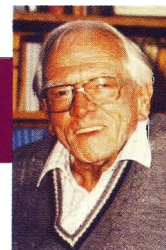


CONCORD

Newsletter of the Alan Paton Centre, No.7. Centenary Edition, December 2003

The Alan Paton Centre
& Struggle Archives



CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

This year being the Centenary Year of Alan Paton's birth, the Alan Paton Centre (APC) arranged Centenary Celebrations in Pietermaritzburg, and liaised with others in the country who were also planning centenary activities.

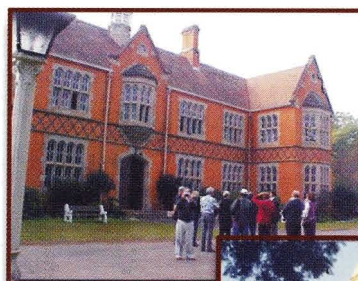
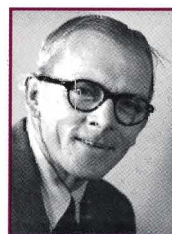
Alan Paton, the world renowned author of *Cry, the beloved country*, was born in Pietermaritzburg a hundred years ago on 11 January 1903. He rose from the relative obscurity of his posts as Maths and Science teacher at Ixopo High School and then at Maritzburg College, to Principal of Diepkloof Reformatory, where he became known as an advocate of reform in the juvenile justice system. In 1948, he then rose to the almost overnight fame of being the author of an internationally acclaimed novel. In 1953, he joined, as a founder member, the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA), of which he was to become National Chairman from 1956 to 1958, and National President until it disbanded in 1968, in the face of repressive apartheid legislation, the 'Prevention of Political Interference Act' which made it an offence for a person to belong to any non-racial political organisation. The members of the LPSA decided rather to close down than to become a whites-only political party, which was the only other option.

For the next twenty years, until his death on 12 April 1988, he remained politically active as a fierce opponent of the apartheid government, and was in great demand as a powerful speaker, who made a lasting impression on all those who heard him. He also continued to write - two more novels, biographies, autobiographies, poetry and articles. But it is for his first novel, and his powerful stance against injustice, that the world will remember him.

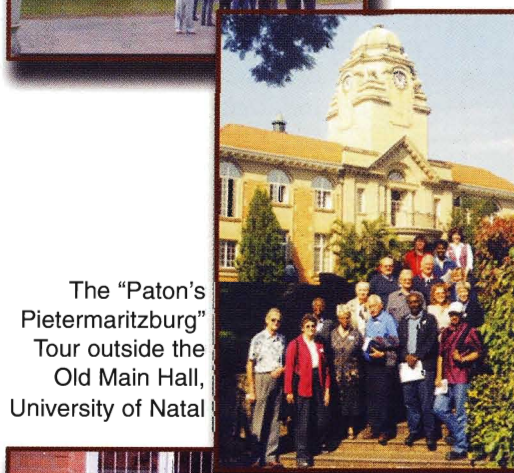
The Alan Paton Centre's Centenary Programme was launched at the APC on 25 February 2003, with a function at which Mrs Anne Paton was the guest of honour, and an exhibition of photographs of Alan Paton's life was on display. This exhibition, put together by Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen, was on view at the APC for the duration of the year. A copy was taken on tour by Roy Sargeant with his production of *Cry, the beloved country*.

A Film Evening took place on 3 April 2003, at which the original film version of *Cry, the beloved country* (1951) and the recently made *A drink in the passage* (2002) were shown at one of the regular FilmClub evenings, at the Centre for Visual Arts. Refreshments were served during the interval, and about sixty-five people attended this function.

Alan Paton 1903 - 1988



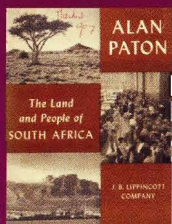
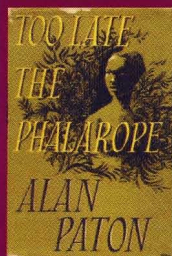
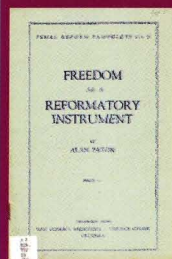
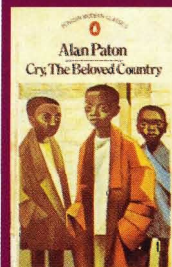
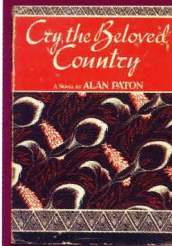
The tour group
outside Clark House,
Maritzburg College



The "Paton's
Pietermaritzburg"
Tour outside the
Old Main Hall,
University of Natal



Joicelesyn Leslie-Smith
with Chris du Preez &
Garnet Mfeka next to
the poem by Alan
Paton inscribed in
cement



Photos: Adrian Koopman

Centenary
Celebrations



The Alan Paton Lecture was held on 15 May 2003 in the Colin Webb Hall at the University of Natal, sponsored by the Standard Bank Foundation and organised by the APC and the Liberal Democratic Association. The audience of about a hundred people enjoyed Peter Brown's reminiscences of the times he shared with Alan Paton in the Liberal Party, Prof. Colin Gardner's erudite talk on the writing of *Cry, the beloved country*, and Jonathan Paton's humorous and lively account of Paton family life. This was followed by a video which "brought Paton to life", and sociable chats with old friends over drinks and snacks. Prof Gardner gave a longer version of his lecture at the Grahamstown Festival in June. Edited versions of the speeches made by Peter Brown, Colin Gardner and Jonathan Paton appear in this edition of *Concord*.

The following morning, a group of eighteen set off in three vehicles on a tour of "Paton's Pietermaritzburg". The tour started at the old Liberal Party offices, now the Lambert Wilson Project Library, Natal Society Library, where they were addressed by Colin Gardner. The next stop was Paton's childhood home, 19 Pine Street, where Joicelyn Leslie-Smith, previous Manuscript Librarian at the APC, spoke to the group. They then moved on to Russell High, formerly the Berg Street Girls' School, where Paton completed his first three years of schooling in one year, in 1909. The tour then embarked for Maritzburg College, where Paton was a pupil from 1914 to 1918, and a teacher from 1928 to 1935. Mr Graham Bennetts, Head of Marketing at College, showed the group the poem which Paton wrote on the wall of the old Science labs. in wet concrete in 1963. The group then moved on to the old building, Clark House, to see the dining hall and "Fluff" Abbit's room, and here an amusing anecdote from Paton's schooldays.

The group was then driven to the Old Main Hall at the University of Natal, where Paton was a student from 1919 to 1924. The last stop was the Alan Paton Centre, where Jonathan Paton spoke to the group in the Paton Study, followed by tea in the Reading Room.

