

# Africa with Lions

From: Philip William Morkel, 1961. *THE MORKELS. Family History and Family Tree.*  
Notes by André T. Morkel

The family farm near Somerset West and Cape Town was far away from the wild life associated with Africa. Even when stamouer Philip Morkel settled at Onverwacht in 1713, there would have been few, if any, of the larger game animals around. The shipwrecked sailors of the *Schonenberg* walking from Cape Agulhas to the farm in 1723 shot a hippopotamus for food on the way, but that was on the far side of the mountains bordering the Hottentots Holland.

Some years later members of the family ventured deeper into Africa, to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the following stories are verbatim from Philip William Morkel's Family History. I was alerted to these fascinating tales when Mick Graham-Smith, originally from Southern Rhodesia mentioned that an acquaintance, John Brockman, had an ancestor saved from a lion attack by a Morkel.

## DANIEL JOHANNES MORKEL (born 15.7.1869, died 1903) (Newspaper Extract) AN INCIDENT

The death of Mr Dan Morkel, which we chronicled yesterday, calls to mind that his life as a pioneer has been full of thrilling adventure and hairbreadth escapes. One of the most thrilling adventures he himself described.

Writing to a friend from the African Transcontinental Telegraph Camp, Mitsidjie, Mr Morkel says: - on September 5, between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, I heard there was a lion in the camp. I jumped out and took my gun with me. A few minutes elapsed before I could make out where the lion was. I called out to Brockman whose hut was about 40 yards from mine, but got no reply. I then thought Brockman was outside trying the shoot the lion, as he was very anxious to shoot one. On walking up to his hut I met his Native boy shivering and calling out: "Nkango! Nkango! (lion. Lion). I called out to my boys (300) in the camp to bring fire. They came out of their Msasas (huts) but could not move. After I had discovered that the lion was inside the hut with Brockman I fired several shots through the roof to frighten him out, but he stuck inside roaring all the time. It was pitch dark. I expected the lion to jump out any moment.

All this time there was not a sound from Brockman, and I could not make out what he was doing, and it was too dangerous to fire into the hut for fear of hitting Brockman. All of a sudden Brockman shouted to me: "For God's sake save my life. He has got hold of me". I rushed to the door of the hut with a torchlight of grass in the one hand and my gun in the other. I kicked the door open, stepped a few yards back, and threw the light to see where to fire. The lion then rushed out dragging Brockman along. I fired, and hit the lion just below the eye, which dropped him, and Brockman dropped at the same time. Brockman then jumped up, ran 10 yards and fell. The lion was making a tremendous noise in his death agony. The boys then shouted "Nkango atawa" (the lion is running away). I called out for a light but they all shouted "Kjopa ambira" (we are very frightened). I wanted to give the lion another shot, but my cartridge stuck, so I rushed up to him and hit him across the nose, which settled him. I broke my gun in two.

After all this I wanted to send for Dr. Croft to Domira Bay, five miles away, and it took me a considerable time to get Native boys to go away from the camp in the dark. Brockman was bleeding dreadfully all the time, and all I could do was to put him in a warm bath, which relieved the pain. I can assure you that it was not a pleasant time. I have since heard from Brockman (in a letter written by a mission lady) that he cannot thank me enough for saving his life, and I also received a letter from Capt. Daly, a representative of the U.S.A. Company and the A.T.I. Company, congratulating me on saving Brockman's life".

It will be remembered that Mr. Dan Morkel was of Major Forbes' party, who were supposed to have been murdered on the telegraph line between Tete and Salisbury, and where he showed considerable pluck in going back and burying the remains of Captain McCullum, who was so fearfully mutilated by the

Mashonas. For his intrepid deed he was highly commended by Major Forbes, and it was his intention to accompany Major Forbes to Cairo with the line and get the handsome bonus of £5,000 offered by the right Hon. Cecil Rhodes.

**Comment by Mrs. P.A. Morkel:**

At the time this adventure with the lion occurred, my husband and myself were living at Blantyre, Nyasaland (now Malawi). It was just after the late Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897, when all Nyasaland had gathered together in Blantyre to celebrate, that Mr. Brockman and my brother-in-law, Dan, bid us goodbye and left for their long trek into the wilds. With them were their native boys carrying the material for the Transcontinental telegraph line.

