

Visit on Thursday 18 July 2019 to Glendower Farm, Beacon and Barville Park

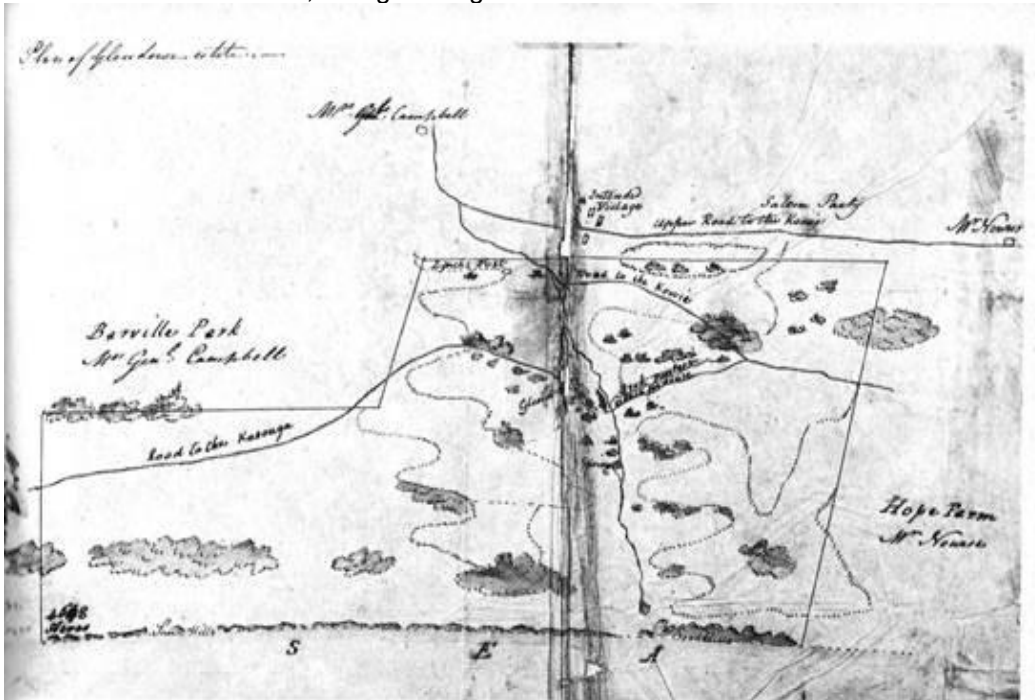
Compiled by Margaret Snodgrass and Sue Gordon

A small herd of oribi zigzagged down the undulating slope on the inland side, and on the other a distant southern right whale flipped its tail and splashed for us. Curious Bonsmara cattle browsed nearby, eyeing us and oblivious to their magnificent setting. Our viewsite? The hill on which stands the Glendower Beacon, built on the 1877 recommendation of harbour engineer Sir John Coode. The 15 metre-high structure has benefitted passing vessels and aircraft ever since, but the view from there for our group of 72 Lower Albany Historical Society members on Thursday 18/7/19 was purely food for the soul. Originally named Monte Verde, the windswept Glendower hill is surely the best vantage point from which to enjoy a coastal view westwards from Kasouga as far as the Diaz Cross. On a clear day, one can see past the Kowie, along the eastern coastline and to the north, the hills around Grahamstown/Makhanda.

Adrian and Elizabeth Ford have owned Glendower Farm for over 20 years; Adrian is the fourth generation Ford farmer. They have Bonsmara cattle and conserve the oribi which have always occurred naturally on the farm. Elizabeth, whose particular passion is her string of Welsh ponies, shared the Glendower history with us.

At the heart of their farmhouse lies the dwelling built by 1820 Welsh Settler Thomas Philipps, a man of some influence and means. The cottage Philipps built was reed and plaster over a framework and comprised an entrance hall, two sitting-rooms and five bedrooms. Before Philipps owned it, the farm was a 'loan place' registered in the name of Joel Smuts which he abandoned in 1811, as were most 'loan place' farms after the initial wars on the Frontier. Joel Smuts named the farm 'Mont Verde', (Green Mountain – today's Beacon Hill). It was not one of the 1820 settler locations.

