

# Then the British Came ... and left ... and returned ... and stayed

The British occupied the Cape in 1795 for about 8 years and were required to hand it back to the Dutch in 1803. The Dutch had the Cape for 3 years when the British took it once more in 1806 and stayed. There are some interesting stories worth telling about how these events affected our family.

## The 1<sup>st</sup> British Occupation. 1795 - 1803



FIGURE 10.—COMMANDANT JACOBUS LINDE

In the uniform of *ritmeester* of the Stellenbosch Burgher Cavalry.

**A dragoon in uniform.**  
Source: Burrows (8, p55)

The British landed at Simon's Town and in August 1795, after overcoming weak resistance at Muizenberg, occupied the Cape. After losing the American colonies in 1776, trade with the Far East, particularly India, became even more important to Britain and the Cape would be a key naval base to protect its interests. The opportunity came when the French army invaded Holland in 1794, five years after the Revolution. Pro-French local 'patriots' took command and established the Republic of Batavia. Prince William of Orange fled to England and on request, wrote an order to the governors of all Dutch possessions to receive the British troops "in order to protect such Colonies and Settlements against the Enemy and to hold them under the condition that they would be restored to the Republic at the conclusion of general peace ..." (1, p44)

The Dutch authorities at the Cape had also received word from Holland (smuggled via an American ship) about the new Republic of Batavia, and that Prince William's office and authority as *Stadthouder* had been abolished. The Cape was divided. The authorities felt obliged to obey the new government in Holland while privately aligning with the English as representing the old order of the Prince of Orange. Many colonials were more in sympathy with the aims of the French revolution and had tired of the Dutch rule. Almost everyone disliked the idea of new British masters.

Three of Philip Morkel's grandsons served in the Stellenbosch *Krygsraad* (lit: war council) which was a voluntary citizens' militia (2):

In 1791 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of Dragoons (Dragonders) included, among others:

Philippus Albertus Myburgh (44 yrs) of the farm *Meerlust*, Captain and Commanding Officer.  
Philip Hendrik Morkel (31) of *Rome*, Captain Lieutenant,  
Willem Morkel (29) of *Voorburg*, first Lieutenant, and  
Daniel Johannes Morkel (24) of *Onverwacht* sub-lieutenant.

P.A. Myburgh was a cousin of the Morkel brothers. His mother, Sophia Margaretha, was the daughter of Philip Morkel and Sophia Pasman.

They were still members of the *Krygsraad* in 1795 when the British occupied the Cape. The new authorities required all inhabitants to sign an oath of allegiance. Those who refused would be imprisoned at the Castle and in a few cases, were banished from the Colony.

At first the British took a fairly conciliatory role under General Craig while there was still the view that they were largely there to protect the Cape from falling to the French and that the Dutch would resume power. Later, in 1797 it became clear that the British intended to stay. Earl Macartney was appointed Governor and he took a harder line, requiring a second oath to be administered, this time to the British monarch (King George III), rather than to a temporary British administration (1).

The second oath was clearly resented by some, and by the expiry date several members of the Krysgraad had not complied. P.A. Myburgh was the most outspoken and sent a somewhat convoluted letter (see Appendix 1) to the *Landdrost* in which he queried the authority of the *Landdrost*, the need for a second oath and the ambiguity of whether the *Krygsraad* had been disbanded or not with the occupation.

P.A. Myburgh was a strong-willed person. He had spent years as a big game hunter in the interior exploring deep into the then wild Africa, crossing the Orange River (3, p61). He did not suffer bureaucracy kindly – apart from playing games with the British, he also wrote a caustic letter about inadequate seating for his wife in the Stellenbosch church (4, p116).

The *Landdrost* sent Myburgh's letter on to Lord Macartney, who wrote a note on its margin that for the protection of the district, dragoons would be quartered on those not taking the Oath. The French Revolution was very much on the minds of British and Macartney was determined to stamp out any Jacobin tendencies in his jurisdiction. The Colonial Secretary, Andrew Barnard (husband of Lady Anne Barnard) twice went to Stellenbosch to enforce the taking of the oath and had some trouble with the Myburghs of *Meerlust*, but eventually they took the oath.