A highlight of the Centenary Year was the performance of *Cry, the beloved country*, a dramatic version of the book written and produced by Roy Sargeant. This was the first time the play had been performed in South Africa, as the production rights had been held in the United States for the past fifty years, as *Lost in the stars*. Frances Bond, Literary Agent for the Alan Paton Will Trust, applied for the rights to be returned at the beginning of the year. The play's run started at the Grahamstown Festival, and then went on to Artscape in Cape Town in July, Bloemfontein in September, and the Hilton College Theatre from 8 to 10 October 2003. The run ended at the Playhouse in Durban from 15 - 25 October 2003.

On 10 & 11 October, Gehri and Petro Janse van Vuuren of University of Natal Drama Studies produced "Patonising: a collage from the prose and poetry of Alan Paton" at the Dive, Hexagon Theatre.

The final boost of the year was provided by Oprah Winfrey's choice of *Cry, the beloved country* as her Internet "Oprah's Book Club" classic novel of the year. "Oprah's Book Club" has over a million members, and the "Oprah Winfrey Show" is watched on television world-wide. Her choice boosted the book to No. 1 on Amazon.com's best-seller list, and will lead to a large reprint by Simon and Schuster in the United States.

This choice, more than anything else, proves the enduring and classic quality of *Cry, the beloved country*. It was an enjoyable and thought-provoking year of celebrations, during which we could appreciate the relevance which Alan Paton's works still have in the twenty-first century.

Jewel Koopman

Alan Paton Centenary Celebrations



Mrs Anne Paton with Prof Ron Nicolson, Chairman of the APC Advisory Committee, and Peter Brown at the launch of the Centenary Celebrations at the Alan Paton Centre.



Jack and Joy Frost view the Alan Paton Centenary display at the Alan Paton Centre/ FilmClub evening held at the Centre for Visual Arts, University of Natal.

Paton's *CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

Colin Gardner

Alan Paton studied at the University of Natal to be a teacher. He did a degree in physics and maths, because his family was fairly poor and he needed a bursary, but his real interest was always literature. He published poems in the university magazine, even several years after he had ceased to be a student, but his private attempts at novels didn't succeed. He loved nature, he took moral issues very seriously, he loved words, he admired many of the great authors. He felt the need to say something himself, but he wasn't at all sure what it was that he wanted to say.



The Alan Paton Centenary Lecture was given by Prof. Colin Gardner, Peter Brown and Jonathan Paton.

Photo: Adrian Koopman

He went on to become a science teacher, at Ixopo High School and later at Maritzburg College. Then in 1935, hardly knowing what he was letting himself in for, he became the principal of Diepkloof Reformatory for young male Africans. In that position he confronted fully for the first time the deep problems of South Africa – social, political, racial, sociological. He was a devout Anglican and participated in the Church's early responses to these problems. He had known Jan Hofmeyr for some time, and he now got to know some of the leading liberals of the time. He published articles on criminological questions.

In 1946, as part of his job, he went on a study tour of prisons in Scandinavia, Britain and North America. Shortly after the beginning of this tour, at a hotel in Trondheim in Norway, moved by the beauty of the rose-window that he had just seen in the cathedral, and feeling homesick, he suddenly began to write the novel which became *Cry, the Beloved Country*. He wrote each evening in hotel rooms. By the time he reached California the novel was finished.

In this remarkable book everything came together. The hills of the Natal midlands and the black townships and white suburbs of Johannesburg. The novel and poetry. It was a book about the social, racial and ultimately the political problems of South Africa. It was also a religious book, with a focus on the lives and struggles of Christians and the role of the church. It also dealt with ecology and agriculture, and the fate of South Africa's soil, which is so bound up with the conduct of its people. There were other major themes too: poverty, crime, the problems of education, the country's economy and the rich people's thirst for profit.

But how could one book contain so much without becoming a tangle of theories and ideas? The novel

succeeds because it is built around, it is rooted in, a grimly simple, almost archetypal story – a story which has a force and inevitability that are reminiscent of a Greek tragedy. There are two families, the Kumalos

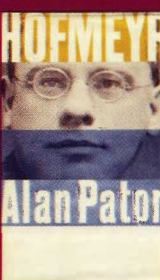
and the Jarvises. They live close to each other, near Ixopo, but (in the South African fashion) in different worlds. Stephen Kumalo is a parish priest and James Jarvis is a farmer. Their only sons live in Johannesburg: Absalom Kumalo has drifted into crime, whereas Arthur Jarvis is a leading liberal. Absalom is involved in the murder of Arthur, and at the end of the book is executed for his crime. This dramatic and fearful story, which is vividly and passionately told and evoked, serves as a symbol but also as a lightning conductor for the full

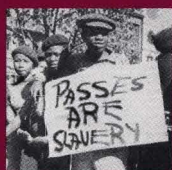
force of what is felt to be the impending South African tragedy.

But the novel is not wholly tragic. It has a sub-title: *A Story of Comfort in Desolation*. As a devout Christian, Kumalo is consoled in several ways, and the story offers various indications of creative potentiality within the lives of the protagonists and within the South African situation as a whole. James Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo, instead of being totally alienated, are drawn towards one another. The novel is tragic, but it is also prophetic. It is an indictment and a warning, but also a plea, and a prayer. The whole of the Alan Paton of the time is encapsulated within the book.

Of course the book worked not only for Paton but for many others as well. It rapidly went through impression after impression, in the USA and in Britain. It was translated into many languages. It was, and has remained, South Africa's most significant bestseller. It was particularly popular in America, which was just beginning to wake up to many of the issues that the novel tackles. In South Africa it was admired by many white readers, but most of them thought that it was hinting at solutions which were too idealistic, not practical.

Paton was acutely conscious of white South African attitudes and fears, and there can be little doubt that white people were the primary audience that he had in mind. But the tale had great life and power, and it made an impact on all who read it. Black South Africans had mixed reactions: they tended to be impressed that a white author had written about crucial issues and had made a black man his main character; but many of them felt that Stephen Kumalo was too resigned, too passive. They felt rather more sympathy with his brother John, the populist politician, whom Paton treats rather harshly.





Cry, the Beloved Country was published in 1948, a month or two before Dr Malan's Nationalist Party came to power in the white South African parliament. In the years of the anti-apartheid struggle — the forty years until Paton's death in 1988, and the years immediately after that — reactions to the novel went through fascinating variations. The book certainly had a profound effect on many white people as the impossibility of the apartheid solution gradually became clear. But more militant people, blacks and not only blacks, felt the book was too gentle in its approach and its solutions. At one point the Rev. Msimangu says:

"I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it."

In the hostile and heady days of the 1970s and the 1980s, with deaths in detention, and riots, and police brutality, and Government intransigence, and a great deal of boiling black anger, Msimangu's words seemed to most people to be hopelessly irrelevant. But then suddenly, after 1990 with the release of Mandela and the Codesa negotiations, we saw almost exactly what Paton had half-predicted. The novel's political suggestions made sense after all! When the second film of the book was made in 1995, it could be said to have come back fairly fully into vogue.

