

29 April 2009

Dear friends and relatives,

I trust this finds you well.

**1. The following is work in progress: The Schmelen-Kleinschmidt family tree electronically.** The fairly extensive tree is not my creation although I have added and corrected (where family have pointed out date or name inaccuracies) various inserts to it in recent months. Erika von Zedlitz, a great grand daughter of Hanna and Franz Heinrich, the missionary couple, created the substantial basis of this tree.

I recently had it scanned at an architect's office and thus the tree is now digitally available. But it is a huge file and I thought you would be none too happy if I just sent you a huge file of 141.1MB (TIFF Document) that clogs up your computer. It is in a format where changes can be made to the content. So, if you want me to send it because your system can accommodate it, please respond and I'll happily send it to you. If you want it but you worry about your computer capacity, lets talk to see if there is a way around it. One way of sending it would be on CD.

The tree now has over 200 name entries, spans 7 generations and with some further input probably eight generations, and extends back some 250 years. Without doubt it can be further expanded and extended in various directions. Your help and input is most welcome. Stories about those whose records are captured here and circumstantial context about the world they live or lived in is also welcome.

2. I have just returned from Namibia, principally to attend our **mother, Eva Kleinschmidt's 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday** but also to see to repairs to the Otjimbingue graves. More about the prospect of repairs in the next e-mail, in a few days time. Below is a picture is of Mutti at the Swakopmund Hansa Hotel on her birthday, 14 April 2009. She is content, still cooks for herself, takes short walks twice a day, avidly watches soccer on TV and remains a star at solving all cross-word questions in the Lions home where she lives.



3. Traveling from Cape Town to Swakopmund by car I visited **Bethanien** in southern Namibia. (There and back and going on various detours, my journey involved exactly 5,000 km). I was pleased to note that the Schmelen house is in a stable condition and the key to the door is kept at the manse of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Pastor in the adjacent house. When I visited here three years ago there was no Minister and the place was deteriorating. Now pleasingly, Pastor Gert Beukes and his wife<sup>1</sup> have taken charge.

Yet there are some oddities I thought I should point to – documented on the photograph below. **Firstly**, there is a row of flat stones that have been erected to the left of the front door of the Schmelen house. (A separate row of white stones seems unrelated). They are painted in red, yellow and black.

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor Gert Beukes, PO Box 67, Bethnie, Namibia. Tel.: +264 81 3757734

I failed to see their importance or symbolism. When asked Pastor Beukes told me they represent the German flag. Why? "Because Schmelen hailed from Germany". I expressed surprise and doubt about the relevance and appropriateness of this. Schmelen adopted Little and Great Namaqualand as his home. He never returned to Germany once. Beukes found these painted stones here when he came here. He does not know who put them there.



The **second picture** shows the newly appointed artifacts that are on display to the right of the door in front of the house. The idea is not bad but I doubt the artifacts have much to do with the Schmelen's and their period. One piece looks like the bonnet of a 1950's truck and another a wheel rim; others are rusty paraffin lamps of a recent era.



The **third picture** is that of a (new) sign on the gate to the house that says: "Schmelen House, Gift of Mrs. Maria Hage, Kali & Family, Oranjemund". It is unclear what is donated. The house? The flag? The artifacts? No contact details and Rev. Beukes could not enlighten me as to who the Oranjemund people are. Can anyone help?



The inside of the house is as it always was. It needs renovation and upkeep (beetles are devouring the reeds that are the ceiling) but the display's are basically sound and link the mission history to that of Schmelen and subsequent decades and to the local people in the surrounds. It also



points to the deceit, treachery and violent subjugation by the German colonial masters – many decades after Schmelen first got here.

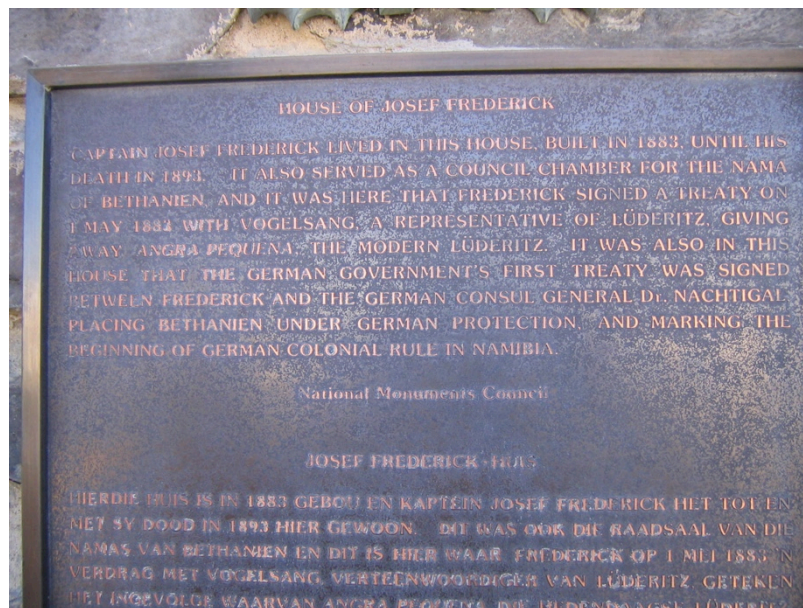
#### **4. Meeting Chief David Frederick.**

