



Charlotte Marie Louise Flemmer



*Edward Stockenstrom
Lodewicus
Giffillan*

CHARLOTTE MARIE LOUISE FLEMMER 1844 – 1934

EDWARD STOCKENSTROM LODEWICUS GILFILLAN 1838 – 1908

Charlotte Marie Louise Flemmer was born on the 18th April 1844 in the small port of Kørsor, Denmark, the fourth child and second daughter of Dr. Christian August Flemmer and Betty Abo. She was a healthy baby and as was the custom, baptism was delayed until the warmer months. She was baptized by her grandfather in the Lutheran Church on 11th July 1844.

Life was quiet and peaceful in the little town and as Charlotte grew up she went to the small school near the Flemmer home on the Baggade. In 1852 the whole family's life changed when her uncle Töger von Abo arrived back in Kørsor after many years in the Cape Colony. The children were captivated by his stories of life in Africa, the animals and tribes, the adventures of this new frontier – it all sounded so very exciting. Töger painted a picture of a land of real promise and convinced Christian and Betty that the family would be far better off in Cradock – then a growing town with many opportunities. With the family under some financial strain Töger even offered to pay part of the costs of the move. So the decision was made to leave behind family and friends and to move to the Cape.

Charlotte was eight when amid great excitement the family packed up, said their farewells and left for Copenhagen. There were more goodbyes there before the family set sail for London. With her older sister Camilla then 12, Charlotte was very much her mother's helper – it was the role of girls at this time to be 'little mothers' to younger siblings. Salvator was the youngest at two, and one needs little imagination to picture how he needed watching on the busy docks and later on board ship.

As we have already seen, the voyage to the Cape was long and arduous. The arrival at Port Elizabeth, the slow trek inland to Cradock – at last they were there!

In common with nearly all of the women of this time we know virtually nothing about Charlotte's early life. Girls were brought up and trained to be wives and mothers. Not for them the holding of public office. There are few mentions of women in the newspapers, making it almost impossible to find out about their individual lives. There was no girls' school in Cradock until 1869 and it is unlikely that Charlotte would have attended the Free School, a pretty rough and ready place by all accounts. It is more likely that she was given elementary lessons at home and sent for private tutoring in subjects like music.

The only public mention I have found of the young Charlotte is in connection with the Total Abstiners Society. A newspaper article of 1863, when she was 19, mentions that 'vocal entertainment' was provided by Miss Flemmer. As we know, her father was a leading figure in the Teetotaler movement and it may have been through this that Charlotte met her future husband, Edward Stockenstrom Lodewicus Gilfillan, who was six years older than her. Certainly Edward had strong views on the curse of alcohol abuse as we see from an interview with Eliza Butler in her Reminiscences of Cradock:

Drink amongst the natives was a terrible curse, and when the women of the Bush or Hottentot tribes took to drink the races died out. Drink was freely given to the customers at the stores, besides what they bought for themselves. There were five canteens although the town was so small. The Rev. R. B. Taylor got them reduced to two. This good man spent his life here trying to convert the natives. He was an ardent teetotaler and through his efforts a canteen in High Street was closed. He was the pioneer in Cradock of teetotalism and devoted his life to this cause and for the good of the native community.

The couple married at St. Peter's on the 7th September 1864 and their wedding was reported in the Cradock and Tarkastad Register:

On Wednesday morning last the marriage of our esteemed townsman Edward Gilfillan Esquire to the only daughter of C.A.Flemmer Esquire M.D. also of this town was celebrated in St. Peter's Church by the Rev. E.W.Barker. The sacred edifice had been beautifully decorated for the happy occasion and at the close of the ceremony an appropriate hymn was sung by the choir. After the wedding breakfast a large cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen on horseback accompanied the bridegroom and his fair bride for a short distance out of town on their wedding tour.

Of course Charlotte wasn't the 'only daughter' as she had a sister Camilla who was already married. Perhaps married daughters didn't count as daughters! It's also interesting to see that Charlotte's name isn't even mentioned.

As I have said I found nothing else about Charlotte herself in any records, but this was the usual situation at the time. Far more is known about her husband Edward. He was the son of the town magistrate and the family is well known from

many records. There is a lot about them in the very good book *The Story of One Branch of the Gilfillan Family in South Africa* by Marjorie Gilfillan. Here we find some interesting information about Edward. He was one of twelve children and Miss Lucy Gray [A Victorian Lady at the Cape 1849 – 1855] records that the Gilfillan children were a happy lot of youngsters. She was a little shocked that *'The younger boys even play with Hottentots in the streets and go where they will'*. While this is not something that people of Lucy Gray's class would condone back in England, she also notes that she was struck by the boys' gentlemanly manners.

There are a couple of errors in the Gilfillan book. One is that Charlotte's father – Dr. Christian August Flemmer – had settled in East London on arrival from Denmark, but as we know the family had gone straight to Cradock. It also says that Edward and Charlotte had 'four sons and one daughter'. As we will see a second daughter was born but died young, so they had six children in all.

Edward and Charlotte spent their lives in Cradock, where he devoted himself to his legal practice and to his home town. Sir John Kotze in his autobiography says

'He was a sound lawyer in the enjoyment of an extensive practice, and was possessed of great influence in the district. He was much respected for his ability and character.'

The six children all born in Cradock were:

Douglas Flemmer born 25th June 1865
 Edward Thornhill born 25th March 1867
 Charles Christian born 29th January 1869
 Wilfred Naested born 10th January 1871
 Anna Betty Camilla date of birth unknown
 Maria Louise born 17th December 1877

It is interesting to see how the Danish family names 'Flemmer', 'Christian', 'Naested', 'Anna Betty Camilla' and 'Marie Louise' were handed down in this family.

