

## ELIZABETH VAN WYK, 1685–1720

An interesting facet of South African genealogy is the study of those women of completely unknown origin who played their part in the establishment of families in this country. During the first fifty or sixty years of the Cape settlement several such women are to be found in records. A few examples are Adriaantjie Gabriels, stiefdogter van Kees de Beer, Anna Elizabeth Paal, Helena Siev(w)ers and Elizabeth van Wyk. Strangely the last two both formed associations with Joost Pieterse van Dyk and both subsequently settled down and were married, Helena to Anton Wagner in 1722<sup>1</sup> and Elizabeth to Nikolaas von Wielligh in 1718.<sup>2</sup>

The entire question of Elizabeth's life is a fascinating one but no satisfactory solution to her actual origin has been discovered. From her are descended all the South African von Wiellighs and through her daughter, Christina she was the indirect stammoeder of the Badenhorsts<sup>3</sup>. Where was she born and of whom, and when did she first make an appearance at the Cape?

So small was the settlement in Table Valley in those days and so close a check was kept on those entering or leaving the country that it was almost impossible for anyone, and particularly a woman, to slip in clandestinely, and Elizabeth is not known to have come legally from Europe. However, the possibility that she did so cannot be ruled out. The strong probability is that she was born at the Cape and the only document found that concerns her intimately, namely her marriage certificate<sup>4</sup> states that she was 'of the Cape of Good Hope' and should be accepted. But who were her parents?

Births among the European population were to a very large extent recorded, although there are a few gaps in the early baptismal records. There is no suspicion that Elizabeth was of mixed race, had this been so she would in all probability been described as 'of the Cape' and not as was actually the case above. Many of those whose origins were shrouded in mystery were of mixed parentage and the terms 'van onbekende afkoms' and 'naam van die eerste vrou onbekend<sup>5</sup> were often used to disguise the fact that the lady in question was a slave<sup>6</sup> or of other mixed blood, or even that she was what is now known as a 'common law wife'. Issue falling under this last named category were illegitimate and these expressions were used to spare embarrassment to their descendants.

The fact of illegitimacy, or even that of colour in the initial stages of the Dutch settlement, cannot be judged by standards of today. Illicit unions cannot be condoned but it must be remembered that relatively few of the settlers were accompanied by their wives and that the full-blooded young men lived under extremely trying conditions. Numbers of these did marry moral local girls of mixed blood<sup>7</sup> and raised legal and respectable families. Pieter van Meerhof was

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1. DRC Archives, G 1 13/1 1712–1754 – 29.3.1722.

2. DRC Archives, G 1 13/1 1712–1754 – 21.8.1718.

3. Hoge, *Personalalia of the Germans at the Cape*, p.13; De Villiers/Pama p.17.

4. as no. 2.

5. Willem Bergman van Deventer who 'had a child by his wife when the latter was still a Company's slave – child's name, Wilhelmina – asks that she may be manumitted' – Leibbrandt *Requesten A-Ep*.52, no. 125, 1720.

6. *ibid.*

7. Heese – *Die Afkoms van die Afrikaner*, pp.63–82, omne.

in 1664 surprisingly given permission to marry Eva, the Hottentot 'princess' a local woman who was far from moral and renowned for her illicit affairs with other men<sup>8</sup> but this case was an exception. Others formed alliances with female slaves with the inevitable results. This practice was strongly deprecated by the authorities but it nevertheless continued. In 1685 Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein, Lord of Mydrecht, V.O.C. official and commissioner at the Cape was horrified to discover that thirty-two sons and twenty-seven daughters born of 'Duijtsche vaders' were numbered among the slaves.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that large numbers of ships called at the Cape on their way to and from the East and remained for many weeks at anchor in the bay also had an effect on population increase. Seamen, even today are renowned for their indiscretions ashore where women are concerned and the fact was even more apparent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when men were at sea for several months at a stretch. Was Elizabeth perhaps the result of one of these affairs with the wife of one of the settlers? If so some very difficult questions must have been asked and how did she come to bear the name van Wyk?

That she was so named is significant but not conclusive proof that one of her parents was of this family. There seems to have been no hard and fast rule as to the naming of illegitimate issue at the Cape at that time and it is probable, in the face of known facts, that this is what Elizabeth actually was. These unfortunate children were indiscriminately known by the name of one or other of their parents. For example, Maria Groothenning, the illegitimate issue of Hans Casper Geringer and his female slave, Anna Groothenning or Anna of Bengal<sup>10</sup> took her mother's name. On the other hand some fathers were apparently willing to acknowledge their offspring in so far as they allowed them to assume their surname. Such instances as Herman Stockfleth, son of Johan Jacob Stockfleth and Christina Matthys<sup>11</sup> and the family of the five illegitimate children of Gerrit Gerrits and Susanna van Bombassa<sup>12</sup> who all bore the name Gerrits may be mentioned. Similarly the four children of Joost van Dyk and Helena Siev(w)ers were all acknowledged as van Dyks.<sup>13</sup>

Was the van Wyk partner of the union that produced Elizabeth the father or the mother? As Elizabeth's age is not known this presents difficulties and the problem of her probable birthdate must first be given attention. According to Hoge<sup>14</sup> who is a very reliable source, Elizabeth had an illegitimate daughter, Christina Matthys but no clue is given as to who fathered her. Her existence is acknowledged too in the will of Nikolaas van Wielligh and Elizabeth van Wyk in 1719.<sup>15</sup> In 1715 Christina's illegitimate son by Jacob Stockfleth was baptised.<sup>16</sup>

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8. RCP. p.316, 12.4.1664.