**Table made by dragoons stationed at Meerlust**

Source: (3, p63)

Nevertheless the quartering was proceeded with. Lord Macartney was tolerating no nonsense, and he instructed that the recalcitrants had to provide forage and maintenance for as many dragoons as the Governor may judge proper. 'For, as their excuses are neither reasonable nor admissible it will be but proper that they should maintain the party sent for their own defence' (2).

The dragoons were quartered as follows:

- 10th November - on P.A. Myburgh for him and his son P.A. Myburgh - 22, dragoons.
- 20th November - P.A. Myburgh Senr. for his son G. Myburgh - 10 dragoons.
- The widow Melk for her son-in-law Philip Hendrik Morkel\* dwelling with her - 10 dragoons.
- Daniel Morkel - 10 dragoons
- Dirk Cloete - 10 dragoons
- J.A. Meyburg - 10 dragoons.

(Note: \* P.H. Morkel was married to Johanna Petronella Malan. Her mother, Maria Rosina née Loubser remarried Martin Melck and farmed at *Groot Paardevlei*, bordering Somerset West on the northwest side).

Thus the Myburgh family between them had 42 dragoons stationed at three farms and the two Morkel brothers 10 dragoons each.

But Phillippus Albertus was not beaten yet. Perhaps to the bewilderment of the British dragoons, he welcomed them – and their horses - to *Meerlust*, sharing his table, his food and wine with them. In return the soldiers offered their services in his fields and vineyards gratis, letting slip to their host that their captain was much cast down in spirits as his bride of only one day had been left behind in Cape Town. Phillippus sent his horse carriage to collect the bride and installed them in the best guest room in the house. Eventually the dragoons were recalled. In appreciation for their stay, two dragoons made and presented the family with a finely crafted table of wild olive wood, which is still in the *Meerlust* home (3).

## **1803 – 1806. Die Kaap is weer Hollands (6)**

On 25 March 1802 the British and the French signed the Treaty of Amiens which temporarily ended hostilities in Europe and recognised the revolutionary French government. Under the terms of the Treaty, signed by Joseph Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleon, the Cape was handed back to the

Batavian Republic. General Janssens was appointed Governor and welcomed by the locals.

Shortly after his installation by the visiting Commissary de Mist, the Governor left Cape Town to visit the eastern part of the Colony to ascertain how matters were standing between the Colonists, the Xhosas and the Hottentots.. General Janssen's party of seven included his aide-de-camp Captain W.B.E. Paravincini di Capelli. They travelled in three wagons, each drawn by 12 oxen. (5)

Taking their midday meal at *Meerlust*, the farm of P.A. Myburgh, they reached *Voorburg* which belonged to Captain Willem Morkel in the afternoon. Here the Governor and his party spent the night. Di Capelli noted in his diary that the evening meal was a lavish one and added: 'good beds, laden tables, who would not wish to travel thus'. On reaching the farm *Onverwacht*, they were joined by the owner, Captain D.J. Morkel who accompanied them to the foot of the Hottentots Kloof which they found extremely steep and difficult (5)

During the Batavian period, Hercules Morkel (the fourth brother, 36 in 1803) was a veld-cornet at Hottentots Holland and Willem, Wz (*Willem's son*) (41 in 1803) had risen to be a *Ritmeester* (lit: Riding master) or Captain. These who had to keep watch at Hottentots Holland *op orde van den gouverneur en chef* (on order of the Governor and Chief) under the Company of the *Ritmeester* Willem Morkel were (2):

Daniel Morkel, Capt. Lieut.  
Phillipus Myburgh, 1st Lieut.  
Willem Morkel, Wz, *Wagtmeester*. (lit: Watch master)  
Willem Morkel, Jz, *Wagtmeester*.

(Note: The list above comes from P.W. Morkel, *The Morkels Family History*. Daniel Morkel (39 in 1803) would be *Ritmeester* Willem's brother. The other two Willem Morkels would have been Willem's son (21) and Philip Hendrik's son (22). Philippus Myburgh (29 in 1803) would be the son of P.A. Myburgh of *Meerlust*. Philippus married Willem's daughter, Helena Catharina Morkel in 1808. I am at a loss why Hercules Morkel is not included in the above list).