From what I have read of him Edward was an upright, austere character and Marjorie Gillfillan quotes his son Douglas:

'The children never really got to know their father as he was so strict with them. When they came down to breakfast each morning, they lined up and said "Good morning Sir" to him and then sat down to breakfast. They always addressed him as "Sir". Edward always had a plate of oatmeal porridge, and ate it in the Scots way, with salt on it, and with milk in a separate cup nearby. He would take a spoonful of porridge, dip it into the milk, and then eat it.'

Apart from his legal practice he worked tirelessly for Cradock. He was a member of the Town Council for years and served a term as Mayor. His great contribution was in education, where he was largely instrumental in solving a long running problem with the founding of the Cradock Boys' High School. Edward was an avid gardener and his fruit trees and vines were renowned in the district.

He died at his home The Abbey in Bree Street Cradock on the 20th July 1908 at the age of 70 and is buried in the Municipal graveyard. Charlotte lived on for many years dying aged 90 on the 17th June 1934 at Wilsonia near East London. I think she may have been living at the home of her son Wilfred Naested Gilfillan at the time of her death. When she died she was the sole surviving 'Danish' Flemmer, all of her brothers and sisters having died by that time.

As we have seen, Charlotte and Edward had six children:

- 1 Douglas Flemmer Gilfillan 1865 – 1948
Sophia Magdalena de Jongh 1865 – 1935



Douglas Flemmer Gilfillan



Sophia Magdalena de Jongh

The long and very interesting life of Douglas is well covered in the fine Gilfillan book by Marjorie Gilfillan that I mentioned above. I don't intend to try to repeat what is in the book but will use extracts from it to try and capture what I can of Douglas' long and eventful life.

He was born in Cradock on the 26th June 1865, the first child of Edward and Charlotte and was baptized at St. Peter's. I quote:

He said his early life in Cradock was a happy one. All the children in the town played happily together, and never worried whether they were English, Afrikaans or any other nationality. Douglas had a great affection for his mother and father,

and also for his family. He frequently accompanied his father into the country. His love of the veld was instilled in him as a boy.

He went to the Cradock Boys' High School where he proved to be exceptionally bright, matriculating at the age of 15. It had been decided that he would follow his father into law. No university degree was required for admission as an attorney, but lengthy articles were served and exams written. Douglas was sent off to Cape Town to the legal firm of Reid and Nephew where he successfully completed his articles. He could not be admitted as an attorney until he turned 21 in 1886.

While in Cape Town he played rugby for the Villager first team and lived at a boarding house at Moullie Point run by the widow of Lourens de Jongh. Mrs. de Jongh had two daughters and it was not long before Douglas had fallen in love with the younger one, Sophia (Sophy). There was no question in those days of them marrying then. Douglas was far too young, and had no means of supporting her. It must have been very difficult for this young couple when he went back to his father's practice in Cradock in 1886. They kept up a lengthy correspondence over the years and married four years later in Pretoria.

I'm sure Douglas found Cradock very quiet after his years in Cape Town. In his later letters to the family he alludes to the fact that he wasn't taken 'seriously'. He was probably seen as far too young by the folk of Cradock, and would also always have been in his father's shadow.

The Transvaal was booming and encouraged by Sophy's brother Jim, Douglas left Cradock in 1888 for Pretoria where Jim had a legal practice. It seems hard to believe now but Barberton in the Lowveld was then the biggest Transvaal town following the gold rush there of 1883. Literally thousands of prospectors, speculators, innkeepers, and lady 'entertainers' had poured into the area after the first gold strike and for the one by the Barbers in 1884.

Because the Transvaal was then a Republic Douglas had to qualify to practice in Barberton which he did at Jim's office, passing his law exams in Dutch and qualifying as a sworn translator. He arrived in Barberton in 1889 when the boom was nearly over. The small prospectors had not found their fortunes, the speculators had won or lost badly and people with the real money were as ever, getting on with making more. There was plenty of legal work to do and Douglas bought a half interest in the legal practice of Henry Calderwood.

He was a very good correspondent, keeping in touch with his mother and father in Cradock, and with Sophy and his brothers and business associates. The Gilfillan family is very fortunate to have a collection of letters Douglas wrote while he was in Barberton. They give a vivid picture of his thriving practice and the losses he made through an ill judged speculation. There are hunting trips and visits to the Swazi King on behalf of a client. Of course he missed Sophy, as is

evident from these letters. The couple had not seen each other for eighteen long months when they were married in Pretoria on 10th April 1890.

Douglas and Sophy had four children, all born in Johannesburg:

Vera Louise born on the 15th November 1894
 Dagmar Marie born on the 15th October 1897
 Noel Hamish born on the 25th December 1902
 Angus Edward born in 1906

The couple enjoyed living in Barberton, and had a wide circle of friends. Douglas was very busy with his legal practice and loved to go hunting in the area. He had bought Sophy a piano as a wedding present – something of a rarity in that rough and ready part of the world. She played at concerts and there were games of tennis and frequent picnic parties. It was a town and a time of unusual characters and wonderful stories – it is a pity that space doesn't allow more than a passing reference to them. Although Douglas was a magnificent shot he only hunted for the pot. It was during his time in Barberton that he realized that if the wildlife wasn't protected it would be wiped out. He was a founder of the Transvaal Protection Society and was involved with its successor the Wildlife Protection Society most of his life.

As I said earlier Douglas was very intelligent and very active in all sorts of spheres. It soon became clear that Barberton was too small for him and in 1892 he and Sophy moved to Johannesburg. He established himself as a leading lawyer and was very much part of the thriving business and social scene of the new boom town. This was a time when people were making enormous amounts of money in the gold mining industry and Douglas and Sophy were socializing with people whose names are part of the history of South Africa. Sophy's monthly 'At Homes' were great events and attended by the likes of Sir Abe Bailey, Julius Jeppe, Charles Marks, de Beer and many others.

