

Historical background to the links between Fort Hare and the Hunterstoun Centre.

The links between Lovedale, Fort Hare and Hunterstoun, and between the Bokwe-Mathews and Hunter-Wilson families, go back for more than 100 years. From the very beginning of the nineteenth century people in Southern Africa---including immigrants of all types who arrived from different corners of the world---were on the move. Our story begins with a young couple caught up in what became known as the *mfecane*, the scattering--- waves of people fleeing in all directions from the rising power of Shaka in Zululand as he sent his *Impis* to expand his dominance on those around him. Some time at the beginning of the 1820's Colwephi Bokwe and his wife Ntondo with their baby Yogwana on her back and their older daughter, Jaliswa, running by her side fled south across the Tukela. After much hardship they eventually reached the land west of the Keiskamma River. Those who arrived in this way were known to the Xhosa living in the area as the *Ama/Mfengu* from their cry, "*Siya mfenguza*" ----"we are destitute and need help". It was there that Colwephi met missionaries recently arrived from Scotland who had printed Xhosa for the first time in 1823 at the original Tyhume ['Chumie'] mission. They had settled on the banks of the Ncera river, a tributary of the Tyhume, and he heard the Good News and was converted. This was at the place that was to become known as the Old Lovedale. In 1834 war erupted again on the eastern frontier where the Xhosa were battling to resist the British invasion of their land. In the upheavals the buildings on the Ncera were destroyed and when the war was over the missionaries decided to rebuild but to do so four miles further west on the banks of the Tyhume river itself which had a larger, more reliable, flow of water.

This was to become the Lovedale where, in 1841, a school under the principalship of Dr. Govan from Scotland, was established. It began with 20 pupils, 11 of them black and 9 white, and for 100 years was to be non-racial and to provide perhaps the best education of any school in South Africa. Amongst the first 20 pupils was Colwephi and Ntondo Bokwe's son, Jacob. He did well and eventually became a teacher at Lovedale where his son, christened John Knox Bokwe, was born in 1855.

The young John Knox Bokwe was exceptionally bright and also very musical. At the age of 12 he met Dr. Govan's successor at Lovedale, Dr. James Stewart and his wife who, in their different ways, were to have a great influence on his life. Mrs. Stewart was to teach him music and Dr. Stewart was to educate him as a man of many parts. He became Stewart's private secretary, a Post Master, an editor, an ordained Minister and---after the South African war--- the founder of a school for destitute whites at Ugie in East

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Griqualand. John Knox Bokwe started composing music when he was 20 and many of his songs and hymns are sung to this day by African choirs all over the continent.

Meanwhile from the other side of the world another young man---some 10 years younger than John Knox Bokwe---was also to be greatly influenced by Dr. James Stewart who was undoubtedly one of the great men of South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. David Hunter, born in Glasgow, started out in life as a business man but whilst still in his 20's felt a strong call to be a missionary. He chose not to be ordained but came out to Africa in the early 1890's and travelled all over the country south of the Limpopo to assess strategically what church mission work was most needed and where it should be located. He concluded that the greatest need was for health care and that it should be centred at Lovedale where James Stewart was at the height of his powers. He went back to Scotland to marry Jesse Macgregor, herself the daughter of missionaries and born in China where her father was principal of a theological college and her mother started a girls' school that was reputed to be the first to insist that girls come with unbound feet. Together they set up home in Lovedale where they lived for over fifty years and where John Knox Bokwe and his family were regular visitors. The Hunter and Bokwe daughters, Monica and Frieda, were at school together at Lovedale and became life-long friends.

During his time at Lovedale. D.A. Hunter raised funds and saw to the establishment and administration of the Victoria Hospital which pioneered the training of African women as nurses, the first two of whom were Mina Colani and Cecilia Makiwane. As a trained businessman D.A. Hunter was to play a key role at Lovedale as an administrator but he also edited the *South African Outlook* for nearly 30 years and was passionate about trees which he planted wherever he could. To further this interest he bought, in 1910, land up in the Amathole mountains only 20 miles from Lovedale but, in those days, two days away by ox-wagon. Sub-division restrictions in the area did not allow him to buy less than half a farm. Thus he acquired the place---with five streams running in to it---which he named Hunterstoun, after ancestral land in Scotland. Here he nurtured trees both indigenous as well as exotics which he grew from seed acquired --- via his missionary connections---from all over the world. Sixty years after his death, Hunterstoun still has one of the richest collections of trees in South Africa.

David & Jesse Hunter had two children, both born at Lovedale, but their first-born, a son, died tragically of appendicitis at the age of six. Their daughter, Monica, had her early education at Lovedale where she was at school both with Frieda Bokwe and with Janet Nonke Maqoma a great grand-daughter of Prince Maqoma. Maqoma was one of the great Xhosa generals in the nineteenth century wars against the British, and it was from Frieda Bokwe, Janet Maqoma and others that Monica learnt that the official

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history of the wars was decidedly one-sided. Not only did Frieda and Janet and Monica and their respective husbands remain friends, but their children also became friends and remain in contact with each other.

