

Richard Sancreed Langford

by Ian van Zyl

My Great Grandfather was Richard Sancreed Langford. He was a medical doctor and worked as a missionary doctor in South Africa. (On the death notice of Marguerite Christie Langfordⁱ, signed by him, he states that she is the "wife of Medical Missionary") Dysseldorp was a mission station of the London Missionary Society, near Oudtshoorn. He arrived there in August, 1879, according to the lettersⁱⁱ he wrote to the missionary organization, the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, an organization based in London and under the patronage of the grandson of the founder of the Guinness brewing company, Henry Grattan Guinness and his wife Fanny.

He married Marguerite Couper on January 12, 1880, in Georgeⁱⁱⁱ.

Het Zuid Afrikaansche Tijdschrift^{iv} of August 1882 contains a story by C.F. Muller ("Reisverhale aangaande Egypte en Palestina" - a serialization of his book by the same name) which recounts the story of "Noor", a young girl sold into slavery in her homeland of Abyssinia, rescued by a Swiss living in Cairo, then sent to England from where she accompanied "Miss C" (Marguerite Couper) to South Africa where she married Dr Langford. The child later returned to England and then to Cairo where she was reunited with her Swiss benefactor. C.F.J. Muller states that he married Richard Langford and Marguerite Couper - this is confirmed by his signature on the marriage certificate of Richard Langford and Marguerite Couper

At around the time of the birth of his first child, he was called to provide medical help to a group of Oudtshoorn Burghers on their way to fight in a frontier war in the transkei. This was reported in the Oudtshoorn Courant^v as follows

"With the Oudtshoorn Burghers

Transkei

Ibeka, Dec. 19, 1880

De Rust

Captain Swemmer remaining to see to Redelinghuis, who was taken ill, and placed under the hospitable roof of the Widow Meiring. Mr Langford was sent for and reported a severe attack of inflammation of the lungs.

(These men were on their way on a military campaign (a frontier war) and at De Rust (35km from Oudtshoorn) Mr Langford, working at Dysseldorp, halfway between Oudtshoorn and De Rust, was called in for medical advice.)"

By 1885 he was no longer the missionary at Dysseldorp, a Mr Lamage had succeeded him. He practised medicine in Calitzdorp.

Shortly before he died, on Monday, January 21, 1895, the Oudtshoorn Courant^{vi} reported that "*We regret to hear that Mr R.S. Langford, who was formally missionary at Dysveldorp and later on in medical practice at Calitzdorp, is seriously ill at Calitzdorp and very little hope is entertained of his recovery.*"

According to his Death Certificate^{vii}, cause of death was consumption, from which he had been suffering for 9 months.

Richard Langford's death notice gives his place of birth as Natal and his age as 47 years 9 months, at his death on 26 January 1895. This would give his birthdate as April 1847, a very early date for a birth in Natal. Secondly, in the letters he wrote to Mr and Mrs Guinness^{viii}, he writes of his arrival in Cape Town "*I cannot describe to you my feelings when, still some seven or eight miles out, I looked upon the house, at Sea Point, where I was born*" On his marriage licence in 1880 he gives his place of birth as Cape Town. This leads to the conclusion that the place of birth in the Death Notice is probably incorrectly reported.

In the same letters (to Mr and Mrs Guinness), he speaks of a brother in Natal - perhaps this explains the confusion in the death notice about his birth place.

One of the children was known as "Daisy", probably Marguerite.

Another child was named Hercules Rowley Langford. It is interesting to note that there was a member of the Irish peerage named Hercules Langford Rowley, 2nd Baron Langford. The connection to his family is unknown at this time.

His children from his marriage to Marguerite Couper are:

1. Percival (1881), who died as an infant, was born in Dysveldorp, and buried at Calitzdorp. His death was reported in the Oudtshoorn Courant September 12, 1882 as follows "*We regret to hear of the sad loss by death of the eldest child of Mr **R.S. Langford**, which occurred last week. **Mr and Mrs Langford** had just returned from a trip to England, and were staying with Dr. O'Hare for a few days prior to their departure for Calitzdorp, when on Monday the child showed symptoms of croup, which rapidly developed, and notwithstanding the most careful nursing and the best medical skill, the little one's spirit fled on Friday morning.*"

2. Mary Marguerite (1882) - no information as to her birthplace.

3. Cyril George Archibald (1883) - born in London England according to his Death Notice

4. Lilian Gertrude (1885) - no information as to her birthplace

5. Hercules Rowley - born in Calitzdorp, according to his death notice

He had two further children by his second wife, Alice Maria Barry, namely:

1. Andrew Herbert Langford - died as an infant

2. Alice Martha Langford born 1894

Anyone with further information is asked to contact the author.



Figure 1: Grave of Marguerite Couper and her Son Percival, Calitzdorp. Photograph by the Author, 2007.



Figure 2: The old mission, Dysseldorp (date on building 1836). Photo by the author, 2007



Figure 3: Dysseldorp, Cape Province, South Africa. Photo by the Author, 2007.

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- i Death Notice Marguerite Christie Langford, (Cape Archives MOOC 6/9/246, no. 1121)
 - ii Regions Beyond, Journal of the E. London Institute, Mrs. H.G. Guinness (Ed.), (London 1878-1888), Feb 1885 edition
 - iii Marriage Register, Richard Sancreed Langford and Marguerite Christie Couper, Cape Province. George
 - iv Reisverhalen Aangaande Egypte en Palestina, C.F.J. Muller, (Het Zuid Afrikaansche Tijdschrift August 1882)
 - v Oudtshoorn Courant, Dec. 19, 1880. Page 5.
 - vi Oudtshoorn Courant, 21 January 1895. Page 2
 - vii Death Certificate, Richard Sancreed Langford, South Africa. Cape Province, (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1-9718-30907-99?cc=1779109&wc=MMG9-S6M:875156464 :n.d.>), death certificate
 - viii Regions Beyond, Journal of the E. London Institute, Mrs. H.G. Guinness (Ed.), (London 1878-1888), Feb 1885 edition