

NEWSLETTER 20.2  
KOMAGGAS 2014 CELEBRATION  
MARCH 2014

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The house in Komaggas where Friederika (3<sup>rd</sup> daughter of Hinrich and Zara) lived with her husband Christian Bam. (Photo taken February 2014) Friederika Schmelen (1819 - 1853), Christian Bam (1809 - ?)

Dear family and friends,

The Newsletter 20 series (You have previously received 20 and 20.1) will keep you updated about all that concerns our gathering in Komaggas in September.

Kenneth Makatees and I returned from Komaggas this past Sunday evening (23 February). We met with the committee who take responsibility for the events during our stay. There is much excitement throughout the village in anticipation of the celebrations. The local organising committee is appointing three sub-committees:

1. A group who take responsibility for the performance of a play about Hinrich and Zara Schmelen, written as a school performance in Komaggas, in 1979. The scholar who acted the role of missionary Hinrich Schmelen in 1979 is a member of our current organising committee. He is Mr. Johan Cloete and he has contacted the other scholars who performed in the play 35 years ago. They will perform the play for us in September.

The play has broader importance. Ursula Trueper and I met the writer and teacher John Cloete several years ago. Sadly he has since passed away, but the script has survived. He told us how he wanted to make a statement against racial segregation in a time when any criticism of apartheid would have cost him his job. To yet get his message across to his pupils he wrote a play in which he celebrates the marriage of a brown-skinned woman to a white-skinned man and how their union contributed uniquely and productively to the culture of the people of Little and Great Namaqualand.

2. An accommodation sub-committee is listing all households in Komaggas (with additional accommodation possibilities in Kleinzee – some 40 km away) able to offer accommodation and whether they will provide breakfast each morning. The resultant list will facilitate how families and groups of people will be allocated. The question of cost per night will also be discussed and you will be informed of this expense in a future Newsletter.
3. A Lunch and Supper sub-committee: The plan is that all lunches and dinners will be shared together in a hall. These meals will also be shared with local relatives and the wider community of Komaggas. Vegetarians will be catered for – a point to make because we will be in serious meat country! The cost of these meals will be made known later.

A draft programme is in the making and will be sent to you when specific items have been clarified.

The numbers attending have not changed much. We are working on the basis of 70 definite and 50 'maybe' attendees. Attached please find an Excel sheet with updated and corrected information.

Besides being entertained by the school play we hope that we will be treated to a performance of rieldansers, a traditional khoi-khoi dance that until recently had nearly become extinct. We also expect local choir's, including one from Steinkopf, to offer songs and hymns typical of the Khoi-khoi language and the region. South African poets will present poetry specially written for the event.

Kenneth is a descendent of Friederika Schmelen, the third daughter of Hinrich and Zara. During our weekend visit we had a separate meeting with his branch of the family many of whom live in Komaggas to this day. Kenneth shared with them his recent research into the family history. We also explained to the gathering of some twenty uncles, aunts, cousins and second cousins how his part of the family (the Bam's, van Reenen and others) are related to the to the Kleinschmidt branch of the family,

they who stem from Hanna (or Johanna) the second daughter of Hinrich and Zara Schmelen.



Descendants of Friederika Schmelen who married Christian Bam, living in Komaggas to this day, at a meeting addressed by Kenneth Makatees and Horst Kleinschmidt, 22 February, 2014.

We further visited auntie May. Auntie May lives in a corrugated iron hut. She will turn 103 in April and belongs to the Schmelen descendant's. She remembers Ellen Bam, the granddaughter of Zara and Hinrich Schmelen. Auntie May remembers being taught by Ellen Bam, a teacher of Komaggas. All three Schmelen daughters, as well as Elisabeth, Hinrich's second wife, taught in Komaggas.

It is easy to get auntie May talking. "Yes, they used to tell us that they took cattle and goats all the way to the sea in winter (some 60 km west) when water was scarce here. At the coast it rained in winter and the bush was lush. But when the mine put up the fence (de Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines) this tradition was stopped. We never saw the sea again. And so the wealth of the people ended" she says. Clear as bell she adds, "Those were hard times but we loved each other; now the times are not so hard but we stopped loving each other". She looks forward to our visit in September but says her legs are no longer so good but asks if people would mind visiting her at her home?



Auntie May is nearly 103 years old, seen here with Kenneth Makatees at her Komaggas home, February 2014.

Lastly, we compiled a brief text (attached) to explain the importance and purpose of the coming Komaggas gathering. It was intended for people and organisations locally who have expressed an interest in what we are busy organising. You too might find this text useful (the text also exists in Afrikaans). An updated list of attendees is also attached.

Kenneth and I trust that you find this Newsletter informative. We will be in touch again shortly.

Kind regards,

Horst & Kenneth



The gravestone of Juhan Truu (1902 - 1963) an Estonian Komaggas. He fled his country during WWII and via Sweden came next to Hinrich Schmelens grave. Truu, like Schmelens was a much-admired teacher in the Komaggas community.