My efforts to probe into history were unexpectedly rewarded when Rev. Beukes suggested he introduce me to his neighbour, Chief David Frederick<sup>2</sup> (The word *Kaptein* is no longer used, he advised me) What a rewarding encounter! Having met him in his house he said I should wait in the Frederick building, a stone house his forefathers had built in 1880. This house, not 150 meters from the Schmelen house, serves as offices of leaders of the !Aman clan.

Have a look at the picture below and try and read the wording that is on a plaque, which is located next to the entrance door. It refers you to the meeting that took place, in this house, between Chief Fredrick's forebear and Mr Luederitz's agent, Mr. Vogelsang, who tricked local communities out of their land by purchasing in a German measure of distance when in fact the locals were used to an English measure that is far shorter. The result was the acquisition of much more land than the locals thought they had sold. The dispute was but a first in which Namibian communities lost their land.

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<sup>2</sup> Chief David Frederick, PO Box 123, Bethanie, Namibia.



The plaque goes on and refers to another meeting that took place in the house when the German Reich's representative, also with a name from the feathered species, Dr. Nachtigal, imposed treaties for signature in this house that sealed colonial demands.

Chief Frederick is a measured, old person who spoke to me in lucid and impeccable Afrikaans, with traces of Dutch. Here a few points that stood out from the impromptu history lesson he offered me.

In my short history lesson I was told the following:

The !Aman community came from Pella and Steinkopf and before that lived further south nearer to Cape Town. The advancing white trekboere and the creeping colonial border, forced them to move northwards. This was the only option they had to retain pasture for their animals. Eventually they had to cross the Gariep (Orange), which is when they settled at the natural fountains at Bethanien. They had horses and guns, which gave them an advantage over local people.

He does not disavow connections to religion and the Lutheran church but is unequivocal that the missionaries were all connected to the Cape Government and later the

German Government and thus paved or prepared the way for colonial occupation.

The Rhenish missionary at Bethanien, during the Nama uprising in 1906 is viewed as a traitor (veraaier). The uprising was against the colonial occupiers and the missionary called for a prayer service of all the men in the village, in the local church. During the service the German soldiers raided the communities' houses and confiscated all guns the locals owned. Deep divisions in the community over whether they should take up arms had complicated matters.

During the uprising a section of the local men joined the uprising. Six men who were caught by the Germans were executed by hanging, from a tree in the nearby riverbed. Once a year the community met at the tree to pay their respects to these men. The six pieces of wire by which they were hung were still evident on the tree branches where they were hung. In more recent times a white farmer pushed the tree over with his tractor. The community collected the trunk and it stands as a permanent reminder next to the Frederick offices. Only a stump remains now, as the tree is dead. Branches are arraigned in circles around the base of



the stump that serve as the reminder and where people now gather.

Many other locals were detained because of their lack of loyalty and apparent non-adherence to the treaty between the !Aman and the Germans. First they were held in

open-air camps near Karibib, but later were taken to the notorious **shark island** in front of Luederitz harbour. More than half of those imprisoned here lost their lives with many of the dead thrown into the sea. Chief Cornelius Fredericks and his wife Aletta also died here in 1907.

The !Aman were always a small community and Chief Frederick believes that his people suffered proportionately more than others. (Other sources comment similarly<sup>3</sup>)

Chief Frederick told of having recently completed the first part of the !Aman history. A second part will follow. They have not yet approached any publisher.

Upon my enquiry Chief Frederick told me that very, very few of the visitors to the Schmelen house ever come to the Frederick memorial house. Pastor Beukes said they had up to 500 visitors per annum to the Schmelen house. I urge any of you who may in time visit the Schmelen house, the adjacent graveyard and the two churches, to ask and be shown the Frederick house and the hanging tree. I am sure Chief Frederick or one of his deputies would also oblige and provide explanations to this painful past.

Bethanien now has a neat looking B&B/Guesthouse<sup>4</sup>. I have arranged that they sell copies of Ursula Truepers book, 'The invisible woman'.

## **5. Visit to Rehoboth.**

Per chance I had lunch at the new Restaurant, also providing accommodation, situated on a cool and elevated hill on the left of the road as you enter Rehoboth. Hobasen

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<sup>3</sup> See the new publication "What the Elders used to say" Namibian Perspectives on the last Decade of German Colonial Rule, ISBN: 99916-840-3-1 by Casper W. Erichsen.

