

# The Formidable Pasma Ladies

## Sophia and her Daughters

We are descended from Philip Morkel and his second wife, Catharina Pasma. There are some interesting stories to tell about Catharina, her mother Sophia (Fytje) (1), and her sisters Margaretha and Sibella.

### Catharina Pasma

Catharina (1691 – 1764) married Philip Morkel in 1713, soon after his first wife, Maria Biebouw died (2). In the same year her sister, Margaretha and her husband Claas Elbertz died in the major small pox epidemic that swept through the Cape. Claas and Margaretha's farm *Onverwacht* (later *Die Bos*) in Hottentots Holland passed on to her mother Sophia, who allowed Catharina and Philip to farm there. It was transferred to Philip in 1718. Thus Catharina brought the farm and prosperity into the family.

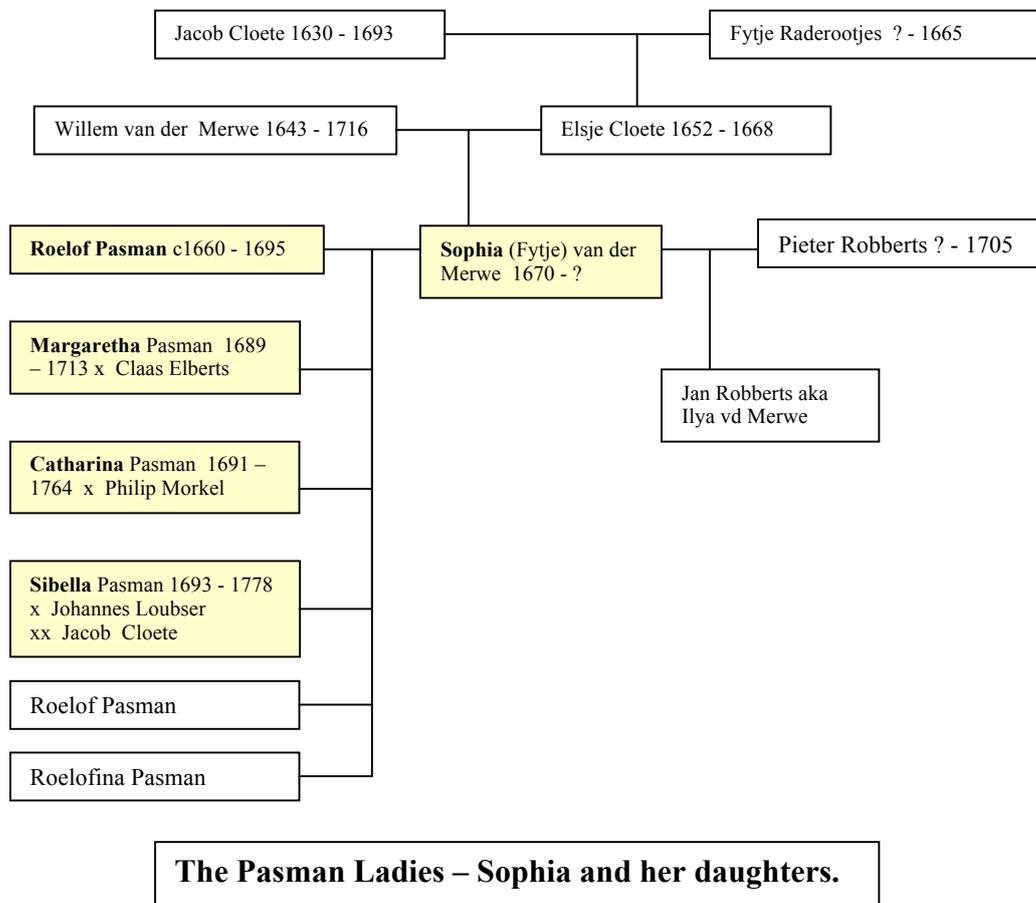
Catharina also inherited Margaretha's clothes but thankfully the disease was not passed on to her. Catharina's beautiful *kis* or chest has survived at *Die Bos* (3). Such chests were for clothing and household linen brought along from Europe, and are cherished heirlooms where they are still in families. Many are in museums such as the Fehr Collection at the Castle in Cape Town.



