You should be able to hear them from your rooms at night as the mothers play with their young.

Exhibitions.

Some of you may have interesting artefacts in the form of photo's, maps, medals, letters or other material that could be viewed when we are in

Komaggas. Please consider bring such items along and let us know how best to show or exhibit them. Otto (Uirab), your work on the Swartbooi family tree, and how it links to the Kleinschmidt family would be wonderful to show during our gathering.

Painting our ancestors.



Christine (Crowley) has embarked on a project to paint portraits of a large number of our ancestors. Each painting is 15cm x 15 cm. They will be exhibited in Komaggas in September. Above is her portrait of Heinrich Kleinschmidt (born 9.10. 1884 and died as a young soldier of the German army in Warsaw on 1.8.1915). His father was Franz Heinrich, 5th child of missionary Franz Heinrich and Hanna Kleinschmidt (nee Schmelen).

The historic graveyard of Komaggas.

The old stonewall that surrounded the graveyard where Hinrich Schmelen and his second wife Elisabeth (nee Bam) lie buried has long collapsed. For decades feral donkeys have trodden the headstones and graves into the ground. The Weich missionary family, who succeeded the Schmelens, also lie buried here among the many elders who founded of this village. This is also where the memorial stone to Zara was inaugurated last year.

The Heritage Committee will shortly arrange for a new fence, front wall and gates that will surround the historic graveyard. It will be in place when we visit.

Twelve family members have contributed to the purchase of building materials for the construction of the fence. Local people are providing sweat equity. A big thank you to all who have helped and are helping with this project.

Passports and Visas.

I have been reminded that some of you are currently not in possession of a valid passport. I urge you to apply soonest. If you require a visa be reminded to apply in good time.

I look forward to hearing from you and to see you in Komaggas.

If you have any questions or suggestions, don't hesitate to raise them with me.

Yours,

Horst