This article was downloaded by: [New York University]

On: 05 May 2015, At: 20:00

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ttrs19>

NOTES ON SOME RECENTLY REDISCOVERED INSCRIBED STONES BEARING ON THE HISTORY OF THE CAPE COLONY

W. L. Sclater^a

^a South African Museum

Published online: 28 Jun 2010.

To cite this article: W. L. Sclater (1905) NOTES ON SOME RECENTLY REDISCOVERED INSCRIBED STONES BEARING ON THE HISTORY OF THE CAPE COLONY, Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society, 16:1, 207-212, DOI: [10.1080/21560382.1905.9526057](https://doi.org/10.1080/21560382.1905.9526057)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21560382.1905.9526057>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

NOTES ON SOME RECENTLY REDISCOVERED IN-
SCRIBED STONES BEARING ON THE HISTORY
OF THE CAPE COLONY.

BY W. L. SCLATER, *Director of the South African Museum.**

(Read June 28, 1905.)

I.—J. VAN PLETTENBERG'S BOUNDARY STONE.

In the year 1778, in consequence of complaints from burghers living on the eastern frontier of the Colony, the Governor, Joachim van Plettenberg, resolved to make a visit to the borderlands of the Colony and investigate the condition of affairs there. Leaving Cape Town on September 3, 1778, he travelled to Graaff Reinet with ox-waggons and saddle-horses. Thence, crossing the Sneeuwberg to the north, he descended the valley of the Zeekoe River to a point about 18 miles due west of the present village of Colesburg. Here on October 4th, some 200 yards from the bank of the stream, he erected a "baaken," or boundary beacon, to mark the extreme north-eastern boundary of the Colony.

A month later, on November 6th, the Governor arrived at the bay where the Keurboom River falls into the sea, now known as Plettenberg's Bay. Here a stone pillar prepared in Cape Town, having the arms of the United Provinces, the monogram of the Dutch East India Company, the arms of the Governor, and a suitable inscription, which had been conveyed to its destination on the waggon of Jacob Joubert, was placed in position, and here it has remained ever since. It has recently been enclosed by a stone wall in order to preserve it, and will be found figured in Moodie's "History of the Battles and Adventures of the British, Boers, and Zulus," vol. i., p. 62, published in 1888.

The above facts will be found in the new edition of Mr. Theal's "History," vol. ii., pp. 149–154, while a complete transcription of a diary of the journal of Plettenberg's journey in the original Dutch,

* For previous papers see these *Transactions*.

preserved in the Colonial Archives, has been recently published by the same author in a "Collection of Important Historical Documents." *

Barrow ("Travels in the Interior of South Africa," i., p. 255, 1803) visited the north-eastern portion of the Colony in October, 1797. He states that Plettenberg's beacon was then already thrown over and broken up by the Bushmen.

The next reference I have met with in regard to the beacon is a letter addressed by a Mr. C. J. Kemper to the *Grahamstown Journal* in 1843. I have not been able to see the original, but the following is a copy kindly obtained for me by Mr. Murray, the donor of the stone to the Museum, who obtained it from Mr. L. Kemper, son of the original writer. The following is a transcription of the letter :—

"COLONIAL BEACONS.

"LICHTENSTEIN, September 16, 1844.

"*To the Editor.* SIR,—Seeing in your esteemed *Journal* a sketch of a land beacon, supposed by Mr. James Howell to be that of Governor van Plettenberg, I am induced to send you a sketch from a drawing of one which I took on a journey in the year 1830 on the other side of the Zeekoe River, not far from the place of the Field Commandant Tjard van der Walt :—

This worthy old gentleman informed me there was a stone on the flat a short distance from his residence called "Plettenberg's Baaken," and that it had engraved upon it some figures and his name. Feeling much interest in this statement, I requested the Commandant to show me this stone, which he did, and I then took, in his presence, a sketch of it and the surrounding hills.