By 1895 friction between the Boer Government and the *Uitlanders* was coming to a head, a period of the history of South Africa covered by historians more able than I. Suffice to say here that a Reform Committee was formed by Douglas and others, based at the Rand Club, to bring about a better lot for the *Uitlanders*. Unfortunately Leander Starr Jameson launched his ill advised raid, which was easily defeated by the Boers. This had far reaching repercussions – Jameson and the Reform Committee were jailed in Pretoria, Rhodes resigned as Premier of the Cape and the scene was set for the Boer War in 1899.

Douglas and the Committee spent time in jail, were brought to trial and sentenced to death. This was later reduced to a fine of £2 000 pounds for most of them, and Douglas was released when Sir Abe Bailey (another Cradock man) paid his fine. Released from jail, Douglas returned to his legal practice and life started to settled down for a while. Of course there was continued tension

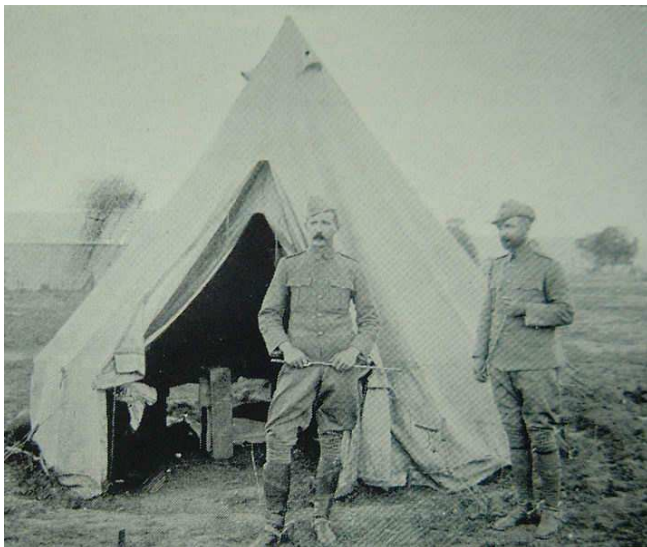
between the Boer Government, the *Uitlanders* and the British Government with consequences that we know only too well.

The Gilfillans were prospering in this period and in 1898, persuaded by Julius Jeppe they moved to what was to become *the* suburb for the rich and famous – Belgravia. Douglas and Sophy had their magnificent home ‘Elgin’ built at a cost of £8 000, a staggering amount for the time. The same year he formed a law partnership with Richard Baumann (later Bowman) and this partnership has really stood the test of time – as Bowman Gilfillan it is still one of South Africa’s leading legal practices.

1899 was of course a turning point for the whole country. Tensions were mounting and with conditions becoming impossible Sophy and the two children left with hundreds of others on a refugee train to stay with her sister in Queenstown. War broke out in October 1899, and Douglas left immediately for Pietermaritzburg where he played a prominent part, with 10 other Reform Committee members, in the formation of the Imperial Light Horse.

As a lieutenant with the ILH he is quoted in several books on the Boer War and the regiment – he certainly saw a lot of action. I quote from the book *Colonial Officers in the Boer War* –

Gilfillan, D F. South African War 1899-1900. Relief of Ladysmith, including action at Colenso, operations of 17-24 Jan 00, and action at Spion Kop, operations of 5-7 Feb 00 and action at Vaal Krantz, operations on the Tugela Heights (14-27 Feb 00) and action at Pieter’s Hill. Relief of Mafeking. Served with the Imp Lt Horse. Queen’s Medal with 4 clasps.



As a matter of interest I was sent this information by Chris Biggins a medal collector who has Douglas’ Queen’s Medal in his collection. Chris also sent me extracts from G.F. Gibson’s history of the ILH:

‘The test for riding was rigorous enough to gladden the heart and satisfy the requirements of the most exacting Regular Cavalry Riding Master. This responsible task was undertaken by Lt Douglas Gilfillan.’

Douglas, standing at right in the field

In the context of the war, this favourable comparison to a 'Regular Cavalry Riding Master' should be seen as the ultimate compliment. Generally speaking the British Army looked down on the Colonial forces that had joined them in the fight against the Boers.

There is another reference to Douglas –

During the Relief of Mafeking, 'F' Squadron was commanded by Capt D. Gilfillan with Lieuts P. Greathead and J.D. Barry. Total all ranks ILH in the relief column 450.

From a letter the family has from the author of this book, Gibson, it seems that the history of the ILH may never have been published if it were not for Douglas' intervention

I firmly believe that our book will be successful. If so, it will be a triumph for you, more so than anyone else. You have borne the heat and burthen of the day. Some of those associated with us have been a trial, cursed with filleted vertebrae, but it was ever thus. They succeeded in delaying printing for nearly a year. That their timidity has been finally overcome is due entirely to you. Finally your agreeing to advance the £50, towards the printing delivered the coup de grace to their opposition. Just ten thousand thanks and my gratitude and that of all Comrades.



*The Queen's medal
awarded to Douglas*

The terrible war dragged on and on. Douglas didn't see Sophy and the girls during the whole time he was on active service. Shortly after the capture of Pretoria the British forces needed to restore law and order and he was seconded and appointed as a judge of the Special Court. The Court had jurisdiction to try all Civil and Criminal cases on the Witwatersrand and Douglas was also magistrate for Germiston and Boksburg.

With the war over Douglas moved back to his legal practice with Baumann, and the family were finally reunited in 1902. They moved back into Elgin which had survived undamaged despite being used by the British Army, to find they had a new neighbour. This was Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, who had moved into Jeppe's house 'Friedenheim'. Douglas' daughter Dagmar, 5 at the time, remembers being fascinated by the sentries posted outside the house and Kitchener's carriage drawn by magnificent greys.