<sup>4</sup> Bethanien Guesthouse, [bestbed@iway.na](mailto:bestbed@iway.na) or [bookings@bethanieguesthouse.com](mailto:bookings@bethanieguesthouse.com) or [www.bethanieguesthouse.com](http://www.bethanieguesthouse.com)  
Also: +264 63 283 013 or fax: +264 63 283 071 or +264 81 359 7858



Montana Lodge<sup>5</sup> is owned and managed by Mrs Vicky Cloete who runs a fine eatery and attached B&B. I commend her establishment because most white Namibians and South Africans still shun places like hers.

Her opening comments to me were: Are you a policeman or someone who is coming to check on my place, because I don't like such people. That out of the way, we had a wonderful discussion, her bringing out a 1967 edition (in Afrikaans) commemorating 125 years of Rhenish mission in Namibia. It provides extensive interpretation of the history, has many pictures, inevitably with nuances typical of the paternalism and racial attitude of the church's white leadership of the day. The Schmelens and Kleinschmidts feature with a chapter each. Mrs. Cloete was not inclined to part with her book.

In conversation with Mrs Cloete and later Miss Anzell Bayer<sup>6</sup> (in charge of the Rehoboth Museum), the events around the battle of Sam !Khubis were also eloquently commented on. This battle took place in 1915 when the Rehobothers, who, during the First World War, had initially been fighting on the side of the German colonial power, turned against them. This is not the place and moment to expound on this event, but local people commemorate it annually to this day. I urge anyone interested in the history of Namibia to read more about this.

The Museum has a large display worthy of noting. It shows the route the Rehoboth Basters undertook as a clan when first forced and compelled to do so from the Cape, having to move ever further north until they concluded an agreement with a local people that resulted in them settling in Rehoboth. The words 'great trek' are used by the Rehobothers in this connection and their having to leave the

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<sup>5</sup> Hobasen Montana Lodge, (Mrs. Vicky Cloete), 2 km south of Rehoboth on the B1. Tel.: +264 62 525 704, fax: +264 62 525705, mobile: +264 81 2569962, email: cloejp@iway.na

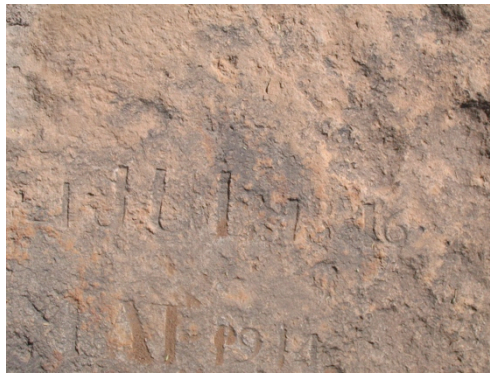
<sup>6</sup> Miss Ansell Bayer, Rehoboth Museum, Private Bag 1017, Rehoboth, Namibia. Tel.: +264 62 522954.

country of their birth. In 1926 a re-enactment, commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this trek was staged, tracing by ox-wagon the arduous journey of their forefathers and mothers. The display traces the routes taken prior to colonial rule in the northern Cape and in Namibia. Not least this identifies the daily distances of the ox-wagons, no doubt influenced by the availability of water and grazing land for their animals. At the same time the points where wagons could be taken across the Gariep and various riverbeds are of interest. One might presume that missionaries relied on the knowledge and experience of these people when planning their own journeys from the Cape to Namibia.

### **A Kleinschmidt grave in Rehoboth.**

Behind the museum are two graves. One is that of the young missionary Scheppman who died here, the other is that of what I presume to be of an infant (Maybe even two infants), marked Kleinschmidt, but spelt Klenschmidt. The stone is eroded and can hardly be deciphered; it may even have been repaired at some point in time. From the Kleinschmidt diary I should be able to establish more about this grave. Maybe one of you has the information on this.





**Lastly**, if anyone travels up from Cape Town: A place, on the main road through the town of Springbok is known as a Springbok Lodge and Restaurant<sup>7</sup> (opposite KFC or Wimpy). Despite its very unpromising appearance it has an interesting bookshop that has various publications on Namaqualand that I have not seen elsewhere. They also rent very inexpensive but adequate en-suite rooms.

I shall write again shortly with news about the repairs to the Otjimbingue graves.

Even if you are on the margins of this story, I hope you find the letter interesting and readable.

Kindest regards,

Horst Kleinschmidt.

PS: The footnotes are intended to be of help to those who might plan their journey along this route.

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<sup>7</sup> Tel.: +27 27 718 1741 or fax +27 27 718 1742