But all this is historical stuff. What of the book today? Does it make sense to read it now, in the 21st century? Though it is so embedded in the life and the problems of its time, and has thus become to some extent what we call an historical novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is still extremely readable and moving. The human drama retains its full force. And the sociological aspects of the book are far from being wholly dated. We live now in a very different South Africa, but, as we all know, many of our social problems are still exactly what they always were: poverty, inequality, disheartenment, crime, and the fear of crime.

The publishers tell me that the book continues to sell steadily. It is not surprising.

(Extract from the speech made by Colin Gardner at the 10th Alan Paton Lecture, 15-3-2003.)

DRAMATIZING PATON

By Elwyn Jenkins

The Alan Paton centenary culminated this year in a performance at the Hilton College Theatre of a dramatized version of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Your report in *nuHeritage* reminded me of when we staged a chapter from the novel at Kearsney College in 1968.

As a young teacher at Kearsney, I dramatized Chapter Nine, in which Shanty Town is built overnight. We performed it as part of an evening of one act plays. The text calls for the singing of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, but we could not find a copy of the music. Ronald Charles smuggled a recording out of the SABC studios in Durban, which we played softly to accompany the boys' singing.

The production, to suit the set-piece nature of the chapter, was stylized: a stark set, no black faces, but black tracksuits. Since it was an all-boy cast, women characters were indicated by blankets around their shoulders. A narrator stood in one corner.

Alan Paton attended the performance and came backstage afterwards to meet the cast and director. Too late I realised that we had not applied for performing rights. In showbiz style, we lined up to shake his hand. As he moved down the line, one small boy piped up with the question we were all dying to ask, but the young director especially was too nervous to ask. "Please, sir, what did you think of it?"

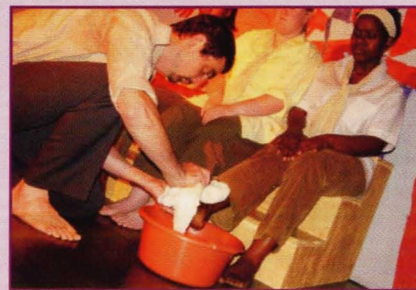


Paton peered down at him with that famous fierce look through his glasses, and replied, "It was just as I have always pictured it."

PATONISING:

a collage from the prose and poetry of
Alan Paton

"Patonising" was performed by first and second year Drama Studies students in the Dive at the Hexagon Theatre on 11 and 12 October 2003. The performance was most effective, with light and sound surrounding the tables of diners. The students became deeply involved with the pieces, especially the extracts from "The Holy Church of Zion" in *Afr, but your land is beautiful*.



Here they are pictured washing each other's feet. It was participatory theatre with some members of the audience's feet also being washed. The show was produced by Masters students, Gerhi and Petro Janse van Vuuren.

Alan Paton's Political Life

by Peter Brown

This will not be an academic assessment of Alan's political life in the Liberal Party of South Africa, but rather, a brief account of some incidents in that life, as much a human as a political story. I bear some responsibility for Alan's involvement in that life. One evening, more than fifty years ago, Alan, who was then putting the finishing touches to *Too late the phalarope* in Bulwer, came here, to 'Maritzburg, to a meeting of a small, non-racial Liberal group, which was meeting at our house.

That group made contact with a similar group in Durban which had been started by disillusioned members of the United Party's Musgrave Branch. Other groups sprang up in the Transvaal, and the Eastern and Western Cape, and in January 1953 they came together in Cape Town to establish the SA Liberal Association. Alan Paton was our delegate and Jean and Ken Hill went from Durban.

Four months later the Nats won their second election, and an emergency meeting of the Liberal Association was called in Cape Town to decide whether the time was ripe to form a political party. The Natal region sent a delegation of Selby Msimang and myself with an instruction to vote for a party. The vote was won by a narrow majority and the Liberal Party (LP) was born. Three months later it held its first National Conference in Johannesburg.

At this and subsequent congresses, Alan played a crucial role in drafting policy statements which could be accepted by everyone. He continued in this role throughout the Party's life. I have just been looking at the final LP Policy Handbook. Almost every page bears the Paton stamp. Its proposals aren't much different to what we have today, but in two respects, they differ from what the ANC stood for at that time. These are its commitment to a Bill of Rights and an independent constitutional court. Those were not official ANC aims then nor for many years afterwards. I remember as recently as the late 1980s at a Five Freedoms Forum meeting with the ANC in Lusaka that these were seen in ANC circles as devices to entrench the inequalities of the past.

Over the years the tensions between a conservative Western Cape old guard and a radical Transvaal membership widened. Natal remained in a sort of mediatory role, but moved steadily towards the Transvaal position. Finally, in 1956 the rift reached the point where it was decided that the National Headquarters should be moved to neutral ground, that is Natal, and that Alan should take over the National Chairmanship. It came here, to 268 Longmarket Street, and stayed there until the party was forced to disband. In 1958 Alan came to me one day and asked if I wouldn't take over the

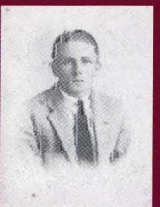
chairmanship. He was trying to finish his Hofmeyr biography and said that he would never be able to do it as long as he continued in that job. We went through some rather dubious democratic process and he became the president and I became the chairman.

That is something of the story of Alan at the national level of the party. At the propagating and recruiting level he was an enormous asset. He was a wonderful orator and the man for the big party occasion. But he was much more than that. If he was free, no meeting was too small or too far away for him to go to. I used to go with him to most of these. It could be a hair-raising experience. One of his extravagances after the success of *Cry, the beloved country* was to buy himself a big car, a big red Pontiac. He used to drive this at speed, with a sort of reckless abandon, however bad the roads were and often missing oncoming traffic by what seemed to me an unnecessarily narrow margin. One day we were approaching a one-way bridge with somebody coming the other way and looking as if they were going to get there first. Alan wasn't having any of that. He accelerated and while I went into prayer mode, dashed across, just missing the other fellow on the other side. Revelation at last came to me of why I had suffered all this hair-raising stuff in the past when I heard him muttering to himself and referring rather contemptuously to the car we had just missed as his opponent.

Anyway, we always got to the meetings intact. There he played a major role with Elliot Mngadi in inspiring the setting up of branches in many of the "black spots" which later, through the Northern Natal African Landowners' Association, became the principal opponents of the Nats' resettlement campaign. It was Elias Tabethe, a man of no formal education, Chairman of the Charlestown branch, who moved, in Zulu, at the National Congress, the successful adoption of universal suffrage. He was typical of many of the people who came to meetings in small communities which Alan addressed who joined the party. Alan wasn't afraid to speak in Zulu, although his pronunciation was a bit peculiar, and this too was important. That the great man would at least try to speak to country people in their own language. These meetings had their hazards. Alan had a rather delicate stomach and on occasions like these, whether Black or Indian hosted, hospitality demanded that, however poor the hosts, plenty of food should be provided and the visitors should play the principal part in eating it all. Poor Alan. Sometimes it nearly killed him.