Life began to return to normal and Bowman and Gilfillan worked tirelessly to build a large and thriving legal practice. Douglas seems to have been a man with endless energy – he was involved in all sorts of committees, apart from his heavy legal workload. One thing he always made sure of was the annual trip with his family to the bushveld. He hunted all his life – there is a story of his legendary marksmanship. He had gone springbok hunting in the Karoo with a new five-cartridge rifle. At a distance of 400 yards he shot five running buck with five shots. Astonished local farmers, no mean shots themselves, measured the distances and confirmed that the buck had been hit by one round each and had fallen about 50 yards apart. I'm not sure how this sort of thing fits with Douglas' lifelong involvement with the Wildlife Society, but it is of course a fact that to this day springbok are culled on a regular basis in the Karoo.

Douglas had a life long love of the veld and the wide open spaces. He was also a very competent botanist. The South African Botanical Annals show a number of plants to his credit and record that he identified a number of species on a farm in the Karoo – this was probably his brother Ted's farm Conway near Middelburg.

There had been regular trips to his cousin Willie Gilfillan's farm in the Waterberg and in 1911 Douglas bought the next door farm *Ongegundand* and built a holiday home there. Later he bought a neighbouring farm and after the First World War the three farms were managed by his son-in-law Ewald Scholtz.

Like his father before him, Douglas had a great interest in education, and for forty years was on the governing board of Jeppe Boys' High School – Jeppe Park was renamed Gilfillan Park in recognition of his services. With the children grown up Elgin was sold and Douglas and Sophy moved to Parktown before settling in Linden, where they created a beautiful garden complete with a small golf course.

Sophy died on the 8th January 1939, and Douglas went to live with his son Noel, who had by then followed his father into the legal practice. When war broke out Noel immediately joined up and Douglas with Richard Bowman, by then old men had to shoulder the responsibility of managing the practice.

Douglas was 80 when the war ended and still went to his office every day. We have this description of him

He was a trim figure, a little bowed with age, five feet eight inches tall, white hair somewhat thinning, a flowing white moustache, ruddy complexion and china blue eyes.

There is an amazing story told when he set out with a ranger named Edwards to hunt down a wounded lion in 1944:

Suddenly the lion charged them and took them by surprise. The lion knocked Edwards over and started to savage him on the ground. Douglas Gilfillan, now nearly eighty years of age, calmly turned to the lion, put his rifle on a vital spot, and fired. The force of the shot blew the lion right over to the other side of Edwards and killed it instantly. The men congratulated Douglas on his bravery but he laughed it off and turned to see how badly Edwards had been mauled.

Douglas died on the 5th of September 1948 at the home of his son Angus, and I'm sure his end was as he would have wished it.

He was a born story-teller and people of every generation enjoyed listening to his stories. As a matter of fact, on the day he died, he had been having Sunday lunch with his son Angus, and had just told a most amusing story, when he sat back, put his hands together, and died so quietly few realised his spirit had gone.

In these few pages I have tried to sum up what was a most remarkable life, marked by adventure, great business achievement and a giving of time and help to the community he lived in.

On his death, a fellow solicitor, Walter Webber wrote a fitting epitaph:

I have known Douglas Gilfillan as an articled clerk, on the sports field and as a colleague in the legal profession, where we have often been on different sides of disputes, but I have never known him to do anything except play cricket.

As we have seen Douglas and Sophy had four children:

1.1 Vera Louise Gilfillan 1894 – married Norwood Edward Coaker

I know very little about Vera and her husband and children. She was born shortly after her parents moved to Johannesburg and spent her early years there. Just before her fifth birthday she left with her mother and sister Dagmar and thousands of other refugees shortly before the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War.

When the war ended, the family came back to Johannesburg and the girls went to a small private school started by Julius Jeppe in Belgravia. In 1907 with their father in poor health they were sent to their aunt in Queenstown, attending the Girls' High School until 1910 when they came back to Johannesburg.

Vera was then sent to the top girls school Rodean in Johannesburg before being sent as boarders to Rodean in Brighton, England for a year. She then went to the Brussels Conservatoire of Music, studying violin and French. From there Vera went to an agricultural school near Ipswich to do an agricultural and animal husbandry course. Certainly a varied education!

Vera and Norwood had two children:

1.1.1 John Coaker

1.1.2 William Coaker

1.2 Dagmar Marie Gilfillan 1897 – married Ewald Vos Scholtz who died in 1957.

I know a little more about Dagmar as there are references to her in the Gilfillan book I have already quoted. She was born in Johannesburg and left with her mother and sister Vera in the great flood of refugees shortly before the Anglo Boer war broke out in 1899. Conditions on some of the trains were appalling but Dagmar's memories were of the food:

The refugee train was delayed on the journey and several people were glad to have tea made for them and to share our large basket of provisions, without which Mother would not undertake any journey. I seem to remember the food was rather short and meat hard to come by. I know we ate sheep's head which I thought disgusting.

And who can blame the poor child!

With the war over the family embarked on a long trip overseas, spending months away. They were in Germany for four months and the girls were put into school for part of the time, learning to speak and write German with the help of the young girl who had been employed to look after toddler Noel.

On their return to South Africa Dagmar went to a small private school in Belgravia started by Julius Jeppe. When her father's health broke down in 1907 all the children were sent to their aunt in Queenstown and the girls were put into the Girls' High School there. In 1910 both girls came back to Johannesburg and Dagmar became a day girl at Jeppe High.

In 1912 she went to Rodean in Brighton England with her sister Vera, staying until war broke out in 1914. Shortly after the war ended she married Ewald Scholtz. He had joined the newly formed Royal Flying Corps as a very young man. He was shot down over Germany while scattering propaganda leaflets and spent most of the war as a prisoner.

After their marriage it was agreed that Ewald would manage his father-in-law Douglas' farm, now called Sunningdale in the Waterberg. He and Douglas got on together and the arrangement worked very well.