In 1825, however, Thomas Philipps, who had been granted the loan farm 'Lemoen Valleij' adjacent to the Pike area of Clumber, was given a grant to obtain 'Monte Verde'.

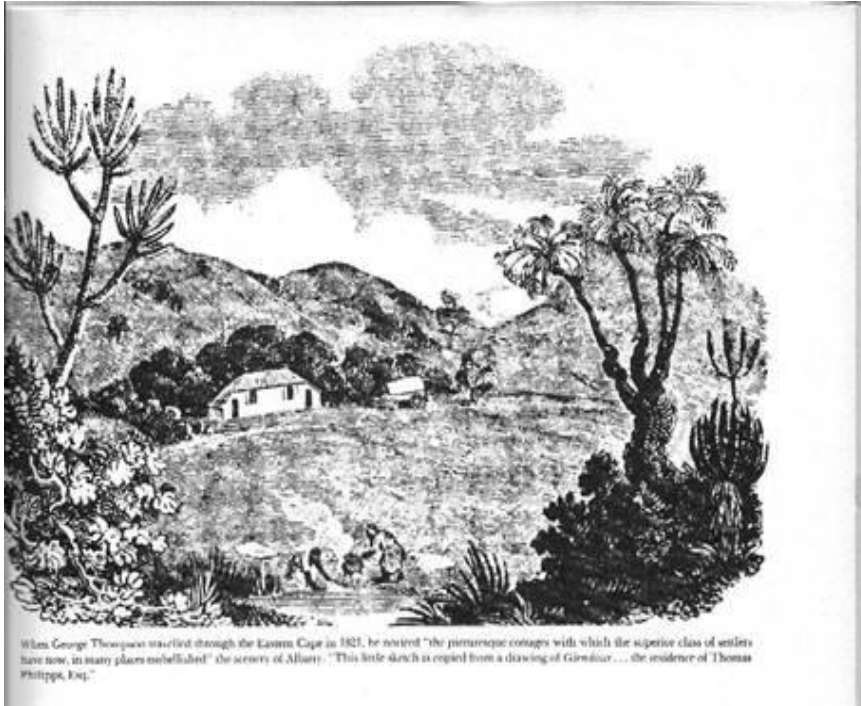


Plan of Glendower Estate. Thomas Philipps, the leader of the Welsh party from Pembrokeshire, was first located at Lampeter on the flats due north of Bathurst. In 1825, however, he succeeded in obtaining a grant of part of Rietfontein, in a fine grassland area near the sea and due west of Port Alfred. This he named Glendower, a name every Welshman associates with Owen Glendower, who, early in the fifteenth century, first achieved recognition for the unity and national consciousness of Wales. Thomas Philipps is noted for his commentary on the early days of the Settlers in *Scenes and Occurrences in Albany and Cafferland, South Africa*, published anonymously in 1827, and for his letters, published in 1960 under the title, *Philipps, 1820 Settler*.

He was very relieved to receive this land because in anticipation of receiving the grant, his sons, Edward and Frederick had already begun building on the farm. He renamed this beautiful farm 'Glendower', after the last independent Prince of Wales, "Owain Glyn Dwe" (Owen Glendower, nationalist hero, 1359-1414).

Thomas Philipps wrote to his relations in England:

"In some of my letters I alluded to a rich belt of land which was situated along the coast...within this belt we are now happily placed but the whole country between the Kowie and Kasouga possesses other beauties in addition, and differs from all the others in splendour of scenery of the softest and most luxuriant in nature."