* "Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten verzameld in de Kaap Kolonie en elders door," George McCall Theal, LL.D., No. I., Kaapstad, 1898.

"I think this must be the beacon erected by Governor van Plettenberg. The armonial escutcheon is that of his family, and corresponds to the period indicated by the figures, Joachim van Plettenberg being Governor of the Colony in the year 1778.

"I remain, &c.,

(Signed) "C. J. KEMPER.

"N.B.—There must be an error given in Mr. Howell's communication in the figures 98, as in 1798 Sir Francis Dundas was Lieut.-Governor."

About fifteen years ago Mr. Murray, a surveyor who, with his brother, occupied the farm Quaggasfontein in the Colesberg district, made a careful search for the beacon, which had apparently disappeared. After some days he succeeded in finding part of the stone with a coat of arms on it, and finally collected several other fragments, though even now it is by no means complete. Mr. Murray

believes that the stone had been thrown down and broken many years ago, probably by a native shepherd, as pieces of it were black and had evidently been heated in a fire to roast meat on, as is the custom with Hottentots.

The pieces of the stone were brought to the homestead, and have remained there ever since until a few weeks ago, when they were most generously presented to the South African Museum by Messrs. Murray Brothers, of Quaggasfontein.

The stone shows the coat of arms, which is a very simple one. I have not been able as yet to trace the arms of van Plettenberg, but I have no doubt that the shield is his; the second half of the date 78 is plainly shown, and also a portion of the name of the Governor.

II.—POST-OFFICE STONE IN THE CASTLE WALL.

My attention has recently been drawn to an inscribed stone built up in the outer wall of the Castle. It is about 10 feet above the level of the grassy glacis on the bastion, facing due west to the right-hand side of the main gateway. The stone is so placed that the principal inscription is upside down, so that it was evidently merely used to assist in forming the wall of the Castle, and not with a view to the preservation of the inscription.

There can be little doubt that the stone has been in this position since the original building of the Castle, which was begun in 1666 and finished in 1679.

My attention was first drawn to the existence of the stone by Major H. Sutton, of the Grenadier Guards, who has lately been occupying a position on the staff in Cape Town; and I am indebted to Mr. H. Amon, of the Army Pay Department, for the very clear and excellent photograph of the stone here reproduced. The inscriptions appear to me as follows:—

JOHN . ROBERTS.
COMMAVNDER . OF
THE . LESSER . JAMES.
AR: Y^E . 8TH DECEM: DE: Y^E
26: 1622 + LOVK . WITH . THIS
LINE . FOR LETERES
HENR MANC.

The second inscription seems to me :—

JAMES . BVRGES . M^R . OF . THE
ABIGAIL + AR : Y^e [17]
DEPAR + Y 26
OF DECEMBAR
1622

Through the kindness of Mr. William Foster, of the India Office in London, I have been able to learn a few particulars about the voyages of these two ships.

He writes : “The *Lesser James* (450 tons), commanded by John Roberts, left Batavia homeward bound in the last days of August, 1622. In his commission, which is still preserved at the India Office, London (O.C. 1074), Roberts was directed, amongst other things, to look for letters at Table Bay.

“ ‘When you arrive in the Bay of Saldania, you shall make search for letters ; and in like mannor, at your departure thence, leave behinde you in writinge fitt remembrances of all matters needfull.’ ”

No further account of this voyage has been found, but the ship reached England in the middle of June, 1623.

The *Abigail* was a new ship, which sailed from England for Batavia in 1622. The journal of the Master, James Burgess, is still preserved in the India Office (Records: O.C. 1060). In it occurs the following entry: "1622, 17 Dec. Arvd at Saldania. Ther I mete the *Littell James* and to Hollandars bounde home." One of these Dutch ships was probably the *Leeuwin*, which left Batavia in company with the *Lesser James*.

There are traces of a third inscription at right angles to that of the *Lesser James*, but I have not yet been able to decipher anything which can give a clue to its history.