*Ritmeester* Willem Morkel distinguished himself during the time of the Batavian Republic and was highly praised by General Janssens. The General was working hard to get the Cape into a fair state of defence when he heard of the recurrence of European hostilities in 1804. Most of his regulars had been recalled to Holland, and he was left with only the resources of the inhabitants and the Waldeck Regiment of mercenaries. So he increased the Hottentot Regiment to the number 600, and encouraged enlisting by the burghers in their various units. These were instructed to be armed and prepared. Among those units were the dragoons of *Ritmeesters* Morkel, Wium and Linde (from Swellendam).

The "*Kaapsche Courant*" dated the 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1804, states that *The Governor and General-in-Chief accompanied with a part of the general staff made a "tourn e" along the Hottentots Holland and Stellenbosch, and on the 19<sup>th</sup> inspected the company of Burgher cavalry under the Ritmeesters Wium and Morkel. They were pleased at the way those officers carried out their duties. The men were spick and span and appeared much better exercised than one would have thought possible in the time they had been under arms. They were diligent and content, their officers beloved and respected. The Governor and General-in-Chief were entertained to some hospitality by the family of Ritmeester Morkel and had lunch at Stellenbosch with the Landdrost in company with the officers.*

To return to Janssens' commendation of Willem Morkel. The "*Kaapsche Courant*" in its issue of the 9th February had an item of news which said that on the night between the 1st and 2nd February 20 men of the Hottentot Battalion and three corporals had deserted. The cause was not known, but the

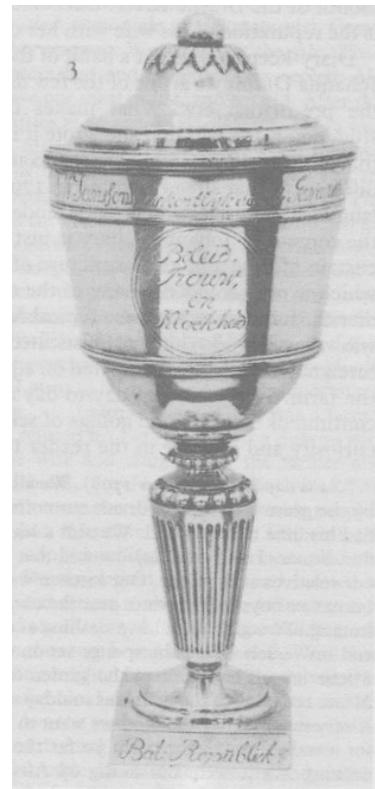


FIGURE 11.—COMMANDANT LINDE'S SILVER STANDING CUP WITH LID A gift from General Janssens and inscribed "for leadership, loyalty and bravery [from

A similar Cup was awarded to Ritmeester Willem Morkel.

Source: Burrows (8, p 55)

most guilty was probably the Hottentot corporal Oerson Africaner who had also deserted under the English when he had not been punished. The deserters were very well armed. The mounted Burghers under Linde, Wium, Human and Morkel pursued them and five deserters lost their lives and one was wounded. Two of the burghers, Roux and Swanepoel, were wounded, and Matthias Zaayman of Human's company was killed. General Janssens was generous in his awards for this action. To the parents of Zaayman were given the use of a loan-farm as long as they lived, and such a farm was also given to Roux and to Swanepoel. *Ritmeesters* Willem Wium, Willem Morkel, Linde and Human, were presented with silver beakers. On one side of these beakers was an inscription describing the event and under it the *Ritmeester's* name, while on the reverse side were the letters B.R, standing for Batavian Republic (2)

The rule of the Batavian Republic came to an end with the capture of the Cape by the English in 1806. After the defeat near Blaauwberg Strand, which was largely caused mainly by the overwhelming naval and military power of the British (7), and by the defection of the German mercenary troops of the Waldeck regiment, General Janssens retreated towards Hottentots Holland, and he spent the first night at Phillipus Albertus Myburgh's farm *Meerlust*. Here their commanding officer came to apologise for the conduct of the German troops, but General Janssens in disgust literally kicked him off the *stoep* of the house.

