SMITH, Alexander

Born *c*. 1818 Perth, Scotland. Died 2 Nov. 1893, Durban.

Gardener, farm labourer, farm superintendent, horticulturist, farmer, storekeeper.

1818.00.00 Born. (SFT). In Perth. (CSO 2286)

1837.00.00 Married —— Shepherd who died at birth of son Alexander. (SFT)

1838.10.00 Son Alexander born. (Tomb WSC)

1838.10.25 Son Alexander b. in Perth. (Smith papers in LHM)

1838.00.00 Married Lucy Mannering. (SFT)

1849.02.00 Sailed from England for Cape Town with wife and four children on the East Indiaman *Scindian*. (BNM p. 231). He was a gardener of Perth. (SFT). The children’s names were Alexander, William, Henry and Margaret. (SO’BS). Their destination was Natal and they emigrated under the auspices of P.J. Maxwell\* who had deposited £100 to the credit of HM’s Land and Emigration Commissioners. This entitled him to nominate 7 statute adults for free passages. Those he nominated were James Fayers\* with wife and child, Alexander Smith with wife and 4 children and Joanna Ryan. [A child under 14 yrs was counted as ½ a statute adult.]. (SO’BS).

1849.06.14 The *Scindian* arrived at Cape Town. No passenger list exists. (Bull)

1849.06.18 P. Southey, a Cape emigration agent, was instructed by the Cape Government to arrange a passage for the Smiths. He reported that they were forwarded to Natal on the *Rosebud* at the expense of £24, that their passage on the *Scindian* had cost £37.16.00 (4 statute adults at £9.9.0 per adult), that shipping maintenance at the Depot from 15 June to 24 July came to £8.8.4 (39 days at 13d. per day each adult) and that there were also wagon and boat hire costs. (GH 776 22/1850 no. 28). The Natal Govt was debited £70.13.4. (GH 776 22/1850 no. 27)

1849.08.06 Arrived off Port Natal on the *Rosebud*. (*NW* 10.08.49). They were steerage passengers. (EI 73). They settled at Congella and were troubled much by leopards. (BNM p. 231)

1850.00.00 Planted J.L. Feilden’s\* first sugar cane in 1850 and early 1851. Also helped Feilden with the growing of cotton. (OVH p. 264)

1852.06.19 Agreement of employment by J. Leyland Feilden drawn up. Smith appointed general superintendent of farm *Feniscowles*, his wife to be housekeeper and his children cotton pickers. Wages to be £50 p.a., to be paid half-yearly. Smith to live in a house on the farm. (RSC 1V/7/16 no. 16)

1852.07.00 He was a labourer of *Feniscowles* when daughter Mary [Polly] born. (R. St P. Dbn)

1853.08.15 Appointed curator Durban Botanic Garden. His starting salary was £50 p.a. increasing to £60 p.a. in 1854. He earned a bonus of £18. (DM pp. 13, 14 &17)

1854.06.12 In the *Natal Mercury* of this date Smith’s resignation as curator, Durban Botanic Garden, was noted with regret and the following comment made – “The gardens were never in so good and progressive a condition as now, and suitable persons for such an office in a small country are few and far between.” His resignation was because of a disagreement with the committee of the Natal Agricultural and Horticultural Society. (DM p.17)

1854.08.15 His resignation as curator Durban Botanic Garden came into effect. (DM p. 14). He resumed employment with Feilden. (OVH p. 264)

1856.00.00 Was working on Feilden’s *Springfield* sugar estate [on the Umgeni flats]. (FAH p. 277)

1856.10.08 At a party to celebrate the Feildens’ fifth wedding anniversary he was presented with a silver cup. (FAH p. 305). It was inscribed, “Presented to Alexander Smith by J.Leyland Feilden Esq., Feniscowles, Natal, South Africa, 8th Octr 1856, for successfully carrying out the culture of cane on the “Springfield” Sugar Estate. (OVH p.264)(Photos of cup supplied by N.Smith)

1857.07.23 Leased from Feilden Lots 1, 6 &7 of farm *Feniscowles* with buildings on Lot 6 for 3 years at £25 p.a. The property is mortgaged to Robert Acutt\*. (RSC IV/19/32 no. 67)