9. Memorien en Instructien 1657-1699 p.126 - 16.7.1685.

10. Hoge p.110.

11. DRC Archives, G1 8/2 1713-1742. - 3.11.1715.

12. Hoge p.111.

13. Will, Joost van Dyk - C.J. 2651 no. 28/28.1.1718.

14. Hoge p. 461

15. MOOC 7/1/20-30.10.1719.

16. vide no. 11.

Assuming her to have been a mother at the age of fifteen her birthdate must have been about 1700. A second child was born to Elizabeth in 1701<sup>17</sup> and later pregnancies precluded a later birthdate for Christina than the above. On the assumption that Elizabeth was also a fifteen year old mother she herself could not have been born later than 1685, but possibly earlier. No record whatever has been found.

At that date there were at the Cape two van Wyks, Willem and Arie, allegedly brothers. The former married in mid 1685 and Arie at an unspecified later date. Both men had arrived at the settlement in 1678 so from that point of view either could have fathered Elizabeth but no evidence exists that they did so. Everything about her origins is purely speculative and her true parentage remains a mystery. The writer, therefore, would welcome any information that might throw light on the matter.

The position in which the young Elizabeth found herself was an unenviable one and it is not surprising that she was unable to escape and fell into the same trap that her mother had done. She lived with one man after another and each of her known liasons resulted in offspring. It is unlikely that there were other surviving issue than those mentioned in her will as she appears to have been a good mother and reared both her illegitimate issue when the fathers abandoned her.

The first of these was Christina Matthys. As was the case with her mother the name of Christina's father is also unknown, possibly the mother herself was not positively aware of this. After her initial affair with Stockfleth Christina married Caspar Hendrik Badenhorst though no reference to the date of the marriage is mentioned<sup>18</sup> and became stammoeder of that family.

The following year, 1701, Elizabeth produced another child, this time a son, Willem by Joost Pieterse van Dyk and he was baptised as their issue on 21.1.1701.<sup>19</sup> In 1705 a further child of this couple was baptised but seems to have died in infancy.<sup>20</sup> Apart from apparently allowing Willem to bear the name van Dyk, Joost did not further acknowledge his existence. In his will<sup>21</sup> made when he believed himself on the point of death, he did not even mention him. He did however make provision for his other illegitimate children by Helena Sievers by leaving each of them 500 rixdollars. He added further that over the years he and Helena had often meant to get married but had not managed to do so ('dat den comparant zyne goede voornemens van haar te willen trouwen door continuele verhinderingen niet heeft cunnen uijtvooren'). Joost signed his will very shakily 'ten huysse van den comparant' in Cape Town before Willem van Taack first clerk in the C.J. with Johannes Pleunes and Christoffel Brand as witnesses.<sup>22</sup>

No marriage for Elizabeth and van Dyk has been found and in 1706 she formed her third and final association with Nicholaas von Wielligh. After the

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17. Willem van Dyk – G1 8/1 1695–1712. DRC Archives.

18. vide no. 3.

19. vide no. 17.

20. DV/P p.184 – b4 Johannes bap. 14.1.1705.

21. vide no. 13.

22. ibid.

birth of six children and only one week after the baptism of the last, Hermanus<sup>23</sup> this finally ended in marriage in 1718.<sup>24</sup> This ceremony *ipso facto* legitimised all the children and provided Elizabeth with the status of a married woman. It seems strange that Von Wielligh, who must have been a reasonably intelligent person should have been content to have allowed his children to be branded illegitimate for so long, not to mention the position in which he placed their mother.

The year after their marriage the couple executed the usual joint will of the period instituting the survivor universal heir.<sup>25</sup> In addition to their own family, provision was also made for Elizabeth's 'voorkinderen Christina en Wilhelm als meede aan de anderen ses kinderen die sy comparants met malkanderen hebben verwekt' all of whom were to receive equal benefits. This situation was also not uncommon at this time.<sup>26</sup>

The Von Wiellighs now settled down to two years of married life. What calling Nicolaas practised has not been discovered. Born in Hamburg in 1682 he arrived at the Cape in 1705 with Kolbe, the traveller/scientist who recognised his innate intelligence and chose him as his assistant.<sup>27</sup> When Kolbe returned to Germany in 1712 Nicolaas had presumably to find alternative employment. In 1715 his resources were sufficient to enable him to buy his own property of twenty morgen, no. 8 Block N in Table Valley from Pieter Guyp.<sup>28</sup> This was situated in the block bounded by Long, Castle, Loop and Hout Streets and there he lived until his death at the age of sixty-one in 1743.

