

Retief Pt.1

Our article draws heavily on the detailed history of the *Welvanpas* Retief family compiled by Helene Retief Lombard, "*The Chronicles of de Krakeelhoek*" (1). Helene encouraged and generously allowed us to publish three chapters of her book on our website. Many thanks Helene.

André T.Morkel. November 2011

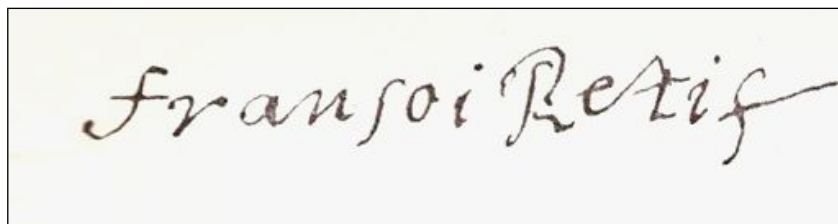
My darling wife, Barbara Elise RETIEF was the second of seven children of Daniel Pieter Johannes RETIEF and Else-Marie GRIENKE. Family gatherings when our children were young were large, with many brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and of course oupa Dan and ouma Elschen

There was also a special affinity between Barbara's family and the Retiefs on the magnificent farm *Welvanpas* (lit. 'Well-suited'), near the town of Wellington. The owner, Dan RETIEF was Barbara's second cousin and we visited him and his wife Andrenette during our vacations in the Cape. As a child, Barbara's father recuperated from a bout of malaria on the farm, and an enduring relationship was formed. Dan's sister, Helene Lombard (née RETIEF) compiled the detailed family history "*The Chronicles of Krakeelhoek*" (1) of the *Welvanpas* on which so much of our story is based. (*Krakeelhoek*, a Dutch word for 'trouble corner' was the original name of the *Welvanpas* farm).

The Retiefs are a well-known and respected family in South Africa. Afrikaner kids grew up with the important role played by Piet RETIEF, one of the leaders of the *Groot Trek* of 1838, when the Boers left the British Colony of the Cape to trek into the interior where they eventually founded the Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. More about him under 4th Generation Daniel RETIEF.

1st Gen. Stamouer Francois RETIF

Francois RETIF was born 2 February 1663 in Mer, along the Loire river in France. Mer is a small town about 15 kms from Blois, a major centre in the Loire valley. When the Edict of Nantes was revoked by Louis XIV in 1685 the persecution of protestant Huguenots intensified and Francois and his sister Anne fled first to Holland and then to the Cape. They probably came via Switzerland, because he was recorded on arrival at the Cape as *francois retijff d'Switser*.



Francois RETIF signature (1, p13)

Our son Charl Retief Morkel and his wife, Valerie Graff, who grew up in the Loire region, in 2002 visited the archives of Blois and Mer to search for the ancestors of Francois Retif (2). They were pleased to find in the foyer of the Blois Archive, a book in a glass display cabinet about the Huguenots who colonised the Cape. It happened to be open at the page where Francois Retif was listed. The staff at the Archives were very helpful and they were able to search for the family through microfilm and original documents. Unfortunately most Protestant archives were lost or destroyed during the persecution and there is a big gap in the crucial period of 1640 to 1669. They did however find numerous mentions of the Retif family name, both at Blois and at Mer and surrounding towns, and they have constructed a likely family-line for four generations:

Gen A ca 1570 -1600: Paul RETIF x Marie LEBRETEZ

Gen B ca 1600 - 1620: Pierre RETIF x Rachel GAULLIST

Gen C ca 1620 - 1650: Jaques RETIF * 1631

Gen D ca 1650 - 1680: Francois RETIF * 2.2.1663

While the connections are not certain, they are plausible and give a fascinating insight into the Retif families that stayed behind as well as those that emigrated. Read more about this search and the many cousins and aunts in the family line in "Searching for Francois Retif" on this website (2).

When Francois and his sister Anne left France they would have been 17 and 13 respectively at the time. As refugees, an invitation to emigrate to the Cape with a mediterranean climate and the prospect of their own land would have been attractive, and they undertook the perilous journey to the Cape. They embarked on the *Borssenburg* at Texel, an island off Holland on a bitter January day in 1688 and arrived at the Cape about 4 months later in May on a beautiful autumn day.