Dagmar and Ewald had two children:

1.2.1 Margaret Scholtz

1.2.2 Julian Scholtz

1.3 Noel Hamish Gilfillan 1902 – 1977 married Ellen Marjorie Morris born about 1905

Noel spent his early years growing up at the family home Elgin in Belgravia. Although he came from a wealthy and influential family, it seems to me that he never let this distract him from a life of hard work and achievement. He described his early life as very happy – there were lots of children in the neighbourhood to play with and it is interesting for us to see how different life was in the early 1900's. A big ballroom had just been added to Elgin:

He remembers the formality of life in those days. The second Tuesday in the month was his mother's At Home day, when her friends called, had tea and left their calling cards. A dinner party was a very proper affair with five or six courses, and additional staff hired for the evening.

From the time he was ten his father took him on hunting trips every year, trekking on donkey carts through the Springbok Flats in search of game. It must have been an idyllic time for the young boy, sharing a tent with his father, up at dawn looking for spoor, and tracking their quarry. He has his own .22 high powered rifle and did his own share of shooting for the pot.

After going to Jeppe Preparatory School he went to Jeppe High and at the age of 13, went as a boarder to Hilton College in Natal. He was scholar of the year in 1920 when he finished school. The following year he entered the University of Cape Town to study for a law degree, having decided to follow his father and grandfather before him. He played in the under 19 rugby team but considered boxing his *forte* and was the lightweight champion. He entered fully into life at UCT – was on the Boxing Committee, in the Debating Society and was on the Committee of the Law Society.

He didn't consider himself a brilliant student, but his determination to succeed and ability to work hard were recognised by his lecturers, who recognised him as a born leader. When he completed his degree, the university Principal recommended him for a position as private secretary to Sir Ernest Oppenheimer. There can hardly be a better confirmation of the esteem in which he was held. After two years with Anglo American he left to set up his own legal firm with Thomas Kinna.

In 1928 he married Marjorie Morris, a B.A. student he had met at UCT. Marjorie later wrote the book *The Story of One Branch of the Gilfillan Family* to which I am indebted for most of the information I have here. She was the daughter of Dr.

Frank Morris and his wife Emily of Cape Town. We have a description of Noel at this time and interestingly, of the ideals that shaped his life

Noel, fair haired when young, had light brown hair when he grew up. He was 5ft. 8 ins. tall (1.73m) and weighed only 135lbs. (61.2 kgs) when he married. He had the blue eyes of the Gilfillans, and in appearance was a typical Gilfillan, with a big nose, high forehead and determined chin.

Like most of the young people of his generation, Noel had high ideals and a great sense of service, instilled in him by his father. "You cannot take everything" said Douglas to his son "without giving as well"

Noel was a man full of energy and big ideas. He worked tirelessly at making a success of his legal practice and also found time to set up the Instalment Property Investment Company and the Dove Insurance Corporation, both of which thrived.

By 1936 he had proved his ability for hard work and his business acumen. His father's firm, now called Bowman Gilfillan and Blacklock badly needed young blood and Noel was persuaded to join his father as a junior partner. One of his clients was De Havilland and through dealing with cases involving their airplanes he became an expert in aviation law. He and Marjorie enjoyed a busy and happy social life; they had many friends and spent every Saturday night dancing. Holidays were spent in the bushveld with their children and, like his father before him Noel loved the life out in the open. There were many happy nights around the campfire with his wife and children telling stories and adventures of the bush.

When war broke out in 1939, Noel immediately signed up with his father's old regiment – the Imperial Light Horse. He was transferred to the Air Force and with the rank of captain was sent North in 1941. The family has a wonderful collection of letters, describing his flight up to Nairobi and his life there. Over the next few months he was moved on to Cairo keeping up a warm correspondence with his wife and children.

In Cairo he seems to have worked himself so hard that his health deteriorated badly and he came back to South Africa by sea so that he could recover. Because of serious management problems at Bowman Gilfillan he was allowed to resume work there in 1943.

In March 1946 the family moved to their new home Littlefillan, a 75 acre farm near present day Benmore about 15kms from the centre of Johannesburg. Looking at this area today it is hard to believe that it was once fertile farmland, with wide open spaces teeming with wild birds. Over the years a big jersey herd was built up with this side of the farming being managed by Marjorie.

The couple had busy lives – Noel had many business interests. There were trips overseas and holidays at the sea. Noel was on the Board of Governors of Hilton,

President of the Wildlife Society, on the National Parks Board, and was also President of the 1820 Settler Association. For his work with this latter organisation he was awarded the Queen's Medal.

The constant stress became too much and he was persuaded to take up trout fishing. This led Noel to buy a farm with river rights at Dullstroom which he called Elgin Farm. Many happy weeks were spent with friends and family in this lovely part of South Africa. With their usual energy Noel and Marjorie transformed Elgin Farm into a model trout farm, planting trees and introducing stock.

In 1967 after his retirement from Bowman Gilfillan, Noel had the opportunity to buy a game farm in the Tuli Block in Botswana. He approached this new project with his usual energy and enthusiasm. He died after a long and productive life in 1977. Noel and Marjorie had three children:

1.3.1 Brian Mayo Gilfillan 1929 – 1984 married Jenifer Mary Griffiths 1932 –

Brian had his early education at Parkview Boys' School and Parktown High before going to Hilton. He completed a Law B.A. at UCT and an Honours Degree at Oxford. He completed his articles at Walker Lewis Godley and Field in Cape Town before joining Bowman Gilfillan and Blacklock. He later completed an M.A.

He and Jenifer had four children:

1.3.1.1 John Hamish Gilfillan 1956 – married Jeannette Eve Malan 1954 – two children

1.3.1.2 Harriet Mary Gilfillan 1957 –

1.3.1.3 Andrew Douglas Gilfillan 1959 –

1.3.1.4 William Noel Griffith Gilfillan 1962 –

1.3.2 Graeme Douglas Gilfillan 1931 – 1950

Graeme was educated at Parktown School and Pridwin before going to Hilton. He was an outstanding cross-country runner, an excellent marksman and played rugby in the first XV. He also played in the Natal Midlands XV with his brother Robin. While at Hilton he developed a keen interest in taxidermy and the first birds mounted by him were displayed in the Hilton School Museum.

