CHAPTER 2
The settlers of the Midlands and the political economy of Natal

If you drive north-west along the N3 motorway from Pietermaritzburg, the old capital of colonial Natal, you will pass through beautiful countryside. You will encounter the towns of Hilton and Howick, Mooi River and Estcourt. Along the way, you will see signposts to Balgowan, Curry’s Post, Lidgetton and Tweedie. You will be in the heart of the Natal Midlands. The country is undulating, with small streams, a few larger rivers and forests breaking up large tracts of pasture.

There is another route you might follow, along the old main road. This deteriorating artery takes you deeper into the Midlands. Roads lead away, north and south to Greytown, Underberg or Ixopo, which, with Estcourt, mark the corners of a rough rectangle which defines the area. Beyond the highway with its articulated trucks and impatient traffic, life is slower and it is not difficult to envisage farm life in an area which still has very little industry and low population densities.

This study is about the Midland farming community a century ago, in its adolescence and its prime. It is about a group of white landowners who occupied the land in the second half of the nineteenth century, and retained occupation of that land, in some cases, for a century and more.
Natal region
In the 1820s the first white settler-adventurers began to operate in Natal. They necessarily had to reach agreement with local African populations, especially the Zulu kingdom, which was at this time emerging. There were good opportunities for trade and hunting and these were vigorously pursued by the small settler population that made its base at what became Durban. In the 1830s, a second wave of white settlers arrived in Natal from the west. Boers led by Piet Retief and later Andries Pretorius attempted to establish a permanent settlement between the mountains and the sea. Retief attempted to reach an understanding with Dingane and the Zulu kingdom, but before settlements were well established, war broke out (1838). The Boers were initially defeated in a number of surprise attacks, but the tide was turned at the Battle of Blood (Ncome) River. Having militarily established their claim to the land, the new settlers energetically set about laying out farms and beginning with rudimentary agriculture. The heart of these endeavours was the area centred on Weenen and spreading southward (that is, the Natal Midlands). But their impact was not to be longlasting. A dispute with zealous British authority over forced labour policies which the Boers adopted led to open confrontation, the defeat of the Boers (1842) and their departure into the interior. But the Boers left behind three important legacies: virtually no trace of their own brief occupation; a land divided up in terms of the principles of private ownership; an area with an insignificant resident black population. When British settlers arrived, they found lands aplenty, cheap and unoccupied. These were necessary ingredients for the establishment of a culturally homogenous, agriculturally based settler community.

The colony of Natal was a backwater before 1880. It was neither an important colony of settlement nor the producer of valuable exports. Its government was basic. The development of social institutions was tardy. Social codes, spatial patterns and the fact of white rule all were not yet rigidly in place. For this reason, some writers have described the area as being a frontier (Marks 1970:16). In the frontier period, gender roles were relatively fluid. Women took part in hunting and trading expeditions, explored and developed a variety of (not necessarily heterosexual) gender identities (Trollope 1988). As the frontier closed, so powerful forces of conformity came into play. The major one, which affected masculine and feminine gender roles and identities, was the state. As Jock Phillips shows for New Zealand, the state considered the existing frontier masculinity (rough and tough) to be at odds with the developmental requirements of the colony and via a number of interventions created a model of masculinity that suited industrialisation, urbanisation and the stabilisation of family (Phillips
1987). A similar argument can be made for race relations, where cross-race unions were initially relatively common (though poorly documented). A well-known example of a settler who crossed the racial line is John Dunn. Born in 1835 in the eastern Cape, he was a frontiersman, explorer and trader. In the 1850s he was involved in the civil conflict that characterised Zulu politics at this time. Later he sold guns to Cetshwayo and was rewarded with land, cattle, office and wives. When he died in 1895, the Dunn clan were numerous, but were no longer considered to be, or acted as, part of settler society (Ballard 1985). Few followed in Dunn’s footsteps and those that did were regarded as a problem. As John Laband puts it, colonial officialdom took a dim view of any person who lived ‘like a native’ (Laband 1995:18). South of the Thukela, public cohabitation with African women in the twentieth century was rare, legally restricted, and frowned upon (see chapter 9).

Around 1880, varying in pace according to time and space, settler society was beginning to assume a mature form. Two of the major reasons for this transition were changes in the regional political economy (the mineral revolution in the interior) and the growing importance of the imperial factor. In 1880 Natal was invaded by Boer forces. British forces subsequently were routed at the Battle of Majuba in northern Natal (February 1881) and the Boers won the ‘first vryheidsoorlog’ though this was to be only a slight hiccup in the development of the colony. But in the previous year the Zulu kingdom had been militarily defeated, paving the way for land-grabbing on a large scale, and easing labour shortages among settlers. In 1880 Natal was on the verge of rapid economic growth and integration into the sub-continent’s trade system. These changes were profoundly to affect its society. But there were other important developments around this time. The institutions established in the colony were slowly maturing. The single-sex, boys’ schools were just beginning to make their mark. Enrolments were rising and the physical fact of their existence was becoming ever more convincing. Sports (particularly rugby) were beginning to attract participants and crowds and were becoming regular events. Some of the military units had come of age in the 1879 war and were becoming more assertive in the social life of the colony. Farmers associations were beginning to be established. Everywhere there were signs of a change of gear, of a settler society beginning to expand and assert itself.

The government and settlers of Natal were not unanimous in their views. The colony’s institutions were frequently marked by debates over the relationship with the metropole. Many argued vigorously for a reduction in dependence and an assertion of cultural independence. At the same time, economic imperatives and social insecurity pushed settlers to cultivate metropolitan links and even romantically to treasure them. A large body of opinion looked for direction to the Colonial Office in London. After Union, Natal developed strong separatist leanings which reflected the idea that it had a special relationship with Britain (Thompson 1990).
The trajectory of social change was affected by demographic considerations. In relation to the area occupied and to the resident African population, the number of white settlers was very small. In the colony in 1880, there were 25,000 white settlers, who made up 6.5% of the colony's population. About a quarter of the white population lived in the Midlands, including the town of Pietermaritzburg. What was alarming for settlers was that while their numbers were increasing, the size of the black population (swollen by refugees from the 1879 war) was increasing much faster. For example, in 1876 there were 21,000 whites, who made up 8% of the colony's population.

