

The Huguenot de Villiers family at Franschhoek Valley (South Africa) and England connection



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Title page: de Villiers Coat of Arms; mountain scene on the R45 road toward Franschhoek; the Boschendal Manor House with the kitchen wing in the foreground; Solms Delta house and vineyard; Franschhoek street scene.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

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INTRODUCTION

This article is about the Huguenot de Villiers family's origins at the south-western Cape in South Africa during the later part of the 1600s and a visit by me and my wife to our family ancestral home on the 9th September 2015 a considerable time after leaving South Africa. There is an introductory information section about the origins of the de Villiers family's Huguenots origins and the move the Cape of Good Hope, as it was then called, at the south-western tip of Africa. Then there is an account of the visit to the Franschhoek Valley and the de Villiers ancestral home. This is followed by discussion of the de Villiers family with family genealogy details in an appendix. Finally, there is an account of the English Villiers from France,



Annotated Cape Town (3422) 1976 World Aeronautical Chart, South Africa Trigonometrical Survey Office.

The Franschhoek (French corner, or quarter) Valley is more of an agricultural region known for viticulture rather than geographical. It is situated in the broader north-west to south-east aligned Drakenstein (dragon's stone) Valley between the northern Klein (Small) Drakenstein, starting from east of Paarl south-eastward to the Wemmershoek mountains, with the Groot (Big) Drakenstein from east of Stellenbosch to the Franschhoek mountains south of Franschhoek. Groot Drakenstein because it has higher peaks than the Klein Drakenstein. Up to nearly 1600m (5250ft), its higher elevation is often snow covered in winter. One of its peaks, the Devil's Tooth, faces the Boschendal wine farm.

Most of the contents of the section on the de Villiers family and the beginning of the de Villiers coat of arms was obtained from the Familie De Villiers Family in South Africa Vol I & II, Huguenot Memorial Museum, De Villiers Family Trust, to whom the author is indebted. A CD copy of the Familie De Villiers Family in South Africa Vol I & II was purchased by the author. It is currently still available by electronic transfer at the Huguenot Society of South Africa. It is a treasure trove of information, as is Colin Graham Botha's The French refugees at the Cape from Forgotten Books and on Amazon.

THE HUGUENOTS

The Reformation, usually regarded as starting on the 31st October 1517, when Martin Luther attached his 95 debating points on the Wittenberg church door. Although many debating points had already been hypothesised by people such as Wycliff, Huss, Erasmus, Zwingli. The Reformation started as a protest against the injustice, hypocrisy and authority of the Catholic Church. Hence the title Protestants. The initial impetus of the Reformers was that salvation was based on faith in Jesus alone and not reliant on good works, as promoted by the Catholic Church. A particular abuse of this was the purchase of an indulgence whereby one could be pardoned for a sin by a Catholic priest and not be punished in the afterlife (Britannica (a), Wikipedia (a)).

In the 16th century the Protestants evolved into four major movements in Europe, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Radical Reformation and Catholic Reformation. The origin of the name Huguenot is obscure. The Huguenots were French Calvinist Protestants (Wikipedia (a), Wikipedia (b)).

From 1562 and 1598 there were eight religious wars and many skirmishes between Catholics and Reformers. The wars started after 80 Huguenots were slain at Vassy in 1562. The worst atrocity was the St Bartholomew Massacre during 3 days from the 24th August 1572, when thousands of Huguenots were murdered at a wedding gathering in Paris and across Paris. Including the nominal leader of the French Protestants, Grand Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, born 1516 (Agnew 1866). The wedding was that of Henry of Navarre, a Huguenot, to Marguerite de Valois, daughter of Catherine de Medici who persuaded her son King Charles IX to order the massacre. Henry survived by pretending to be a Roman Catholic supporter and later became King Henry IV in 1598 (Britannica (a), History Extra, Wikipedia (c)).

The Edict of Nantes was signed in 1598 by Henry of Navarre, now King Henry IV of France, who wanted to put an end to the division and encourage religious tolerance. It did not put the two faiths on an equal footing, although it did give the Reformists some religious and political protection (Britannica (a)).

However, La Rochelle had become a centre for the Huguenots. At the time it was the largest French harbour on the Atlantic coast. The port prospered, but came into conflict with the central authority of King Louis XIII. In 1627, led by Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), the port was laid under siege. In spite of limited help from George Villiers, the 1st Duke of Buckingham (1592-1628) in James I's English Court, La Rochelle, the last major Huguenot stronghold, surrendered after 14 months. By which time the population decreased from 27,000 to 5,000 due to disease, famine and casualties (History Extra).

In 1629, Cardinal Richelieu removed the political protection. In 1661, King Louis XIV (1643-1715), a staunch Catholic, introduced strict controls as to when and where services could be held, funds were confiscated, hospitals and schools closed and prohibited Protestants from learned professions, gradually from every trade and forced to "renounce their Protestant religion in public." At Nimes the Protestants had a hospital they had built taken from them (Agnew 1866, de Villiers B 1996). The medieval hospital definition is somewhat different from the modern definition. At the time, apart from hospitals for the sick, these religious charities offered shelter to the poor, were also hospices for the dying and hostels for pilgrims.