One of our worst experiences, however, was provided by a white host, Geoff Luffingham, a farmer and our only white member in Winterton. Geoff was a widower and food and drink were not high on his priorities.





He decided that the only place big enough to hold the meeting was his cowshed and all that he would provide by way of refreshment was coffee at the end of it. But how to boil the water in the cowshed? He had a brainwave. He had an immersion heater and would boil the water in a galvanised milk bucket. What he didn't know was that the immersion heater would produce some ghastly reaction between it and the galvanised bucket and that what he served so triumphantly at the end of the meeting would be galvanised coffee.

I don't know whether people in other political parties get any fun out of their politics, but we did when we could, not least Alan. Leslie Rubin, who was a Senator and what was then called a "Natives' Representative", was a great friend of Alan's. They used to drink whisky together at our parties, tell risqué jokes and make up rude songs about Dr Verwoerd in particular. Leslie had to address some important meeting in Sea Point and he asked Alan to go down there and speak. During Leslie's speech a heckler made what Alan thought was a very funny interjection, and Alan got the giggles. There was Leslie making this impassioned plea to the audience and in the chair next to him here was his main speaker and National President rolling around in his seat.

One other story. When Bishop Reeves vanished to Swaziland in the 1960 Emergency, Alan was asked, by the Church, I presume, to go and see him to find out what he was planning. The question was, how to get there. Simon Roberts worked in the same law firm as George Tomlinson. George had distinguished himself in the RAF during the war and kept his flying hand in by flying a small plane on Sundays to remote areas and farms of the province, delivering people's Sunday papers. He agreed to take Alan, whom he knew slightly. They landed safely in Swaziland but were delayed while finding Reeves. George was a pretty laid-back kind of person. They left later than they would have liked and Alan asked in passing, as they climbed aboard, whether George thought they had enough fuel. George checked the gauge and said confidently, but not very reassuringly from Alan's point of view, "Oh yes, I think we'll be alright".

Alan climbed into his seat towards the back of the plane, and they set off. After a while the wind changed and they were flying into it. Alan noticed what looked like a gauge of some sort at about eye level. Whatever it was gauging seemed to be slowly going down. Could it be the fuel? He didn't know. After a while he plucked up courage and asked George, "George, how are we going on the fuel?" "Oh, I think we'll be alright". The wind continued to blow strongly towards them and whatever the gauge was measuring continued to go down. Round about New Hanover the gauge hit rock bottom and George remarked casually, "Alan, our fuel seems to be about out. I think I'm going to have to find somewhere to land". He found a meadow and they did - and hitch-hiked back to Maritzburg!

His relationships with other anti-apartheid leaders were always good. He went to Robert Sobukwe's funeral. On the way there we arranged with her lawyer to see Winnie Mandela in Brandfort on our way back. He was an important source of support for her in those years, particularly I think when her children were at school in Swaziland. While Chief Luthuli was alive, he and Alan were always on good terms, born out by the fact that Alan was one of the speakers at the Chief's funeral.

But his closest friendships were with the SAIC (South African Indian Congress). The Group Areas Act was something he loathed. The LP, mainly through Alan, Leo Kuper, Pat Poovalingham and Ken Hill, was heavily involved in the campaign against its implications and, almost every week-end, one or other or more of them would be involved with members of the Congress movement in protest meetings in some centre in Natal. He made two close friends there, J.N. Singh and Monty Naicker, president of the SAIC. He didn't just share Monty's distaste for the Group Areas Act, he also shared with him his taste for whisky, and they had more than one joyous dinner party together. Chief Buthelezi was another friend. In the years in which the Chief tried to fend off having the Bantu Authorities imposed on his tribal area, he often sought Alan's advice on how best to do that.

Finally, a word on the cost to Alan of his involvement in the struggles of the LP. He was charged with addressing at least one illegal meeting; his home was raided; his car was vandalised in the Eastern Cape; his passport was confiscated. But the biggest price he paid for that involvement was the effect it had on his writing. When Mrs Hofmeyr died and he finally felt able to continue with his biography of her son, it was in a state of desperation that he came to me and told me that, unless he could give up the party chairmanship, he would never be able to finish the book. That was biography and something which I imagine a writer can give their full attention to much more easily in conditions of stress than writing fiction. But because of his total involvement in the affairs of the Party and of the country as a whole, he just couldn't escape the distractions. He wrote two great novels before he got involved with the LP. I think he would have written several more had he not. I think that this is the measure of what he gave of himself in his struggle against apartheid. Of white South African writers only Breyten Breytenbach gave more. If there were others, in those dark days of the 50s and 60s, I have still to hear of them.

(Extract from the speech made by Peter Brown at the 10th Alan Paton Lecture, 15-3-2003.)

Concord is edited by Jewel Koopman with production assistance by Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen of the Alan Paton Centre, and layout is by Alistair Nixon, Audio Visual Centre, University of Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
Tel: (033) 2605926; Fax: (033) 2606143;
e-mail: koopmanj@nu.ac.za or liebbe@nu.ac.za

TRAVELS WITH MY FATHER

by Jonathan Paton

I had a complex relationship with my father, the best part of which was the journeys we did together. When I was four years old my father, mother, brother David and I set out in a 1938 Chev to the Karoo to see the eclipse of the sun. I was terrified that I would go blind and will never forget the birds going quiet in the middle of the day. Then in the war years we went twice by train to Natal to holiday in Durban or the Natal North Coast. After my father had written "Cry" we went on some wonderful holidays - the then Nyasaland, the then Rhodesia and to the Victoria Falls. We also travelled to Cape Town, the Drakensberg, the Transkei and the Kruger Park.



The famous Paton red car (Pontiac) on its journey to the Congo. (L-R) Margaret, Alan, David and Nancy Paton; Dorrie Paton (seated)

Photo: Jonathan Paton

vegetables and excellent Belgian wines. We travelled to Bukavu, a lake paradise on Lake Kivu where we swam in the blue and warm waters. On to Kisyezi, also on Lake Kivu where the nearby Niragongo Crater has often spilled its lava into Lake Kivu. Then across the Equator to the Ituri Forest where the local pygmies taught us to shoot bows and arrows. And on to the magical and mysterious Ruwenzori Mountains (Mountains of the Moon) which were shrouded in mist when we arrived. But after a day the mist cleared and we caught a striking glimpse of these majestic

mountains. Altogether a wonderful trip, thanks to the generosity of my father.

