

Reading Between the Lines Part 3

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The Lady Visits and the Hosts are absent¹ (*Index 3*)

In May 1798 Lady Anne Barnard and her husband, Andrew Barnard travelled to the Overberg and Swellendam². On their way they stopped for midday meal at the Myburgh farm *Meerlust* and overnights at *Onverwacht*, the Morkel farm.

At *Meerlust* they found that *Mynheer* Myburgh (Phillipus Albertus Myburgh) was away from home, but *Mevrouw* (who did not speak English) gave them a very good dinner — mutton cutlets, chicken, roast lamb and pickled fish. It was excellent and the wine was very good. After this sumptuous meal — an impromptu one for they were not expected on that particular day — they went on to *Onverwacht*, the Morkels' farm (of *c* Daniel Johannes Morkel and his wife Maria Dorothea Morkel, née Louw). Here everyone was away, except a tutor of 'moralizing and philosophical turn of mind'. He was very kind and did his best for their comfort by providing them with featherbeds for the night and by lending them a team of oxen next morning. They needed the oxen to help pull their wagon over the difficult *Gantouw* pass over

¹ Website: The Lady visits and the hosts are absent

² Dorothea Fairbridge, 1924, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope 1797 — 1802* p62 & 63. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

the Hottentots Holland mountains. Lady Anne also made a sketch of their host, the Tutor at *Onverwacht*. A number of questions arise from this somewhat innocuous account of the Barnards' travel.

- Did they really arrive unannounced? Were there no advance arrangements?
- Was the sumptuous meal at *Meerlust* impromptu or was it specially prepared for the visitors?
- Was the absence of both P.A. Myburgh at *Meerlust* and D.J. Morkel at *Onverwacht* coincidence or intended?
- Why was there a tutor at *Onverwacht*, when there were no children to teach? (The oldest child at the time was three years old). Who was the tutor?
- Was it normal for a tutor to provide overnight hospitality and on the following morning, loan a team of oxen for the trek over the mountain pass?

We do not know the answers, but there is some background to the visit, which can provide context.

About five months earlier in November 1797, Andrew Barnard in his role of Colonial Secretary travelled to Stellenbosch twice to persuade a small group of about five burgers who held out signing a second Oath of Allegiance to the British King (George III). It was significantly different from the first Oath, which pledged support to the British as temporary custodians on behalf for the Dutch government (Prince Willem of *Oranje*) in exile in Britain. It was resented by some, particularly P.A. Myburgh, of *Meerlust*, and his cousins D.J. (of *Onverwacht*) and P.H. Morkel. After a report by the *Landdrost* at Stellenbosch that he encountered problems administering the Oath, Andrew Barnard, normally a decent and amiable person, had to cajole and threaten the recalcitrants to sign³. Although Barnard succeeded to get the oath signed, the governor, Earl Macartney, ordered a military presence on their farms. There were 22 dragoons stationed at *Meerlust* and 10 each at *Onverwacht*, and a few other farms within the Myburg-Morkel families. Macartney was determined to stamp out any Jacobin sympathies with the recent French Revolution. The dragoons would have been surprised and non-plussed when they were welcomed as guests by P.A. Myburgh. They in turn

³ The most potent threat would have been the prospect of banishment, which would have stripped these landowners of their farms and livelihood.

helped out on the farm — an amiable outcome for what was intended to be a display of British power and control. At *Meerlust* a finely carved coffee table is on display which the dragoons made as a gesture of thanks⁴. Daniel Johannes Morkel at *Onverwacht* most likely followed his leader in extending hospitality to the dragoons.

The punitive measure to station dragoons on their farms would have been in the minds of P.A. Myburgh and D.J. Morkel, when they learned that Andrew Barnard and his wife (and two others) were coming for a visit. They would have felt honour-bound to provide good hospitality but probably preferred to be absent for the actual visit. Whatever Lady Anne's private thoughts were, her biography gives no hint of a perceived snub.