1857.08.00 Feilden gave P/A to A.W. Evans\* to dispose of farms *Zee-Koe Vallei*, *Richmond* and *Feniscowles* subject to a lease of part of the latter to Smith. (RSC 1V/19/32 no. 42). *Feniscowles* did not go out of the Feilden family until 12.03.1930 when, being 3 540 acres of the farm *Seaview*, it was transferred from Wemyss G.C. Feilden to Frank Shaw and then Theodore Pitcairn of Phladelphia, USA, minister of religion. (ROD. Deed of transfer no. 798/1930). The property now comprises the area known as Carrington Heights where there is a Pitcairn Road. (SO’BS)

1859-1860 Of *Sea View*, farmer, renter, on Durban jury list. (*NM* 11.08.59)

1863.02.12 He and wife Lucy [Mannering] made their will. All movables to go to eldest son Alexander and imovables to be divided in equal portions between Alexander, William and Henry. Wife Lucy to enjoy a life rent on whole estate. Margaret and Mary [Polly] to be paid £100 on father’s death. (RSC 1V/12/13 no. 196)

1868.02.00 Son Henry, born Sevenoaks, Kent, married Agnes Lucy Bowley. (CSO 2285)

1868.02.18 He was a sugar planter, Umhlanga, when son Henry married Agnes Lucy Bowley. (*NM* 00.02.68)

1870.01.29 Daughter Mary married Walter Gray. (*NM* 00.02.70)

1871.09.14 Son William married Julia Davis, widow, born Bowley. (*NM* 19.09.71)

1872.11.06 Of *Springrove* sugar estate on the Umhlanga, sugar planter, gave P/A to J.D. Shuter\* to pass a mortgage bond in favour of George Frederick Eastwood\* of farm *Hoghton*, Seven Oaks, Umvoti County, gent., for £1 000.00. As surety binds 100 acres being Lot 16 of farm *Zee-Koe Vallei* and all crops growing thereon and in particular a specified amount of sugar making machinery. (RSC 1V/19/36 no. 81)

1873.05.00 Son Alexander, born Perth married Emily Jane George. (CSO 2286)

1874.09.19 David Sparks\*, sugar planter of *Ridle Vale*, Victoria County gave P/A to J.D. Shuter to pass a mortgage bond of £1 000.00 in favour of G.F. Eastwood, originally taken out by Alexander Smith on 12.11.72. (RSC 1V/19/36 no.145)

1878 end Gentleman, Commercial Rd, Dbn. (DNA 1879)

1879.01.27 Wife Lucy died aged 69. (DGRD). Died in Durban . (*NM* 14.02.79)(*NW* 18.02.79). Mrs Feilden recorded that Lucy was a well-educated woman. (FAH 52) and that she made hats to supplement the family income. (FAH p.222)

1879.10.18 A widower and storekeeper aged 65, born in Perth, he married Charlotte Wilson, (b. Wardell [*sic*]) aged 61, a widow born in Portsmouth. His children were Alexander 33, William 31, Henry 29, Margaret 27 and Mrs Mary Gray 25. Charlotte had no children. (CSO 2286). [The ages of the children are not correct. BMS]

1882.01.04 Of Commercial Road, wife Charlotte (b. Wardle) died at Durban. She had previously been married to George Moffitt and Thomas Wilson\*. A codicil to her will dated 1881.04.19 appointed Alexander Smith heir and executor. If he predeceases her then her estate is to be divided between the sons of John Thomas Anderson (son of W.P. Anderson\*). (MSC 17 & 18/1882). Charlotte’s sister Jane was the wife of William Pringle Anderson. (MSC 23/1881). Charlotte’s late husband Thomas Wilson, born in London, son of William and Hannah, died in Durban on 02.03.1878 aged 46. He was a bricklayer. She signed his death notice with an X. (MSCE 4/301). In June 1872 Charlotte Moffitt, illiterate, had been granted a licence to marry Thomas Wilson. Her maiden name was Wardle and she was born off Portsmouth on board the *Victorine*. The licence was issued in Durban. (CSO 2285). When married to George Moffitt she had kept a boarding house *Mazeppa Cottage* at the East end of West St. (AGO 1/4/5 p. 7)

1893.11.02 A gentleman of Berea Road, Durban, he died aged 81. (DGRD)

CHILDREN

First marriage.