Meanwhile as early as 1871 James Stewart had proposed publicly that the time was ripe for the establishment of a university in South Africa that would be open to Africans. At first it was thought that Lovedale itself might grow into such an institution of higher learning but in the end---nearly 50 years after Stewart first made his proposal---Fort Hare was established as a separate institution, on the opposite bank of the Tyhume river from Lovedale. But the old school and the young university college remained very close. The Principal of Lovedale, James Henderson, was chairman of Fort Hare council for many years. The first Principal of Fort Hare was another Scot, Alexander Kerr, who arrived at the end of 1915. Amongst those waiting on the Alice railway platform to greet him and Mrs Kerr was D.A. Hunter who had, by then, been 20 years at Lovedale. Dr. Kerr together with Professor DDT Jabavu, the first senior member of the teaching staff to be appointed, built up the university over the next 30 years. The first graduate of Fort Hare, in 1922, was Z.K. Matthews who had first come to Lovedale as a schoolboy on a scholarship from Kimberley. Soon after his graduation, Z.K. married Frieda Bokwe.

This is not the place to record the distinguished career of Z.K. Matthews as university teacher and political leader during years of great turbulence. But it was he who, as leader of the Cape A.N.C., first proposed the Freedom Charter, for which he was charged with High Treason, and it was he who resigned in 1959, only months before his pension was due, rather than condone the apartheid government's action in taking over Fort Hare with the aim of changing it, in effect, into a tribal college for Xhosa-speakers only, controlled by the state.

During the difficult years of the Treason Trial and before he was driven into exile, Z.K. and Frieda used to drive up from Alice to spend time with Monica in the peace and quiet of the mountains. From when he first came to South Africa to marry Monica in 1935, Godfrey Wilson became a great friend of ZK's. Eight years later, writing to Monica from the army during the Second World War, he asked that ZK be the Godfather of their second son, Tim. When Godfrey died in 1944, Monica (who was living at Hunterstoun at the time) had to get a job immediately. It was Fort Hare which came to her rescue. Dr. Kerr asked her to be warden of the women's residence, Elukhanyisweni whilst Professor Z.K. Matthews appointed her a lecturer in the department of African Studies which he headed. Thus Monica, who had been born in

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Lovedale and studied at Fort Hare during the year after school before she went to Cambridge, returned to Fort Hare for her first teaching job. Subsequently, when she went to Rhodes as professor of Social Anthropology, she retained her connection with Fort Hare as a member of the university council. Many years later, after Fort Hare was liberated in 1990, this connection was to be continued when her elder son, Francis, was appointed chairman of the newly constituted council whose members included Dr. Govan Mbeki, recently released from Robben Island, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

There was also another link between Fort Hare and Hunterstoun during the apartheid years. Hogsback is a place of great beauty and there has for many years been a picnic place within the state-owned forest. As the National Party government extended its vision of apartheid, the picnic spot was declared "For whites only" and the Fort Hare students had nowhere at Hogsback that they could picnic. Monica was incensed and made a plan, so for many years Fort Hare students were able to picnic on the wall of the lochan at Hunterstoun when no (mostly white) tourists or Hogsback ratepayers had access to this private part of Hunterstoun. Family members still meet people who say, "Oh I know your place at Hogsback, we used to picnic there when I was a student at Fort Hare."

It is against the background of this long history linking Lovedale, Fort Hare and Hunterstoun that the development of the Hunterstoun Centre as part of the University of Fort Hare is perhaps best understood. For when the Wilson family came to consider what best to do with the house and library which Monica had built and in which she had lived and worked for many years, where she had prepared the autobiography of Z.K. Matthews for publication and where her father-in-law, John Dover Wilson, had edited his Cambridge edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets, it made sense to approach the university to ask if it would consider buying the buildings and the immediately surrounding garden as a basis for establishing a centre for creativity---located within the wider Hunterstoun garden---- along the lines of such places as Bellagio on the shore of Lake Como in Italy. Fort Hare responded immediately and warmly to the idea and over several years worked with the family to forge a vision of the sort of place that the Centre might become. The core of the shared vision is that the Hunterstoun Centre should be "A unique African space, recognised internationally as one which promotes excellence and creativity in an unspoilt natural environment of beauty and peace." The overall objective is "to provide current and potential leaders in their fields from all walks of life throughout Southern Africa with a creative and innovative space which allows for self-development, reflection, meaningful exchanges and future creative application and action within the communities they serve."

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Thus in 2008, the centenary year of Monica Wilson's birth, her house and the library buildings were handed over to the university and the first conference---organised by the Fort Hare Institute of Social & Economic Research---was held with scholars from all over the world coming to reflect and write about topics arising from her life and work. The keynote speaker at the main dinner at this founding conference of the Hunterstoun Centre was the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor who, as the granddaughter of Frieda & Z.K. Matthews, symbolised the deep ties that had bound together for a century and more the Bokwe-Matthews and Hunter-Wilson families on the one hand and the Lovedale-Fort Hare and Hunterstoun places on the other. Other speakers, that night, cementing those ties were Livingstone Mqotsi who had been taught by Monica at Fort Hare and Gaositwe Chiepe, one of Botswana's most distinguished cabinet ministers, who had been head woman student [& baby-sitter of the two small boys] at Elukhanyisweni when Monica was the Warden there.