**Chest (Kis) of Catharina Morkel née Pasma at *Die Bos***

(Photo: Author)

Catharina was 43 when Philip Morkel died in 1735 and she lived for another 29 years as the owner of *Onverwacht* and loan farms over the mountains. Her son Willem was 17 when his father died and took over the farming duties with Catharina very much in charge.



## Sophia (Fytje) van der Merwe x Pasman xx Robberts

*Fytje Robberts was 'tough as old boots' - Adam Tas (4)*

Catharina's mother, Sophia (1670– ?) was the oldest child of Willem Schalksz van der Merwe, the stamouer of the populous van der Merwe clan. She married Roelof (also spelt Rudolph) Pasman (ca 1660 – 1695), originally from Mörs in Germany. Roelof was granted the farm *Rustenbergh* of 135 morgen 200 square roods, (5) on the outskirts of Stellenbosch, bordering *Ida's Valley* in Jonkers Hoek. The farm's name was variously spelt *Rustenbergh*, *Rustenburgh* and *Rustenburgh*.

Roelof and Sophia had 5 children, including Margaretha, Catherina and Sibella. We know little about the son Roelof and youngest daughter Roelofina. Roelof Pasman was a diligent farmer. By 1692 he had a flock of 400 sheep, 20 oxen and with the assistance of only two slaves, had planted the wilderness with 5,000 vines (4). Roelof died young at around 35 in 1695.

As a marriageable widow owning a good farm in a colony short of women, Sophia would have been quite a catch. Soon after Roelof's death, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1696 she married Pieter Robberts, who was a sergeant employed by the VOC. He came from Neustadt in the German county of Holstein, and arrived at the Cape in 1693 (4). Pieter and Sophia had one son, Jan Robberts (see the box inset about the mysterious Ilya van der Merwe).

The little we know about Pieter Robberts is not all that favourable (4). It seems that he was a toady of the corrupt and unpopular governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel (6). He became heemraad in 1701 and acting landdrost from 1703 to 1705. According to the diary of adversary Adam Tas, Robberts diligently practised the informer's craft, for which he would eventually be rewarded.

**. . . . .want het een zekere zaak is dat die vent 't verklikkers ambagt sterk oeffent, dan hij staat er mettertijd voor beloont te werden. (7)**

He would regularly make the journey in his horse chaise from Stellenbosch to Vergelegen in the Hottentots Holland to tell on the locals, sometimes in the company of his successor as landdrost, Starrenburg (4). Apparently he (Starrenburg) mistrusted Robberts and according to Tas, told van der Stel that Robberts could have told more about the rebellious burghers had he wanted to, but towards him, he held to himself.

**Hy werd door beide partijen gewantrouwd. Starrenburg schrijft (22 Sept 1706) aan van der Stel dat Robberts wel inlichting zou kunnen geven omtrent de opstandige burgers "als hij wilde" "maar", klagen Starrenburg "tegen mij houdt hij sigh seer ingetoogen" (7)**

Sadly Robberts suffered a stroke which left him semi-paralysed and with an obstruction in his speech. Tas on 21 July 1705 wrote in his diary that the guy appeared weird, like a slobbering donkey at the water trough, and that he was swerving like a swallow with one wing. He (Robberts) also said that none of the other friends wanted much to do with him.

