

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT MAY 2003 – APRIL 2004

Looking back over the last year, one is aware of how many interesting things have been happening all around us! History in the making! The merging of East London with surrounding towns and villages to form Buffalo City has brought us into contact with new ideas and developments. We, as a Society, are pleased to note that certain historical sites are receiving a bit more attention. "Our" particular historical monument, the Ncera Church, has been thoroughly renovated, repaired and re-painted, and recently we enjoyed an outing – with at least 30 people in support – to view the building on completion of this work. We are most grateful to the S.A. Heritage Resources Agency for their most generous donation which made this big undertaking possible; to Ken Gradwell who undertook supervision of the work; to Dave Bowen for his hard labour on the burglar guards – and indeed to all those who offered support and encouragement along the way.

This year our meetings each month have been interesting, with talks on a wide range of topics.

Gill Vernon chose "From Sword fighting to Fencing – a History of the Duel" having fenced at university, provincial and national levels.

The author, Roger Webster, gave a talk called "At the Fireside". The audience was fascinated by his tales of African history. *Exclusive Books* provided wine and juice and our

committee provided snacks. About 30 of Roger's books were sold after his talk.

Lloyd Wingate spoke on "The History of the Amathole Museum", (close to his heart, being the present Director).

Tony Ribbink covered "The Coelacanth – an Historical Perspective". This subject continues to fascinate an audience!

At our Annual Dinner in November, Kenneth Gradwell and David Bowen presented "The Ncera Church Story and Renovations", well illustrated with excellent photographs.

Beryl Bowie covered a wide area in "What History means to me".

Nancy Tietz brought a suitcase filled with mementoes, etc. in "Letter from Palestine".

Geraldine Morcom presented her study of Cove Rock – always a fascinating landmark on our shore.

The attendance at meetings remains fairly stable, but it is disappointing that we have been unable to attract younger people to the Society.

Our big loss – through ill health and moving house – has been in Blake Dalrymple's relinquishing of the position of Secretary of the Society. We miss the flourish of his most able penmanship, and were proud to bestow Honorary Life Membership on him at our Annual Dinner.

As always, my position has been made light by the very supportive and active committee. I thank each one of them. Also, we could not exist were it not for the members and friends who join us each month and share our interests and offer friendship.

I thank you all.

Jennifer Penrose-Marks.

**DR. MARJORIE COURTENAY-LATIMER DIED IN
EAST LONDON ON MAY 17, 2004, AGED 97.
AS A FOUNDER MEMBER OF THIS SOCIETY AND
HONORARY LIFE VICE-PRESIDENT, THIS EDITION
OF THE *COELACANTH* IS DEDICATED TO HER
MEMORY.**