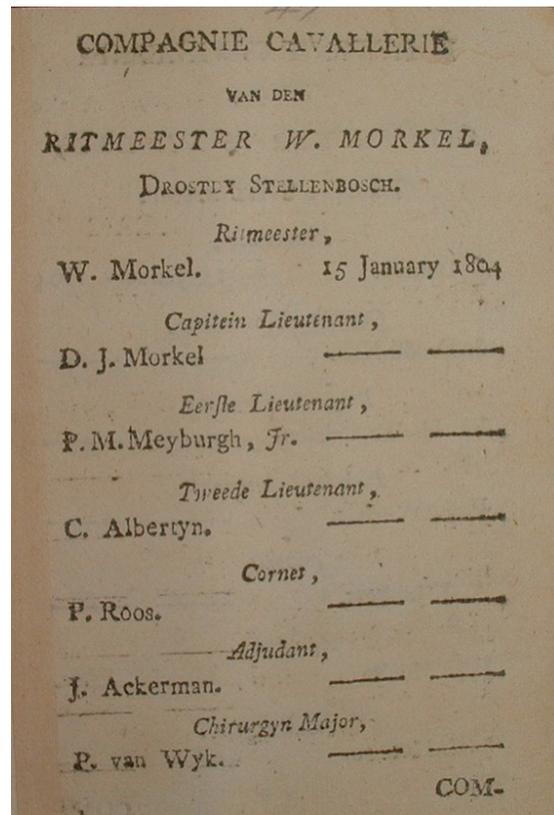
I have wondered about the behaviour of the Waldeck Regiment. Apart from the obvious reason of cowardice, they would have been ambivalent to fight the British. They had formerly fought with the British in 1776 during the American battles for Independence. Were they reluctant to fight their former allies? The British King George III still had strong family connections and support in Germany. More about the Waldeck Regiment in Appendix 2 (7).

The treaty was signed at Brink's Inn at the foot of Hottentot's Holland, but before that General Janssens had said goodbye to his last few faithful supporters, among whom were the Morkels. Commandant Marthinus Wilhelmus Theunissen of *Vergelegen* was mentioned by General Janssens as being conspicuous for bravery in the battle (5). At a later date, Theunissen's daughter married Daniel Johannes Morkel's son, Hendrik Johannes.

In the words of his own despatch: 'On the 10th January 1806 Cape Town capitulated... Burgher Cavalry Captains Wium, Morkel, and van Reenen whose dwellings were in those districts already occupied, were honourably discharged and sent back to their homes. Their parting was affecting. The burghers shed tears when they took leave of their unfortunate Governor' (2).

General Janssens, himself a gentleman of great courtesy and courage was treated with respect and consideration by the victors. After a wait of six weeks, he and his family and remaining Dutch were taken to Holland in British ships, where they arrived to discover that Napoleon's brother Louis had been crowned as king. Janssens was held in high regard in spite of the loss of the Cape. He served in high office in various capacities and by the end of 1807 he was Minister of War. (7, p201)

The British also honoured the loan farms Janssens had allocated to his loyal and brave officers (7).



**Willem Morkel's Cavalry 1804**

Source. *Almanac*:



**Luitenant General Jan Willem Janssens.**

**Governor of the Cape 1803 – 1806.**

Source: (3, p64)

**André T. Morkel**  
**March 2009.**

### **Sources and Notes:**

1. Hermann Giliomee 1975, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind 1795 – 1803*. Kaapstad. Hollandsch Afrikaanse Uitgevers Maatschapij.
2. Much of the information in this story comes from: P.W. Morkel, 1961. *The Morkels. Family History*. Published privately, and can be found in Chapter 1 on our website.
3. Phillida Brooke Simmonds, 2003. *Meerlust. 300 Years of Hospitality*. Fernwood Press. This coffee table book is a rich source about the Myburgh family.
4. A.M. Hugo en J. van der Bijl. 1963. *Die Kerk van Stellenbosch*. Tafelberg Uitgewers. Kaapstad.
5. Peggy Heap, 1970. *The Story of Hottentots Holland*. A.A. Balkema, Cape Town. p80
6. *Die Kaap is weer Hollands –: The Cape is Dutch again*.
7. Mark Robert Dunbar Anderson, 2008. *Blue Berg. Britain takes the Cape*. Published by the author.
8. Edmund H. Burrows, 1994. *Overberg Odyssey. People, Roads and Early Days*. Published by the author and the Swellendam Trust.