Governor Simon van der Stel allocated farms of 60 morgen (3) in the *Drakenstein* valley. A year earlier land was allocated in that area to Dutch locals and the French refugees received what was left, which was not good for farming. Much of the land was rocky or swampy and of the 30 morgen often only about six could be tilled. Being unmarried Francois received less assistance than married couples - he had to share a plough, and iron pot, lead, rifles and shot for hunting and basics for the kitchen. He erected a basic structure of wattle and daub with a thatch roof and no glass for windows. The land had to be cleared for crops and they had to contend with marauding locusts, baboons, hippos trampling crops at night and 'wolves' (hyenas) raiding livestock. Life was not easy.

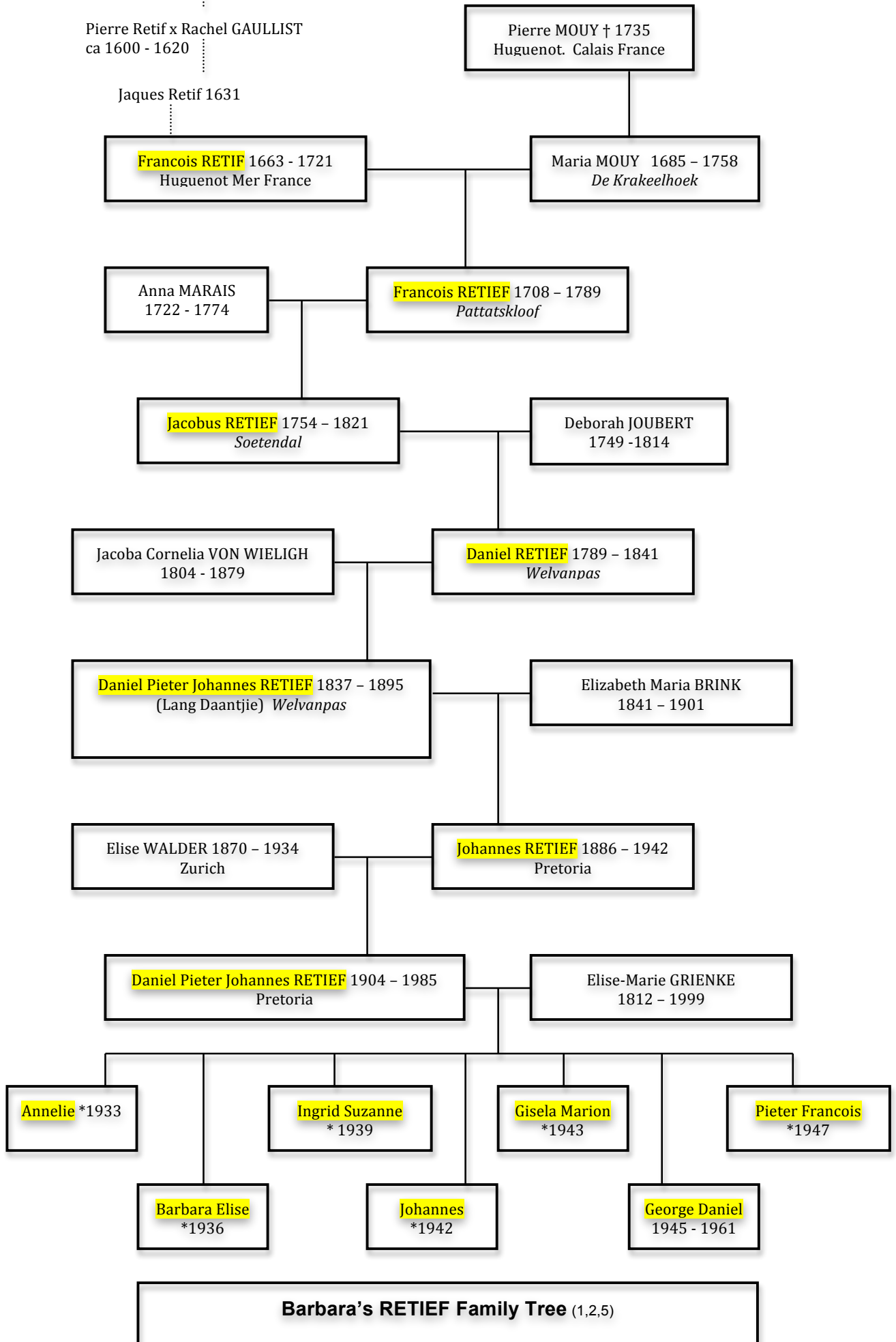
About a year after their arrival, Anne Retif married Pierre Rousseau who had also been a passenger on the VOC ship *Borssenburg* and who came from a neighbouring town, Menars-de-Ville. The new minister, *Dominee* Simond took up the plight of the Huguenots with the governor, and they were allocated new and better land on both sides of the Berg River. Francois and his sister Anne and her husband had adjoining farms which they called *La Paris* and *L'Arc d'Orleans*. Nostalgic and somewhat grand names for what was at that stage very humble settlements.