Graeme went to the University of the Witwatersrand to study medicine. He played in a curtain raiser for the Transvaal under 19 team before the South Africa – New Zealand test at Ellis Park. This talented life was cut tragically short when he was killed in a motor bike crash in 1950. His father donated a rifle to Hilton College each year to be competed for in a tournament in his memory. In 1965 Noel donated a rugby field and pavilion to Hilton called the Graeme Gilfillan Pavilion.

1.3.3 Robin Francis Gilfillan 1934 – 2001 married Bernice Bramson

Robin had his early education at Parktown School and Pridwin before going to Hilton as a boarder. He had an outstanding school career. He was a prefect, a member of the Debating, Photographic and Music Societies and Commander of 'A' Troop of the Cadets. He was an outstanding sportsman representing the school in first team rugby, cricket, tennis, swimming, hockey, gymnastics and water polo. He played for the Natal Schools rugby team.

He started a degree at UCT but later did a Business Administration course at the Manchester University Institute of Technology. While there he played for Sale Rugby and was selected for a trial for Scotland. Just before the trial he was kicked in the head resulting in severe concussion and the end of his rugby career. He worked for Dove Insurance Company, which had been set up by his father and when that was sold, formed Lenagil Investments with a group of friends.

Robin and Bernice had four children:

1.3.3.1 Graeme Douglas Gilfillan 1960 –

1.3.3.2 Berin Nicholas Gilfillan 1961 –

1.3.3.3 James Duncan Gilfillan 1966 –

1.3.3.4 Margaret Eliana Gilfillan 1970 –

1.4 Angus Edward Gilfillan born about 1906 married Alice Britten – they had three children:

1.4.1 Ann Gilfillan

1.4.2 Jean Gilfillan

1.4.3 Douglas Gilfillan

2

Edward 'Ted' Thornhill Gilfillan 1867 – 1963

Mathilda 'May' Hart Cook 1876 – 1971

Ted was born in Cradock on the 25th March 1867 and spent his early years in the town. He was educated at the Cradock Boy's High School, an institution his father put so many devoted years of service into improving. He spent some time at Stellenbosch University before coming back to the Middelburg District where he was to spend the rest of his life farming. By 1886 when he was 19 his farm diaries show that he was on the farm Conway.

In 1892 aged 25 he and his brother Wilfred obtained two mortgages totalling £1 200 for the purchase of Conway Farm. The loan was provided by Harvey Bagnall and Anna Noble Willcox and security was '*part of farm Groot Hoek (known as Ruighte Kloof) folio 122a/1002 measuring 1207 morgen 283 sq. roods*'. There

was another mortgage in 1898 this time provided by Ellen Gilfillan (born Weyland) wife of Alfred Gilfillan for an amount of £880. Security was a *'piece of perpetual quitrent land 1333 morgen portion of the farm Stapelbergs Kraal Agter Sneeberg.'*

In 2003 while visiting the Middelburg Museum I found the Ted Gilfillan's farm diaries which were lying in a pile on the floor. They date from the 1880's and give a fascinating glimpse of farm life through the years. Of special interest to us is the frequent mention of the Flemmer and Naested families over the early years. Many of them were farming in the area or living in Cradock and Middelburg. They were obviously close and saw a lot of each other. I give one typical example:

Tuesday 27 July 1887

Camilla and Wilfred (Gilfillan) [Ted's brother and sister] rode over to Thornhills' after breakfast to a picnic. Sent Jan for cart horse to take Emmy and Dot (Flemmer) [cousins] over too, but just then the Naesteds [cousins] came to fetch them so when they had started I rode over to the dance which Barrand was giving

Farming wasn't all hard work as we see from these entries;

Wednesday 22 April 1891

I went to the siding and met Ida and Camilla; after dinner about 3.30 we started for Distins and arrived there a little after sunset

Thursday 23 April

Camilla and I started home at about 5 a.m. after a most enjoyable dance

In 1899 the Anglo Boer War started and like so many young men loyal to the Crown, Ted signed up. Because of his knowledge and bush craft he served as a scout behind enemy lines as part of Gorrings's Flying Column. Boer commandos moved throughout the farms of the Middelburg District and his grandson, also Ted Gilfillan told me:

There was a period when troops camped on Conway Farm. There was a dam directly above the Conway Farm house and Grandpa threw surplus ammunition which was left behind by the troops into the dam. The dam was broken down in later years and became the vegetable garden for the homestead. As children we would often find rounds of ammunition in the vegetable beds.

A British officer fell off his horse whilst riding in the veld. Years later Grandpa picked up a gold sovereign there but look as we did we never found another!

The terrible war over Ted married Mathilda 'May' Hart Cook on the 25th March 1903 on the farm Glen Heath near Conway. May was 26 at the time and it's not

known how the couple met. She was born at Douglas near the Orange River and was adopted by a childless aunt and uncle, growing up on their farm Two Rivers near Steytlerville.

The year after getting married, with the economy in a bad way after the war, Ted took another mortgage this time for £2 000. It was secured on *'various quitrent portions including Conway but also Dist. Middelburg portion of farms Zeevenfontein, Sterkfontein, Lemoenkloof, Taaiboschfontein'*. Ted and May farmed Conway most of their lives, and especially in the early years it was a beautiful, productive piece of the world as grandson Ted tells us:

He farmed on Conway Farm, a farm of 4000 morgen with 70 morgen of wonderfully productive flood irrigated lands. The principle business in early times was the breeding and sale of horses and during the ostrich boom years would have run ostriches and sheep.

It was, at the time of purchase and for the period up to about 1940, a farm endowed with a steady water supply from a fountain feeding into the Klein Brak River, a tributary of the Great Fish. As Middelburg grew in size and as the irrigation farmers tapped into the sponge feeding the Klein Brak, the springs slowly dried up and the river became increasingly dry in my father's time.