**Dingsdag den 21n Julij 1705 ... onder anderen vonden we daar (zonder hem te zoeken) den Oud Noordzen landdrost Robberts: die vent zag er zeer raar uit en geleek niet qualijk een eezel die wijwater geslobbert heeft! Voorts liep hij zoo wat swerven als een swaluw met een wiek: hij zag datter niemand van de andere vrunden veel werk van hem maakte. (7)**

Sophia would also have experienced the hostility in the community, and she lashed out. Two days after the slobbering donkey entry, Tas records that the rude wife of the old northern landdrost Robberts cursed his sister brutally, hurled many swear words at her and threatened to hit her. This is likely the origin of Viney and Proust's (4) remark that Fytje was "tough as old boots".

**Donderdag den 23n Julij 1705 .....het onbescofte wijf van den oud noordsen landdrost Robberts (mijn) suster zeer brutaal hadde belegend en veel scheldwoorden na 't hoof geworpen, haar drijgende te zullen slaan. (7)**

The rebellious burghers led by Tas was imprisoned at the Castle but they managed to smuggle a petition to the Directors (Here Sewentien) in Holland. Van der Stel was deposed and banished.

### The Mysterious Ilya van der Merwe

The genealogy for Willem van der Merwe has Ilya (or Ulya or Eula) as his 12th child, baptised at Drakenstein 28 May 1696. This unusual name has long puzzled genealogists. The other children have more regular names such as Sophia, Schalk Willem, Jacob, Helena, Pieter, Hendrik and so on, and they were baptised in Cape Town. Why did Dutchman Willem have his son baptised in a French church in Drakenstein, about as far away from Cape Town as you could get at that time, and why the strange name?

When genealogists inspected the actual baptismal records, they found:

*"Lannée 1696 le 28 Mey il y a eu un enfant Baptisé du beau-fils de Willem Schalk van den Merven" or:*

*"On 28 May 1696 there has been baptised a child of the son-in-law of Willem Schalk van der Merwe."*

We thus have the very unusual baptism record of a child without a name. The original family historian would have mistaken *il y a eu* (there has been) as the boy's name. The son-in-law was Pieter Robberts, who had married our Sophia on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, less than four months before the baptism. How they persuaded the French church to baptise the illegitimate child is not recorded, but the French could not have been happy. The parents were not allowed to attend the ceremony, and the entry without a name in the records was very unusual, to say the least.

Through a process of elimination they identified Ilya as Jan Robberts, the only son of Pieter Robberts and Sophia with no birth date listed.

#### Sources:

1. Ilya or Ulya or Eula is listed as Willem van der Merwe's 12<sup>th</sup> child in <http://Stamouers.com>
2. Leon Endeman of GISA (Genealogical Institute of South Africa) and André Kellerman inspected the church records. Leon reported their findings in a Genforum note on 23 Jan 2002. (See Appendix)

After Robberts' death Sophia continued to farm at Rustenberg. She did well and increased the productivity of the farm. By 1720 there were 600 sheep, 30 horses, 12,000 vines and 24 slaves. She inherited the Hottentots Holland farm *Onverwacht* from her daughter Margaretha, and she allowed Catharina and her husband Philip Morkel to farm there. In 1718 *Onverwacht* was transferred to Philip Morkel. Sophia had also bought another farm *Nooitgedacht*, close to Stellenbosch, which she deeded to her other daughter, Sibella. Sophia left her farm *Rustenberg* to her grandson, Pieter Loubser (Sibella's son) and not to her son Jan Robberts, whom she apparently disinherited.

Sophia and her daughter Catharina were buried in grave 1 within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stellenbosch church (8). Philip Morkel was buried in grave 95.

### Sibella Pasman

Sibella Pasman was born 19 August 1693 and married Johannes Albertus Loubser in 1714. Her mother Sophia gave her the farm *Nooitgedacht* in 1713 which was transferred to Loubser in 1718. One of the centre panes of the second church of Stellenbosch of 1723 (the first

church burnt down in the terrible fire that swept the town in 1710) shows a painted family crest for Sibella Pasman, widow of Jan Lobsten (sic). The crest was clearly concocted for the occasion (8) and much of it was later copied by her brother-in-law Philip Morkel for his family crest (9). The falconer on the left side represents Cloete, and the parallelogram bottom right Pasman. I do not know about the six pointed star – perhaps it was van der Merwe, or Loubser?