In 1699, eleven years after Francois and Anne came to the Cape, Pierre Mouij and his two young daughters, Marié 14, and Jeanne 13, arrived in the *Donkervliet* in Table Bay. Pierre looked for a place of his own and, as a relatively late-comer, had to move deeper into the mountain valley where, close to the Val du Charon, or *Wagenmakersvallei* he found suitable land watered by a constant stream from the *Hawequa* mountains. Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel allocated the land but soon Pierre was in strife with a counterclaim from neighbour Jan Louwrens of Rostock.

Paul Retif x Marie LEBRETEZ
ca 1570 - 1600

Pierre Retif x Rachel GAULLIST
ca 1600 - 1620

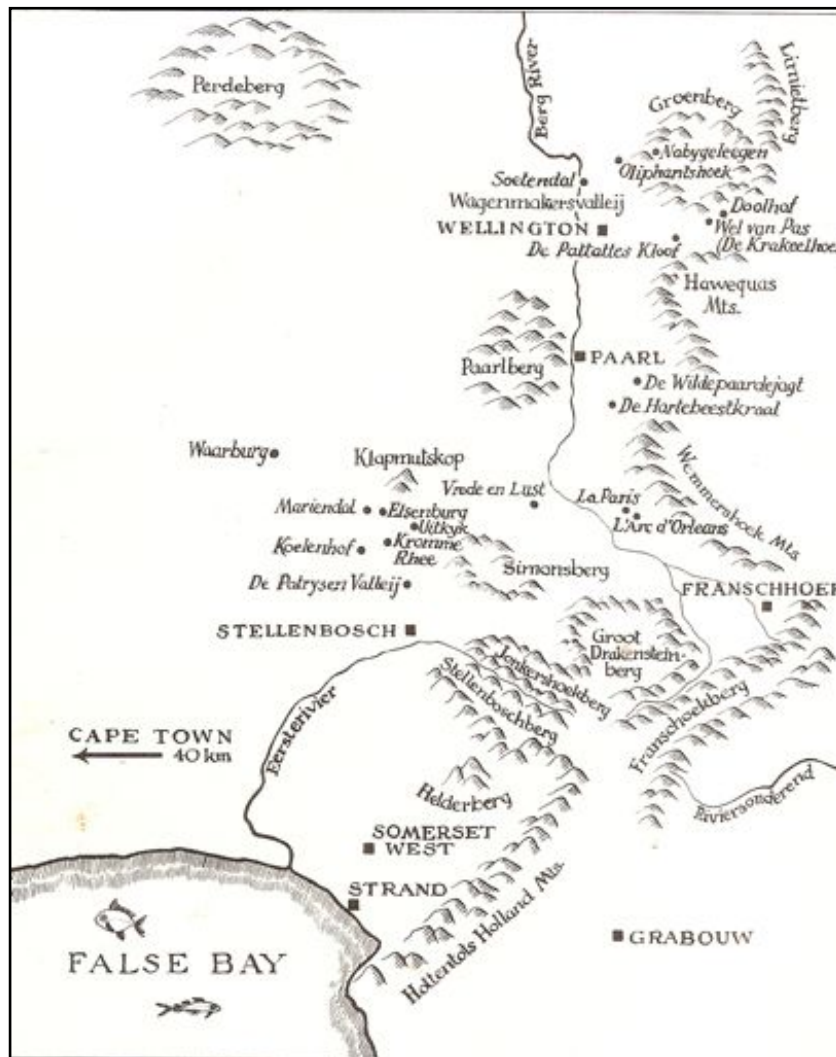
Jaques Retif 1631



Barbara's RETIEF Family Tree (1,2,5)

The dispute was eventually settled and Pierre named his farm *De Krakeelhoek* (Trouble-corner). (At a later stage the Retief family acquired this farm, which by then was called *Welvanpas*.)

Francois Retief knew the Mouij family through church and Marié became his bride two weeks before her 15th birthday on 2nd May 1700. Francois was 37. He had farmed at La Paris for 12 years and they lived in comparative luxury compared to conditions at *De Krakeelhoek*. He had planted a vineyard, grown wheat and built up his herd and owned a few slaves.



