



SECTION THREE:

MIGRATION

Nonja Peters



Figure 1
Australia Your Future. Courtesy, National Archives Australia, CP815/1/1 Item 23/21/4 Pt2.

Section Three is concerned with the experience of Dutch Migration to Western Australia pre and post WWII. There were few Dutch in WA before the Second World War, in fact, the last Census before the outbreak of WWII recorded just one hundred and two.

Between 1945 and 1971, around 170,000 Dutch left the Netherlands for Australia. An estimated 25 per cent returned to the Netherlands during the 1950s and 1960s. Approximately 13,000 of the Dutch who made Australia home settled in Western Australia. At the last census around 35,000 Western Australians claimed Dutch Ancestry (ABS 2012). These include the Dutch expatriates working for Dutch corporations in the mining, oil and gas industries.

Everyone's experience of migration is unique, since each case study has not only been shaped by the economic, social, cultural and political situation they left behind, but also by the time of their arrival, gender and age at arrival.

Some migration stories are full of the joy of fulfillment and contribution, others are preoccupied with hardship, homesickness and deprivation and many are a combination of all these elements. The chapters and vignettes in Section III contain a 'selection' of some of the myriad of experiences relating to the benefits and pitfalls, and the hope and courage that underlie them, which were encountered by Dutch migrants to WA before and after WWII.

The focus of the pre-WWII chapters begins with the story of the Bruce Family's Dutch connections by Nonja Peters, followed by Neil Foley's chapter on the Dutch Socialists who settled in WA at the end of the 19th century. The personal vignette by Alet Doornbusch describes the life of her Dutch-born Socialist grandparents and their Australian-born children in rural and urban WA. The chapters by Anne Pauwels, Kim Negenman and Nonja Peters and the personal vignettes by Rietveld, Crijns, Vermeulen, Plug, Pritchard and Eysbertse-van Schaik focus on the diverse experiences, challenges and opportunities that confronted those migrants who chose to resettle in WA after WWII.



Figure 2
National Archives of Australia Collection
C3939/1, N1957/75/106 PT 2.

JOHANNA BRUCE – Nee HERKLOTS AND FAMILY 1850 - 1917

Nonja Peters

A little known Dutch link with WA was introduced by Col. John Bruce, the Officer in Charge of the Pensioner Guards who was commissioned by the British Government in 1850 to accompany and oversee the convict labour that the WA Government had requested from Britain to help strengthen the economy.

John Bruce was born on 25 July 1808 in Athlone, Ireland. He joined the British Bengal Army in 1828, and in the same year married Johanna Jacoba Herklots who, according to John Bruce's biographer, was the daughter of Gregorius Herklots from Bremen, Germany. He was a Fiscal at Chinsura - a Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC) Dutch East India Company settlement - in Bengal.¹ Information in the data bases digitised in 2014 by the Presidency University, note that Gregorius Herklots Senior who was the Acting Governor there from 1784 – 1785, was married to C. G. Kloppenburg from Middleburg in Zeeland in the Netherlands, and that they were the parents of Johanna Herklots.²

John Bruce, Johanna Bruce nee Herklots and their children: Charlotte Elizabeth, Jane Mary, Mary, Caroline, Clarrie, Emily Helen and Edward arrived in the Swan River Colony with a group of Pensioner Guards on 24 October 1850, on board the colony's first convict ship *Hashemy*.

The Bruce family's first place of residence in Perth was the east end of the building in St George's Terrace called 'The Cloisters' (currently only the façade remains, the building behind it is occupied by Landgate – it was the Dutch Club in 1945/6). The Bruce family's next move was to 'Cambray', a house on what was then the Swan River foreshore, which later was the site of the Foy & Gibb Department store. From November 1868 to 29 September 1869 John Bruce was Acting Governor of the Swan River Colony, and Johanna consequently – First Lady. Johanna was known for her kind and charitable disposition, her excellent needlework skills and her love of letter writing. She founded DORCAS – a charitable society that looked after the poor in Western Australia. It was still thriving 50 years later.

Three of the Bruce daughters were married in the first year the family was in Perth. The one who was most relevant to the Dutch theme in this book was that of Mary Bruce. On 3 June 1852, she married Anthony O'Grady Lefroy of Limerick, Ireland, then private secretary to the WA Governor and Colonial Treasurer for 36 years. They had three daughters and two sons, one of whom, Henry Bruce, became Premier of Western Australia in 1917.