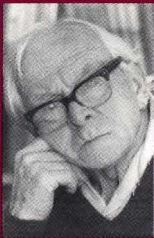
My father loved travelling. He knew the names of every tree, flower, river and bird in South Africa. He loved this country with a passion and he loved travelling in it. He loved family banter and particularly making up corny riddles. "Why is this place called Oribi Gorge?" No answer from the family. Then my father would say "Because a man was walking along here and got stung. He called out 'I've been stung by a wasp—ORRABEE.'" Then he would chuckle loudly at his own joke. "Why is this place called Umtentweni?" Alan's answer "Because the one black youth said to the other black youth 'I'm turn tweni.'" The other replied "I'm turn tweni one." Further chuckles from Alan. "Why is this place called Uvongo?" Alan's reply: "Because one chap said to the other chap 'U von go? Then I von't go either.'" More guffaws from my father.

Our biggest trip was when my father bought a big red Pontiac. It was one of the few ostentatious things he did. In 1958 my father and mother, my brother and his wife Nancy and I and my wife Margaret did one of the most exciting journeys of our lives. In this huge American monster we undertook a momentous journey to what was then called the Belgian Congo - a total journey of about 6000 miles. We set out from Durban in July 1958 and travelled via Johannesburg, Bulawayo and the Victoria Falls. Then on through the old Northern Rhodesia and into the Belgian Congo where we had to learn to drive on the right hand side of the road.

We travelled through mountains, forests, rocky, barren areas and along the side of Lake Tanganyika. We stopped at remote village hotels where we were offered good Belgian cuisine - roast meats, fresh

I had one last trip with my father, one which I shared with him alone. In 1910 he had seen Halley's comet when he was seven years old. This was in Pietermaritzburg where he was born. He described it stretching right across the sky, from horizon to horizon. So in 1986, two years before he died, he invited me to join him on a car trip to the Karoo to see the reappearance of the comet. We stayed at a small hotel in Beaufort West. The problem was that my father liked his whisky before dinner. In the press, potential viewers of the comet were warned not to drink alcohol before viewing the comet because it blurred one's vision. In any case the comet was a damp squib and could only be seen well after dark. By this time my father was sleepy after the whisky and would rather retire to bed than look for the comet. Same thing for the next two nights. Instead we had a wonderful and close time exploring the Karoo. We returned to Durban via Bloemfontein. We stopped at a small motel outside Bloemfontein. My father drank several whiskies and ordered a bottle of wine for dinner. When the wine was finished the waiter brought along another bottle, saying "Komplimente van Meneer Heavies". "Heavies" Botha was the proprietor of the motel and was impressed by the fact that Alan Paton was staying there. After dinner we staggered back to our bedroom. "Less have another look at the comet" slurred my father. I brought out the binoculars and held them up to my father's eyes. "OH, POOF" he called out loudly. That was his last word on Halley's comet, 1986.

(Extract from the speech made by Jonathan Paton at the 10th Alan Paton Lecture, 15-3-2003.)



Centenary
Celebrations

'Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful': Personal Memories of Alan Paton

by David Philip

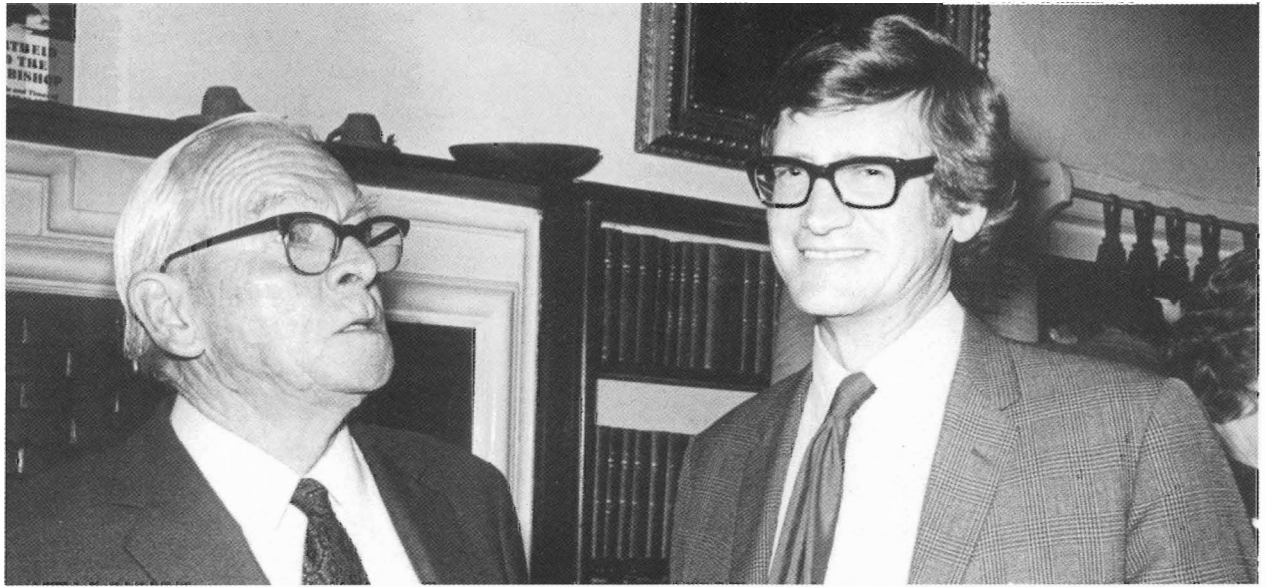


Photo: Cape Argus

Alan Paton, who died in 1988, was born 100 years ago in 1903. You may have seen the recent dramatisation of his novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, produced by Roy Sargeant to celebrate the centenary of his birthday. My memories of Alan Paton are not of his public or political or even literary persona. They are mostly personal and family memories of him during the frequent occasions he and I spent together, both here in Cape Town and at his home in Durban. Whenever his latest book was being prepared for the printers, he and I would go through every page together, every line, every word.

First impressions of Alan Paton were of a gruff voice and a cantankerous expression. But it was not long before you began to wonder whether these were unconsciously assumed so as to conceal strong emotions. When, as often, the humorous twinkle broke through, you were completely disarmed.

Although I had often heard him speak eloquently at Liberal Party meetings in the 1950s, I only came to know him in 1963, when I helped with the detailed editing of his great biography of J H Hofmeyr. I was working for the Oxford University Press Cape Town branch under the historian Leo Marquard, whom I succeeded as Editorial Manager, and took over from him the editing of the Hofmeyr biography.

Leo used to tell the story of how he complained to Alan about his description early in the book of the Western Cape, 'where the mountains fall everywhere into the sea'. Leo, of a literal frame of mind, said to Alan, 'They don't.' And Alan replied, 'Leo, you can correct my history as much as you like, but leave my poetry alone.'