In the colony as a whole, but in the Midlands particularly, the low population density was a factor in promoting marriage and social institutions. That settlers saw themselves as 'the few' moved them to associate with one another intimately and to regularise this process by creating clubs, associations and societies which in time became the means of monitoring settler society, creating and maintaining hierarchy and the gender and class norms that went with it, and of excluding outsiders. This was not an uncomplicated process. While many acknowledged the central importance of family, many men and women were unmarried. This was because the creation of a family by marriage required levels of wealth which in many cases took some time to accumulate. Thus it was that although men outnumbered women, and women by and large sought the security of a marriage, there were many unmarried women (Beall 1982:113). And many women married late. For example, in 1904, in the 16-30 age category, more women were unmarried than married. In the 31-45-year-old category, there were six times as many women married as unmarried (Beall 1982:213).

In 1880 Natal had a representative, rather than responsible, political system. Government was primarily in the hands of the lieutenant-governor and, from 1882, the governor. In 1893 Natal was awarded responsible government, which meant that those with the vote (most white males) could elect members of a legislative assembly. No strong political party emerged in colonial Natal. Elections were generally dominated by an issue rather than party political considerations, and the outcome of a vote in a constituency often hinged on personality. The Midland farmers, despite not having a political party of their own, were highly influential in government. In 1897 two-thirds of those elected were of the 'farming interest'. Although by 1904 almost half the white population were resident in towns, the Natal parliament was dominated by maize and stock farmers. In 1906, five-sixths of parliamentarians were stock and maize farmers, even though the population was becoming more urban (Marks 1970:17-18). Of the seven prime ministers (between 1893 and 1910) five were from Maritzburg and the Midlands: Hime and Binns were from Pietermaritzburg, Sutton from Howick, Smythe from Nottingham Road and Moor from Estcourt. The last three were farmers, the former two were a civil servant and lawyer respectively, both being intimately connected with the elite boys' schools discussed in chapter 3.
The racial geography of the Midlands was of great significance for the capacity of the settlers to develop a class and gender identity along metropolitan rather than indigenous lines. By 1880 Natal’s administrators (particularly the influential Theophilus Shepstone, successively Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal from 1846 to 1876) had already decided on a policy of indirect rule which granted ten per cent of the land as locations for Africans (Brookes & Webb 1965:60). Much of the huge and vacant area left over by this arrangement was bought cheaply by individual speculators and prospective farmers. In the Lindsay family history, for example, it is told that a bag of salt procured a 1520 000 acre farm in the Boston area (Fly interview 1992). In the Nottingham Road area, ‘a large well-known farm … changed hands for a barrel of rum! Another, in the Dargle area, was “swopped” for a theodolite’ (Wood 1947:61). In 1860 the Natal Land and Colonization Company (NLCC) was floated in London by Natal speculators (Slater 1975). Intent not on farming but on renting, their intervention gradually caused land prices to rise. Nevertheless most of the early prospective farmer settlers were able to afford large farms. Land continued to be affordable so long as agricultural markets were poorly developed. With the opening up of the railway to the Rand and the improvement of the Durban harbour (L Heydenrych 1985; H Heydenrych 1985) land prices rose further. After 1880, settlers wishing to farm either had to have access to capital (and many of the later settlers were in this category) or had to be prepared to take advantage of government land settlement schemes which opened up the less accessible, and climatically hostile, areas to settler farming. By the end of the South African War (1902) there was relatively little land that was not yet farmed and plans to settle demobilised soldiers and new immigrants as yeomen farmers (which were envisaged in Transvaal, the Orange River Colony and Rhodesia) were not considered in the Midlands.

There were not many African locations in the Midlands and attempts to gain land through the market met with limited success. White landowners seldom sold to blacks, and the major way in which individual Africans got land was when crown land was opened up for sale. In 1878 Africans owned only 17 366 acres (Lambert 1995:73). In that year, crown lands were made available to private buyers. In the next twelve years, white buyers purchased over 500 000 acres. African buyers bought a mere 67 077 acres (Lambert 1995:77). This was mute testimony to the difficulty found by African cultivators and entrepreneurs in accumulating or borrowing capital. During the forty-year period covered here, some African private landowners fell into arrears and lost their land. Despite limited land-ownership (communal and private) the existence of pockets of African settlement which could not be eradicated by military or administrative means served constantly to destabilise settler complacency, giving focus to settler identity.

But the African presence was not just a question of destabilisation. Africans were generally subordinate, and often considered a threat, but they were also a constant and immediate
presence in settler life. They provided labour but not simply at the beck and call of farmers. African families on the land provided playmates for white children, sexual partners for lustful farmers, care for the aged, companionship for the lonely (see chapter 9). Africans contested the terms of their relationship with the colonisers, they did not just acquiesce (Atkins 1993). But, as Loudon (1970) reminds us, ownership of land and the instruments of production, the support of the state, access to capital and class and racial solidarity which limited the ability of Africans to resist exploitation by moving off a farm and finding a sitplek elsewhere gave white farmers literally and figuratively the whip-hand.

A second major effect of the shape of land settlement was on the cultural form that the settler community came to take. With the exception of some small pockets of land where Afrikaans- and German-speaking settlers congregated, the area was dominated by British settlement. Settlement spread outward from Richmond, the first area settled. 11 Ironically, it was the smallness of the plots given to settlers of the Byrne immigration scheme of 1849 which propelled settlers to take up land throughout the colony. The small plots were unprofitable and soon were superseded by large farms. The effect of this was that Midland families were able to model themselves on a metropolitan squirearchy, quite different from the original schemes which viewed them as sturdy yeomen. Possession of large farms and capacious farmhouses became the cultural staple of Midland farmers. Their extensive agricultural practices over time gave way to more sensible and profitable forms of production, but not before the image of a farmer riding around his farm on a good stallion observing the labours of his workers was firmly established as the idea of 'proper farming'.