When I next saw Mr. Brockman passing through Blantyre on his way to England, just shortly after he left the Mission hospital, he was and looked a wreck. It was a miracle he ever recovered from this dreadful mauling. Two of his fingers had been chewed off, the flesh down his one thigh had been torn down, he limped and his nerves were shattered. He told me that at night he could not sleep alone in a room, the eyes of the lion like coals of fire and his foul breath as he grabbed hold of him and pulled him from the bed, still haunted him.

Mr. Brockman lived in England for a while but later returned to Salisbury, S. Rhodesia (he died not so long ago in Cape Town).

Dan died in 1903, at Fort Jameson, N. Rhodesia, where he was buried – (he was a brother of my husband. The above incident is a copy of a newspaper cutting still in my possession.

## MORKELS IN RHODESIA

Dr Hans Sauer, the friend and collaborator of Cecil Rhodes, who accompanied him on his famous visit to make peace with the Matabele in the Matopos tells a good deal about a member of the Morkel family. In his well-known biography "Ex Africa", Dr Sauer writes:

"On the Umzingwani River we found some transport wagons under the conduct of Morkel, whose father was a well-known coach proprietor and transport rider in Griqualand and the Transvaal. Morkel had with him his several men travelling as passengers, amongst them an Afrikander from the old Colony, to whom the vast stretches of the Bushveld were new and unknown. One afternoon this youth left the camp armed with a shotgun and three cartridges. He had set out to shot some guinea fowl or a small buck for the pot. Morkel and his friend heard three shots fired at about a mile distant from the camp and concluded that the hunter had bagged something and would presently turn up at the camp.

"As the afternoon wore away and the short African twilight set in they began to feel uneasy at the absence of their companion, and when night fell they fired off guns at regular intervals in order to give the missing man some indication of the position of the camp. They also lighted large wood fires in the hope that the glow from these would catch the eye of the man lost in the bush. The gun-firing and the beacon-lights were all in vain. The missing man did not return, and as lions were not uncommon, they came to the conclusion that the worst had happened. Next morning search parties were organised and the forest country was well beaten for miles around the camp, without result. The search continued for considerably more than a week, and all hope of finding the lost man had almost been given up, when Morkel riding out in a last attempt, suddenly saw a ragged figure running through the bush. He rode down the fugitive, who, on the near approach of Morkel, dived underground into an ant-bear (aardvark) hole. After much difficulty Morkel succeeded in extricating his post passenger. The man, however, was now nothing but a gibbering idiot; his clothes were torn to ribbons by the wait-a bit thorn-bushes (\*wag 'n bietjie"), and his fingers, with which he had dug up roots to eat were bleeding and wounded. He could not speak and made gibbering noises like an ape. Morkel had to overpower him and tie his hands before he could get him back to the wagons.

"The sick man was sent on, under guard, to Fort Victoria, by the weekly coach which worked between Mafeking and Salisbury. It took more than three months for him to recover his sanity and general health. He acted as postmaster of Umtali for years after his recovery."

Dr Sauer continues:

"Morkel himself, a year or two after, was the victim of a terrible adventure. With a friend he had gone on a prospecting expedition in the Zambesi Valley, where – I think on the north bank of the Zambesi – they established a camp from which they operated. As a protection against lions they

had built a large hut or room with stout wooden poles lashed together, the roof being thatched with grass. The hut contained two stretched beds also built of wooden poles with cross piece and covered with cut grass serving as mattresses.

As often happened in those days, both Morkel and his companion were stricken down with malaria, and were so ill that they were confined to the hut under care of their native servant. They were now so weak that neither of them were capable of movement, and one night a lion entered and began licking the exposed side of Morkel's face. He soon became aware of this licking but could do nothing to protect himself. Fortunately his companion woke up, saw the lion and shouted at the native. The boy heard the shout, leapt up, and taking a burning log entered the hut and thrust the torch into the lion's mane. This courageous act put an end to the scene, as the lion bolted without delay. On examining his master, the boy found that the lion has almost entirely licked away one side of this face. Both Morkel and his friend recovered, but Morkel was terribly disfigured for life".

A.R. Morkel was one of the close friends of the great scout and hunter, Frederick Courtney Selous. It was he who, in 1917, wrote to the Selous Memorial Committee, after the pioneer had been killed in the east African campaign:

"The natives around my farm all remember him though it is well over 25 years since he was last here; and it is pretty good testimony to his character that, wherever he travelled amongst natives, many of whom I have talked to about him, he was greatly respected and esteemed as a just man. We the settlers of Rhodesia, will always have this legacy of him, that he instilled into those natives a very good idea of British justice and fairness".