He went on to describe the road leading to the:

richest pasture imaginable, an extensive parkish plain is bounded towards the South by gently swelling hills with clumps and groves....the road passes under a wood, half way or more over the plain it divides, one leads to the intended new village and the other to Glendower. We will follow the latter through Mimosa and over a small sandhill covered with bush for a quarter of a mile until Lynch's Post (on a little hill) is seen, or rather the very little remains of it, it was a military Post about seven years ago. Here Edward and Frederick pitched their first tent, with a view to taking repossession and fixing a boundary when they came down only with liberty to graze...the cottage of Glendower appears at the extremity of a plain and in front of luxuriant grove, which hides in its

recess the farm Yard etc. Over the house are seen lofty green hills whichever view is taken the whole seems encompassed and locked in...you can wind gradually up one of the hills and see on one side the Ocean, the Bushman's River Hills, the Grahams Town Hills, Bathurst and round to the Kowie".

Glendower then was teeming with game of all kinds: reedbuck, grysbuck, bushbuck - and oribi. Philipps and his sons crossed South Downs sheep with Spanish Merinos; they grew all kind of crops which flourished until the locust invasion in 1829. In the same year a whale was washed up on the beach near Glendower and Thomas Philipps cut up and boiled the blubber and sold the oil to the farmers. He managed to extract 150 gallons (680 litres) of oil.



Glendower Farmhouse today

Thomas Philipps' wife, Charlotte, died in Grahamstown in December 1834, just before the Sixth Frontier War of 1835. The *Glendower* house was burnt down and all the cattle stolen; Philipps did not rebuild the house but gave up farming and moved to Grahamstown where he died in 1859 at the age of 83. The farm has had many tenants and owners since Philipps, but has retained the name *Glendower*. William Cock became the owner of

Glendower in 1848, but sold it the following year. Edward and Stephen Dell also occupied it for a short time, as did Carlisle, Gray, R Featherstone Jnr, Ussher, Parker, Sam Reed and Fred Keeton. George Vernon Ford, son of Ann and James Ford of Kasouga Farm, lived on Glendower for over 40 years. He renovated the old homestead. Colin Ford, his youngest son, continued to live at *Glendower* and conserve the indigenous game there, including one of the largest herds of oribi. Colin, Adrian's father, was also one of three farmers in the area to receive a prestigious National Heritage Award for this work.

Glendower Beacon

The Beacon close up is every bit the grand landmark it suggests as one passes it along the R72. Sir John Coode, the eminent British harbour Engineer, whose improvements concerning the Kowie Harbour are mentioned in Eric Turpin's '*Basketwork Harbour*', recommended in 1877 that a navigational beacon be built on the highest point of *Glendower Hill* to help mariners overcome the difficulties experienced in making the Kowie landfall.

It was built only in 1881. A stone on top of the Beacon has the initials KHW inscribed on it - apparently after the stone mason, K H Westcott. All the stone for the beacon was said to have been transported by ox-wagon to the site from Grahamstown. The Beacon, the property of Spoornet (now Transnet), was for many years painted regularly - the lower third white and the top two-thirds black. It has a triangular design facing South East, South West and North.

Our LAHS group was made to feel very welcome by Adrian and Elizabeth. There can't be many farms in the area that enjoy Glendower's rich history, verdant rolling hills, oribi, huge trees, sea frontage – and even friendly ponies. On our departure for Barville Park, however, the two old anchors from local shipwrecks which decorate Glendower's gate reminded us of the perils of our coastline. What a great cost there had been, in lives and ships, before the Glendower Beacon was constructed.



Barville Park

Judy McGarvie of Barville Park had much to tell us about the various owners, first Major-General Campbell (1822) and his sons, followed in 1842 by the Dell brothers. Judy wove personal anecdotes into her presentation and in the main house a number of interesting historical articles, documents and the Campbell-Dell Deed of Sale were on display.

Barville Park is situated between Reed Fountain stream and the Kasouga River and was originally a portion of the 'loan place' *Rietfontein* or *Reed Fountain*. Lieutenant Michael Lynch of the Cape Corps was granted 'Reed Fountain' in 1813 and then on July 11, 1814, Lieutenant Proctor was granted 200 morgen - roughly where Barville Park is today. Hezekiah Sephton's Party reached Reed Fountain in June 1820 but soon after were ordered to move to Salem on the Assegai River by Major-Gen Campbell's bailiff, Cyprus Messer, who had gone ahead to Reed Fountain to prepare for the General.