Henry Bruce Lefroy continued the Dutch origins he inherited from his mother via his maternal grandmother (Kloppenburg), when he married Rose Agnes Wittenoom, granddaughter of the colony's Anglican chaplain,

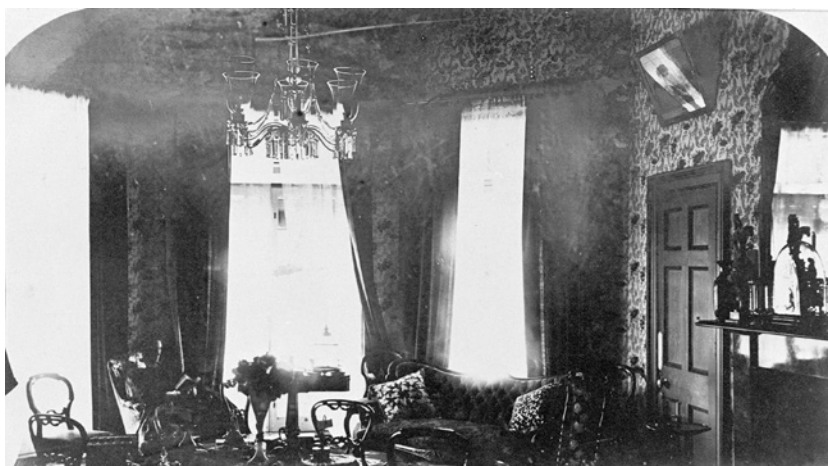


Figure 1
Johanna Herklotz in her drawing room
c1860s. Courtesy: Battye 21402P.

John Burdett Wittenoom (1788-1855), in St George's Cathedral, Perth on 15 April 1880. The couple had three sons and a daughter. The Dutch connection comes via her great grandfather Thomas Wittenoom of London, who had Dutch grandparents.³ Of interest too is the fact that John Burdett Wittenoom's daughter – Mary Eliza Dircksey Wittenoom – was the mother of Edith Dircksey Cowan, the first Australian woman to enter parliament and after whom Edith Cowan University is named. Consequently this was quite a significant Dutch imprint for the early years of the Swan River Colony.

The Perth suburb of Nedlands is named after Edward (Ned) – the youngest Bruce child and only boy – the land having been left to him by his father. Many Nedlands' streets are also named after other family members, although Johanna Street (now Webster) was removed in WWI as a result of her father's German origins.⁴ Johanna left WA to live out her aged years with her daughter in London and died there a few years later.

ENDNOTES

- 1 <http://dutchcemeterybengal.com/voc.php>
- 2 Presidency University email 13 April 2014, Afzal Mohd (New Dehli introducing N.Peters to Prof. Souvik Mukherjee at Presidency University) who is coordinating our efforts (digitizing of VOC records) at Chinsura.
- 3 <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wittenoom-john-burdett-2810>.
- 4 Col. Edward Bruce was educated at the old Bishop's College, St. George's Terrace, Perth, amongst his schoolfellows; being Sir John Forrest, Mr. S. Burt, K.C., and the present Chief Justice, Sir Henry Parker. Leaving Western Australia for Sandhurst, he entered the army as a subaltern in the 84th Regiment, afterwards exchanging into the Indian Cavalry-the 19th- Bengal Lancers (Fane's Horse of the Indian Mutiny). With a natural aptitude for languages he was twice entrusted with missions to Persia. He also served on Sir Donald Stewart's staff in the Afghan war, and was at the battle of Ghazni. He also formed one of the late King's escort during his memorable visit to India in 1875. While lately in command of his regiment he controlled the important district of Chitral, on the North-West frontier, during the absence in South Africa of Sir Archibald Hunter. He received the military order of the Bath five years ago, personally receiving his decoration from the late King at Buckingham Palace. Four years ago he renewed his interests in this State by commencing the development of his property on the Swan River, now the well-known Nedlands Park Estate, so named after him. He was a typical Anglo-Indian - officer, and all who met him were attracted by his personality. He had many friends in this State, who will regret his unexpected demise. He married in 1874 a daughter of the late General Webster, who survives him and leaves four sons, two of whom are in the Indian Cavalry, and two daughters. He was 61 years of age.