Ted was a leading member of the farming community and was Chairman of the Midlands Farmers' Association for nearly forty years. He served with the South African forces in East Africa during WWI. At some stage he and probably Jack Bowker made a trip to North Africa and brought back superior ostrich breeding stock. I read the story of this cloak and dagger operation years ago without realizing Ted was involved. It certainly made a big difference to ostrich breeding in this country.

He sold Conway Farm to his son Edward Mounsey Gilfillan in 1943 and moved to the farm Brincliffe about 16 kms towards Tafelberg from Conway Farm. He continued to take a lively interest in the affairs of the community and attended farmers meetings and regular tennis days at Tafelberg. I am told Ted and Jack Bowker would always sit together, both large elderly gentlemen with white hair and white beards, they were known as the Tafelberg twins.

Ted lived at Brincliffe with May and his unmarried sister Mary until his death in 1963. May died in 1971.

Ted and May had four children:

2.1 Wilfred 'Bill' Wayland Gilfillan 1904 – 1989 married Mary Daphne de Kock 1911 – 1996

I know nothing about Bill except that he and Mary had two children:

2.1.1 Jean Mary Gilfillan 1942 – married Peter Bartleet 1942 –

They had four children:

2.1.1.1 Corinne Bartleet 1964 –

2.1.1.2 Lynda Bartleet 1968 –

2.1.1.3 Wendy Bartleet 1973 –

2.1.1.4 Tracey Bartleet 1974 –

2.1.2 Robin Meyer Edward Gilfillan 1945 – married Lynda Ann de Vries 1948

–

They had two children:

2.1.2.1 Joanne Gilfillan 1975 –

2.1.2.2 Katherine Gilfillan 1979 –

2.2 Cicely Louise Gilfillan 1905 – married Harold Melhuish died 1946

I know nothing about this family but have a record of three children:

2.2.1 David Melhuish

2.2.2 Brian Melhuish

2.2.3 Jenefer Melhuish

2.3 Edward Mounsey Gilfillan 1910 – 1981 married Mary 'Mels' Shakerley Antrobus 1913 – 2000

Born in 1910 Edward is described by his son Ted as *'handsome, curly headed and full of energy and game for anything.'* He grew up on Conway Farm and was schooled at St Andrews in Grahamstown where he excelled at swimming.

Edward was sent by his father to learn farming on the farm Longacre near Baroda owned by Geoff and Mary Antrobus. Geoff had come from a wealthy landed family in England and had married Mary, a daughter of the well-known Hilton-Barber family. It was here that Edward met and courted Mary their youngest daughter. She was apparently "delicate" as young lady and seemed to have spent most of her early years at home before being sent to school in Grahamstown. The couple were engaged for seven years and finally married in 1936 just as the depression was coming to an end.

Edward had inherited the farm Two Waters near Steytlerville which he sold in 1943, buying Conway Farm from his father. Edward joined the First City Regiment soon after the outbreak of the Second World War. He was sent for officers' training at Roberts Heights and was posted with his regiment to Madagascar. He suffered very severely from eczema. On a march north the troops were not allowed to take their boots off and his eczema broke out to such an extent that he had to be sent back to Durban on a hospital ship. He suffered from blood-poisoning and very nearly died. He was subsequently invalided out of the army and went back to Conway Farm.

As we have seen the farm declined in productivity over the years because of the ever decreasing water supply. With shallow soil and prone to drought it was difficult to make it fully productive. The farm's main line was wool-sheep with a sideline in cream production. Farming here was never easy but the wool boom in the 1950s meant a welcome improvement in the family fortunes.

Edward was Chairman of the Middelburg Divisional Council for many years and played a prominent part in the affairs of the Midland Farmers Association. He was an accomplished golfer and a shotgun and rifle shottist of note, gaining his Springbok colours with a shotgun. He enjoyed hunting and fishing and played good tennis and cricket for the Tafelberg Club.

I have found correspondence dating back to the 1950's with my grandfather, MT Flemmer of East London. There was much talk about a family history that was being written, but as far as I know nothing came of it. His son Ted describes his father:

He was a devoted father and spent hours coaching skills in fishing and shooting not only in his own children but in children of many friends and relations. He loved to play bridge and taught many people that skill. He was a raconteur of note. People would always gather around to hear what he had to tell.

At the urging of his far sighted wife Mary, Edward persuaded fellow farmers to buy land in the newly opened town of Kenton-on-Sea. He and five other farmers bought a hotel site which they cut up into six plots along the Kariega River and that part of town is still referred to as 'Little Middelburg'. The Kenton plot became the venue for annual family holidays which enabled him to play golf, fish and enjoy oysters of which he was particularly fond.

After Edward's death in 1981 Mary lived for years in a flat in Middelburg and was well known in the Anglican Church community. When she became frail she moved into an old age home in Grahamstown and also spent much of her time visiting her daughter Camilla and her husband Henry Gush on the farm Woodbury in the Paterson district. Mary died on the 21st of November 2000. The couple had four children:

2.3.1 Camilla Mary Gilfillan 1938 – married Henry Gurney Gush 1936 – 2005

I first met Camilla and Henry at the Family Reunion in Cradock in 2003. A year later I stayed on their game farm Woodbury near Paterson. Camilla reminded me a lot of my own Flemmer aunts and uncles and she and Henry were kindness itself. The farm was wonderful and they took me on my own private game drive that evening. I was so sorry to hear that Henry had died after a short illness soon afterwards. Camilla and Henry had two children:

2.3.1.1 Giles Joseph Gurney Gush 1968 – married Jennifer Seaman 1970 – one child

2.3.1.2 Andrew Edward Gurney Gush 1970 – married Donna Leigh Kemp 1977 – one child

2.3.2 Edward ‘Ted’ Crawford Gilfillan 1940 – married Ruth Mary McJannet 1942 –

Ted has been an invaluable source of information on this branch of the descendants. He went to St Andrew’s College, Grahamstown before completing a B Sc Agric. at the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg. He also completed a UNISA B Comm.