### **Appendix 1.**

Letter from Philipus Albertus Myburgh of *Meerlust* to Landdrost van der Riet. The original would have been in Dutch – I only have a translation from P.W. Morkel.(2)

At the Farm Meerlust,  
13th of October 1797.

To R. J. van der Riet, Esq.  
Landdrost together with the War Raaden  
and Heemraden of the Colony Stellenbosch.

Gentlemen,

I have perused with the utmost surprise and found, against my expectation your letter of the 2nd instant together with the further invitation by your messenger by command of His Excellency, the Earl of Macartney, commander-in-chief of the Cape etc. against next Monday the 16th instant. These therefore are to inform you that I thought I had no longer a seat in the combined assembly of Heemraaden and War Raaden because not only I myself but also the whole college of War Raaden, as far as they had no relation to any other college, have unanimously declared that they could not take the officer's Oath, as we have already in the commencement of this British Government taken an Oath in the College of War Raaden for the maintenance of Public peace in the country and as I myself together with the whole college are conscious of having never by any means rendered ourselves guilty of any breach of that oath so that I do not consider a new Oath to be of the least importance as I am persuaded that you nor any person whatever is able to cause the said Oath to take effect in its full Virtue and Value.

Further you will not be able to deny that when we represented in the present instance to you that we could not take the officer's Oath, the Landdrost has replied to us, that those of the members who were not willing to take the Oath could no longer continue in Office - accordingly not only I myself but also the other members have taken the Common Oath with the other inhabitants and if you have considered yourself not to be authorised to discharge me together with my fellow members from our office, then you ought to have previously reported on the subject to his Lordship and not to have administered to us the common oath - It therefore is evident that the Landdrost and Heemraaden : I speak for myself : discharged me from my office, and so I wish to continue.

And a further proof thereof occurs when it is considered that orders have been sent by the Landdrost and Heemraden to the Veldwachtmeesteren, and that the Veldwachtmeesteren now have been appointed by His Lordship, which appointments have formerly always been under the direction of the War Raaden who have now received not the least notice thereof; from whence there-fore more evidently follows that we are no longer in that office so that I am confident that as the College Landdrost and Heemraden have for the said reasons discharged me from my office, I can no longer be invited to take seat in the said War Assembly.

And finally it causes me a very great surprise that, in the manner in which they proceeded the Landdrost and Heemraden should still have considered me to have a seat in any college as the War Raad in the country as well as in Gape Town has under the former National Government never been subordinate either to the Burgher Senate or Heemraden but on the contrary have always depended immediately on Government, so that I think that we the War Raaden are of course deprived of our Prerogatives and treated contrary to the 7th Article of the Capitulation in purporting -

"That the inhabitants in this Colony shall continue to preserve their Prerogatives which they at present, enjoy as well as the Present Publick Worshp without any alteration".

So that I conceive that the Landdrost and Heemraden assume to do what is not

*of their province - though you have already taken the Officer's Oath, still you apprehend that His Lordship has intended to send here Dragoons to Quarter, as I am too well persuaded of His Lordship's Powers and Influence than that I should suppose to condemn any person without previously hearing him.*

*And it also would be too laughable to believe that the Dragoons were already in readiness on the day of Assembly so it could not be known what in the said assembly would take place. This I think enough for information.*

*I am with Esteem and Salutation,  
Gentlemen,  
Your humble servant,  
P.A. Myburgh.*

## Appendix 2.

### The Waldeck Regiment (5<sup>th</sup> Battalion)

Source: Anderson (7, p128 - 129)

The Dutch State Army employed among others, German soldiers as *subsidietroepen* (subsidy soldiers). One such mercenary unit was the Waldeck Regiment, which had been established as far back as 1681 in the *Vorstendom*, or County of Waldeck, one of the smaller states in the district of Hesse.