In 1685 the Edict of Nantes was annulled, because it was stated that most of the population and the most important part of the population were not Reformists. A new edict imposed the death

sentence on Protestant ministers with life sentences for anyone who remained in contact with them. Knowledge of meetings and not reporting them became a punishable offence. It was enforced by the booted missionaries (dragoons). Protestants became outlaws (Agnew 1866, de Villiers B 1996).

Agnew (1866), quoting Bishop Burnet who travelled in France in 1685, states that “not only dragoons, but all the clergy and bigots of France broke out into all the instances of rage and fury against those as did not change” their religion. Those who attempted to escape were seized by “guards and secret agents” along roads and frontiers, where “if men, condemned to the galleys and if women to monasteries,” their children to different monasteries. Furthermore, “orders were given that such of the new converts as did not at their death receive the sacrament, should be denied burial and that their bodies should be left where other dead carcasses were cast, to be devoured by wolves or dogs. This was executed in several places with the utmost barbarity.” However, people were so horrified that it was stopped. According to a letter, dated 15th January 1686 by Maury’s Huguenot Family, the dragoons looted houses and either destroyed them or took them for themselves, deprived Huguenots of food, beat them, “burning some alive, half roasting others then letting them go, tying mothers to posts and leaving their sucking infants to perish at their feet.” Also, hanging from hooks in chimneys and smoked with wisps of burning straw until they suffocated, dipped in wells and force-fed wine “until reason was destroyed” (Agnew 1866).

The result was many Huguenots fleeing from France to England, Germany (then a collection of Germanic states), South Africa (at the time, the Cape of Good Hope), Switzerland and the British colonies on the east coast of North America (Botha 1921). In the space of a few years more than 250 000 Huguenots had immigrated. Agnew (1866) states 300 000. Full religious freedom in France was not until 1905, when the French State and Church were separated.

HUGUENOT REFUGEES AT THE CAPE

Most of the following information was obtained from photographs of a poster boards taken on the 6th September 2009 during a visit to the Solms Delta Estate, Franschhoek Valley.

“It was via Holland that around 400 Huguenot refugees were to find a new home at the tip of the African continent, at the Cape of Good Hope, under the protection and governance of the VOC.” The VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), or United East India Company, was established in 1602. It is more commonly referred to as the Dutch East India Company. The outpost, where Cape Town is now located, was originally named the Cape of Storms. It was established in 1652 by Jan van Riebeeck to resupply the company ships passing to and from the Dutch Batavian Republic, or so called East Indies. It was not the intention to colonise the Cape (Botha 1921). Foreign ships could use the outpost to re-supply, but at an exorbitant cost. With the arrival of the Dutch in 1652, came the slaves primarily from the East Indies from 1653 until 1822. Slavery was finally abolished at the Cape in 1834.

