

CONCORD

The Newsletter of the Alan Paton Centre for the study of the literature and politics of conflict and conciliation

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The Alan Paton Centre: building an on campus community archive

Few people in South Africa's literary history have made as great an impact as Alan Paton.

Author of *'Cry, the Beloved Country'*, one of the classics of our century, he was also the author of biographies of J.H. Hofmeyr, and Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton, as well as a two-part autobiography, short stories, essays, poetry and two other novels.

Respected as an educationist and humanitarian, Alan Paton is regarded as a 'veteran of the Anti-Apartheid struggle experience'.

After his death in 1988, there was a desire to remember and further what he stood for.

Opened on 24 April 1989, the Alan Paton Centre (APC) is a centre for the study of the literature and politics of conflict and conciliation - the two major themes in Alan Paton's life. Its particular reference is to our region KwaZulu-Natal.

At the opening Professor Colin Webb stated clearly the aims of the Alan Paton Centre which is 'not to create a memorial...still less a shrine. Its purpose is quite different. It is a facility for the living, an instrument for carrying forward the struggle for improved human relations'.

Core donations comprised the contents of Alan Paton's study, including books, journals, and memorabilia, made available to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, by Mrs Anne Paton shortly after Alan Paton's death. Subsequently the Alan Paton archives - a large collection of unpublished works, short stories, addresses, diaries, and correspondence, and the papers of the head office of the Liberal Party of South Africa, which was forced to disband in 1968, were donated.

Acquisitions of interest to users include the documents of the Greater Pietermaritzburg Local Government Forum, and the minutes and reports of national bodies such as the Multiparty Negotiating Forum.

During the period of the National Elections in 1994 and during the KwaZulu-Natal Local Government Elections in 1996 the APC collected manifestos, policy statements, pamphlets and posters across the party political spectrum.

A focus of collecting during the 1990's has been the archives of NGO's (non government organisations) of the region. The partial closure, or amalgamation of some of these bodies being the spur. NGO material includes archives of the Detainees Aid Committee, the Natal Midlands Black Sash and their Advice Offices, the ECC - End Conscription Campaign, Five Freedoms Forum, Peace-in-Natal and Afra - the Association for Rural Advancement. Individuals with links to many of these organisations, and to Alan Paton, continue to deposit their papers.

A branch of the Campus Library, the APC is thus an archive with a library and museum component. For several years (1992-1994) it has also been part of an education for democracy project, and is currently engaged in an oral history project.

The APC is visited by students, researchers - local and foreign, by tourists, groups of high school children with their teachers, and by the public.

Visitors are given a guided tour of the APC, and there are pamphlets and videos on the life of Alan Paton and the work of the Centre.

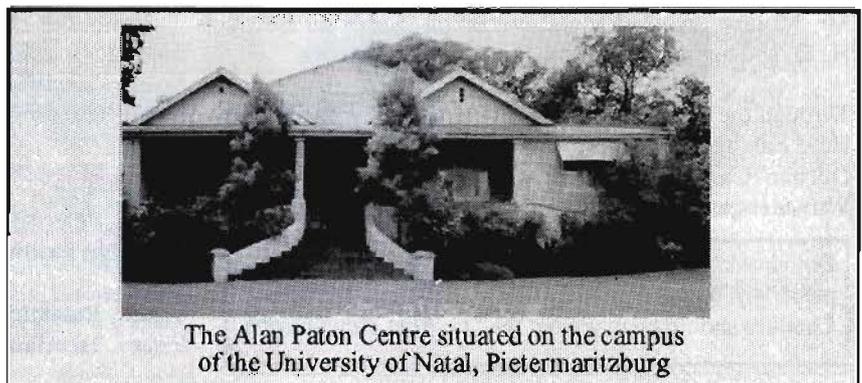
Alan Stewart Paton (1903-1988)

Alan Paton was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1903 and attended school and university in that city. After some years as a science teacher in white high schools, he became in 1935 principal of Diepkloof Reformatory.

The publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in 1948 made him famous. He planned to become a full-time writer, but was drawn into the political arena. He was the first president of the Liberal Party, which was founded in 1953 and forced to disband in 1968. His second novel, *Too Late the Phalarope*, appeared in 1953. He published a variety of books.

Paton was a public figure, hated by the apartheid government (though it later tried to befriend him), but admired by many in South Africa and abroad.

He received numerous awards and honorary degrees. Those caught up in militant resistance politics in the last two decades of the apartheid era tended to distrust his reconciliatory attitude, but after the big political changes in 1990 (two years after his death) his approach was generally accepted.



The Alan Paton Centre situated on the campus of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

1996 FUNCTIONS

As in the past, the functions hosted, and/or co-hosted by the Alan Paton Centre during the course of this year, have been varied, exciting and most successful. The screening of the 1951 film version of 'Cry, the Beloved Country', and the Bessie Head exhibition were arranged to coincide with the National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar on campus. It gave those students visiting the campus, who had an interest in Alan Paton, the opportunity to attend these two functions, and so experience in part what the Paton Centre stands for. This was followed by the annual Paton lecture, the 3rd in the series.

The Bessie Head Exhibition (30 July - 8 August)



Left to right:

Mr. Rogoff Modise, Ms. Veronica Samuels, Prof. Bernth Lindfors and Alison Sainsbury (National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar, U.S.A.), Prof C.O. Gardner

What started off as a celebration of the launch of the biography of the African author Bessie Head by Gillian Stead Eilersen hosted at the APC last year, resulted in a full-scale two-dimensional photographic exhibition on the author, for a two week period, at the end of July.

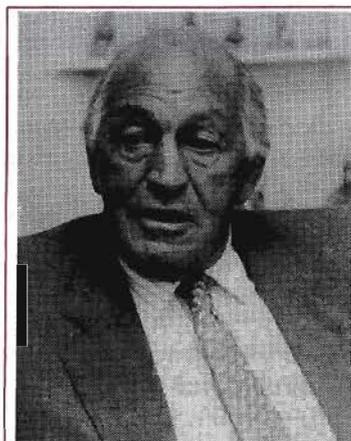
A joint venture of the Alan Paton Centre and the Khama III Memorial Museum in Serowe, Botswana, the exhibition was entitled 'Bessie Head-portraits of exile'. 'Portraits of exile' comprised a striking, and at times startling, collection of photographs taken at various stages of the now world-renowned author's life, to which the Paton Centre added a detailed text. The exhibition was enhanced, not only by a number of the publications by the author, but by the fact that the copies on display, were Bessie Head's personal copies, some bearing annotations by her.

This was all made possible with the co-operation of the young curator from the Khama II Memorial Museum, Rogoff Modise. He was invited to open the exhibition. This was held in the foyer of the Main Library, before more than 70 invited guests, and an interested public, after a cocktail party in the Principal's Dining Room. In his speech Mr. Modise revealed some interesting stories on Bessie Head, and her papers, which are housed in Serowe.

Through the auspices of the Alan Paton Centre, the Bessie Head Exhibition became a travelling exhibition, visiting the Durban Campus, UNISA and the University of the Witwatersrand before returning to Botswana.

Donations, in the form of money or documents for deposit, will be welcomed by the Alan Paton Centre. Cheques should be made out to: The Alan Paton Centre

The Third Alan Paton Lecture (19 September)



Sir Raymond Hoffenberg
(Dr. Bill)

The third lecture in this annual series, hosted by the Alan Paton Centre, and the Liberal Democratic Association (LDA), was presented by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg ('Dr Bill'), a lifelong friend of Alan Paton. A former President of the Royal College of Physicians he was knighted in 1984. It was the best attended Paton Lecture to date. Some distinguished guests present were the University Chancellor, Archbishop Denis E. Hurlley OMI, Professor Brenda Gourley, the Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Archie Gumede of the ANC, and Mrs Anne Paton, widow of Alan Paton.