By national standards the Midland farmers were a relatively homogenous group. Yet it is not easy to fit them into conventional economic, rural class categories. They do not, for example, fit into the schema proposed by Verne Harris for northern Natal (Harris 1992). There Harris demonstrated the extent, durability and diversity of the bywoner class – white farmers working as tenants on the land of white landowners. In that area there were three major categories: landowner, landowner-farmer, bywoner. In the Midlands, there were no bywoners, and only in the late 1920s and early 1930s do informants provide reference to the odd Afrikaner 'tramp' and destitute Afrikaner families squatting on crown land (Pennefather interview 1992). The British model of landowner, tenant farmer and labourer does not apply to the Midlands either, where labourers were all black, and all farmers owned their land. The same is basically true of Mann's typology for Europe in the nineteenth century. He divides the agrarian classes into estate farmers including nobles, gentry, or commoners, owning land and employing labour; peasants (small-holding farm proprietors); and landless labourers (Mann 1993:694). The Midland farmers were capitalist to the extent that they employed labourers (even if the employment was on rent terms), they invested capital in productive enterprises, they geared production to the market and sold
their surplus. But they were not just farmers in the 1870s and 1880s, and many earned much of their money from non-agricultural pursuits such as transport riding. This was very lucrative before the railway reached the Rand, and lucrative again during the South African War. In 1883 it was estimated that 15 000 wagons crossed the Drakensberg annually (Lambert 1986:80). Many farmers were possessed of capital which allowed them to invest in stocks and shares (many speculated in gold shares) or in the early twentieth century to develop a food-processing capacity which, like the sugar millers, united the processes of production and processing and increased profits. They were also a class which actively engaged in farming itself, which is to say that many not only supervised production but involved themselves in it as well (in milking and so forth), though as time went on their labours were diverted to managing and supervising, and all manual jobs were undertaken by black labour. Midland farmers, then, were not chequebook farmers, with no knowledge of their operations other than as rows of figures in ledgers. Furthermore, they were subordinated to, and sometimes in competition with, metropolitan capital, urban commercial interests and rival agricultural interests such as the sugar industry. In the historiography of South African agriculture they would be referred to as ‘progressive farmers’. This term has been used to distinguish the capitalised, large-scale, scientific farmer from the bywoner, the under-capitalised, scarcely commercial, landless cultivator.

The use of the term ‘progressive’ in South African historiography has also been given political meaning. Progressive farmers were those who favoured organisation, who favoured export and an end to ‘semi-feudal’ farm relations which tied labour up unproductively on small-holdings. In this sense, progressive farmers were a ‘fraction’ of capital contesting control of the South African economy with imperial capital (Davies, Kaplan, Morris & O’Meara 1976). In terms of this theoretical approach, progressive farmers were defined by their relationship to the working class and capital. Since these debates, class analysis has moved on – for some to oblivion, for others to a more subtle, multifocused understanding which eschews the economic essentialism of this position. Mann (1993:548) makes a plea for the abandonment of a unitary focus of class-relatedness and identity pointing out that there are other important determinants of class power, including schooling, social interaction and family location. In terms of these other factors, the Midland farmers can legitimately be regarded as an economically, capitalist, socially middle, and politically, ruling class.

The Midland farmers constituted themselves as a gentry, in the process socially distancing themselves from other classes and races. They employed servants, they patronised civic affairs, they associated with charitable causes, they built grand houses. While many of these affectations were derived from the imagined lives of landed British aristocrats, they should not blind us to the fact that the economic base of such ostentation was not that of huge
estates rented out to tenants, but rested on the much more modest strivings of a relatively small black workforce working agriculture extensively.

Forces of modernisation did not leave Midland farmers untouched. Market forces were ever active in forcing farmers to rethink their production processes, to reassess their operations. A role model of modernisation was Joseph Baynes, who established himself at Thornville and built his farm into a 20 000 acre block with a variety of food processing plants on the estate. When he died in 1921, his estate was valued at over £300 000. Baynes was the outstanding farmer of Natal (and the Midlands), a parliamentarian, a minister of government, an influential spokesman on a range of issues and an innovative agriculturist who (with Dr Watkins-Pitchford (Natal's Principal Veterinary Officer)) pioneered the dipping system which eventually ended the threat of East Coast Fever. Equally, however, we need to note that there were many farmers like him, whose prominence and prosperity were only less spectacular. Baynes’s success lay in consolidating his farming and diversifying; He built up an estate of over 23 000 acres with a full-time, wage-earning workforce of 300. His profits came primarily from his pioneering moves in food processing. He established creameries and a variety of other dairy ventures and bacon factories not just in Natal, but in Rhodesia, Transvaal and OFS (Pearse 1981:236).

Not all individually had the wherewithal to diversify or to convert the raw produce of farming into a more valuable, processed product. In these instances, family money or collective endeavour worked just as well. In the case of the Mackenzies of Cramond, the Clan Syndicate was established in 1901 to grow and sell timber (Hayes 1987). Its foundation members were all related to one another and included Sir George Leuchars (Greytown), Edward Mackenzie Greene of Nottingham Road and two Mackenzie brothers of Cramond (Solomon interview 1992; Mackenzie interview 1993; King 1987:57). Many of these men were not reliant on one source of income and had interests spread widely. Greene, for example, was a very wealthy lawyer (being in partnership with the future Chief Justice, Henry Bale). George Mackenzie, a close friend of Joseph Baynes, was a director of Nel’s Rust Bacon factory. George Leuchars had interests in, and sold his produce to, his brothers’ company, Hunt, Leuchars and Hepburn.

In Richmond a similar circumstance prevailed. Henry, one of the many Nicholsons of the area, was the major merchant of Richmond. He not only provided a most convenient (and profitable conduit) for the family’s produce, but he established a canning factory in 1889 with other prominent people of the district: the shareholders were his wife, Isabella, Joseph Harcourt and J W McKenzie (Coulson 1986:53–54). Another example was of prominent farmers in northern Natal coming together to establish the Newcastle Creamery Company in 1912. Thus it was that many prominent farmers were also directors of agricultural pro-
cessing factories: Estcourt MP John William Moor (brother of the Natal premier Frederick Robert Moor), for example, was a director of Natal Creamery Limited and Farmers’ Cooperative Bacon Factory (Shorten & Young 1939:33). Here were farmers who either processed their own produce or who had direct access to markets via family businesses which placed them in a very profitable position. The issue of markets was also less pressing in Natal than elsewhere because of the dominance and pervasiveness of the family and community networks. Families were not just confined to farms – their representatives were in government, in commerce, in banking. By utilising personal ties domestic markets were opened to producers. Joseph Baynes, for example, sold his crop regularly to the military (Pearse 1981:44). This may have had a lot to do with good price and quality and efficient delivery. It may also have had something to do with his membership of the Victoria Club (see chapter 5) in which all imperial officers were honorary members. There were areas in which this did not work – selling beyond the borders of the colony was seldom facilitated by family connections. Secondly, as the regional economy became integrated and more closely tied into international markets, family clout counted for less. Marketing was depersonalised. Put another way, while Midland farmers were well placed in terms of production, local marketing and processing, they could not control and had little influence in the increasingly important national and metropolitan markets; nor could they overcome the basic structural fact of
Southern Africa’s domestic market, which was that most of its (black) people were self-sufficient and did not need to buy the produce of white farmers (Bernstein 1992).