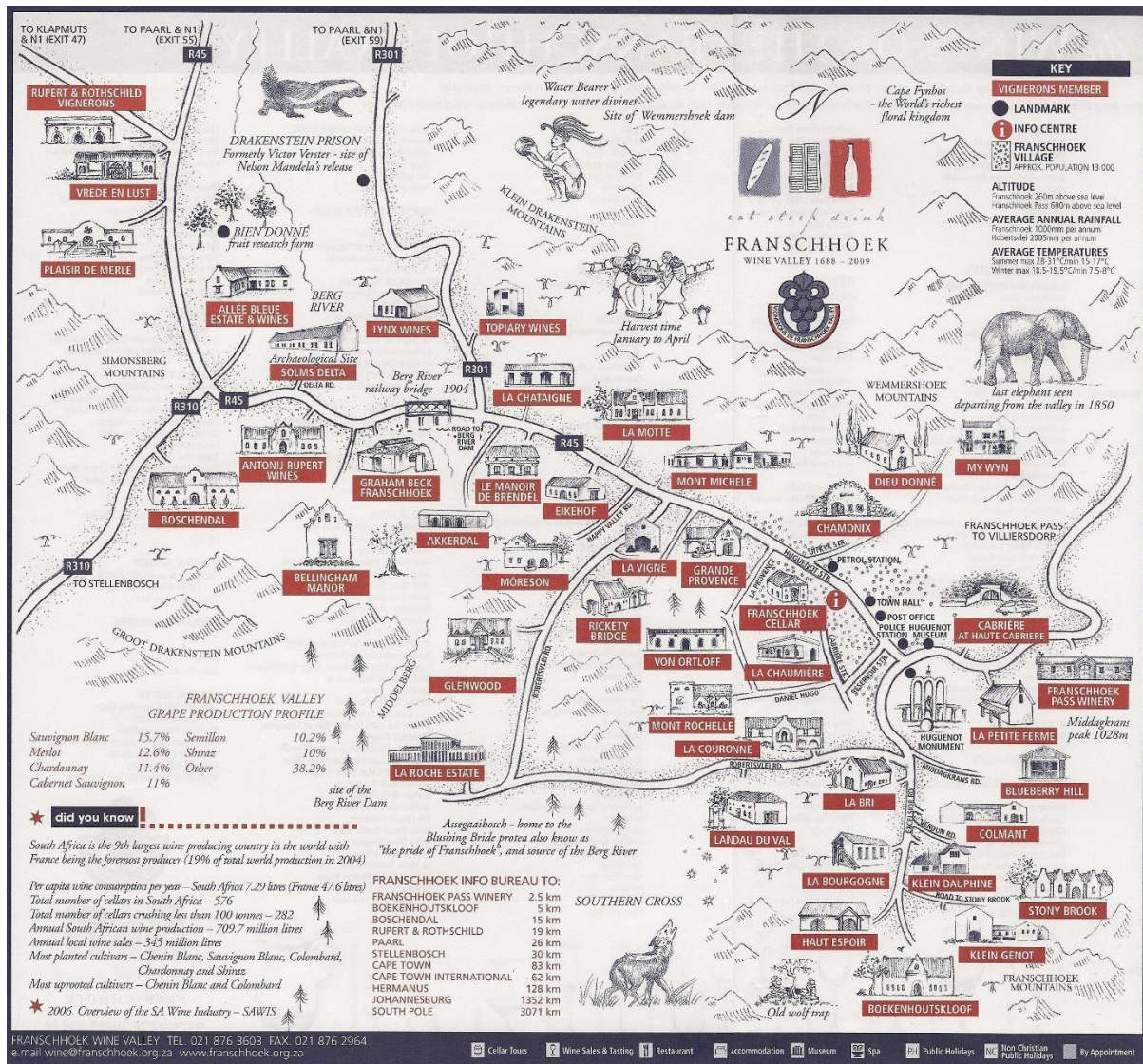
The main group of Huguenot refugees arrived at the Cape in 1688. The majority settled in the area from Olifantshoek (now Franschhoek) to Wagenmakersvallei (now Wellington). Many were granted plots of land in the Drakenstein, by the now Commander at the Cape, Simon van der Stel, when the region was divided for settlement. (He replaced the original Commander Jan van Riebeeck in 1679. The post was changed to Governor in 1691 (Botha 1921)).

The Frans Quartier of Drakenstein soon became known as Frans Hoek, later Franschhoek. Many of South Africa's oldest settler families originate from these Huguenot refugees. The de Villiers, du Toit, du Preez, Viljorn (Villion) and Marais families, to name but a few, are South African families that had their origins in French religious persecution and immigration to the Cape.

Solms Delta, originally Delta, was one of the farms owned by the de Villiers family. Namely, Jean de Villiers and his wife Geertuyda du Toit 1771-1799, Jan Pieter de Villiers 1799-1803 and Isaac Cornelis de Villiers 1814-1823. Others owned by the family through the 18th century to the late 1800s were, in no particular order; Boschendal (of course), Vrede en Rust, Watergat and Sondernaam (now collectively Bien Donne), Lekkerwijn, Bellingham, Meerrust, Eenzaamheid, Buiten Molen, Dwars-in-die Weg, La Bri (now Laborie), Champagne and Burgogne.

England went to war with France in 1793 after the French had occupied the Dutch Republic. Due to its strategic importance, the English occupied the Cape in 1795 after a short battle against the Dutch. Thereby ending the VOC's rule in the region. However, the English relinquished the colony to the Dutch in the 1802 Treaty of Amiens, but re-occupied and retained the Cape in 1806 after the start of the Napoleonic Wars (Wikipedia (d) and Britannica (b)).

VISIT TO FRANSCHHOEK VALLEY



The above Franschhoek Wine Valley publicity map shows the locations of the wine farms in the area. Marked on the map are the major mountain ranges shown on the map on the first page in relation to the farms. The farms mentioned during our visit are clearly marked along the R310 from Stellenbosch and eastward along the R45 to Franschhoek, as well as the Huguenot Monuments on the south-eastern edge of the town. Next to it is the museum. Not marked is Glen Carlou. It is some distance off the map on the R310 at the lower left of the map.



Our first brief stop, with our guides, my sister and her friend, was prior to reaching the Franschhoek Valley at Glen Carlou near Stellenbosch. The Glen Carlou vineyard and view in the photograph on the left.

I wrote the odd note on our Rand per bottle price list and order form while tasting. There were no descriptions of the wine:

Sauvignon Blanc 2008: Too dry (R85.00).

Chardonnay 2008: Bitter (R90.00).

“The Welder” Natural Sweet 2008: Cold, sugar cane (reminded me of chewing raw sugar cane as a child) (R85.00).