Retief farms:
De Pattates Kloof
Oliphantshoek,
Soetendal
Welvanpas,
Doolhof

Francois Retief's 1st farm
La Paris was next to his
 sister's farm *L'Arc*
D'Orleans

Western Cape. Location of Retief Farms (1, p27)

Marié would have been horrified when swarms of *sprinkane* (locusts) and *kalanders* (a kind of scale insect) attacked their vines and damaged the 1701 crop badly.

When they had been married for 21 months the couple was attacked by a naked intruder, a *kalant*, with a knife. Francois managed to overpower him and bound him up before sending a runner to his sister Anne and her husband who lived on the

neighbouring farm. Marié was 6 months pregnant and had cuts to her left hand and was stabbed in her breast. Francois had a terrible cut to the right side of his head, taking off half of his ear, and a deep wound in his shoulder. The intruder was a known scoundrel who had been stealing from various people. He had several injuries and later died from his wounds.

Marié no longer felt safe at La Paris and Francois bought *De Pattattes Kloof* (later *Patatskloof* – lit. sweet potato valley) in the Bovlei near her father's farm of *De Krakeelhoek*. They prospered and later Francois moved to *De Hartbeeskraal* in 1712. Even though they lost several children the family grew to 7 children. Francois died in 1721 and was the first to be buried in the new church. Francois was active in community and his name featured regularly on *Rolle te paart* and *Rolle van de Kavallerije* (those doing cavalry duty). He held strong opinions and incidents are recorded where he lost his temper. In his dealings with the Stellenbosch Heemrade he was described as *kortgebonde en heethoofdig* (short tempered and hotheaded). He would not have been an easy man to live with but was said to be kind and helped his neighbours.

Marié did not marry again after she was widowed and continued as a successful farmer and businesswoman for another 37 years. Records show her as a caring mother and grandmother and raised daughters who became *volksmoeders* of the Rousseau, Hugo, Marais and Roos families. Two sons married and were the founding fathers of the Paarl and Wellington Retief families. She died in 1758 to be the second last of the Huguenots who could still be asked about life in the old country.

2nd Gen. Francois (Frans) RETIEF 1708 – ca 1788

Frans was 13 years old when his father stamouer Francois died. As the oldest son he became his mother's right hand man and grew up quickly to handle the responsibilities of the farm. He learnt French from his mother and grew up fully bilingual. He was a devout churchman and actively involved in church affairs throughout his life. At the age of 33, Frans bought two farms, *D'Oliphantskop* (Elephantshead) and *Nabygelegen* (Closeby), not far from both *Patatskloof* and *De Krakeelhoek*. Later in the same year he married Anna MARAIS, who was the daughter of his cousin Aletta Rousseau from *L'Arc d'Orleans*. Frans was 14 years older than Anna and they had 8 children of whom 6 reached maturity.

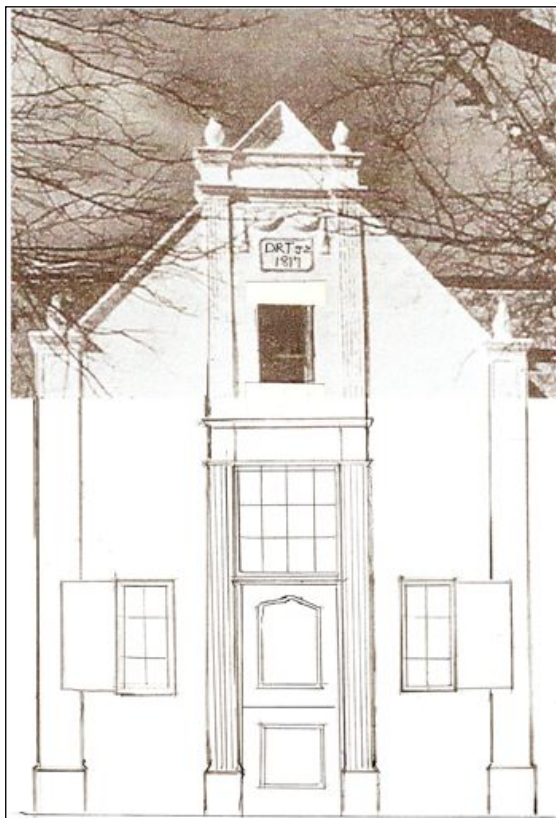
At the age of 52, Anna died in 1774 and Frans lived for another 15 years, helping his sons to acquire farms. He died at the age of 81 about 1789.