(Mick Graham-Smith mentioned that his father knew Arthur R. Morkel who was magistrate)

#### Source and Notes:

Philip William Morkel, 1961. *THE MORKELS. Family History and Family Tree*. Published privately. The Brockman story starts on p27 and the Dr Sauer story from p50 on.

## Family lines.

There are four Morkels mentioned in the above stories – Daniel Johannes Morkel, his brother Paul Andries Morkel, an unidentified Morkel quoted by Dr. Sauer and A.R. Morkel. It is possible that Sauer's unidentified Morkel is either Daniel or A.R. A.R. Morkel was possibly Arthur Loreth Rubidge Morkel.

The Morkel Dr Sauer wrote about had a father who ran coaches and transport. I could not locate a coach/transport owner in the Morkel family but there is an intriguing possibility. The Zeederberg family was well known for their coaches to Kimberley and Johannesburg in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Daniel Johannes Morkel's grandmother was a Zeederberg – a promising lead. However, his father, also Daniel Johannes Morkel was the owner of *Morgenster*, the beautiful farm in Somerset West and did not operate coaches..

Family line of Daniel Johannes Morkel and Paul Andries Morkel.

- a1 **Philip Morkel \*27.2.1677 (?Date uncertain) Hamburg Germany, † Onverwacht, Hottentots Holland 12.4.1735 x 25.3.1708 Maria Biebow ~25.3.1708 † 1731 xx 17.11 1713 Catharina Pasman ~ 17.8.1691 † 29.3.1764.**
- b3 **Willem ~ 25.1.1718 † 1788**
- a1b3 **Willem Morkel ~25.12.1718 + Onverwacht 1788 x 11.5.1749 Sara van Brakel ~ 11.11.1716 + 28.3.1759 xx 22.7.1759 Helena Catharina Malan (*Morgenster*) ~ 11.3.1736 † 27.10.1825.**
- c6 **Daniel Johannes ~ 2.9.1764 † 15.8.1825**

**a1b3c6 Daniel Johannes Morkel ~ 2.9.1764 † Onverwacht 15.8.1825** x date ? Hester Sibella Keeve  
~ 17.12.1676 † 13.1.1792 **xx 6.9.1793 Maria Dorothea Louw ~17.12.1775 + 1801 xxx**  
Sophia Alida Brink ~25.4.1808 †19.11.1824  
**d9 Willem \*3.6.1803 ~ 1.7.1804 † 27.12.1876**

**a1b3c6d9 Willem Morkel \*3.6.1803 ~ 1.7.1804 † 27.12.1876 Morgenster** x Nov 1830 Isabella  
Margaretha Zeederberg \* 28.2.1809 † 287.10.1886  
**e1 Daniel Johannes \* 12.9.1832 † 4.9.1894**

**a1b3c6d9 e1 Daniel Johannes Morkel \* 12.9.1832 † 4.9.1894** x Maria Adriana van der Bijl \*  
2.1.1844 † 26.12.1904  
**f3 Paul Andries \* 25.1.1868** x Jeanette Schulz  
**f3 Daniel Johannes \* 15.7.1869 † 1904** aged 34 at Fort Jamieson, Rhodesia.

**Family Line of A.R. Morkel. (Arthur Loreth Rubidge Morkel?)** This Morkel is mentioned only briefly above and I list only the basic outline.

**1<sup>st</sup>: Philip Morkel x Catharina Pasman.**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: Willem Morkel x Helena Catharina Malan**  
**3<sup>rd</sup>: Willem Morkel x Anna Margaretha Wium**  
**4<sup>th</sup>: Willem Morkel x Esther Leonora Louw**  
**6<sup>th</sup>: Pieter Loret Morkel x Susanna Petronella Wessels**  
**7<sup>th</sup>: Petrus Johannes Morkel x Sarah Margaret Rubidge**  
**8<sup>th</sup>: Arthur Loreth Rubidge Morkel Farmer at Shamve, Southern Rhodesia \* 14.5.1871 at Bloemhof, Orange Free State † 11.7.1937 at Salisbury** x Alice Hendrina Southey \*  
22.9.1878 Graaf Reinet † 20.9.1929 Johannesburg.  
**5 Children.**

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