In 1971 I was told by the OUP in the UK that I must

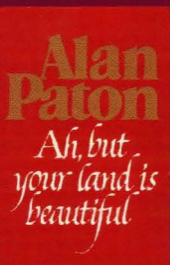
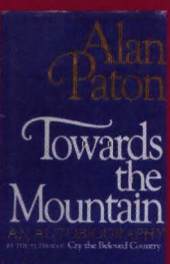
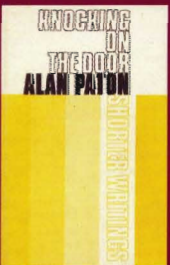
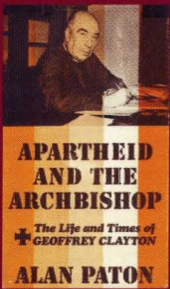
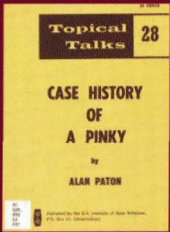
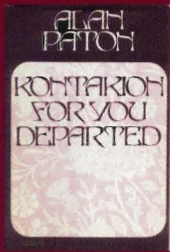
stop publishing books on history and politics and concentrate on books for African primary schools. This decision of theirs was motivated by a concern, not only for where the biggest market would be, but also for the safety of the staff of their Cape Town branch during the dark days of apartheid. Because my wife Marie and I wanted to go on publishing politics and history and books relevant to the current situation, we decided for this among other reasons to set off on our own as David Philip Publishers in August 1971.

A year after we began, Alan Paton was responsible for the turning-point in the history of our firm. He was staying with the Archbishop of Cape Town and he walked me round the grounds of Bishopscourt, asking me about our plans. At the end of our walk he announced, 'I'm coming with you. You can have my next book.' For us new struggling publishers this was encouragement indeed. It was characteristic of his impetuous generosity.

And so we went on to publish *Apartheid and the Archbishop*, the biography of Geoffrey Clayton, which won the CNA literary award in 1973. And we published a further six of his books after that, until 1988 when he died.

Alan and I had a mutually teasing relationship. *Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful* was the title of his last novel. As his South African publisher, I expressed my concern about his choice of title, because I doubted whether his reading public would understand the irony of the title: that the emphasis was on the land being beautiful, even though there were some unbeautiful people in it.

In his growly voice he replied, 'David, I would have you know that *Die Vaderland* has written that I have a genius for book titles.' I replied, as he half-expected, 'But you



don't believe everything you read in *Die Vaderland*, do you?' He pretended to be cross, and said, 'Humph,' but there was that marvellous twinkle in his eye. This story so well illustrates our mutually teasing relationship that I have chosen 'Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful' as the title of this article.

Needless to say, he as the author had the last word about his title, and he was probably right. It was added to his other inspired titles like *Cry, the Beloved Country*, *Kontakion For You Departed*, *Knocking on the Door*, and *Too Late the Phalarope*, which, by the way, was requested in a bookshop as 'Too Late the Fellow Wrote'. 'Only too true,' said Alan.

Alan Paton, a born teacher, specially enjoyed talking to young people – rather as Nelson Mandela does today — and our young daughters specially enjoyed talking to him. Our younger daughter, then aged 8, asked him, 'Does a cat know it's a cat?' He didn't reply and we talked about something else. Ten minutes later he said to her, 'I don't know if a cat knows it's a cat, but I know that a cat knows when it sees another cat.'

He could be a spell-binding talker – as he was when reading from his own writings. On another occasion one daughter was so enthralled by his conversation that she, needing to leave the room for a moment, got up and said to Alan Paton, 'Don't say anything until I come back.' And he loved it.

There were some people he took enormous delight in teasing, specially if the teasing was mutual. He was staying at our home on one occasion and Uys Krige, another spellbinding talker, was invited to dinner. Before Uys arrived we had all agreed that the one thing we all wanted to hear Uys talking about was Roy Campbell, whose biography Alan had begun writing (but did not complete). We knew however that Uys, for various reasons, was reluctant to do so. 'Leave it to me,' said Alan.

As soon as Uys arrived, Alan said to him, 'Don't worry, we don't want you to tell us about Roy Campbell.' Two hours later Uys was still talking about Roy Campbell, with Alan ironically silent throughout. At this point Uys looked at our daughters, who had been treated to two hours of Uys's verbal fireworks, and said, 'Alan, you mustn't show off in front of the girls.'

During the interval of the first night of Guy Butler's play *Take Root or Die* at the Labia Theatre, Alan and Uys Krige found an old acquaintance who had been Secretary for Education under J H Hofmeyr. 'You know,' said the former Secretary for Education to Alan Paton, 'I often think that somebody should write the biography of J H Hofmeyr.' Uys was falling about with glee, when Alan morosely replied, 'I spent five years of my life writing the biography of J H Hofmeyr.'

(Uys Krige had a puckish sense of humour, to go with his small stature. When we invited him to a Paton book

launch in the Ballroom of the Mount Nelson Hotel, he cried out excitedly, 'And Alan and I will dance!') During the publication of his last seven books, I frequently went up to Natal to stay with Alan and his wife Dorrie, and after Dorrie's death his second wife Anne, to spend a week editing proofs with him. If we ever differed about the meaning or usage of a word, he would solemnly get up and go to the lectern in his study on which sat the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary in two hefty volumes. He would read out the relevant definition and that would be that, but on one occasion when I simply could not agree, I had the cheek to point out that his edition was dated 1930, and that quite a lot had happened to the English language since then! 'Humph,' he said, but he took the point, and I might even have been allowed to win that round.

After a day of editing we would gather in the evening for a drink. As Peter Brown, perhaps the friend closest to Paton, has said:

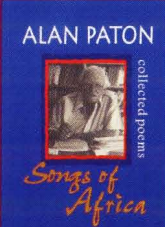
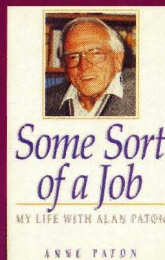
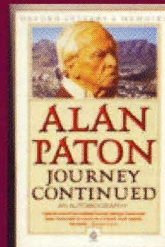
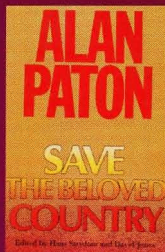
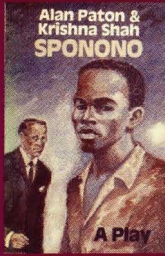
'Jokes were a very important part of his life. He told them very well and was never happier than when he was chuckling away at a good one.'

What a privilege it has been for my wife, my family, and myself to know this special great man. As I said when I began, my memories are not of him as the public figure able to sway large crowds with his vision and his oratory. But I hope that my informal, even domestic, reminiscences of Alan Paton may add warmth and humanity to your perception of someone who had a public image of an almost Old Testament sternness and remoteness.

(Based on a talk given by David Philip to the Owl Club, Cape Town, September 2003.)