We did not buy any wine.

Then it was on to the Solms Delta on the R45 with its typical white washed Cape gable style buildings set amongst the vineyard with the Klein Drakenstein mountains in the background. Here we had our first proper wine tasting session while seated outside and served wines to sample. We bought a selection of their wines.



At Solms Delta. Our waiter approaching and the view of the beginning of Klein Drakenstein Mountain range in the distance.

Same process. I wrote notes on our price list and order form while tasting, including preferences. This time including our jovial waiters' occasional suggestions. Working down the Solms-Astor list with descriptions and Rand price per bottle provided below:

Vastrap 2007; Easy-drinking fruity style, produced from “out of fashion” grape varieties. A blend of Chenin blanc, Clalrette Blanche & Semillon (26.00). Number 1 (not my choice), bitter after taste, breakfast wine.

Langarm 2007; Southern European red varieties in an Innovative Cape blend with intriguing twist (R52.00). Number 3, goes with Springbok meat (venison).

Cape Jazz Shiraz NV; Sweet all-occasion Shiraz sparkler, low in alcohol (R52.00). Number 6, 4.5% alcohol (low), picnic wine, before breakfast, carbonated, very good, serve cold.

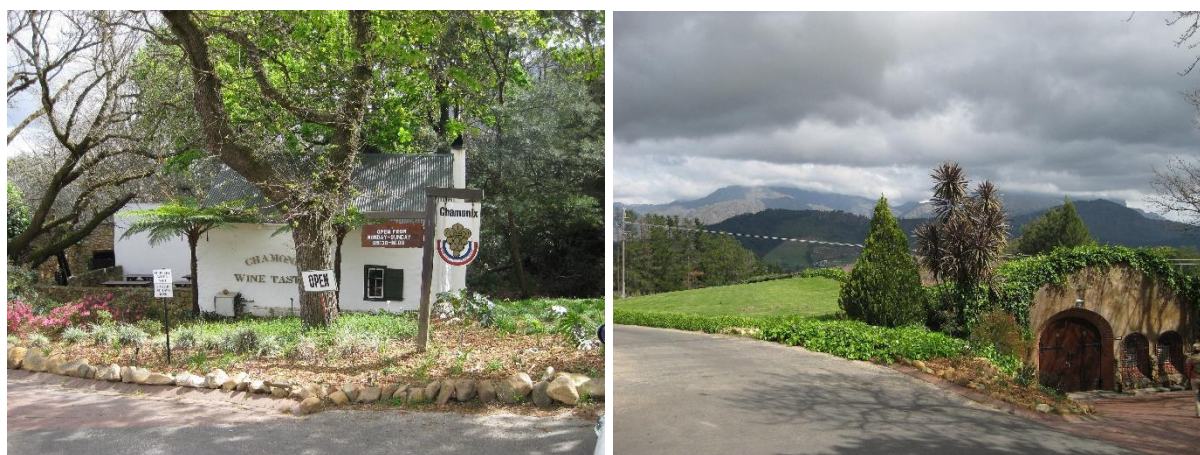
Lekkerwijn 2007; Oak matured dry rosé. A blend of Mourédre, Vlognier, Grenache Noir (R32.00). Number 2, picnic wine.

Africana 2007; 100% Shiraz desiccated on the vine. A dark red with a floral nose, noble bitterness and intense tannin on the palate (R145.00). Number 4, braai (barbeque) wine, terrace wine.

Kolonl 2007; A floral Muscat style wine with hints of oak. Good structure and a lingering unexpectedly dry finish. A blend of Rhine Riesling, Muscat de Frontignan (muscadet) and Muscat D’Alexandrie, 100% desiccated on the vine (R46.00). Number 5, goes well with curries, slight bitter.

Further on along the R45 toward the town of Franschhoek, we stopped at Chamonix for a further brief tasting session. An interesting place with the usual gabled Cape Dutch buildings plus an earth and grass covered wine cellar. Here there was a framed poster giving a detailed

list of South African names deriving directly or indirectly from France and places of origin in France. Possibly not entirely accurately. This will be discussed later in the section on the de Villiers family along with a photograph of the map.



Chamonix shop and wine cellar. Wemmershoek Mountains in the background.

Here we tried five wines, four white, the last one red.

MCC Sparkling 2006: A fresh citrus nose with a rich and spicy character. A fine mousse with elegance and a long finish (R110.00). (Who writes these!? Someone with a vivid imagination. A citrus nose and a long finish. Not when I am drinking).

Chamonix Blanc 2009: Chamonix Blanc on release has a bright straw colour with greenish highlights and an intense aroma that recalls ripe apples and pears with hints of herbs and tropical fruit. Bright and steely dry in flavour, the grapefruit and spice sensations are buoyed by zesty acidity that refreshes the palate through a smooth finish (R35.00). After that expected at least R110.00. My comment: Non! Very dry. Although rated number 1 by the others.