Elizabeth died in 1720 as is shown by the lodging of her will with the Orphan Chamber in October of that year. She was survived by the six Von Wiellighs and Christina and Willem. The latter died unmarried in 1733<sup>29</sup> and is not therefore the Willem van Dyk b.3 who married Catherina Hagedoorn in 1754. Willem's heirs, according to his estate account<sup>30</sup> where Christina and his Von Wielligh half- or step-brothers and sisters.

Nicolaas von Wielligh married twice after the death of his first wife, namely Adriana van Dam in 1722<sup>31</sup> and Maria Cleef in 1725<sup>32</sup> increasing his children to nine. After his death his widow sold no. 8 Block N together with a second property he had acquired in 1732. The estate accounts and inventory<sup>33</sup> reveal that the family were reasonably comfortable. Their cutlery was of silver, maps and pictures, no doubt a relic of Nicolaas' association with Kolbe, were displayed on the walls and books also featured among his possessions. There was ample and adequate furniture.

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23. DRC Archives, G1 8/1 1713–1742.

24. DRC Archives, G1 13/1 1712–1754.

25. vide no. 15.

26. vide wills of Hans Caspar Geringer, CJ.2597/9.6.1700, CJ.2649/29.1.1705 and CJ.2598/ no. 63, 25.6.1713.

27. Kolbe, vol. 1. p.29.

28. Transfer 1034/13.5.1715.

29. MOOC 13/1/2 no. 85, 22.1.1734.

30. *ibid.*

31. Hoge p.461, 3.5.1722.

32. Hoge p.461, 4.3.1725.

33. MOOC 8/3 no. 57, 22–17 April 1743, inventory and estate a/c filed together.

With the death of Von Wielligh the story of Elizabeth van Wyk comes to an end. This woman, who led such an unfortunate early life can only be admired for the manner in which, with the help of Nicolaas, she raised herself from error and degradation to die as a wife and mother in ultimate respectability.

Margaret Cairns

#### ELIZABETH VAN WYK 1685–1720

- 1685 or earlier, born of unknown parents, presumably at the Cape  
 c.1700 – Christina Matthys, her daughter born.  
 1701 – Willem van Dyk, her son by Joost van Dyk baptised, 24.4.1701.  
 1705 – second child by Joost van Dyk baptised, 14.1.1705.  
 1706 – Margaretha von Wielligh baptised 17.7.1706  
 1709 – Matthys von Wielligh baptised 6.10.1709.  
 1711 – Nicolaas von Wielligh baptised 25.10.1711.  
 1714 – Jacobus von Wielligh baptised 1.4.1714.  
 1716 – Johanna von Wielligh baptised 3.5.1716.  
 1718 – Hermanus von Wielligh baptised 14.8.1718.  
 – Nicolaas von Wielligh and Elizabeth van Wyk married 21.8.1718.  
 1719 – CJ.2651 will of above made 30.10.1719.  
 1720 – Elizabeth van Wyk died.

Considering the naming pattern followed in Dutch families, namely that the second son bears the name of the mother's father, there is a possibility that Matthys von Wielligh was so named for this reason and that Elizabeth's father was a Matthys van Wyk or a Matthys with an unknown surname. This may also have been the reason behind Christina's surname. Matthys is not a German name so is unlikely to have come from von Wielligh forbears.

#### DIE VOOROUERS VAN DIE VOORMALIGE STAATSPRESIDENT JACOBUS JOHANNES FOUCHÉ

Ons is almal bekend met die begrip van eksponensiële groei in getalle wanneer die voorouers van 'n persoon opgeskryf word. Daar is twee ouers, vier grootouers, agt oorgrootouers en as ons by die agste geslag kom, kan daar reeds 256 persone in daardie betrokke geslag voorkom. As ons egter al die individuele voorouers tot en met die agste geslag bymekaar tel, is die totaal 510. Verdere geslagte sal hierdie getalle natuurlik dramaties verhoog.

As ons na die aanbieding van die voormalige Staatspresident se voorouers kyk en merk dat sekere familielyne tot in die tiende geslag deurgetrek is, dan is dit duidelik dat hier 'n omvangryke werk tot stand gekom het. En wat dit soveel meer merkwaardig maak is die feit dat in Duits onder die naam van 'n Duitse genealogie verskyn het.

Daar is egter ander noemenswaardige aspekte aan hierdie publikasie verbonde:

1. Die verskillende familielyne word telkens en doelbewus net tot by die stamvader/immigrant van die betrokke familie teruggevoer om die omvang van die werk enigermate te beperk. Volgens die navorser is daar egter reeds oor verskeie van die Afrikaanse stamouers *verdere inligting beskikbaar* en word daar tans nog steeds navorsing gedoen om die feite oor die Europese herkoms van sulke families aan te vul.