3rd Gen. Jacobus RETIEF 1754 – 1821

Jacobus was the 6th child of Frans RETIEF and Anna MARAIS. He had three older brothers, Francois, Daniel and Petrus and an older sister Anna Aletta. He grew up on *D'Oliphantskop aan de Groenenberg* and was considered particularly independent and resolute even as a child. As a young man he was restless and wanted his own farm. He married at 18 to Deborah JOUBERT who was four years his senior. The next year he bought their neighbouring farm *Soetendal* with his father's assistance.

Jacobus was a successful farmer and paid back the loan of his father for the farm within 6 years. He felt *Soetendal* was too small and when it came on the market, he acquired *De Krakeelhoek*, his grandfather Pierre Mouij's old farm, which by then had been

renamed *Welvanpas*. The farm had abundant water, deep black soil and large tracts of mountain grazing and had wonderful potential. They moved to *Welvanpas* in 1780 and Jacobus implemented many improvements over the years. It became the family farm for this branch of the family ever since.



An Impression of the original front facade at Welvanpas. (1, p62)

The family moved with two children, Francois aged 7 and Anna Aletta aged 3. The next son, Pieter who later became the famous *Voortrekker* leader was born at *Welvanpas* in November 1780. More children followed, Deborah, Martha Elizabeth, Jacobus, Margaretha Louisa, Daniel, Gideon, Anna Elizabeth and finally from a second marriage, Johannes Jacobus. It was a large and busy household.

Jacobus was an energetic and progressive farmer who constantly made improvements. He expanded the vineyards, orange groves and fruit orchards. He planted grain and had a threshing floor, operated a smithy to shoe horses and for maintenance work. He ran cattle and sheep and hired various farms in drier areas for grazing and to keep the animals on healthier soils. He was a leader in community and church affairs and, with his brothers, Francois, Daniel and Petrus were members of *De Kaapse Patriotten*, a political movement to bring about change of the autocratic rule of the VOC.

As their boys grew up, several, including Piet, left the Cape for the eastern border of the colony. By then the British ruled the Cape and tensions arose between the Dutch farmers and the Colonial government. Piet played a major role, initially as commandant for the Colonial Government and later as the supreme leader of the *Voortrekkers*. Some of the brothers, including Daniel returned to *Wagenmakersvallei* and the family farms.

In 1813 Jacobus commenced the planning and construction of a new house at *Welvanpas*. The existing house was situated close to the road passing through the farmyard and a higher venue on the slope was more suitable. Site preparation was a major undertaking. Oak trees more than a hundred years old at the time had to be removed and the site was built up and terraced using river stones and bricks before they could start on the house itself. Jacobus made a major investment in the purchase of a highly skilled Malay slave, Martyn, who constructed the ornate gable and house at *Welvanpas* as well as several other homes in the district and Stellenbosch. Although a slave, Martyn was respected and recognised in the district as a masterbuilder and was effectively in charge of the project. The house is H-shaped and the main gable is in the neo-classical style (4) while the side gables are in the older pre-1800 baroque *hol-bol* (hollow-bulge) shape. Thus while the front gable kept up with fashion, the beautiful older style was also retained.



The Baroque style side gables at Welvanpas (1, p62)

Sadly Deborah died in the winter of 1814 at the age of 64. They still lived in the old home and she never saw the new house completed. Letters were posted to their sons Francois and Piet who were on the eastern border and it would have taken weeks before they received the sad news. Life as a widower did not suit Jacobus and in July 1815 he married a widow Johanna Petronella VAN BLERK, twenty years his junior, who lived on the neighbouring farm *Doolhof*. At some stage Jacobus handed over the Welvanpas building operation to his son Daniel, and it is his name and the date, 1817, that appears on the gable. To Helene (1, p63) this suggests that Jacobus moved to stay with his bride Johanna Petronella at *Doolhof*, and that Daniel took over at *Welvanpas*.

Jacobus was 67 when he died on 12 May 1821. An inventory (1, p69 and 70) was drawn by the executors and it lists furniture and household items characteristic of that time. Very special is the grandfather or long-case clock at *Welvanpas*. It is in the ornate Dutch style, the pride of the family and much admired by visitors. It was acquired by Jacobus, most likely during the 2nd Dutch occupation of 1803 to 1806.

4th Gen. Daniel RETIEF 1789 – 1840

Daniel was the 9th of eleven children reaching maturity, of Jacobus and Deborah Joubert. It was a busy household. His four brothers had left the home, farming with their own families while he remained on the farm. Although the fourth son, he became the next owner of *Welvanpas*.