**Alexander** (25.10.1838, Perth, Scotland – 00.07.1934, ?Hillary, Natal)

1838.10.00 Born. (Tomb WSC)

1838.10.25 Born in Perth. (Smith papers in LHM)

1849.08.06 Arrived off Port Natal on the *Rosebud* with his father, step-mother and three siblings. (EI 73)

1852.06.19 By agreement between his father and J.L. Feilden, he and his siblings to be cotton pickers on *Feniscowles*. (RSC 1V/7/16 no. 280)

1863.02.00 Who was the Alexander Smith, lime burner of Dbn, who leased a subdivision of Lot 10, Block C, Dbn, from Edward Lello\*, guardian of Charlotte Humphrey aged 12? He contracted to complete the store with 2 dwelling rooms, kitchen and WC which Lello had started to build on it. (RSC IV/19/34 no. 91). By May 1863 he was a police constable of Dbn. (RSC I/8/8 no. 685)

1863.09.28 Who was the Alex Smith of *Blue Bell Farm*, Colenso, who gave P/A to J.D. Shuter which on 01.04.64 was transferred to John Vialls\* who on 12.04.64 cancelled the lease. (RSC IV/19/34 no. 91)

1873.05.00 Born in Perth he took out special licence to marry Emily Jane George (née Robertson), widow, born in London. She had one child, Caroline Emma aged four. Licence issued in Durban. (CSO 2286)

1873.06.00 Sugar planter, Victoria County, married Emily Jane George, widow. (R.St P. Dbn)

1874.00.00 He was a sugar planter when a child was born. (DGRB)

1878 end Storekeeper, West St, Dbn. (DNA 1879)

1879.00.00 He was a storeman when a child was born. (DGRB)

1916.05.00 His wife died aged 68. (Tomb WSC)

1916.05.03 His wife died aged 68. (DGRD)

1919.11.00 Lately of the Berea, now of Hillary, he recently turned 81. He has been in Natal for 70 years having arrived on the *Rosebud*in August 1849 aged 11. He saw Durban grow from sandy waste to its present state. His father was the first man to produce Natal sugar in paying quantities for Leyland Feilden at *Feniscowles*. (*NMP* 07.11.1919)

1931 *c*. Accompanied Miss Ethel Campbell and Mr J.H.W. Bullimore to the site of *Feniscowles* house where, ‘Although it was, then, over 60 years since he had been there, he was able to point out, approximately, the site of the house which I visited later with the Keeper of the Natal Archives (where much information about the Feniscowles Estate is preserved). I also took some natives for excavation purposes and we found what appeared to us, undoubtedly, to be the foundations of the “slate roofed,” “brick” portion of the house, which was built and occupied by the Feildens after they had lived in the wooden portion for sometime. The position of the foundations coincided, not only with what Mr. Smith had said, but with Mrs Feilden’s sketch of her house showing the outlines of the hills beyond. We found old bricks and stones. Later, I marked the spot with a cairn of cemented stones and hope on my return to Durban to carve the necessary information and have it cemented into the cairn. Mr. Smith also accompanied us to the site of Mrs Bowen’s house and garden, *Keventrenfa*.” (EC in *NM* 04.11.1933, p.20)

1934.07.00 He died. (Tomb WSC)

Second marriage.

**William** (*c*. 1840, Kent – 18.11.1916, Durban)

1840*c*. Born, Kent. (CSO 2285)

1871.09.04 ANC of Wm Smith of Dbn, soda-water manufacturer, and Julia Davis (b. Bowley), widow of William Davis, formerly of Port Elizabeth, carpenter. (RSC 1V/18/17 no. 11)

1871.09.00 William, b. Kent took out licence to marry Julia Bowley, widow Davis, b. Smethwick, Staffordshire. Licence issued in Durban. (CSO 2285)

1871.09.14 William Smith m. Julia Davis. (*NM* 19.09.71)

1909.08.12 Wm established a mineral-water business in Dbn and is still engaged in it. (*NMP* 12.08.1909)

1916.11.00 William Smith died aged 76. (Tomb WSC)

1916.11.18 William Smith, gent., died aged 76. (DGRD). William Smith d. aged 76. (Dove’s

 Dbn list). William Smith died. (R. Wes. Dbn)

1928.09.00 Wife Julia d. aged 81. (Tomb WSC)

1928.09.27 Wife Julia d. aged 81. (R.Wes. Dbn). She was b. 12.04.1847. (MSCE 6/317). Her parents were Benjamin Bowley b. 1811 and Mary Ann Blewitt, b. 1814, Wombourn, Staffordshire. They were m. on 25.12.1838 at Dudley, Worcestershire. (Blair). Benjamin Bowley was of Cape Town. (*NM* 00.03.63). In about 1876 Benjamin and Mary Ann Bowley retired to Dbn. (Blair)

**Margaret** (*c*. 1843, ?England – 13.10.1919, Dbn)

1843*c*. Born, ?England.