Settler agriculture took a long time to become viable. Farming operations were initially pastoral: sheep, cattle and horses. Sheep (first mutton and, in the 1860s, wool) proved profitable and were particularly suited to the colder climes in the south and up against the Drakensberg (Sellers 1989). Cattle were favoured in the drier northern areas. The Pietermaritzburg garrison, the local military and the slow development of motor transport ensured a reliable market for horses until the first decade of the twentieth century. Before 1860 there was little cultivation. By 1880 sugar had become a viable coastal crop and was being exported, but in the interior the turn to cultivation was slower (Richardson 1986). Farmers gradually found that pastoralism was not, on its own, particularly profitable. Many resorted to plundering the local resources, first game and then timber, to meet their needs.
for cash. The natural resources gradually became exhausted, and transport-riding became a popular and lucrative activity boosted by the diamond and later gold discoveries in the interior. The mineral discoveries also provided an impetus to local agriculture. There was not, until the emergence of inland markets, much incentive to switch to cultivation. The domestic markets were supplied cheaply by independent African cultivators (Lambert 1995:58), transport was rudimentary, and labour in short supply.

After 1880, however, a series of developments provided impetus to settler farming. In the first case, the development of large urban settlements in the interior – Kimberley and Johannesburg – had a major impact on the region’s economy. On the one hand, the new towns provided new, large-scale and lucrative markets for agricultural produce. On the other hand, the new cities boosted the fortunes of Durban as a centre of trade. The quantity of shipping and trade passing through Durban rose rapidly, doubling between 1886 and 1889 (H Heydenrych 1985:33), stimulating population growth, and in turn providing a new, large urban market within Natal itself. The huge imperial military presence engendered by the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War and the 1880–1881 South African War also created a large, though temporary, domestic market. A more enduring effect was that imperial trade connections were strengthened. Natal was more closely linked into the metropolitan trade system. From henceforth farmers would export their best products to London, would forge business links, would access capital and import machinery and bloodstock (Ballard & Lenta 1985:128–131). The accelerated tempo of colonial life was reflected in the expansion of the railway network. Labour was more readily obtained and the colonial state, especially once responsible government had been granted in 1893, began more ardently to support settler farmers. Agricultural exports rose from £849 108 (1896) to £2 485 596 (1905). A beginning was made to the export of processed foods (rising from £1 481 (1898) to £54 720 (1899)). Farms became smaller and were more intensively cultivated.

Farmers began to diversify their farming operations. Monocropping became less common, with many farmers cultivating maize and fodder crops, as well as running, sheep, cattle or horses. Wattle was introduced by John Vanderplank in 1864 and became widespread after 1887 when George Sutton established its importance as a tanning agent. By the 1890s the Pietermaritzburg-Greytown area was heavily wooded with wattle (Guest 1989:319). Dairy farming steadily became the most important farming occupation. The 1880s were years of an international dairy revolution and methods of processing, transporting and marketing improved dramatically. In turn this encouraged the import of pedigree stock from Britain (Gordijn 1985; Lambert 1986:188; Whethorn 1979). By 1920 the erection of decentralised processing dairy plants throughout the Midlands and the increased efficiency of the transporting of dairy products had entrenched the popularity and profitability of dairy farming.
Wattle plantation: six years old

The spread of branch railway lines was vitally important (see map 3). In 1884 there had been only 173 kilometres of railway in Natal, by 1908 there were 1,588 (Duminy & Guest 1989:353–354). This put farmers in touch with markets and with industry. All along the main line to the Reef, capital investment, crop diversification and increased acreage resulted. And when rail spread south of the Umkhomazi, areas surrounding Ixopo, Donnybrook and Underberg began to prosper (Camp 1986; Mingay ?:9).

The expansion of agriculture could not have taken place without major improvements in the availability of labour. We do not have definitive knowledge on the sources of farm labour, but a number of speculative comments can be ventured. The destruction of the Zulu kingdom effected by the 1879 war, the civil war thereafter and the land seizures after that struck a fatal blow to the autonomy of the homestead economy in large parts of Zululand (Guy 1982). Whether Africans sought land and jobs south of the Thukela after this is unclear, but it is at least likely. The failure of Africans south of the Thukela to establish, via land purchase, independent land holdings outside the already overcrowded reserves in the medium term, at least, extruded labour into the farm labour market. Another factor was the determined attack by farmers to prevent absentee landlords from renting land to Africans. (Further detailed, discussion of labour relations is offered in chapter 7.)
In broad terms, before 1880 farm labour had been difficult to obtain. Wealthier farmers resorted to contracting indentured Indians for agricultural tasks. After 1880, African labour became more available. It came generally in the form of resident labour tenants who worked for three to six months in return for grazing and residence rights. In addition, seasonal labour was obtained from reserves at planting and harvesting time. The practice known in the Transvaal as ‘kaffir farming’, renting land to Africans with no labour obligations and no independent production enterprise by the farm owner, was not common in
Natal. Nor was share-cropping, the practice so popular in the Orange Free State.

The state assisted agriculture consistently, though undramatically. Effort was put into infrastructural development and enabling legislation, rather than direct, ‘handout’ assistance. Infrastructural development (primarily rail construction) was critical but expensive. Much of Natal’s political debate centred on the issue – the routes to be taken, the technology to be used, the expense to be afforded. The state also extended its involvement by providing veterinary services, training (Cedara Agricultural College just outside Pietermaritzburg was established in 1902) and extension services to promote ‘scientific’ farming.

Cedara students, August 1902. Campbell Collections

The other crucial role played by the state was to assist settlement. In the 1880s crown land had been made available to African and white buyers. But this decision was gradually eroded as Africans (the major buyers of crown land) fell behind with their payments and for-
feited the land (Lambert 1988). At the same time, white farmers began buying up that land. In Creighton (Dronkvlei) and Lufafa, in 1895, Africans were cleared off crown land to make way for white settlers (Camp 1986:15). The process was further accelerated by the 1904 establishment of a Land Board. The Board encouraged white settlers as long as they had some capital and were the ‘right sort’ (Duminy & Guest 1989:364).

Comparing 1920 with 1880, the following main trends can be noted. Whereas Africans had provided most of the agricultural supplies for the internal market before 1880, at about that time they were overtaken by white farmers (Lambert 1989:134). Forty years later, Natal farmers were exporting a wide range of agricultural goods (dairy, beef, wool, wattle bark) on a large scale. By 1909 the total area of cultivated land in Natal was five times as much as it had been in the 1870s (Guest 1989:314). In the same period, the numbers of sheep trebled and cattle doubled (Guest 1989:317).

The old Natal families (ONFs)

In 1880 there were no old Natal families, no ‘ONFs’. Most white settler families had been on their farms for less than twenty years. They were few and far between, unsettled, financially precarious. There was little sense of a farming community, bounded by locale and defined by a shared culture and history. Yet by 1920, a distinct sense of community had developed and by the mid- to late-twentieth century, this had been converted into the phenomenon of the ONF.