Natal Society Special Collections

The Natal Society Special Collections (NS SC) are now housed at the APC on permanent loan. The Natal Society Library is due to be handed over to the Msundusi Municipality soon. It was decided to move the Special Collections away from the public library, and to house them on the University Campus, where they can be used as research collections. The Special Collections comprise the Africana Collection, which contains books and pamphlets of historical relevance, collected in the early years of the NS; the O'Brien Collection, bequeathed by Senator W. J. O'Brien, one of the founders of Natal University (NU); the Hattersley Collection, bequeathed by Prof. Alan F. Hattersley, who became the first Professor of History and Political Science at NU in 1923, and a photograph collection, containing historical photographs of people and places in KwaZulu-Natal.



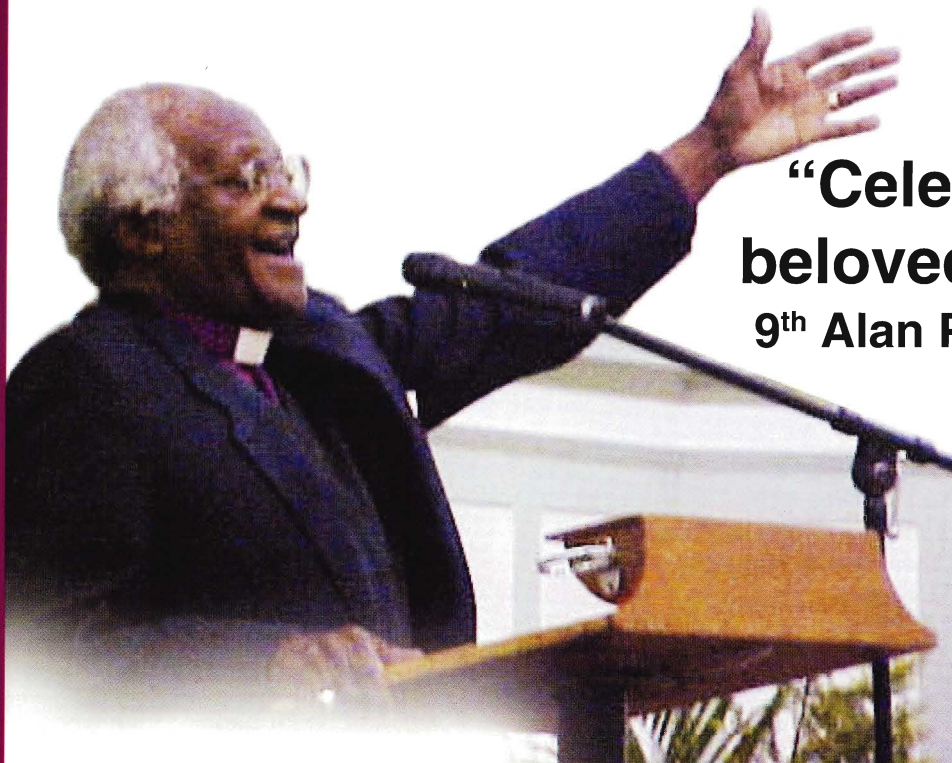


Photo: Adrian Koopman

“Celebrate, the beloved country”: 9th Alan Paton Lecture, 2002

Jewel Koopman

On hearing that the title of the 9th Alan Paton Lecture, given by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, was to be “Celebrate, the beloved country”, some people asked, “But what’s there to celebrate?”. Indeed, Archbishop Tutu agreed that the arms deal was inexplicable, the attitude to AIDS was not acceptable, and that accepting the grossly unfree and unfair election in Zimbabwe was a bad letdown. He also said: “Crime should be combated, and killing of farmers should be stopped”.

However, in spite of the fact that there are problems to be dealt with, he said that we should not minimise or devalue our accomplishments: “We need a crash course in history...to be able to see ourselves more properly in context and we need another course in memory, in remembering, for we have shown a quite staggering capacity to forget far too soon for our own good. Someone needs to shake us up and say, ‘Hey, have you forgotten so soon?’”

He spoke of some of the bad things which we have already forgotten, such as the violence, notoriously bad in KwaZulu-Natal; the massacres, the insecurity felt by township dwellers boarding a bus, due to drive-past shootings, or a train, due to killing of passengers; bombs frequently going off; the horrendous cases of necklacing; and Vlakplaas with its Death Squad. He quoted Santayana’s warning: ‘Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it’. He asked the audience to recall the humiliation of race classification, the forced population removals, the resettlement camps, Bantu education, the Immorality Act, and other examples of “race obsessed madness”.

He said that many people felt personal pain through experiences of these damaging events. “That is the

sort of pain people carried around with them for ages, and it is indeed a miracle that almost all have not demanded their pound of flesh when they could get their own back.”

He said “The world admires South Africa for three things - our extraordinary relatively peaceful transition; Nelson Mandela, the icon of magnanimity, forgiveness and reconciliation; and thirdly for the TRC (which) accomplished something unprecedented, unparalleled...Our transition and the TRC are accomplishments which we should be celebrating exultantly.” Some of the other things we can be positive about and celebrate are the stability of the country, the world-class accomplishments in sport as a rainbow nation, a formidable array of writers, a lively and free Press, and a wonderful Constitution which is admired throughout the world.

The Archbishop finished his Lecture by exhorting the audience to “Engage enthusiastically, participate, debate, argue, help to shape what South Africa should become... We have the privilege of being in on the ground floor in the construction of a new society. It is still nascent, it’s still flexible. Be part of the moulders of the future. This is your land, this is your motherland, you are a South African and be proud of it...Your contribution is indispensable. You are wanted here, you are needed here. Let us celebrate our diversity.” Archbishop Tutu received a standing ovation from the audience of three hundred after his speech.

The 9th Alan Paton Lecture was organised by the Alan Paton Centre and the Liberal Democratic Association, and sponsored by the Standard Bank Foundation.

STAFF CHANGES AT THE ALAN PATON CENTRE

FAREWELL TO DEBORA



Photo: Tony Bruton

A sad farewell was said to Debora Matthews when she left the Alan Paton Centre in August 2002, to join her husband and daughter in their new home in Johannesburg. Debora worked at the APC for nine years with great dedication and enjoyment. In her final two years at the Centre, she devoted much of her time to the re-documentation of the archives of the Liberal Party of South Africa. She drew up a very detailed descriptive list, which is proving to be of great value to researchers. She also re-filed, re-boxed and re-labelled the collection, making it a pleasure to use.

We wish her happiness for her new life in Johannesburg, and congratulations on the birth of her baby boy.

GREETINGS TO ESTELLE



Photo: Stefan Barkhuizen

Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen started at the APC in December 2002. She brings with her a wealth of experience from her previous positions in the Voortrekker Museum and as a Fine Art lecturer in the Centre for Visual Art, University of Natal. Estelle is an expert in paper conservation, and has a most useful back-ground in art and museum techniques.

