The Formidable Pasman Ladies
Sophia and her Daughters

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

Catharina Pasman

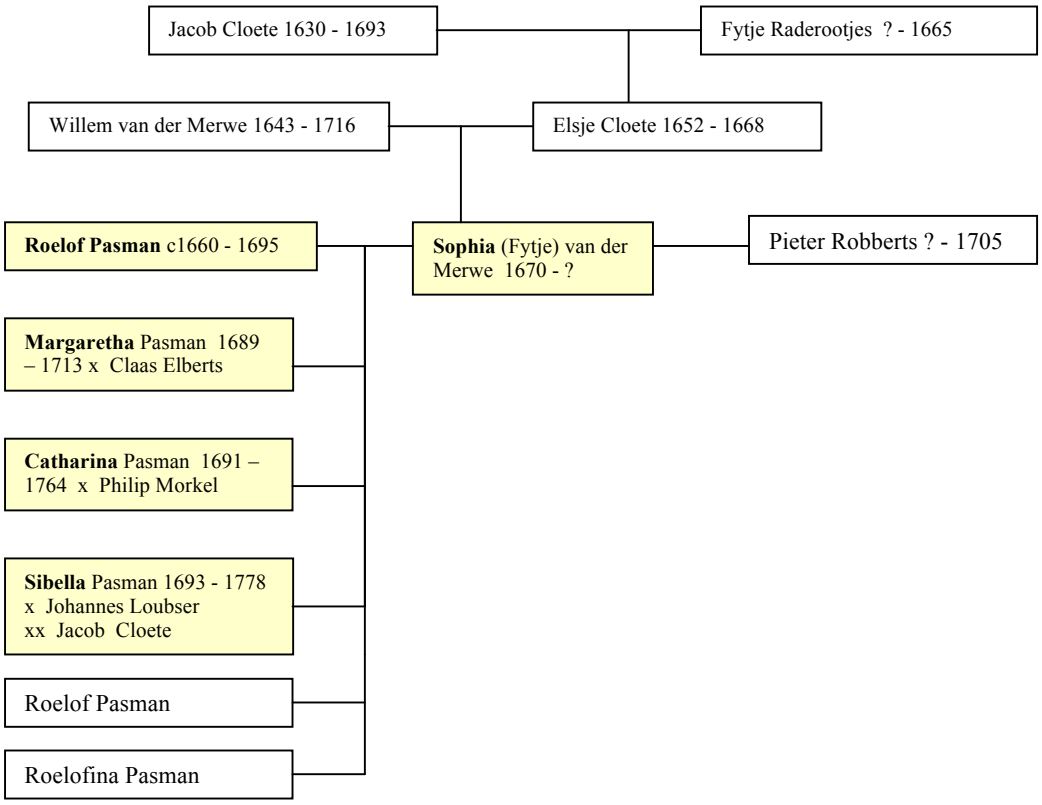
Catharina (1691 – 1764) married Philip Morkel in 1713, soon after his first wife, Maria Biebouw died (2). In the same year her sister, Margaretha and her husband Claas Elbertz died in the major small pox epidemic that swept through the Cape. Claas and Margaretha's farm *Onverwacht* (later *Die Bos*) in Hottentots Holland passed on to her mother Sophia, who allowed Catharina and Philip to farm there. It was transferred to Philip in 1718 (2). 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*. Such chests were for clothing and household linen brought along from Europe, and have become cherished heirlooms where they are still in families.

Chest (Kis) of Catharina Morkel née Pasman 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 (2). Her son Willem was 17 when his father died and took over the farming duties with Catharina very much in charge.



The Pasman Ladies – Sophia and her daughters.

Sophia (Fytje) van der Merwe x Pasman xx Robberts

Fytje Robberts was 'tough as old boots' – Adam Tas (3)

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 *Rustenberg* of 135 morgen 200 square roods, (3) on the outskirts of Stellenbosch, bordering *Ida's Valley* in Jonkers Hoek. The farm's name was variously spelt *Rustenberg, Rustenburg* 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 (3). 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 1st 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).

The little we know about Pieter Robberts is not all that favourable (3,5). It seems that he was a toady of the corrupt and unpopular governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel. 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 zeekere zaak is dat die vent 't verklikkers ambagt sterk oeffent, dan hij staat er mettertijd voor beloont te werden. (5)**

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 (3). The latter mistrusted him 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, 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" (5)**

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. (5)**

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 (3) 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 bejegend en veel scheldwoorden na 't hoof geworpen, haar drijgende te zullen slaan. (5)**

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.

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).

Sophia and her daughter Catharina were buried in grave 1 within the 2nd Stellenbosch church (6). Philip Morkel was buried in grave 95.

An earlier version of this story has it that Sophia and Pieter Robberts had a child which was baptised less than 3 months after the wedding (and born even sooner). The child was baptised in the French church at Drakenstein as the 13th child of Sophia's father. The church records were in French merely stating that on 28th May 1696, a child of the son-in-law of Willem Schalk van der Merwe has been baptised:

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

A later genealogist misread the French entry that the child's name was Iya van der Merwe. It was thought this child was Jan Robberts, son of Sophia and Pieter. However, even later research showed that they did not have a child and Ilya was the son of another of the van der Merwe sisters.

Sibella Pasman

Sibella Pasman was born 19 August 1693 and married Johannes Albertus Loubser in 1714. Her mother Sophia in 1713 gave her the farm *Nooitgedacht*, 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) (6). The crest was clearly concocted for the occasion and much of it was later copied by her brother-in-law Philip Morkel for his family crest (2). 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?

Church window centrepane.

Sibella Pasman Weduwe van Jan Lobsten 1723
Source: Hugo & van der Bijl (6)

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, Vogelenzang 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.

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 (8).

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.

Painting at *Groot Constantia* said to be of Sibella Pasman

(I have my doubts) *Source: PW Morkel (2)*

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Notes and Sources:

1. Fytje would be pronounced 'fait-ye' in Afrikaans and more like 'fight-ye' in Dutch.
2. PW Morkel 1961, *The Morkels. Family History*. Published privately.
3. Graham Viney and Alain Proust, 1987, *Colonial Houses of South Africa.* p82 .
4. A Cape morgen is 0.856 hectare or 2.12 English acre. 600 Cape Roods = 1 morgen
5. Diary (Dagboek) of Adam Tas.
6. 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.
7. See under Family Stories on our website: "The Family Crest".
8. See the *Groot Constantia* website http://www.grootconstantia.co.za/3/home