



CAPENSIS



**NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN CAPE BRANCH
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NUUSBRIEF VAN DIE TAK WES-KAAP
GENEALOGIESE GENOOTSKAP VAN SUID-AFRIKA**

PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION

"At least I don't have any murderers in my family tree," I said to Pieter, waving goodbye through the car window. It had been a long afternoon, talking about ancestors and ancestry over a braaivleis and a bottle of red wine.

Brave words!... But I was wrong.

Some months later I found myself in the Cape Archives, fascinatedly turning the dusty pages of the proceedings of the Council of Justice. Then my blood ran cold. I was reading about an ugly inter-racial murder - and the accused was one of my ancestors. What made the case more infamous was that he was a leading pillar of the establishment in his day. As it is written in the Book of Proverbs, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Johannes GROENEWALD was born in about 1694 (we know that he joined the Drakenstein militia cavalry as a trooper in 1713, when he would have been eighteen or nineteen years old). He was the second son of a settler who came from Königsberg in East Prussia, Christoph GRÜNWARD, and his wife, Catharina NIEMAND, a Dutch woman from Amsterdam. They lived on the farm "Houd den Mond," outside Stellenbosch (which was formally granted to Christoph in 1701), and between 1705-1708 they acquired first one half and then the other of "Groenhof" to the north-east of the town.

Johannes was married on 11 April 1717 to Margaretha HATTINGH.

He is an ambitious young man. In 1726 he appears in the militia muster rolls as quartermaster of the Drakenstein Infantry. By October 1727 he has moved to the Drakenstein Cavalry, and, in 1729, he is promoted Ensign in the Stellenbosch Infantry.

In December 1730 he is elected to serve a two-year term both as a member of the Court of Heemraden and as a deacon on the Stellenbosch church council. In 1731 he is appointed Lieutenant in the second company of militia cavalry. In December 1734, he returns to the Court of Heemraden for a further two years, and finally, in October 1735, he is promoted to Captain and appointed to command the Drakenstein Dragoons.

Besides carrying out important civic responsibilities, Johannes farmed on a large scale. During his lifetime he acquired the farms "Nazaret",

"Saxenburg", "Spier", "Idas Valleij" and "Veelverjaagt" - all near Stellenbosch.

Despite his early prominence in the district, Johannes was apparently a man of ungovernable temper. He has been described in unflattering terms as "a fractious man who was given to causing ructions in the congregation... ."

Not surprisingly this active and angry man courted disaster and eventually it sought him out.

Helped by a distant connection of his, Jan VERBEEK, Johannes GROENEWALD beat one of his slaves, by name ABRAHAM, to death.

The case came before the Council of Justice in the Castle at the Cape. On Thursday, 29 August 1737 the members reached their verdict and decided on the appropriate punishment. The following Thursday, Governor VAN KERVEL pronounced the sentence of the court. Acting "in the name and on behalf of the High Mighty Lords States General of the Free United Netherlands", he dismissed Johannes from all public offices, and ordered him to pay a fine of 200 Rixdollars and the costs of the case. Furthermore, the governor decreed that another of Johannes' slaves, KEES VAN DE KAAP, would be sold and would never again be allowed to become GROENEWALD's property.

At their meeting on Monday, 30 September, the landdrost of Stellenbosch, Pieter LOURENS, handed a document to the secretary to read to the members of the Court of Heemraden. It was a copy of the sentence of the Council of Justice of Farmer Johannes GROENEWALD (as he was henceforth known), removing him from all his appointments. LOURENS asked the assembled worthies to remember what they had just heard when subsequently they should be obliged to nominate fresh members to join the ranks of the Heemraden.

On Tuesday, 8 October the Council of Policy appointed a new captain for the Drakenstein Dragoons, "... since ... Johannes GROENEWALD, by sentence of the Council of Justice of this administration, ... has been dismissed from this and all further public offices... ."

He retired to his farms.

Almost forty years later, in 1773 - the year before his death - we read in the Opgaaf that he owned 18 slave men and a slave woman, sixty horses, a herd of 125 cattle, 500 head of sheep and 30 000 vines. He

admitted to producing 20 leaguers (3 040 gallons) of wine and 180 muids (just over 530 bushels) of corn during the year of assessment.

He died in 1774. His widow, Margaretha died on 8 April 1779. They had had some thirteen children, of whom I descend from the eighth, a daughter - Clara Francina GROENEWALD.

Johannes' story is disagreeable. But it has taught me once again - what I should never forget - that just when I think I know all there is to know about my ancestry, another skeleton may be waiting to tumble out of the cupboard!

AS for poor ABRAHAM - Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

William de Villiers

Notes and References

Cape Archives (CA) MOOC 7/1/22: 19. CA CJ 19, pp 71-115. CA 1/STB 1/12: 27. G.C. de Wet (ed.) "Resolusies van die Politieke Raad", deel VI11 (1975), pp.118-119, 386; deel IX (1981), p.149. F. Smuts et al, "Stellenbosch Three Centuries" (1979), p.253a. H. Fransen & M.A. Cook, "The Old Buildings of the Cape" (1980), pp.162-163, 167. G.C. de Wet, "Die Vryliede en Vryswartes in die Kaapse Nedersetting 1657-1707 (1981), p.68. J.A. Heese & R.T.J. Lombard, "S.A. Genealogies", Volume 3 (1992), p.116.

A "leaguer" was equal to 152 English gallons; a "muid" consisted of four "schepels". There were about 10 schepels to every 82 English bushels; see "The South African Almanack & Directory for the year 1829" (1829), p.168.

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