To the historian looking back today at the Midland farmers, a striking aspect of their history is the length of time they maintained their hold on the land. In many instances, family occupation of a farm could be traced back five generations (a hundred years or more). The viability of their farming operations was testified by this pattern. Midland farmers, unlike many of their colleagues elsewhere on the sub-continent, were also unusually well capitalised (Morrell, Padayachee & Vawda 1993:188–189). Midland farmers differed from their inland contemporaries in that there was no powerful mining industry with which to compete or ally (as in the Transvaal), but also, as a corollary, no large urban or industrial market readily available locally.

Socially, the most important thing about a Midland farmer was his family. The family name was what gave him place, allowed him to be recognised. And the family as unit gave him geographical and social location. In most cases biological family was synonymous with home. To have a name meant to have a home, to have a history. But family provided a lot
more — influence, capital, jobs, friends, emotional support, assistance. For the Midland farmer, family was his safe port.

While some of the early settlers came out independently, that is, without kith or kin, others came out in small family groups — brothers together, siblings, young married couples. For those who came out without familial support, the tendency in most cases was for social units (families) to be established early on, testimony to their utility. Upon this utility was in due course built their social, economic and political significance.

The early settlers came from widely different parts of Britain and from widely different class locations. Most of the Byrne settlers were of humble origin. Only 14 per cent of the settlers who arrived in the early 1850s were self-supporting (Beall 1982:107). From that time on, moneyed settlers or men with public school backgrounds began to emigrate in greater numbers to Natal.

Whether one was of aristocratic lineage or a victim of Scottish Highland clearances, it was economically difficult and socially uncomfortable living and farming in the isolated Midlands. Most of the settlers retained close ties with their family of origin in Britain, but once in Natal, separate from the emotional and social support, if not the material support, of those families, settlers generally themselves chose to build a family. This was a conscious project — as the biographer of Joseph Henderson noted, ‘Joseph and Jane Henderson were founders of a family in a new country’ (Hathorn 1973:x). The construction of family depended on marriage. Initially this might give rise to a nuclear family setup, though as time went by families took on an extended form, frequently involving three generations and including in-laws and distant relatives.

From the start, social ties with neighbours often led to marriage links. ‘In those days, you married somebody within riding distance,’ said Phyllis Reed (née Smythe) (Reed interview 1993). While economic necessity was often a major consideration, and biological concern for reproduction another, marriage was not blind to considerations of status. In a society as socially conscious and hierarchical as Natal, great care had to be taken to ensure a good match. In 1864 Pietermaritzburg was described by a British visitor as ‘the most clique-ridden town it has been my lot to dwell in’ (Hattersley 1938:73).

The fact that land was cheap, making it possible for virtually all settlers to be landowners, provided a useful foundation for many marriages. There was an obvious logic in two landowning families joining together in marriage. Yet there were concerns about not ‘marrying below one’s station’. Such concerns were articulated initially by aristocrats like Charles Smythe, born in Methven Castle, Perthshire, the son of a Scottish aristocrat. Smythe was
taught from early on that 'class distinction was something that could not be ignored. Society was divided into rigid castes, and everyone knew his or her place' (Child 1973:6). For those whose origins were not as lofty, other devices suggested themselves to conceal working-class origin and thus avoid the contempt of town-based cliques who lorded it over colonial society. Having a 'good name' became important. A good name could be manufactured.

There were many ways in which a family name could be moulded to convey gentility and to suppress ordinariness. One way was to create a double-barrelled name. Ernest Thompson, my great-grandfather and founder and headmaster of Weenen County College, gave all his children Forsyth as a second name, and from there onward the name slowly evolved from Forsyth Thompson to Forsyth-Thompson. The same practice was followed by another of Dean Green's descendants who created a Lovell-Green dynasty in Nottingham Road. In Greytown, the Royden Turners were invented. Walter John Slatter, a Greytown farmer with a huge farm and prominence within many of the local civic organisations (including the Umvoti Agricultural Society (see chapter 7)), married the widow Evelyn Strickland. She had had a child (Edward Royden Turner) by her first husband, Edward Turner. The child was brought up by the Slatters as one of their own, but retained his name, albeit in the gentrified form.

Alternatively, one could subtly alter one's surname by deleting from or adding to it. Duncan McKenzie's family had been Mackenzies before leaving Scotland. The O'Farrells from Ireland became Farrells when they arrived in Natal (to avoid prejudice against the Irish) while Edward Mackenzie Greene (son of Dean Green of Pietermaritzburg) was christened Edward Mackenzie Green but a fortuitous squiggle at the marriage register ensured his distinction (McKenzie nd:201; Pat McKenzie interview; King 1987:57).

Finally, one could import distant connections into the family history and given them heightened prominence. The Slatters of Greytown effected this by including as middle names the family names of Herefordshire gentry – Stanhope and Scudamore (AJS Slatter interview 1993). The Pennefathers proudly recall their connection with the aristocratic de la Poles (Daphne Pennefather interview 1992). This was part of a process called the creation of 'ancestor myths'. These 'provided the family with idealised or make-believe pedigrees' (Samuel & Thompson 1990:8). For families incapable of disguising their humble beginnings, another option was available – to celebrate humble origins as exotic. Both of these uses of history confirmed the idea of 'family romance' 'in which a make-believe ancestry offers a second identity' (Samuel & Thompson 1990:8).

The growing importance of the family name also resulted in names being changed to create distance – to throw the hounds off the foul smell of family fallout. In the case of the
Thrash and Thresh families, for example, there was no biological difference between the families at all. The family split into Thresh and Thrash after an acrimonious and unsettled dispute between men in the family. 23

If name was important, language was equally so. English was the accepted language of the Midlands. In families in which Afrikaans and English were spoken, efforts were made to eradicate the former. Joseph Alcock married an Afrikaans speaker, and his children grew up in the late nineteenth century speaking Afrikaans. He had always aspired for his family to be English and after the South African War, when speaking Afrikaans (the language of the enemy) in Natal became a stigma, he became insistent (Daphne Pennefather interview 1992).

It was not necessary to suppress the lowliness of one’s metropolitan origins in order to be accepted. Being a landowner was generally a prerequisite, but on top of this there were a number of other points of qualification. Ernest B Morrell (unrelated to me) emigrated to Natal in 1901. He was a plumber by trade and initially worked in a Pietermaritzburg sheet metal business where he later was joined by his brother, Frank. In 1910, having made some money, they bought the only affordable land available at Loteni, deep in the foothills of the Drakensberg. On the farm ‘Westview’ (1 365 acres) Ernest constructed a house and ran cattle. His industry and energy rapidly gave him a place in the new community. He became secretary of the local farmers association and played the violin in the local band at Impendhle. He built a tennis court on the farm and hosted tennis parties for his neighbours. He sent his daughters (he had no sons) to the private Pietermaritzburg school Collegiate (Morrell interview 1992).