It is likely that the tutor at *Onverwacht* was Carel David Wentzel. (*Index 3*)

Who was the tutor at *Onverwacht* during Lady Anne's visit? We do not know, but about eleven years later in 1809, when there were indeed children to teach, Carel David Wentzel was a teacher at the Morkel farms of *Onverwacht* and *Morgensters*. If he were the Tutor that Lady Anne sketched, he would have been about eighteen years old at the time. Whether he was employed at *Onverwacht* at the time of Lady Anne's visit or just conveniently available, we do not know. In 1797 there were five children between 5 and 13 years at neighbouring farms of brothers Willem Morkel (*Voorburg*) and two of 12 and 13 years at Philip Hendrik Morkel (*Morgenster*). Perhaps he was tutoring at those farms and 'borrowed' for the occasion.

Were the side courts of the Dovecote used for cock-fighting? (*Index 2*)

The main Cape Dutch building at *Onverwacht* is the dovecote with its neoclassical facade and baroque gables on the side courts. It has become a recognisable icon for the family. It was built around the early 1800s by third generation *c*6 Daniel Johannes Morkel. The one at *Onverwacht* has side enclosures or courts, not normally found in dovecotes. What were they used for?

⁴ Phillida Brooke Simons, 2003. *Meerlust. 300 Years of Hospitality*, Fernwood Press. p 63

⁵ H.C. Hopkins, 1969. *Die NG Kerk van Somerset Wes 1819 - 1969*. p42

Certainly not for raising pigeons. According to Victor de Kock ⁶, they were used for cock-fighting. This pass-time was very popular amongst Malays, many of them slaves. The side courts would have been ideal arenas for that purpose. Walled off for privacy, each court had space for the two rival groups at either end, with the cocks fighting in the middle. It is unlikely that they were built for the pleasure of slaves — they probably made use of it once it had been built.

Was Daniel Johannes a cocking enthusiast himself? Possibly. He had close connections with his cousin P.A. Myburgh at *Meerlust*, who was his commanding officer in the dragoons. Also P.A.'s son was married to Daniel Johannes' daughter. The dove-cote at *Meerlust* also had side courts and was likely the model for the *Onverwacht* dovecote. If P.A. were into cock-fighting, he might have introduced Daniel Johannes to the 'sport'. It is the most plausible explanation for the side courts I could find.

Year of Maria Dorothea Louw's death (*Index 4*)

^{c6} Daniel Johannes Morkel's second wife was Maria Dorothea Louw. According to the Morkel Genealogies⁷ she was born in 1775 and died in 1801, and that Daniel married his third wife, Alida Brink in 1808. Thus Daniel was without a wife from 1801 to 1808. However, son ^{d9} Willem, the progenitor of the *Morgenster* Morkels, was born during that time in 1803⁸. What happened here? Research⁹ could not find a death notice for Maria, but a probate inventory was lodged in 1807. Such inventories are usually compiled shortly after death and it is likely that Maria died in 1807, not 1801.

⁶ De Kock, p88-89.

⁷ GISA SAF1999, p679 and P.W. Morkel 1961.

⁸ Hennie Morkel alerted me to the problem

⁹ Archival Research by Maureen Rall

Are the Rhoda family descended from a Morkel? (*Index 2*)

The mixed race Rhoda family of Somerset West have strong oral history that they are descended from a slave girl Rhode and a Morkel farmer, either c6 Daniel Johannes or c5 Willem Morkel¹⁰. Additional evidence in the Rhoda family has it that *Die Bos* Morkel family have acknowledged this connection at more than one occasion. I found the Rhoda family traditions plausible. The absence of documents or tradition within the Morkel family would not be unusual. While the Rhoda family would keep the oral tradition strong, the Morkel family would have likely viewed it as an indiscretion to keep quiet about. However, DNA tests do not show a close family connection. Rodney Rhoda was tested to be from another haplogroup (I2b1) from the Morkels (I1). It remains unresolved.

¹⁰ Website: The Morkel Rhoda Connection, Book chapter 41, the Morkel Connection.