In 1722 Sibella married again, to Jacobus Cloete (ca 1696 – 1757) who was the grandson of stamouer Jacob Cloete, while Sibella was his great grand-daughter. Their younger son Hendrik Cloete born in 1725 married Hester Anna Lourens (1734 - 1794), daughter of Pieter Lourens (1703 - 1748), landdrost of Stellenbosch. They had eleven children. The family lived at *Nooitgedacht*, from which base Hendrik became one of the Cape's largest land owners. In the Stellenbosch district he owned, apart from *Nooitgedacht*, *Dekker's Vallei*, *Vryberg*, *Hardenberg*, *Weltevreden*, *Vogelzang* and *De Berg Sinai*. He also owned the farm *Zandvliet* near the present Faure and a cattle farm in the Overberg, as well as holding several on quitrent.



**Church window centrepiece.**  
**Sibella Pasman Weduwe van Jan Lobsten 1723**  
 Source: Hugo & van der Bijl (8)



**Painting at Groot Constantia said to be of Sibella Pasman**  
 (I have my doubts) Source: PW Morkel (2)

To these extensive possessions he added *Groot Constantia* on 15 December 1778. The purchase price was 60,000 guilders (Indian value), to be paid in four equal annual instalments. He also bought all the movable property, which had originally belonged to Van der Spuij, including furniture, paintings (perhaps including the one supposedly of Sibella), wine making and agricultural equipment, oxen, horses, cattle, wagons and 16 slaves for 30,000 guilders in cash. He spent a further 2,000 guilders on new furniture (10).

*Groot Constantia*, originally the farm of Governor Simon van der Stel is *the* iconic Cape Dutch farm in South Africa, located on the far side of Table Mountain and popular with tourists.

## Notes and Sources:

1. Fytje would be pronounced 'fait-ye' in Afrikaans and more like 'fight-ye' in Dutch.
2. Most of the information about Catharina comes from PW Morkel 1961, *The Morkels. Family History*. Published privately.
3. My cousin Hanna (Hendrik Johannes Louw Morkel), owner of *Die Bos* gave me a guided tour of the old heirloom furniture on the farm and was confident that the Kis came from Catharina.
4. Graham Viney and Alain Proust, 1987, *Colonial Houses of South Africa*. p82 . Googlebooks. Tas wrote his diary in Dutch and my source, Chris Hendriks on SAGenealogie with access to the diary could not locate the exact quote. The closest he came was where Fytje cursed Tas's sister in crude and vulgar language and threatened to hit her
5. A Cape morgen is 0.856 hectare or 2.12 English acre. 600 Cape Roods = 1 morgen
6. The story of corrupt Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel and rebellious Adam Tas is told in a separate story.
7. Chris Hendriks from the SAGenealogie Postroom provided the quotes from the Diary (Dagboek) of Adam Tas.
8. A.M. Hugo en J van der Bijl 1963 *Die Kerk van Stellenbosch*. Tafelberg Uitgewers. p64a for the window pane and p225 for the grave numbers.
9. See under Family Stories on our website: "Vainities, Fables and Foibles Pt1".
10. See the *Groot Constantia* website <http://www.grootconstantia.co.za/3/home>

## Appendix.

### Wie was die geheimsinnige Ilya of Eula van der Merwe?

Date: Wed, 23 Jan 2002 14:01:51 +0200

From: "Leon Endemann" <gisa@renet.sun.ac.za>

Subject: Eula van der Merwe alias Jan Robbertse

Beste Lyslede

Hiermee die een-en-ander wat sommiges mag interesseer:

Inaggenome my veelvuldige Van der Merwe afstamming het ek 'n buitengewone belangstelling in daardie familie. Een van my raakpunte is o.a. Sophia (Fytje) van der Merwe (b1) = 2.11.1670 oudste kind van die stamvader (volgens De Villiers & Pama asook Janet Melville in SAG vol. 5 p. 531d) wat agtereenvolgens op 12.11.1684 met Roelof Pasman en daarna op 25.1.1696 met die stamvader Pieter Robberts(e) getroud was.