Sauvignon Blanc 2008: On release our Sauvignon Blanc shows a pale straw colour with greenish highlights and ample yet refined aromas with scents reminiscent of tropical fruit, with asparagus and pomelo grapefruit on the palate. It is full and round with rich fruit sensations balanced by bracing acidity. The wine reaches its prime in about 2-3 years (R65.00). Rated number 2 by the others.

Chardonnay 2008: Our Chamonix Chardonnay is released in the second year after harvest. The wine shows bright straw yellow colour with golden highlights and ample aromas in scents that recall tropical fruits and grapefruit, mingling with hints of oatmeal, caramel and nutmeg. Medium-bodied with richly complex flavours, mellow fruit sensations are deftly fused with oak in a long, elegant finish. It should reach its prime in about 5 years from release (R100.00).

Troika 2007: The Chamonix Trioka (Trioka meaning Russian sleigh pulled by three horses - author) has deep ruby-mulberry colour when young, with scents that recall vanilla, ripe cherries, blackberries, cinnamon and other spices. The wine is amply structured, full, round and smooth on the palate with rich fruit and berry sensations, fine harmony and length of flavour (R160.00).

We also tried a Pamplemousse, Wild Fig, Aperitif 25%. 500ml R70.00 or 200ml R36.00.

Who needs to eat anything. Everything you need is in the wine. Except meat for the braai (barbeque). Most amusing pretentious descriptions by a person, or persons unknown, with a vivid imagination, causing much comment and mirth. Certainly gets first prize. If I recall correctly, rated numbers 1 (Chamonix Blanc 2009) and 2 (Sauvignon Blanc 2008) were bought.

We then entered the town of Franschhoek where we had lunch. Unfortunately, the name of the eatery is forgotten and the name on the awning in the photograph is not sufficiently legible. From there we went to the Huguenot Memorial, but did not visit the nearby Huguenot Memorial Museum.

We then headed back to the west on the R45 past Solms Delta and south onto the R310 to Boschendal.



White stones spelling Franschhoek and the ever present mountains. On the right where we had lunch, or is it luncheon?



The Huguenot Memorial and Franschhoek Mountains in the background. The museum is off to the left of the photograph.

BOSCHENDAL MANOR HOUSE

The last place we visited was Boschendal, which was the family's ancestral home so to speak. It is now owned by Anglo American along with other farms to form the large Boschendal Estate. Given the number of farms that were eventually owned by the family, I have to wonder where it all went wrong and why I am not a wealthy landowner.



The view looking toward the north facing the front of the H shaped Manor House. The inscription, mentioned blow is at the top of the dormer window. In the background left is the Groot Drakenstein's Devil's Tooth peak.

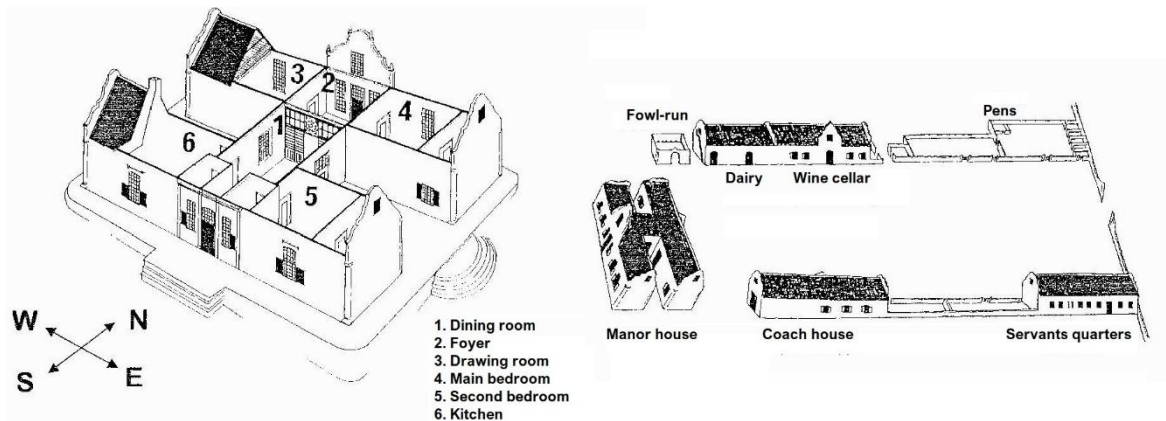
Information in this section was obtained from the Guide: Boschendal Manor House 1812, given to us when we visited the Boschendal Manor House on the 6th September 2009 and obtained from photographs of poster boards at the house.

The farm Boschendal (it means wood and dale) was granted to Huguenot Jean Le Long in 1685. It was bought by Abraham de Villiers in 1715, along with adjacent land already bought from Nicolas de Lanoy. Both farms were 60 morgan (51ha, 126 acres) each. Standard plots issued to settlers. He later sold both farms to his brother Jacques de Villiers.