1852.11.00 Mrs Feilden recorded that, “… from some natural impediment she [Margaret] has difficulty in speaking.” (FAH p.26)

1852.12.28 Mrs Feilden recorded, “My little pupil, Margaret Smith, will never bring me much credit. There is some defect both of speech and ear for sound.” (FAH p. 36)

1919.10.00 Margaret died aged 75. (Tomb WSC)

1919.10.13 Margaret died aged 75. (R. Wes. Dbn)

1919.10.13 Margaret died, Durban, aged 75. (Dove’s Dbn list)

**Henry** (*c*. 1845, Sevenoaks, Kent – 28.07.1899, Dbn)

1845*c*. Born, Sevenoaks, Kent. (CSO 2285)

1868.02.17 ANC between Henry Smith, accountant of Dbn and Agnes Lucy Bowley, spinster of Dbn. She was assisted by her brother-in-law and guardian Elijah Middleborough\*. Witnessed by Wm Smith and W. Davis. (RSC 1V/22/4 no. 45)

1868.02.00 Henry b. Sevenoaks, Kent, aged 23 took out licence to marry Agnes Lucy Bowley, aged 18, b. Birmingham, ward of Elijah Middleborough. (CSO 2285)

1868.02.18 Henry, on 18.02.1868 at St Paul’s, Dbn, m. Agnes Lucy, d. of B. Bowley of Cape Town. (*NM* 00.02.68)

1869.03.22 An accountant by this time. (DGRB)

1872.10.26 An accountant. (DGRB)

1875.08.20 A produce broker. (DGRB)

1878.00.00 A merchant. (DGRB)

1881.04.00 J.L. Feilden writing to [nephew] D.F. Whittaker\* from Essex says he has not heard from Henry Smith for nearly a year. [W.R.] Royston\* at *Feniscowles* is indebted about £80 for rent, and the other tenants, one at *Houghton* (Commissie Drift), Richmond, and another who took old Smith’s lease is also, he thinks, in arrears. He is going to write this mail to Henry Wemyss Feilden about it. He is acting, if necessary for him, He is greatly surprised that he has had no advice for so long from Henry Smith. He has a strong feeling of regard for his father and all his family because they had stuck to him at a time when he was being fleeced by a lot of hawks, and he should be sorry to think that anything could go wrong with any of his family. While Andrew Kennedy [nephew of Eliza, wife of J.L.Feilden] was in health his rent was regularly paid. It was only since his illness that Henry Smith has acted in his place. The tenant of *Houghton’s* lease is near to expiration and he had written to Henry Smith that he might renew it for five years. He has had no advice from Smith on this head. He has asked H.W. Feilden to look into all these matters if he has time. (J.L.Feilden, Eyre papers, Don Africana Library)

1881.09.09 Made will. He was manager of S.A. Loan, Mortgage & Mercantile Agency. (MSC 105/1899)

1881.09.09 Henry Smith, manager in Natal of S.A. Loan, Mortgage & Mercantile Agency and his wife Agnes Lucy declared that at the time of their ANC he had given her Sub, 3 of Erf 8, Block I, Dbn, with buildings and furniture on it, which was transferred to her on 12.06.1880. This property was sold and another on West St – portion F of Lot 7, Block G – purchased in her name. They intended paying off the bond held by J.W. Akerman\* on the property and setting up a trust giving Henry control of the property during his lifetime and then for the benefit of his widow and children. (RSC 1V/5/4 no, 404A)

1899.07.28 Henry died in Dbn aged 55. (MSC 105/1899)

1899.07.28 Henry d. aged 56. (DGRD)

1899.07.28 Henry d. aged 55. (Tomb WSC)

1899.07.28 Died aged 56 yrs 10 mths. (MSCE 39/110)

1900.10.29 Agnes Lucy Smith presently of PMB, widow of Henry Smith of Dbn, declared they were m. after an ANC dated 17.02.68. Her mother was Mary Ann Bowley and her b-in-law was James John Rowe. Some years ago she and her husband went to England with the intention of settling there. Their eldest dau. Agnes Ethel received a house on the Berea from her father when she married and their second dau. Augusta Mary is about to marry and she wishes to give her a similar marriage portion and makes a claim on her husband’s estate for money which belongs to her. (RSC 1V/13/52 no. 381)

1925.08.00 Wife Agnes Lucy died in Canterbury, England, aged 75. (Tomb WSC)

Third marriage.