Volgens De Villiers & Pama deel II p. 684 is daar vyf kinders, vier dogters en 'n enigste seun, uit die Pasman huwelik gebore, waarvan die jongste Roeloffina op 27.9.1695 ten doope gebring is. Die vermoede bestaan dat Roelof (ook Rudolph Pasmann genoem) oorlede is net kort voor die geboorte van sy jongste (in ieder geval voor Sept 1695), wat ook die vernoeming van hierdie postuum gebore dogter verklaar.

Sover vasgestel het Pieter Robberts, sedert 1699 eienaar van die plaas Rustenburg digby Stellenbosch en latere waarnemende landdros van die distrik (1703-05), en sy Fytje van der Merwe, die weduwee Pasman, 'n enigste seun Jan gehad vir wie De Villiers & Pama geen geboortedatum aandui nie. Die ontbrekende doopdatum

was vir my 'n bron van frustrasie omdat Jan een van my voorouers is deur sy agter-agterkleindogter Petronella Margaretha Robbertse (b1c7d9e1f2) \* op Trek ca. 1836, + 27.2.1879 van die plaas "Krokodildrift", wyk Hexrivier, dist. Rustenburg.

Met die redigering van die Van der Merwe bydrae tot SAG vol. 5 het die bestaan van 'n jongste kind van die stamvader Van der Merwe genaamd Eula (= Drakenstein 28.5.1696) my geweldig gehinder en het ek en André Kellerman besluit om die inskrywing in die Drakensteinse doopregister na te gaan. In die eerste plek is dit 'n totaal vreemde naam en selfs die ander weergawes Ilya en Ulya kan nie met enige ander Dietse voornaam verbind word nie. (Naaste wat enigsins aan Eula kan herinner is die Franse mansvoornaam Eudes - op Duits Udo).

Met die nagaan in die doopregister van die Franse gemeente van Drakenstein is die volgende deur myself en André Kellerman bevind (en ek haal woordeliks aan) "Lannee 1696 Le 28 Mey il y a eut un enfant Baptize du beau fils de Willem Schalk van den Merven" Dit is opvallend dat nêrens van 'n Eula, Ilya of Ulya gepraat word nie. Die vertaling uit Frans lui soos volg : "Daar is op 28 Mei 1696 'n seuntjie vir die skoonseun van Willem Schalk van der Mewe ten doop gebring". Die naam van die skoonseun en die dopeling word ongelukkig verswyg.

By wyse van eliminasie was dit duidelik dat die skoonseun van Willem Schalk hierbo genoem niemand anders as Pieter Robberts kan wees nie. Dit sou meebring dat die dopeling, Pieter en Fytje Robbertse se seun, Jan moet wees. As verklaring daarvoor dat die ouerpaar nie teenwoordig was tydens die doopplegtigheid van hul enigste nie, kan gewyt word aan die feit dat hy te kort na hul huwelik gebore is (die doop het vier maande na die huwelik plaasgevind) en dat hy derhalwe buite die eg (omstreeks Roelof Paman hierbo se afsterwe) verwek was. Oupa Van der Merwe moes daarom instaan by die doopfont, waarskynlik omdat die leraar van Drakenstein (en sy kerkraad) nie met die ouerpaar se gedrag genoë geneem het nie.

In die immer ontwykende kerkraadsnotules van die gemeente Drakenstein word die onomstootlike bewyse tot hierdie raaisel nog steeds bewaar.

Leon Endemann