Major-General Charles Campbell, a wealthy man from Argyllshire, had been in command of armed forces in Newfoundland. He landed at Table Bay on 30 December 1821, then arrived at Reed Fountain in March 1822, naming the farm *Barville Park*. His bailiff had already built three huts and a well and had assembled material for a house. Campbell's family was a large one (he had been married three times) but he was not destined to enjoy Barville Park for long. On May 8th 1822, en route to Grahamstown, he was thrown from his horse and badly hurt. Rev George Barker of Theopolis tried his best to help Campbell but the Major-General died the following day aged only 51, and was buried in the Botanical Gardens, Grahamstown.

Mary Campbell, his young widow of only 21 years, was left in the unenviable position of caring for seven children: Lawrence, Harriett, John, Frederick (13), William (10), Edward (5) and Catherine (1). Two of her stepsons were older than she was. Mary was no pauper, however, and Capt Alexander Biggar managed her financial affairs. She appears to have been very adaptable and began farming sheep, remaining at Barville Park for 10 years then returning to England in 1832. In 1840, when her son William came of age, she bequeathed Barville Park to him, but he soon sold it to George Wood for £750. George Wood (later the first mayor of Grahamstown) sold it and Kasouga Farm two years thereafter to the Dell brothers, Stephen and Edmund.

Stephen Dell grew forage for the military. Just before the 7th Frontier war he was warned by Henry Somerset of an impending attack and advised to sell his forage and leave the farm. Stephen resisted, unsatisfied with the price the military offered for his forage and certain that he would be safe. Unfortunately he was ruined when the Xhosa set the forage alight one night. One of Stephen's four sons, Walter, returned to Barville Park from Johannesburg in 1906 and married Hannah Ford in 1911. His brother Cornelius travelled from Kei Road to Barville Park for the wedding and was killed in the Blaauwkrantz Bridge disaster on 22 April 1911. When Walter died in 1941, his niece, Kathleen Norton, inherited Barville Park on the understanding that it was entailed for Kathleen's eldest daughter, Elizabeth (Betty) Norton. Betty learnt to speak isiXhosa and built up a herd of Afrikaner Shorthorn cattle for which she won a variety of farming and conservation awards.

The McGarvies, who farm Barville Park today, are also Dell descendants, so the farm remains in the family

Right: Judy McGarvie at the grave of Stephen Dell



Left: Judy McGarvie speaks against the background of the original Wesleyan stone chapel and cottage, now one residence.



Right: The gracious Edwardian (1911) Barville Park mansion which Walter built for his bride makes a strong impression as one arrives at the farm.

The most historic 'Dell' part of Barville Park lies a short walk to the west and comprises a complex of buildings built (c.1842) by Stephen Dell, his younger brother, Sam and a man called Geach. There is a so-called 'fort,' a large double-storey settler house, with a surrounding loop-holed wall which in turn is enclosed by a higher stone wall, creating a cattle kraal.

A loop-holed barn which Stephen Dell used to store his forage, has an original scale suspended on the outside. This building is now renovated but retains its original yellowwood ceiling and embrasures that



allowed for enfilading fire (firing from a side position). According to Bartle Logie [*Dusty Road to Long Ago* p161-162] whose father worked at Barville Park, the materials used - stone, lime and yellowwood - all came from the farm. The extent of protective stone walling around this old complex is impressive, even by today's standards; the 'settler' house in the centre now has smooth plastered walls and new extensions. Stephen Dell's complex still commands a vista of pristine bush and boasts magnificent old cycads and massive trees.



Some of us noticed the 'Mandela's Gold' yellow strelitzias and enjoyed the fact that we had celebrated Madiba's birthday that day in sunshine and good company.



References:

1. Logie, Bartle. *Dusty Road to Long Ago*
2. Bennett, Mike. *A Pembrokeshire Trek to the Cape. Toposcope Vol XLIV, 2013*