The oldest brother Francois farmed at Graaff Reinet, a town near the eastern border of the Colony. Brother Piet was an optimistic entrepreneur, moving from one financial disaster to the next. However, he had outstanding leadership qualities and when the Government needed militia from Stellenbosch to reinforce the troops on the troublesome border, Piet was made one of three Commandants. Piet's younger brother,



The Grandfather Clock at Welvanpas (1, p71)

our Daniel aged 22, was appointed *Commissaris van de vivres*, i.e. in charge of provisions. The party assembled in April 1812 at Stellenbosch and proceeded over the difficult Hottentots Holland Kloof (passing the Morkel farms) on their way to the border where Luitenant Colonel Graham (an ancestor of Mick Graham Smith in Perth) awaited them. His camp became Grahamstown. The Stellenbosch party used 34 wagons and 410 oxen. Daniel rode ahead to buy meat and bread. After their tour of duty they returned to Stellenbosch and *Wagenmakersvallei*. Daniel was happy to be back and settled at *Welvanpas* where, apart from running the farm, his father started on the construction of the new house with Martyn, the slave masterbuilder.

Piet Retief moved back to the eastern border area. He married Magdalena (Lenie) De Wet, widow of Field Cornet Greyling with six children from her first marriage. They settled in the Uitenhage district on *Mooimeisiesfontein* (Prettygirls fountain) and had a further four children together. He speculated with property and did contracting work and most of the time was on the brink of insolvency and more than once bankrupt. Lenie, his children and neighbours gave him solid support during these troubled times.

The *boers* (farmers) on the eastern border was continually in conflict with the various black tribes such as the Xhosas, Pondos and Tembu. The *boers* suffered ongoing raids where their thatched roof homes were burned down and their cattle and other livestock stolen. The *boers* were discouraged from retaliating and had to wait to be called up by the colonial government for border patrols. As always in such complex realities, there were wrongs on both sides. However, the mood in the church and intellectual circles in London tended to favour the blacks as "noble savages" being exploited by the whites. While these views had little influence on the imperial activities of the British government in India and Africa, they were very successful in painting very negative views of the *boers* both in Britain and the Cape

Colonial government, and which have persisted ever since. Andries Stockenstrom who later became luitenant –governor in charge of border policy gave evidence to the

powerful Aborigenes Committee in London that the violence and problems were caused by the frontier farmers not looking after their cattle and blaming the blacks. This remote Committee of a few men sitting around a table in London controlled British activities in the colonies and tied the hands of the local authorities, even when they saw the predicaments of the frontier farmers.

Piet Retief would have been one of the better-educated farmers and leaders on the border. In December 1834 war broke out when the Xhosas attacked. Two thousand cattle were taken in one night and houses torched. Piet Retief found the Field Cornet had abandoned Grahamstown and he took command. At the end of the war 457 houses had been burned down, more than 114,930 cattle, 160,000 sheep and 5,715 horses had been driven off. The *boers* lacked protection from an unsympathetic government that placed increasing restrictions on them. Piet Retief tried to maintain morale among the boers and negotiated with the Luitenant Governor Stockenstrom. It was a hopeless task and when a manifesto written by Retief listing their grievances was published in the Grahamstown Journal (see Appendix), he was relieved of his command by Stockenstrom.

Several parties of *Boers* had already left British rule for the interior in ox-wagons in what became known as the *Groot Trek* (big Trek). Piet Retief followed, leading a party of about 100 wagons and they met up with the others near what later became the town of Winburg in the Orange Free State. The leaders of the first two treks were squabbling among themselves and Retief was elected as the overall leader of the Trek. He led a major party across the Drakensberg into Natal to negotiate the acquisition of land from the Zulu King, Dingane who had succeeded the legendary Chaka. Dingane required that Retief retrieve cattle raided by a rival tribe. Retief's party succeeded in retrieving the cattle but was massacred after Dingane agreed to land allocated to the Trekkers. Dingane also sent impi (warriors) to murder the rest of the party awaiting Retief's return. War and retaliation followed with the defeat of the Zulus at Blood River. However, the Trekkers had enough and retreated to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State where they set up the Boer Republics. Piet Retief is honoured by Afrikaners to this day.

Daniel did not join the Trek and left the colonial border to returned to *Welvanpas* where he took over running the farm and the building of the new house. He had his initials DRT Jz 1817 (Daniel Retief son of Jacobus) crafted on the front gable of the house. The old house was demolished and the farmyard cleaned up in its current presentation. When Jacobus died in 1821, four years after the completion of the house, he was a prosperous man. Daniel became legal owner of *Welvanpas* after various payments to his brothers and sisters. Daniel married Jacoba Cornelia Von Wielligh in 1824. She was 15 years younger than him, a small trim and straight-back young lady.