In his interesting and thought-provoking lecture 'Dilemmas of Principle' Sir Raymond focussed on those dilemmas which he, Alan Paton, and many others had to face during the repressive apartheid years. Both a doctor, and a medical lecturer in Cape Town, he became involved in the Defence and Aid Fund, an organisation that offered legal and humanitarian assistance to people accused of political crimes. Sir Raymond described the turbulent, depressing phases of his banning in 1967, and his consequent forced exile from a country to which he was so attached.

'Dilemmas of Principle' is available on tape or transcript, and may be ordered from the Alan Paton Centre.

Cost: Tape (45 minutes) R35, incl. postage

Transcript: R12, incl. postage

Also available:

Brown, Peter 1995 Alan Paton: the man and the politician. **2nd Alan Paton Lecture**, Transcript: R14

Vigne, Randolph 1994 Namibian democracy: a liberal legacy. **1st Alan Paton Lecture**. Transcript: R12

Recording the Anti-Apartheid experience



Mr. Emmanuel Kunene (l) and Mr. Anton Xaba (r) during an interview at the Alan Paton Centre, UNP, 13.07.95

In order to begin to build up the resources for a people's history of the region - which has been left largely unrecorded and neglected - the Alan Paton Centre undertook, in 1995, an oral history project 'Recording the Anti-Apartheid struggle in KwaZulu-Natal'.

Working on the premise that what is not recorded is often lost, this project seeks to record both life experiences relevant to the Apartheid experience, and the circumstances surrounding specific events as they occurred (ie) marches, bans, forced removals.

The initial two year pilot project, begun in March 1995, has to date interviewed 60 people through the medium of English and Zulu. Those interviewed have included Robben Islanders Archie Gumede, Harry Gwala and Anton Xaba., John Makhatini of NUMSA, Peter Brown - Liberal Party and Afra veteran, Yunus Carrim, and Marie Dyer of Black Sash.

The intention of the project is to continue interviewing for four years, and to record a diversity of experiences across the political, cultural and social spectrum.

Interviewers include members of non government organisations (NGO's), students and volunteers. Methodology is overseen by the Alan Paton Centre, or the relevant department on campus viz Historical Studies.

Tape recordings are translated, and the lengthier interviews are transcribed, funds permitting. The interviews are documented, and appear in the Main Library catalogue. This material will also be accessible through the National Register of Oral History linked to State Archives.

If you are able, and would like to help in funding this vital project, please send your donation to the Alan Paton Centre Oral History Project.

Original Paton film on campus

(18 June)

The Paton Centre was unprepared for the roaring success of this event. At the last minute a scurry for chairs resulted in late comers filling up floor space in no time. This original film version of the Alan Paton classic, produced and directed by the Korda brothers of Lion Films in London, was received with mixed reviews in 1951. On 18 June, in the Stoffel Nienaber Room on campus, it was received with nothing but applause. This applause could, no doubt, partly be attributed to Jonathan Paton's masterly commentary on the old film. He focussed his discussion on a comparison of the original version with the more recent version (1995) directed by Anant Singh. His humorous anecdotes on the making of the original film, in which he had a minute part as an extra, had the audience in fits of laughter. The question & answer session that followed also brought interesting facts on both films to light.

Visitors

As in 1995, students, both university and high school, continue to be our most frequent users. An increasing number of black students (ie) KwaPata Senior Secondary, Georgetown High, Esigodini and Bongudunga High Schools have visited.

With approximately 70 students and teachers visiting at one time, the APC and UNiversity Archives staff have joined forces to offer a "package" tour of the APC, including, the significance of the life and work of Alan Paton, and the importance of archives, museums, libraries and oral history in the new South Africa.

The students are encouraged to consider a career in one of these areas, and to create their own school archives.

DOCUMENTS OF INTEREST include

ELSE SCHREINER PAPERS 1987-1992

Charged first with Treason, but subsequently with Terrorism under the Internal Security Act, Jennifer Schreiner, a member of the Yengeni Group in the Western Cape, was detained in September 1987. After six months in solitary confinement, and a trial lasting two years, the Yengeni trialists were granted indemnity, and released in 1991.