The de Villiers family lived at Boschendal for 164 years until 1879. They were responsible for the existing buildings. Jan de Villiers built the wine cellar and coach house in 1796. Paul, his youngest son, built the present manor house in 1812. His initials and those of his wife, Anna Susanna Louw, appear on the front gable. The north facing gabled Cape Dutch style white-washed manor house was really an ostentatious H shaped thatched roof farmhouse with an upstairs loft and fancy loft gabled dormer windows.

The house was carefully restored and opened to the public in 1976. It was authentically furnished with pieces mentioned in early inventories. Both the manor house and its werf (farmyard) were proclaimed national monuments.

Wine farming was the mainstay of the valley until the late 19th century when the phylloxera epidemic spread through the Cape vineyards. Phylloxera is a small insect or aphid that eats the roots of grapevines (Jarvis 2019). In 1897 Cecil John Rhodes bought many of the devastated farms and established Rhodes Fruit Farms in the valley. Wine farming was resuscitated by Anglo American in the 1970s. The greatly extended collection of wine farms became the Boschendal Estate and the wine marketed under the Boschendal brand name.



Manor House plan seen from the rear entrance and farmyard with its southern entry.



Comparing with the guide brochure farmyard plan above, left is the dairy with the wine cellar beyond. On the right is the coach house with servants' quarters in the distance.



Entry to the property is from the southern end of the werf (farmyard) passing the pens for pigs, sheep and cattle on the right, then the wine cellar and dairy buildings with the fowl run nearest to the house. On the left one passes first the slave (or servants) quarters then the coach house. Post restoration, the wine cellar has become a restaurant, the slave quarters a café and the coach house a gift shop. One enters the manor house through the back door, photograph left, into the dining



room (left on this page). The slaves/servants from the East Indies influenced the cuisine, bringing with them their curries. The photograph shows a 19th century dining table with extension leaves. On the left is a stinkwood display cabinet containing Dutch Leerdam glass, Chinese Imari plates and Cape silver. Other items in the room, not seen in the photograph was a yellow-wood sideboard and paintings. The combination

of the dark reddish beefwood with dark walnut or reddish brown to black stinkwood and much lighter yellow-wood were a characteristic of Cape furniture. The floorboards and ceilings of the house are yellow-wood.

Toward the far end of the room is an open neo-classical screen with louvres made from yellow-wood and teak with ebony inlay that leads to the foyer. In the foyer can be seen an 18th century large teak gate-leg table with cabriole legs. Beyond the table is the front entrance to the house. It has a drop-fanlight that had to be raised to allow entrance. The fanlight let in light but not wind while giving one a view outside. "Visitors were often greeted with sweet house wine."



Off to the left of the foyer in the photograph (to the front west wing) is the large drawing room "decorated with a rose frieze." This is where friends and visitors were entertained, including making music, dancing or playing cards. Referring to the photograph of the drawing room, at the far end is a stinkwood and beefwood cabinet on a stand. It is flanked by paintings of a man in a white ruff on the left believed to be 17th century

by the Dutch artist Miereveldt. On the right is Abraham Benjamin de Villiers of Paarl, descended from the Boschendal de Villiers. On the floor are "two 18th century French Aubusson carpets." The stinkwood chairs were made "at the Cape in Rococo style." In the foreground is the larger Dutch "floral marquetry table with mother-of-pearl inlay" circa 1700. The oval

mirror just visible on the right with gilt frame is English Regency. It hangs above a Cape beefwood and stinkwood table.



On the other side of the foyer in the east wing is the main bedroom painted a “dusky colour.” The photograph (left) is dominated by the 19th century “stinkwood four-poster bed with hand-crocheted canopy frill. Alongside is a fruit-wood cot with only three sides so that the baby could lie close to its mother.” In the left foreground is a 1790-1820 Nankin porcelain basin on a wooden stand. Just visible under the bed is a Chinese Imari chamber

pot. The house had no bathroom. One had to use an outside long-drop pit latrine. Beyond the bed is a “Cape neo-classical chair with a split-splat back, tapered legs and a riempie seat.” A riempie seat consists of leather thongs stretched 90 degrees to each other across a wooden frame. Next to the chair is a Cape 19th century night table made from “various woods with a star inlay.” The doorway and frame is made of “ebony, coromandel, beefwood and satinwood. Coromandel is a greyish-brown ebony streaked with black. Beyond the “would have been a another bedroom.”



The photograph of the second bedroom in the rear east wing has a 19th century Cape yellow-wood and stinkwood four-poster bed above which is a print of Boschendal by G. C. Smithard. Next to the bed is a porcelain washbasin and jug on mahogany dressing table with a mirror above. On the wall to the right is a 1741 map of False Bay coast by Peter Kolbe. Out of the photograph, to the left of the bed is a doorway to what have been another bedroom. The

house originally had five bedrooms located in the two east wings. “The de Villiers owned several farms so the older sons could move out to make way for the younger ones. Girls were

married off early.” Apparently, Jan de Villiers married twice and had 22 children, spanning two generations. So not all of them living at Boschendal at the same time.