**Mary (Polly)** (00.07.1852, Durban – 26.12.1910)

1852.07.00 Born, Durban. ((R. St P. Dbn)

1870.01.00 Mary, 17, b. in Natal m. Walter Gray, b. Shropshire. They took out licence to m. in Dbn. (CSO 2285)

1870.01.29 Mary at *Rounian* [*Reunion*] *Estate*, Umlaas, m. Walter, younger-son of R.B. Gray of Epsom, Surrey. (*NM* 00.02.1870)

1910.03.00 Walter Grey [*sic*], engineer d. aged 70. (PGRD)

1910.03.13 Walter Gray, engineer, d. in Pmb. (MSCE 37/250)

1910.03.14 Walter Gray was buried, aged 69. (Tomb CRC). Was he the Walter Gray, 21, from Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, engineer, who arrived in Natal on the *Priscilla* in Sept. 1860? (Akitt lists). Major David Erskine [Colonial Secretary] had stood surety for his passage. (E.I. 65). On 08.10.1868, in the insolvent estate of Gray & Tyrrell, John Crofton Peddie and Walter Gray were reported to have proceeded against the trustees for sums due them by the estate. (MSCE 1/42 no.25)

1910.12.00 Mary d. aged 59. (PGRD)(Tomb CRC)

1910.12.26 Mary, b. in Natal, d. aged 59, boarding-house keeper, widow of Walter who d. 13.04.1910. (*sic*) They were m. in Dbn, she d. in Pmb. A son signed the death notice. (MSCE 40/162)

1910.12.27 Mary Gray buried in PMB. (*NW* 27.12.1910)

People marked \* denote they are British Settlers who arrived in Natal between 1824 – 1857.

SOURCES

**Books, Directories & Journals**

Blair, Beverley. *The South African Bowleys*. *Familia* vol.21, nos 2 & 3, 1994.

BNM – Buchanan, Barbara I. *Natal memories*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1941.

Bull, Esme. *Government aided immigration from Britain to South Africa, 1837-1867*. Pretoria:

HSRC, 1991.

Campbell, Ethel. *The story of Feniscowles in the fifties. Natal Mercury*, 04.11.1933.

DM – McCracken, Donal P. *A new history of the Durban botanic garden*. Durban: Durban Parks

Dept,1996.

DNA – Natal Almanac & Yearly Register. Pietermaritzburg: P.Davis, 1863-1905.

FAH – Feilden, Eliza Whigham. *My African Home*. Durban: Reprint, T.W. Griggs, 1973.

OVH – Osborn, Robert F. *Valiant Harvest*. Durban: SA Sugar Association, 1964.

**Cemetery Lists**

Tomb CRC – Commercial Road cemetery, Pietermaritzburg.

Tomb WSC – West Street cemetery, Durban.

**Church Registers**

R St P. Dbn – Register, St Paul’s Church, Durban.

R. Wes. Dbn – Register, Wesleyan Church, Durban.

**Unpublished Official Papers**

AGO – Attorney General’s Office.

CSO – Colonial Secretary’s Office.

DGRD/B – Durban Government Register Deaths/Births.

EI – European Immigration.

GH – Government House.

MSC – Master of the Supreme Court. Wills.

MSCE – Master of the Supreme Court. Deceased Estates.

PGRD – Pietermaritzburg Government Register Deaths/Births.

ROD – Registrar of Deeds.

RSC – Registrar of the Supreme Court.

**Newspapers & Journals**

*NM* – *Natal Mercury*

*NMP – Natal Mercury Pictorial*

*NW* – *Natal Witness*

**Private Source Material**

Dove’s, Undertakers, Durban. List of burials.

Feilden, J.L. Correspondence, Eyre Papers, Don Africana Library.

SFT – Smith Family Tree via Dr E.V. Palmer and T.B. Hodson (both deceased).

Smith Papers, Local History Museum, Durban.

SO’B S – Shelagh O’Byrne Spencer.

3 085 words