And yet an internal hierarchy was maintained within the Midlands, an expression of instability, an exposure of the shibboleth of cohesive, equanimous Midland community. Mooi River was renowned as a ‘very snooty district’ (Green interview 1992). The district contained many ex-army officers and moneyed expatriates including Rev Noble, General Lloyd and Major Richards. ‘There were lots of snobs in Mooi River.’ Andrew ‘Zulu’ Green, who grew up in the district in the 1910s, remembered as his favourite tale the story of a Natal Carbineers’ social gathering in Mooi River where all the officers came together and signed the register with their ranks. A local farmer, Jumbo (George) Lund, who poked fun at the district’s snobbery by calling his farm ‘Effort’, came in and signed the register ‘private’ (the lowest rank in the army) (Green interview 1992). Similarly in the class-conscious Greytown area, families like the Slatters and Kimbers considered themselves to be above the town folk, and seldom mixed (Mary Slatter interview 1993). 24

The importance of the family name grew with the influx of settlers, especially after the
South African War and the First World War. By then, if not earlier, longevity had become a useful device to establish belonging and distinguish oneself from the hoi polloi. In Richmond, this sentiment was expressed by Charmian Coulson, amateur historian of the village and longstanding resident: ‘[Y]ou need a granny in the Richmond graveyard to be accepted!’ (Natalia 1987:105).

New settlers who were no longer able to obtain land cheaply or easily took up jobs with little prospect of wealth or satisfaction. Some obtained teaching posts. Employers often rued making these appointments. In a 1921 report of the Weston Agricultural College, for example, an inspector requested that a teacher, Mr Chapman, ‘be prompt and not to appear before the boys drunk’. The school’s logbook for 1914 to 1926 is mute testimony to the calibre of the new settler – many cases of drunkenness, untidiness and incompetence are reported therein.

As the community began to coagulate through and around a range of social institutions, so a local culture and consciousness began to develop. A strong attachment to the land was asserted and a loyalty to family and to the metropole espoused. In addition, a local folklore was created around large-as-life figures such as the soldier Duncan McKenzie, the famous polo-playing Shaw brothers, the initiative and wealth of Joseph Baynes, the rigid morality of Maritzburg College headmaster R D Clark. And it was, of course, fleshed out by reference to local idiosyncracy, treasured as giving the local culture some specific humanity and humour. Much of this endeavour promoted a self-image of superiority over outsiders (Mewett 1982).

Midland community and ONF mythology

During my interviews with members of the ONFs I was struck early on by their presentation of themselves as a community. When speaking about the past, they would automatically move to talk about their family, related families. These would invariably become animated by the injection of familiar family names. With few exceptions, the people I interviewed knew one another, knew of one another, knew about one another. They could often trace family connections. They would frequently recall and recount anecdotes I had heard from other informants.

The reality of community as I experienced it through interviewing was paralleled in the local jargon by reference to the Old Natal Family (ONF). As an uninitiated outsider I first heard the term used by Jo Beall, whose work encompassed the ODFs (Old Durban
Families) (Beall 1982). While I have found no ONF equivalent, a tongue-in-cheek 1994 description of ODFs gives one the flavour.

Can only be spotted by the public at race meetings and polo matches ... Their metropolis is England, the counties rather than London, and some even admit to connections with Scotland ... They are secretly envious of Old Cape Families.

There are few entry points for aspirants to the club. Marriage is the most reliable ... A few outsiders have been known to slip through. Hilton and Michaelhouse rugby matches offer opportunities as well.

No one is quite sure whether the ODFs are perpetrating their own fantasy of otherness or whether others have invented them as a butt for their own sense of exclusion (ADA 1994:93).

I have not discovered who invented the term ONF, or when it was coined. In contemporary times people considered to be ONF know the term, but believe it has a short lineage. Pat McKenzie (of the Duncan McKenzie Nottingham Road clan (see chapter 6)), for example, said he thought the term was only 15 years old, saying that his grandmother used to talk of ‘the pioneers’ (Pat McKenzie interview 1993). There was agreement amongst most of my informants that ONFs could trace back their emigration to the nineteenth century and that they could demonstrate occupation of a single family farm (preferably) or of Midland farms for one hundred years (Fly interview 1992). The construction of the ONF as a semi-mythical representation of a social group rested on the prior creation of community. The Natal Midland farming community presented itself as uniform to the outside world. The image was of landed respectability. Such image, of course, concealed the internal dynamics within the farming community which allotted status in terms of wealth, public office, achievement, prominence and family lineage. The process of community construction flattened out differences and created a perception of a united, socially coherent, landed class. Needless to say, the process was dynamic and contested. It was also marked by silencings which were brutal and which bore testimony to the partiality of the ONF phenomenon (see chapter 9). The community could never include, and the ONF phenomenon never encompass, all those who putatively belonged.

The Midland farming community took a particular form (closed, relatively cohesive, tight) as a result of the absence of sharp and major class divisions amongst the white population. Unlike most other rural areas of South Africa, the Midlands had no poor white population. Initially I assumed, mechanistically, that the absence of sharp class divisions made for a
homogenous farming community. But this was not entirely the case. The Midland farmers did not become a community automatically. Nor was there anything predestined to ensure that they became a community. Research gradually revealed tensions, disharmonies which were not easily squared with the snug tales of fraternity and unity that many informants generally first presented. The answer was quite simple. The ONFs were both social class and constructed community.

Where and when did the ONF myth begin? We need to distinguish between the myth as constructed by ‘outsiders’ and the myths which were woven into a system of self-representation by the families of the Midlands themselves. While these are not in reality distinct, it will be helpful here to analyse them discretely.

In 1888 John Bird, former magistrate for Pietermaritzburg county, colonial treasurer in 1876, and judge in the Native High Court in 1878, published his *Annals of Natal*. The work, which dealt with Natal’s history up to 1845, had been funded by the council of the Natal Society in 1883. This society was initially headed by the lieutenant-governor but later (in 1874) became an elected body in which the lieutenant-governor could appoint some council members. The society included prominent citizens and senior government members and those considered to be capable of making decisions concerning the cultural direction to be followed by the colony and its settlers (Hattersley 1936:11). Although the work did not explicitly deal with white settlement, it was an important starting point for the development of the ONF myth. At the same time as John Bird was working up the early history of Natal (using primarily the testimony of whites), James Stuart was beginning his labours to obtain Zulu views on society.