He worked in the Sugar Industry with Tongaat Sugar and then Tongaat-Hulett Sugar his entire working life. He was with Tongaat Sugar as Agronomist from 1964 and then ran a small farmer development company within Tongaat. He was General Manager Agric in Northern Natal and finally General Manager of the Açucareira de Xinavane Sugar Mill and Estates in Xinavane, Moçambique from 1998 to 2003. Ted retired to Kenton-on-Sea and his interests include woodwork, metal work, electronics, the study of trees, cycling, canoeing, fishing and flying a microlight.

Ted and Janet had three children:

2.3.2.1 Edward Hugh Gilfillan 1970 –

2.3.2.2 Clare Mary Gilfillan 1972 –

2.3.2.3 Ross Mounsey Gilfillan –

2.3.3 Jocelyn May Gilfillan 1948 – married Chris Visser –

I know nothing about this family, but have a record of two children:

2.3.3.1 Richard Visser 1982 –

2.3.3.2 Christine Visser 1982 –

2.3.4 Philip Mounsey Gilfillan 1950 – married Helen Kinsey –

I know nothing about this family but have a record of four children:

2.2.4.1 Edward Mounsey Gilfillan 1985 –

2.2.4.2 Caitlin Gilfillan 1987 –

2.2.4.3 Anthea Gilfillan 1990 –

2.2.4.4 David Gilfillan 1993 –

2.4 Mary Thornhill Gilfillan 1912 – unmarried

3 Charles Christian Gilfillan 1869 –
Isobel Gertrude Randell

Charles, or Christian as I think he was known, was born in Cradock on the 29th January 1869, the third child of Edward and Charlotte. I know very little about him and presume that like his brothers he had his schooling at Cradock Boys High.

There are mentions of him in his brother Ted's farm diaries, so I assume he was farming in the Cradock or Middelburg Districts.

Charles and Isobel had five children:

- 3.1 Douglas Gilfillan 1912 –
- 3.2 Waldemar Gilfillan
- 3.3 Gwen Gilfillan
- 3.4 George Gilfillan
- 3.5 Charles Gilfillan

4 Wilfred Naested Gilfillan 1871 – 1946
Marie Brinker 1873 – 1940

Wilfred was born in Cradock on the 10th January 1871. Edward and Charlotte's fourth child. Like his brothers he was educated at Cradock Boys High. I know very little about him except that in 1892 he and his brother Ted entered into a mortgage agreement for the purchase of Conway Farm. I am told that he farmed in the Cradock District most of his life. There are several mentions of him in his brother Ted's farm diaries.

Wilfred and Marie had three children whose details will be found in Charlotte and Edward's family tree.

5 Anna Betty Camilla Gilfillan died 1915
Launcelot Malcolm Harison 1854 –



We don't know when Camilla as she was known, was born. In fact very little is known about her at all, although there are mentions of her in her brother Ted's diaries. She would go up to Conway to visit him and go to parties and dances with him.

While looking for something else entirely at the National Library, by chance I found two detailed newspaper reports of her wedding. One was by The Midland News reporter and the

Anna Betty Camilla Gilfillan

following day the editor decided to publish an account written by 'a young maiden'. The ceremony took place at St. Peter's in Cradock on the 5th of February 1902 and there are several references to it being a happy occasion and a welcome distraction from the Anglo Boer War.

Camilla married Launcelot Harison '*our popular and very able Magistrate and Administrator of Martial Law*'. The best man was Camilla's brother Ted. The report continues:

For the benefit of our lady readers we may here record that the bride looked charming, being attired in a dress and train of white oriental satin with transparent sleeves and a yoke of tucked chiffon and silk lace chiffon. She also wore a veil with the usual wreath of real orange blossoms and stephanotis.

Her bridesmaid was her cousin Louie Flemmer dressed, as we know from her book *The Little Dane*, in her own wedding dress. Louie's wedding had been postponed several times because of the War and despite being told it was bad luck – had decided to wear her own wedding outfit. Louie married the following month in the same church.

There are some interesting references to the times they were living in which I quote here:

Mr. and Mrs. E. Gilfillan have lived in Cradock a great many years, and have a large circle of friends and acquaintances, but they decided that if they attempted to entertain them all even the halls of a South African home which are known to be elastic would not contain them all, so to relatives only – with very few exceptions – were invitations sent. And in spite of the fact that the Boers are just now very active in the Cradock district and the railways not considered very safe, as many of the relations as possibly could, traveled long distances in order to be present on the happy occasion.

Despite restricting the guest numbers the Church was '*crowded to excess*' which goes to show how many people there were in the combined Gilfillan, Flemmer and Naested families by this time! The wedding party left the Church for the Gilfillan home The Abbey in Bree Street where the celebrations started as reported by the tongue-in-cheek 'young maiden':

All looked very happy and smiling; no solemn looks or speeches were allowed under instant pain of dismissal by the best man, who administered the law on that subject in a martial and stern manner, which struck terror into the heart of any unfortunate woman who felt inclined to shed just a tear or two to show she was enjoying herself.

The couple left on the evening train for their honeymoon at the Kowie.

I have not found out any more about this couple. There is some confusion in the records in South Africa as to how many children they had but I am certain it was only three. Camilla died young in 1915 and I think Launcelot remarried.

Camilla and Launcelot had three children:

5.1 Malcolm Gilfillan Harison 1902 –

5.2 Bessie Louise Harison 1905 –

5.3 Edward Launcelot Gilfillan Harison

7

Maria Louise Gilfillan 1877 – 1881

Maria is not mentioned in any accounts of the family. I only found out about her when I came across her gravestone in the Cradock Municipal Graveyard. She was born on the 17th of December 1877 and died shortly before her fourth birthday on the 7th of November 1881. It is quite likely that she died in one of the frequent outbreaks of scarlet fever, typhoid and cholera which were a sad feature of frontier towns.