In the west wing, opposite the second bedroom, is the kitchen. Although now fitted with electric lighting, at the time candles provided the only lighting. These were made from animal fat using tin candle moulds. Nearest in the photograph is the table on which food dishes were prepared. Behind and to the right of the table is a wooden water vat. Vats or tubs were used for pickling meat, carrying water and washing dishes. Behind the wooden water vat, the

dividing wall extending back to the external rear wall, contains the fireplace and baking oven with an enclosure above, “probably for smoking or drying meat.” Behind the fireplace, to the right in the photograph is a small pantry. In background, behind the table, are “copper and brass utensils: pots, pans, kettles, jugs, jelly-moulds and clothes irons.” In the corner left, out of sight in the photograph (with the foyer on the other side of the wall), is an L shaped wooden stairway to the extensive loft. Essentially a large storage area, including food. The loft floor “had a fire-proof mud layer called a brandsolder, because thatch roofs could and did catch fire.”

THE DE VILLIERS FAMILY

The history of the de Villiers family in south Africa is well documented. The de Villiers family in South Africa is undoubtedly descended from the three Huguenot de Villiers brothers Jacob (1651-1735) Pierre (1657-1720), Abraham (1659-1720), vinicultures and wine-makers by trade. They fled from France to the Netherlands during the persecution of the Huguenots. They sailed from Goree, in the Netherlands province of Zeeland, on the 8th or 9th January 1689 on the Zion, arriving at Table Bay four months later on 6 May 1689 (Botha 1921, de Villiers J. C. (a) 1996). Brief biographies of the three brothers at the Cape are provided in the next section.

The brothers were preceded by a letter to the Cape, dated 16th December 1688, from the Chamber of Delft stating that they have permitted the three brothers, all born near La Rochelle, to sail to the Cape to earn their living as freemen. That they have good knowledge of establishing and managing vineyards and that they be given a helping hand. Grants of land prior to 1700, show they were each granted land in 1694, although most likely they were farming them since their arrival in 1689. They were also collectively, made a loan of 570 guilders for stock and material.

Title deeds were granted to Abraham in 1711 to the farm Champagne, Jacob in 1712 to the farm Le Bri and Pierre in 1713 to the farm Burgogne (or Burgandy). The farms being next to each other in the Franschhoek valley. By 1719, all debts were repaid and they had prospered so that they could buy additional land (Botha 1921, de Villiers A 1996, de Villiers J. C. (a) 1996).



South African surnames from France, seen at Chamonix. Courtesy of David Elvidge, illustrated by Joanne Taylor.

The Zion, passenger list states their origin as La Rochelle aged 32, 30 and 28. This may be simply because Le Rochelle was a Huguenot escape route and due to the letter quoted above. It has been suggested that they came from further to the north-east in the Burgundy enclave of Bar-sur-Seine in Champagne, hence the names of the farms.

However, while it is acknowledged that the La Rochelle area is not a significant wine-producing

area, the weight of evidence points to the La Rochelle environ. Such as Niort, in the La Rochelle region, where a Pierre de Villiers was mayor and the father of the three brothers, according to M. de la Fosse (historian and Director of Archives at la Rochelle). Or St. Jean d'Angely and Rochefort, ~30 kilometres inland of, or ~25 kilometres south of La Rochelle, respectively, where it is known there were de Villiers families. Or, the present Deux-Sèvres area, ~125 kilometres inland from La Rochelle and where the de Villiers family was established as early as 1335.

The answer is still open to question. Bear in mind, research into origins of the de Villiers family in France are severely hampered by the destruction of records during the religious wars, particularly those of Protestants and during the Revolution, by Catholics (de Villiers D. P. 1960, de Villiers J. C (a) 1996).



The de Villiers family Dutch State Bible on display in the Manor House at Boschendal.

The staunchly Calvinistic Protestant religion was important to the Huguenots, evidenced by their fleeing as refugees to other countries. To the Huguenots at the Cape, it was important have their own church and congregation.

Furthermore, church and schooling went hand in glove together. This included being able to read the Bible. Children included. Consequently, their literacy was of a higher standard than the non-French Huguenot population. Meanwhile, church customs and

structure were similar to the Dutch Reformed church making assimilation easier (de Villiers J. C. 1996 (b)).

There was some resistance to assimilation. Abraham de Villiers was part of a group of French Huguenots who, in 1689, lobbied Commander Simon van der Stel that they be granted their own church council. Before they left Holland they were promised their own clergyman, which they received in the form of the Reverend Simond They presumed this also meant their own congregation. This was refused.