She has added to her skills since starting at the APC, having digitised an exhibition for the Alan Paton Centenary; set up a new website and worked on the documentation of the archival collections. She is now re-organising the photograph collection. We are very glad to have you here, Estelle.

“Our roots are speaking”



Photo: Adrian Koopman

The new committee (L-R):

Pieter Nel of KZN Archives, Pietermaritzburg; **Phumuzile Mwandla** of KZN Archives, Ulundi; **Prof. Philippe Denis** of Sinomlando Project, UNP; **Sibongiseni Mkhize** of Voortrekker Museum and **Vino Reddy** of the University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre.

“Our roots are speaking” is the title of an Oral History Seminar which took place on 17 September 2003, in celebration of Heritage Day, in the Colin Webb Hall. This seminar had two purposes. The first was the official launch of the KwaZulu-Natal Oral History Association, the acceptance of the constitution and the election of the committee. This was done through nominations from the 85 people who were present, followed by voting in of the new committee.

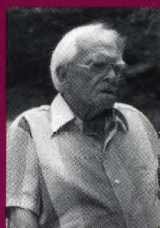
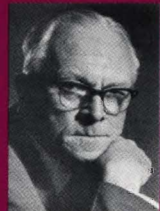
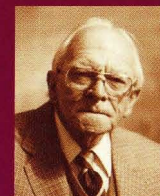
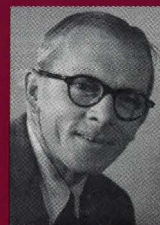
The objective of the Association is to encourage and facilitate the collection, preservation and study of oral history in KwaZulu-Natal. In the past, the various organisations working on different oral history projects (OHPs) had very little contact with each other, and were unaware of what others were doing, whereas now a network can be established for mutual

information and sharing of knowledge and skills.

The second objective of the seminar was to provide the opportunity for representatives of the different OHPs to give presentations on their projects. The projects which were presented were the Sinomlando and Memory Box projects; the UDW Documentation Centre project; the Natal Museum Edendale Family History Project; the National Botanical Institute Zulu Botanical Knowledge Project and the KZN Archives OHP based in Ulundi.

This seminar was co-organised by KZN Archives; KZN Oral History Association; Voortrekker Museum; Sinomlando Project and the Alan Paton Centre.

Jewel Koopman



Recent Archival Donations



The Alan Paton Centre



The Study



The Reading Room



Natal Society Special Collections



The O'Brien Collection

The Alan Paton Centre has been very pleased to receive the following recent donations of archival papers, for which we are very grateful.

David Philip, who published several of Alan Paton's books, donated photocopies of his personal collection of correspondence with Alan Paton, and other material relating to the following publications: *Hofmeyr*; *Apartheid and the Archbishop*; *Knocking on the Door*; *Ah, but your Land is Beautiful*; *Towards the Mountain*; *Sponono*; *Diepkloof*; *Journey Continued* and the abandoned Roy Campbell biography. The originals of the David and Marie Philip Collection are housed at the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown.

Ms Margery Moberly donated papers which include a photocopy of an unpublished poem by Alan Paton, written for Betty, Joy and Joan Otto, entitled "A teacher's dream" - written while Paton was teaching at Ixopo High School, 1925-1928.

Beryl Gascoigne Hibbert donated a copy of her book of poetry, *The tale of three mysterious trees*, for which Alan Paton wrote an introduction in 1948.

Hanspeter Dürr sent from Switzerland documents on Swiss - South African relations, 1948-1994.

Prof. James Lund donated two files of papers relating to Conscientious Objectors and the Pietermaritzburg Democratic Association.

Mrs Audrey Cobden (néé Dodson) emigrated to Canada, and sent an envelope of her Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA) Johannesburg papers, which include the official LPSA logo.

Yvonne Spain is housing archives of the CINDI (Children in Distress) network at the APC. CINDI Organisations collaborate around children affected by AIDS in Pietermaritzburg.

Further additions to the archives of the LPSA were given by **Peter Brown**, as well as additions to his own papers. **Mrs Isobel Aitchison** sent further papers of her late husband, Ralph Aitchison, relating to the Cape branch of the LPSA. **Mr Jean van Riet** of the LPSA in the Free State donated further material.

Christopher Merrett sent a collection of letters to the editor about non-racial sport and the sports boycott, to be added to the Aurora Cricket Club papers.

Mrs Mary Grice added papers to the Duchesne Grice Collection, and **Mrs Jean Hill** added to the papers of her late husband, C.Kenneth Hill.

Natal Society Special Collections are on permanent loan from the **Natal Society Foundation**. See page 9 for further information.

Many thanks for these most welcome donations.

NEW LOGO and WEBSITE

Over the last fourteen years, since its inception, the Alan Paton Centre has grown from being firstly an archive of Alan Paton's papers, and secondly of the archives of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA), to an archive of a much expanded collection of the papers of individuals and organisations who opposed apartheid in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. It also now houses oral history collections: the APC's own oral history project: "Recording the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in KwaZulu-Natal", and the School of Theology's Sinomlando Project. For this reason, it was decided that the name should be changed to the "Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives", to reflect the expanded nature of the collections. The logo chosen is an adaptation of the LPSA logo, partially because the LPSA collection is central to the APC, and partially

The Alan Paton Centre
& Struggle Archives



as it shows racial co-operation, which was the goal of so many of the individuals and organisations whose papers have been collected.

In line with this, the website has been redesigned to reflect the variety of collections now at the Centre.

The main collections highlighted in the website are: Alan Paton; the LPSA; collections containing information on violence in KwaZulu-Natal; the Black Sash; collections of political activists; collections containing information on "Black Spots" and forced removals; the oral history collections; Nomkhubulwane and virginity-testing; collections containing peace and reconciliation initiatives; the Natal Society Special Collections, photograph collections and the CINDI archives.

The new website can be accessed at: <http://www.library.unp.ac.za/paton>

Concord Sponsorship

This Centenary edition of *Concord* was partially sponsored by generous donations from Prof. Richard Dale of the USA, Dr David Paton of Johannesburg and Mr Jean van Riet of the Free State.

Request for donation of archival papers and photographs

A request is made to those of you who were involved in the struggle against apartheid, whether as individuals or as part of an organisation, to donate your relevant papers, photographs and journals to the Alan Paton Centre for incorporation into the archival collection. The aim is to build as complete a picture as possible of resistance to apartheid, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

If you would like to donate your papers, please contact Jewel Koopman, Alan Paton Centre, University of Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Tel: (033) 260-5926;

e-mail: koopmanj@nu.ac.za

Monetary donations will also be welcomed. Cheques should be made out to the University of Natal, but posted to the Alan Paton Centre. Please cross your cheque, and note that altered cheques are no longer accepted in South Africa, due to the increase in cheque fraud.