It was John Bird’s hope that his work would be the beginning of a mighty exegesis on the colonial contribution to the alleviation of the dark continent’s burden of darkness. His hopes were in part realised by his son, Christopher John Bird, who became principal under-secretary in 1893. In 1896 he took forward the initiative by writing to, and interviewing, settlers who had come to Natal before 1852.

Although he never produced a second volume of *Annals of Natal*, he popularised his findings in the press. From 1896 to 1914 (at least), Bird wrote newspaper articles (*Times of Natal, Natal Mercury*) in which he described the great achievements of the early colonists. His articles contain many references to ‘truly remarkable’ men who endured the challenges of the wild and who established commerce and farming. The settlers are referred to tenderly as ‘old colonists’ and ‘pioneers’. And in public addresses too, Bird voiced the praises of early settlers and made a virtue out of the length of one’s residence in the colonies.
The local press were part and parcel of the project to restore to memory the feats of early settlers. In 1905 a newspaper poster entitled ‘Natal Pioneers’ was issued, showing a group of white-haired and bearded men. The retrieval of historical roots and the veneration of these men should be understood as part of a campaign by the media and politicians for the independence of Natal at a time when the unification of South Africa was beginning to be mooted. Nevertheless, an effect of this was to add to the myth of the ONFs.

When Bird died in 1922 his vast collection of primary material was left to the Natal Society. Using these papers, Alan Hattersley, professor of history at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, published in 1936 More annals of Natal. This book covered the period 1845–1875 and began a tradition of Natal self-representation. Hattersley was writing at a time when the political dominance of the South African Party (which had stood for ethnic equality between English and Afrikaners) was being challenged by the emerging force of Afrikaner nationalism and the National Party. His prodigious output on regional, white settler history should be seen as a reaction to these developments. His books testified to the specific English character of Natal and implicitly called for its recognition. Within four years, the third volume on Natal’s settlers (The Natalians: further annals of Natal (1940)) had been produced.

In Hattersley’s writings there is no clear distinction between ONFs and ODFs. While he is sensitive to social difference, he does little to elevate the inland farmers into a distinct category, bathed in the hue of rustic glory. But the story of early settlement was about the Midlands to the extent that the Byrne and other settlers had been settled there (at Richmond and York (near Greytown) for example), that the private schools were located there, that colonial prime ministers farmed there. There was no need to make such a distinction – it was obvious.

More recent works have picked up where Hattersley left off. In many of the biographies and family histories the theme of the ONF underpins the narrative. R O Pearse, teacher, writer and aficionado of the Drakensberg, traced back Joseph Baynes’s roots to Donald Bane, eleventh-century king of Scotland and, having thus established his claim to aristocracy, describes Joseph’s father as ‘scion of a noble family’ (Pearse 1981:4).

And in novels this theme is faithfully carried through by a product of one of the elite Midland schools, Wilbur Smith. Smith, a best-selling fiction writer and sentimental defender of colonialism, stability and white rule in southern Africa, embellished in his early novels the stereotype of the handsome, well-bred, adventurous sons and the beautiful, well-bred, loyal (and sexy) daughters of the ONFs (Hall 1995:194–196; Maughan-Brown 1990:151–154).
In the journalism of contemporary Natal these images are perpetuated. Described in a popular ‘woman’s magazine’, Style, as ‘a rare breed’, the ONFs are lampooned for their eccentric taste and anachronistic attachment to empire (Clarke 1989:96–99). The author writes:

To encapsulate Natal style is rather like pickling the Union Jack ... conservative fragments of colonialism have stuck with an affectionate simplicity bordering on Anglo-Saxon eccentricity ... the elite of Natal seem poised to remain in this post-Napoleonic embrace for generations to come ... They never talk about money and dream of rustic obscurity, secure in the knowledge that their genealogy is embroidered with enough bullion and breeding to see them through the status race.

But the distinction between Midland and coastal variants of the ONF is now largely blurred. The economic and political axis of the region is now firmly centred on Durban. Many of the sugar barons own (or have access to (via syndicates, timeshare or business reciprocity)) small Midland farms where they fish for trout, take in the views of the berg, or simply retreat from the hurried life of the city. Similarly, Midland farmers have a stake in the life of Durban and Natal’s beautiful shoreline, with friends, family and business interests providing the entree. In short, while politically and economically the Midlands are somewhat marginal, their cultural importance lives on.

The self-representation of the Midland farmers was from the start bound up with history and geographical origin. The ONFs were a self-contained, small community, whose reference points initially were the aristocracy and gentry of the metropole. They could never hope to emulate at the material or cultural level the lifestyle of this class, and so they satisfied themselves with selecting aspects of that class’s lifestyle, adding aspects from their own cultural milieu and then fashioning the disparate elements into a cultural whole. This exercise could only be successful because the actual metropolitan aristocracy were not present to make their efforts look pathetic; nor was there an indigenous capitalist class (as there was on the Reef, for example) whose material muscle could actually buy the trappings of culture. It was, therefore, precisely the isolation and closed, self-referring nature of the Midland farmers which permitted their cultural project to succeed.

As with the ONF myth, it is difficult to pinpoint the moment of the community’s birth as social label or internalised self-description. History was consciously used (and distorted) to order the social hierarchy and disseminate influence. For men like Christopher Bird, the representation of the settler achievement was very important. In 1897 Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, governor of Natal, described Bird’s contribution as historian and praise singer for the empire, noting in the context of his conservation of records and artefacts that Bird
was careful to preserve memorials'. Yet the sense of posterity did not yet exist. The concern for the present dominated, and for those who had their eyes on the future, the concern was for securing it for their offspring, rather than leaving a record of great achievements.

Surprisingly, the private papers of the Midland families are actually quite scarce. Some of the scarcity is artificial. In trying to collect private papers from prominent families, Duminy, Honnet and King commented in exasperation that many families placed an ‘exaggerated economic value’ on family papers or were ‘extremely reticent about revealing themselves … to “outsiders”’ (Duminy, Honnet & King 1977:i). Their search revealed that ‘with few exceptions, the papers of almost all Natal’s politicians appear to have vanished without trace’ (Duminy, Honnet & King 1977:ii). Similarly, R O Pearse wrote of Joseph Baynes that he ‘left behind no relatives and no family, no diaries, and only a handful of letters. His memory almost died with him’ (Pearse 1981: preface). Either little was committed to writing, or what was committed to paper was considered of little importance and destroyed, or documents are kept from public view.