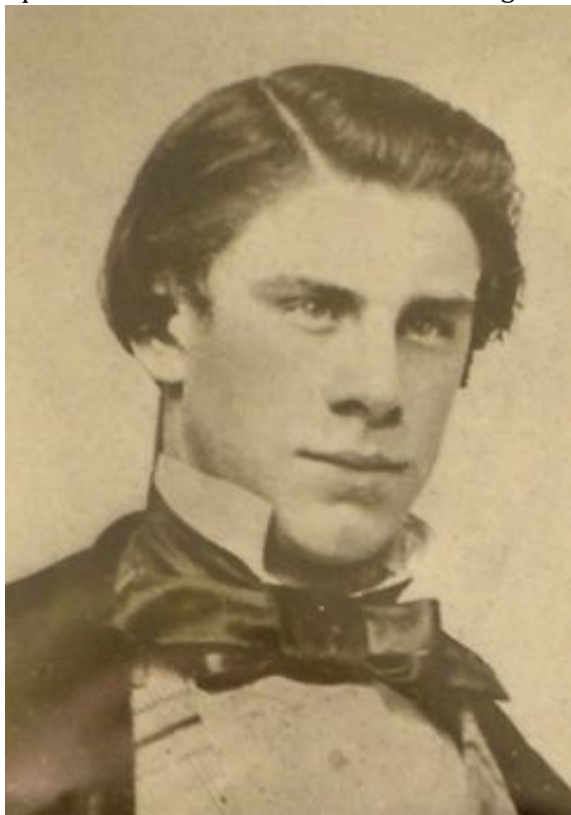
During the first decades of the 1800s Cape had a prosperous period after England introduced preferential tariffs on Cape wines, while maintaining penal tariffs on French wines imposed during the Napoleonic wars. However, after 1821 economic conditions became harder. The rixdollar was devalued once more and in 1825 the British government reduced import duties on European wines and the Cape no longer had a price advantage. Slavery was abolished in 1834 and the abolition had a severe economic impact. While slavery was morally indefensible, slaves were a major asset and were used as collateral for loans. Compensation was less than half the value and paid out only in London. Farmers had to use agents with high fees and little was over in the end. The Retief family had a long tradition of humane treatment of their slaves and ensured over the generations that families were kept intact. However, the economic impact of the abolition was felt by all.

Daniel and Jacoba had seven children, 3 girls and 4 boys. However, only two boys, Jacobus and Daniel Pieter Johannes Retief reached adulthood.

Daniel passed away on 8 December 1840, aged 51 years. He had been married only 16 years. He left his wife Jacoba Cornelia, aged 34 with the daunting responsibility of running an extensive farm and raising four children, two daughters aged 14 and 8 and two sons aged 12 and 3. Jacoba did not remarry and became a small tough lady who could hold her own in a man's world. Daniel left behind a loyal and experienced workforce of former slaves who stayed on with the family. *Sy was klein en baie kwaai. Hul sê sy het saam met die volk op die steier gestaan en aan die kelder gemessel.* (She was small and formidable. They say that she stood on the scaffold with the workers and plastered the cellar.) *Sy het kamaste op die plaas gedra en snags met haar haelgeweer oor haar skouer en haar twee getroue honde, Storm en Baron, geloop in die boord om te sien dat niemand haar lemoene steel nie.* (She wore leather leggings and patrolled her orange crop at night with her shotgun slung across her shoulder accompanied by her dogs, Storm and Baron. Nobody was going to get away stealing her oranges if she could help it.)

5th Gen. Daniel Pieter Johannes RETIEF (Lang Daantjie) 1837 – 1895

Lang Daantjie was 3 years old when his father died. His older brother was 12 years. Their mother was then aged 34 years and ran the farm for many years as the boys grew up. Daniel loved animals and was riding his own horse from an early stage. He was tall



Daniel Pieter Johannes RETIEF

Lang Daantjie (1, p121)

for his age and naturally gregarious, visiting family and neighbours in the *Bovlei*. When he was 12 years old, Andrew Geddes Bain started building a pass through the mountains. The early stage of the Bainskloof pass went over *Welvanpas* land and Bain lived in a house on the neighbouring farm, *Doolhof*. For 4 years, until he was 16, Daantjie regularly followed and monitored the building of the pass on his horseback, asking questions in his broken English.