Since the 1740s the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions of the Waldeck Regiment had been in Dutch service and the Count of Waldeck himself given the rank of marshal, held a high position in the Dutch Army. In 1776 a 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion was raised specifically to serve as mercenaries with the British Army in America during the colonists' struggle for independence. When signing on, these men were required to swear allegiance to the British Crown, yet it was the German rulers of these mercenaries who received an annual subsidy for their service, in addition to a payment of seven pounds (£7) for each soldier killed or incapacitated. The man's family however, received nothing.

As many as 30,000 soldiers, (one third) serving with the British forces during this conflict were German. Yet, in spite of the esteem in which they were held, Napoleon himself retained a low opinion of the men from Westphalia and Hesse, the areas from which the Waldeckers recruited their personnel. The fact that so many of them came from Hesse prompted the Americans to refer to the Waldeckers as Hessians.. They served mostly in the Florida area where they lost 720 men out of a complement of 1,225. Many of those who returned to Holland from America joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which had been formed in 1785. In 1802 the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, with Luitenant-colonel Müller in command, was sent to the Cape in the Dutch warships *De Kortenaar* and *Pluto* to augment the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, which was already serving there as garrison troops.

The Regiment had its own Lutheran minister and two surgeons. The colour of the facings on their uniforms were yellow and the coats were dark blue. They received one *stuiwer* (farthing) every two days for subsistence. They had been trained in the French Republican style in the Batavian Republic before leaving for the Cape. The Waldeckers also received an infusion of unwilling soldiers – men from the east of Europe who had been taken prisoner by the French army and who were impressed into the regiment. The Regiment consisted of one elite *jäger* (light infantry) and six *fusilier* (regular infantry) companies. The *jägers* was a German development, introduced by Frederick the Great, whereby rifle-armed skirmishers would advance as a screen in front of massed infantry, making the best use of available cover and firing carefully aimed shots at selected targets so as to demoralise the enemy. Napoleon also used this tactic with his *tirailleurs* to great effect.

After the surrender by Jannsens, British luitenant-colonel Robert Wilson remarked approvingly of the of the Waldeck *Jägers* and wrote that there was something inherently martial in the German race. However the main body of the Waldeckers had turned tail and ran during the battle of Blaauwberg. Not only did their cowardice turn the tide against the Dutch defenders, but valuable manpower was used to detain the defectors at the Castle.

## Appendix 3.

### The final meeting of the Stellenbosch Krygsraad (2)

"December 15. His Excellency directed a letter to be written to the Landdrost and Heemraden of Stellenbosch to say that in consequence of the readiness shown by several of the gentlemen composing the Council of War to conform to the orders of Government, His Lordship does not require their monthly attendance unless particularly summoned for the purpose".

Another letter was sent on January 2nd, 1798 to the Landdrost of Stellenbosch desiring him to issue orders for assembling the Council of War as soon after the next Saturday as possible,

Sunday, the 7th January 1798 was appointed - Sunday, when the inhabitants would in any case attend church. Then the Stellenbosch Krygsraad met for the last time in history. All the officers, the Landdrost, R.J. van der Riet, and Andrew Barnard were present. These officers were:

Hendrik Oostwald Laubscher	P.A. Myburgh
P.G. van der Byl	Dirk Wouter Hoffman
Sam J. Catz	P.H. Morkel
Wouter de Vos	Phillipus Willem Wiun
Willem Morkel	J. J. Hamman,
Rudolph Cloete	P.J. du Toit
Dirk Cloete	J.A, Meyburgh Jn.
D.J. Morkel	J.G. Faure
IP. de Villiers	P. Malan
Arend van As	P.A. Myburgh Jn.
P. Minnaar	C.J. Hoffman
C. Albertyn.	

"Mr. Barnard went there to be present at the meeting. Every member had taken his place according to the rank he held in that assembly. He had the whole proceedings of it read over to those who had been absent at the last two meetings, in which it evidently appeared that the Landdrost had done his duty in the fullest sense of the word and that the complaints exhibited against him to His Excellency in their Petition were totally void of foundation. After cautioning them against offending a second time, a Government over watchful over their Interests, and one that, although full of Mercy, yet knew likewise how to punish, he broke up the Assembly."

Thus ended the Krygsraad.