This lack of concern with history should be contrasted with the present fascination, bordering on obsession, with the past. There was hardly an informant I spoke to who was not, in some way, engaged with family history. Perhaps the upsurge in interest is a response to the erosion of a system which has for long been in place. The false certainty with its linear projection of progress which gave the settlers much of their confidence is difficult now to sustain. Perhaps the rifling of the family past is a response to the political and economic changes which have infiltrated and subverted comfortable stability. For whatever reason, there has been, particularly in the last fifteen to twenty years, a concentration of energy in writing family history and recording, whimsically, the days gone by.

The men of the Midland ONFs can be presented as essentially evil, manipulative, exploitative, domineering. They can also be understood as gendered members of a class who, if we take the description of childhood offered in the Cullinan poem in the Preface, were subjected to the angers, arbitrary displays of power and humiliations of their seniors and experienced the sorrows and discovered their frailties in the process. Men are not bound together by a common, natural masculinity. Rather a hegemonic masculinity exists which is taken to be (and presents itself as) the masculine essence. It silences other masculinities and prevents critical exploration of masculinity as social construct. If we work with this understanding, then the ONFs should be understood not as a plea that they get special consideration. Nor should it be regarded as a humanist demand that the ruling class be treated ‘just as people’. Rather it is an insistence that we examine the acquisition of identity, and accept its social constructedness. And acknowledge, too, how the uncertainty of
this process produces fragility and how this in turn impacts on the gendered ways in which classes construct and reproduce themselves.

Notes

1 Some districts straddle the Midlands. The Weenen district, for example, is geographically and climatically divided into two. Part of it is high-lying. Centred on Estcourt, it is owned and farmed by white farmers. Its geography, vegetation and climate are classically Midlands. The other section, centred on Weenen village, on the other hand is much closer to northern Natal conditions. It is lower-lying, hotter, drier and has coarser grasses. Much of this area was, in 1880, occupied by Africans, leasing land from white landowners. These farms, called 'thorn' or 'labour' farms, were used as labour reservoirs by Midland farmers. The area also had a poor white population. From 1885, after African cultivators had been expelled, small plots were offered to settlers (Burton-Clark 1988:145). Later, in 1894 and 1903, two irrigated small-holding schemes were launched for settlers with little capital or agricultural capacity (Weenen 1929:5,6). In short, this part of the Weenen district belongs culturally and economically to Northern Natal and will not be discussed here.

2 Notwithstanding Legassick's sweeping critique (Legassick 1980:52) of the 'frontier thesis' as an explanation for South Africa's race relations, it is helpful to retain the idea of Natal as frontier in the early period. It reminds us of how capitalism (the force Legassick himself identifies as being crucial for the establishment of new 'race relations') later transformed the colony, leading to a more rigid class structure less able to accommodate racial crossings and class deviance.

3 For the first third of the twentieth century, Paul Thompson describes this as Natal's 'British civic culture' (Thompson 1995).

4 Attachment to Britain was also expressed by dogged political opposition to any form, no matter how mild, of Afrikaner nationalism (Van Wyk 1982).

5 *Natal Blue Book for 1876:* R10–11.


7 For example, in 1904 there were 66.3 women for every 100 males (Beall 1982:116).

8 Beall's figures here lump white and Indian women together, but indications are that disaggregated, the trend would be little different. In 1904, 37% of all white women were married, 60% unmarried and the remainder divorced or widowed. But these figures include girls under the age of 16 who made up about a third of the white female population (Beall 1982:213, 215).

9 There is a debate concerning the 'empty land thesis' which Cobbing (1987) argued was a mythical construction to justify white land grabbing. The Midlands were not empty, but large areas (mainly the high-lying areas towards the mountains) were frequented by nomadic peoples (the Bushmen) and had no resident cultivators. This point is evidenced by the numerous complaints of early settlers about the total unavailability of labour. On the other hand, areas closer to the coast hosted large African, sedentary populations (Gordon 1988:9, 29). According to Hattersley, Africans only began living in the Nottingham Road area about 1860 (Hattersley 1936:163).

10 Plans to settle demobilised soldiers after the First World War were implemented, but the only land available was in Zululand (Brookes 1992) and northern Natal (Arnold 1990).
By 1880 the area of densest settlement was along the major route to the interior. The last areas settled were in the south and west, towards the Drakensberg. Small settlements like Creighton (previously called Dronkvlei), and Donnybrook developed only in the late nineteenth and twentieth century as a result of crown land being opened up to white settlement. What became the Polela district was first settled in 1886 but remained unpopular among settlers. It was only with the proclamation of the Underberg Magistracy (in 1903) that it began to establish itself. It came to boast the curious situation of two villages, Underberg and Himeville, four miles apart, which rivalled one another for leadership in the area! (Mackenzie 1990:11–12).

The history of Baynesfield (established by Baynes) is preserved in a private collection housed at the Baynesfield estate, Thornville. It consists of primary documents, letters and some oral transcripts (of the workers who lived there and worked under Baynes). Baynes’s biography, based to some extent on this collection, was published in 1981 (Pearse 1981).

Exports were also promoted by a more conscious approach by the Natal government, which began from 1893 to establish a separate Department of Agriculture, and which after the South African War expanded its assistance and promoted ‘scientific’ farming and closer settlement.

On the whole, I have attempted to use gender-neutral terminology. Here I use the male form, because I am actually talking about Midland males. For females family name and family home were important too, though in different ways. Women, for example, changed their names at marriage and mostly adopted the history and identity of the husband’s family.

Henderson was founder of the Natal Bank and a member of the first Natal parliament in 1857.

Beall argues that the clique rested on business, finance and banking. Dominy (1988) would add the imperial military. These groups elevated themselves above the run-of-the-mill artisans, tradesmen, small farmers and labourers’ (Beall 1982:108). David Lincoln (1988) notes that a similar situation prevailed amongst the sugar-barons, most of whom were of humble birth and had similarly to create a history that was worthy of them.

26 Corrigan and Sayer (1985:194) argue that the attachment to the metropole was an effect of the state’s construction of the citizenry as a ‘state elect’, a condition which inspired in the inhabitants of England a self-confidence at being English, which in turn gave the imperial mission its power.


29 Durban Local History Museum. The poster is framed but the source is not indicated.

30 For a critique of Smith’s novels and an exposure of his political agenda, see Ann Harries, ‘Pandora’s Box’, *Southern African Review of Books* 1989, 2(4).

31 CPSA, C. J. Bird papers (A421, E3) 1897 (article entitled ‘The new government buildings’).