These papers contain:

* **Letters:** Else Schreiner, mother of Jennifer Schreiner, to friends, trial supporter, and family based on her notes taken during the Yengeni Trial.

* **Yengeni Trial notebooks:** 10.03.89-27.02.92, includes charge sheet, plea, affidavit

- *Letters & poems* by Jennifer Schreiner smuggled from Parow police cells, 1987-1988;
- Poetry written in Pollsmoor prison; *drawings* executed in court during the Trial

- *Yengeni Trial Support Group (YTSG)*, UK: newsletters 1989-1991
- *Wynberg Crisis Committee:* pamphlets, circulars, photos
- *Letters from trialists* to Else Schreiner after their release in 1991; and *cuttings*.
16 Files cc. Access unrestricted, except for certain letters with the permission of the donor. PC92.

JOHN JW AITCHISON COLLECTION

* *Autobiographical manuscripts and typescripts of H. Selby Msimang 1887-1982;*

* 32 tapes, and transcripts of interviews for a Msimang biography (unpublished) 1971-1972

H. Selby Msimang, veteran politician, trade unionist, and community worker, was a founder member of the ANC. As a member of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA) he was banned in 1967. He died at Edendale, Pietermaritzburg in 1982. Access unrestricted. PC14.

Gandhi and his significance:

Gandhi Centenary Conference 7-9 June 1993

This conference, which marked the centenary of Gandhi's unceremonial, and deeply humiliating ejection, from a train, onto the Pietermaritzburg railway station platform, was the first major conference with which the Alan Paton Centre was linked. Gandhi's transforming experience demanded a response, and undoubtedly contributed, during his formative years in South Africa, towards the development of *Satyagraha* - which he subsequently exercised to such good effect in India.

Selected proceedings of this conference appear in a book, newly released by the University of Natal Press, co-edited by Judith Brown and Martin Prozesky, and entitled *Gandhi and South Africa: principles and politics*. The foreword is by David Maughan Brown, Chairman of the Alan Paton Centre Advisory Committee.

South Africa: ISBN 0 86980 917 2 R50

USA: co-published by St Martins Press N.Y.

UK: obtainable from Africa Book Centre, 32 Kings St, London WC2E8JT

CONCORD

Out of the study of conflict and conciliation there comes, hopefully, **concord** - that is agreement, harmony, and a 'being of the same heart or mind', so that justice and peace may take root in the new South Africa.

CONCORD is produced by the Alan Paton Centre, Univ. of Natal, Private Bag X01, 3209, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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Publications linked to research at the Paton Centre

Alexander, Peter

Alan Paton - a Biography. OUP, 1994.

ISBN 0-19-811-237-8 R225 Paperback: R89.95

In this biography Peter Alexander explores both the public figure of Alan Paton, as well as the private man about whom much less is known. Against the backdrop of profound political changes, and harassment by the apartheid government of the day, Paton struggled to achieve harmony both in his public and private life.

Kohler, Peter ed.

Songs of Africa: Alan Paton - collected poems.

Durban: Gecko Books, 1995.

ISBN 1-8 75 011-15-3 R60

Alan Paton is well-known for both his fictional and political writings, and for his lyrical and polemical grasp of the South African scene. Yet he regarded himself as 'a poet who wrote novels'. His poetic voice has remained largely unexplored. In *Songs of Africa* over 130 poems, songs and psalms have been collected and published under a title Paton himself once formulated in a letter to his friend Aubrey Burns. Most of this material is to be found in the Paton archives at the Alan Paton Centre.

Vigne, Randolph

The History of the Liberal Party of South Africa

Due to be published by Macmillan in the UK in 1997, this history of the Liberal Party has been extensively researched by Randolph Vigne. As a fellow of the Department of Political Studies, Pietermaritzburg, nearly a year was spent researching the Liberal Party papers at the Alan Paton Centre, and interviewing numerous people in South Africa and the UK.