Daantjie became a tall young man, 6ft 7 inches (2 m) and became known as Lang Daantjie. He had a mind of his own and, while his mother had a strong personality, she found him difficult to dominate. He acquired a pair of silver spurs (still at *Welvanpas*) and with his best waistcoat was an imposing sight on his horse. With Kootjie Malan, a friend

from childhood days they paid court to two Brink girls from the town. When he took Bettie Brink to *Welvanpas* there

was a tense atmosphere as his mother, *Kwaai* (angry) *Kootjie* had a strict attitude and made no secret that she thought her son was undisciplined. Bettie's mother died and it was customary for the daughters to enter a year of mourning. However, Bettie found to her shock that she was pregnant. Lang Daantjie took it in his stride and he never bothered much about what people said. However it was a tense time in the family with recriminations from his mother. They were married 19 days before the birth of their first child, Daniel, and Bettie moved into *Welvanpas* and the strict regime of her mother-in-law.

The two brothers, Jacobus and Lang Daantjie ran the farm under the strict supervision of their mother. Both were married and had children. The congestion was relieved when a new house, called *Die Boland* was built for Jacobus. Sadly Jacobus became ill and died at the age of 38. Widower Du Toit from the neighbouring farm *Nabygelegen* came calling and Jacobus' widow Maria married again. They lived within walking distance of *Welvanpas*. There was no longer talk of dividing the farm with Lang Daantjie the designated heir.

Lang Daantjie was an active and successful farmer as well as a leader in the community. His Afrikaner *osse* (oxen), vines and citrus were top quality but his special passion was for horses. He regularly won prizes in horse shows, both in the country and in Cape Town. He kept a sharp eye on the progress of the riding abilities of his sons. Danie, Johannes (Barbara's grandfather) and young Wouter, as well as the youngest daughter Jacoba Cornelia learned quickly but the second son, Jacobus (Jakoos) had little aptitude, to the disgust of his father. Sadly the youngest son Wouter died after he was kicked in the stomach by his father's prize horse Bismarck. He disturbed the horse while at sleep and it kicked backwards in fright. He got a hiding for being naughty without his father realising how seriously he was wounded. It was a cross Lang Daantjie bore all his life.

Education of the children were important, first in the local school and later in Cape Town at SACS, the South African College School (the girls went to Rustenberg Girls School, also in Cape Town). Lang Daantjie felt at a disadvantage with his inadequate command of English, and while he shared the anger in the community about how English was forced into Dutch schools, he was determined that his children would be able to negotiate on equal terms with the English. Jakoos enjoyed the classics and all his life could recite reams of Shakespeare by heart.

In 1879 Jacoba Cornelia passed away and Bettie had her last child, named after her grandmother. Bettie was finally in charge of her home. Three of Bettie's children, Danie, Johannes and Elizabeth grew up to be real perfectionists. Of the other two, Jakoos was a rebel and the youngest daughter a tomboy comfortable outside on the farm on horseback.

Lang Daantjie was a successful farmer and expanded the farm by buying back portions that had previously been sold. His team of oxen was his particular pride. Diamonds and gold had been discovered in the interior attracting a steady stream of fortune hunters. The Bainskloof pass became a bottleneck and often people came to the farm asking shelter overnight before tackling the long pass over the mountain. They shared accommodation with the three boys in an outside room and shared their stories and dreams with them. One of them, Sammy Marks eventually became a well-known and very successful gold magnate. He always remembered how he was received at the farm without the discrimination commonly applied to Jews. They were apparently up most of the night talking and playing chess. Johannes beat them all at chess.

It did not take long before the three boys also took the long road to the goldfields in Transvaal. They were not successful in striking gold. Danie eventually returned to *Welvanpas* when his father took ill. Jakoos dined at a hotel in Pretoria and was spotted by Sammy Marks who offered him a manager's position but this did not work out and, after various jobs, he eventually returned to *Welvanpas*. Johannes stayed in Transvaal and joined the Transvaal Republic civil service.

Lang Daantjie contracted cancer of the tongue and was unable to eat. Although he kept up a cheerful appearance he literally starved to death - slowly and painfully. On 15 June 1895 it was all over. His funeral was huge as he was respected and popular in the community.

His widow Bettie lived most of her life dominated by her mother-in-law and then as wife of strong-willed Lang Daantjie. She now embarked on major changes, possibly to clear the painful memories of her husband's death. She felt the house was too dark and several old oak trees, dating from Pierre Mouij's time were chopped down. The front door and side windows were replaced with a "modern" and impressive teak door and large paned-sash windows. The front veranda was changed and various alterations were done to the house. She also sold most of the old furniture and the family have found it hard to forgive her for what they viewed as vandalism.

Our story continues in Part 2.