They were reminded by Simon van der Stel that after they fled France, Holland had treated them with every kindness and given every assistance at the Cape. Instruction from the Directors in Holland was that emigrants were to be treated the same as Dutch emigrants. They were also reminded of the contents of the oath they signed before leaving Holland, along with their contract and to conduct themselves in accordance with the oath. However, they relented. In 1691 a Consistory, or Council of the French congregation in the Drakenstein was established with the proviso that the elders and deacons preferably be bilingual in French and Dutch.

Abraham was appointed a deacon on the first church council of the Drakenstein congregation (Botha 1921, de Villiers A. 1996, de Villiers J. C. 1996 (b)).

Nevertheless, the intention was that the French speaking Huguenots were to become Dutch speakers. To this end schoolmasters were to be bilingual and instruct both Dutch and French children. The French children learning read and speak Dutch so that they could be “more readily be assimilated into the Dutch Nation” (Botha 1921). The end result was French and Dutch lasted for about two generations before integration with the Dutch then French disappeared (de Villiers A. 1996, de Villiers J. C. 1996 (b)). Integration was the aim as far back as 1687, when Simon van der Stel had marked twenty-three 60 morgan (51 hectares) farms along the Berg River that flows through the Drakenstein Valley that were carefully allocated so as to scatter the French among the already settled Dutch farmers (Botha 1921).

There was another reason for the divide, or scatter, among Dutch settlers and integration policy. The Dutch and the French had been at war with each other for about thirty years. The Cape had been “repeatedly threatened by French squadrons cruising in the neighbourhood” (Botha 1921). The Dutch at the Cape were concerned that French Huguenots sympathy and assistance would be with the French if they attacked, in spite of what the Huguenots had been through. However, mistrust and aloofness between the two groups gradually disappeared through shared hardships. Particularly in 1706, when the country burghers (Dutch and French), instituted grievances against the Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, who became governor after his father, Simon van der Stel, in 1699 (Botha 1921).

The oath taken before proceeding to the Cape of Good Hope was:

“I promise and swear to bear true and faithful allegiance to their High Mightinesses the States General of the United Provinces our Sovereign Master and Lords, to His Highness the Lord Prince of Orange, as Governor, Captain and Admiral General, and to the Directors of the General Chartered Company of the East Indies in the said lands, likewise to the Governor-General of India, as well as to the Governors, Commandants and others who may be placed over me during the voyage by and afterwards on land. That I will observe and execute faithfully, in every respect, all the laws and ordinances made or to be made by the Lords Directors, the Governor General and Councillors or Commandant of the place of my abode and moreover, to regulate and behave myself in every sense as a good and faithful subject.

So help me God.

Done and registered at the meeting of the Seventeen on October 20th, 1687” (Botha 1921).

The United Provinces was the confederation of seven provinces and the first Dutch nation state. The Seventeen, or Gentlemen Seventeen was the name for the board of directors. (Botha 1921). The Prince of Orange at the time was William III. From 1689 with Queen Mary II, king of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (Crofton 2006).

The main clauses of the contract, on condition they signed the oath, were;

Free passage to the Cape on one of the Company’s ships.

Free luggage needed for the voyage only would be carried. Any other luggage deemed necessary will be at the discretion of the Directors.

They may take specie free of charge. That is, money of their own.

They must settle at the Cape and earn a living either by farming or use their “industry, knowledge, handiwork or trade.

Those that choose farming will be given as much freehold land as they can cultivate. Additionally, the necessary farming articles will be lent to them as needed, “such as seed for corn, or oxen,” these may be paid for in corn or anything else as occasion offers.”

They must remain at the Cape for five years.

If during this time anyone is in difficulty, the person is entitled to request the Seventeen to reduce the period if “good cause be shown for making” the request.

After five years, those who wish to return to the Netherlands, “shall be allowed to return on paying for their passage and food on board” in advance. (The costs for passage and food were stipulated for men, women and children over 12 years of age and children under 12 – author).

If a passenger dies during the voyage, heirs or the estate will be refunded pro-rata after consideration of the length of time on the voyage before death occurred.

No colony merchandise will be allowed in their luggage.

Any of their own possessions can be converted to money with the Company. This will be refunded to them in the Netherlands, plus 4% commission (Botha, 1921).

Death during the approximately four months voyage in either direction was frequent, particularly outbound due to the number of passengers. The lack of fresh food, such as vegetables and fruit and lack of vitamin C, resulted in scurvy that was often fatal. Fresh water was scarce and rationed. Meat was cooked in salt water to preserve it.

It is also worth noting correspondence between Simon van Stal and later Willem Adriaan van der Stel with the Seventeen in the United Provinces that they both preferred that they “desired agriculturists” be sent to the Cape and they “should be of the reformed religion, subjects of the States General or members of such Germanic nations as were not engaged in sea traffic, lest the Government should be exposed to a revolution” (Botha 1921).

Life was not easy at the primitive settlement. The primary aim was to re-supply the company ships. Any activity not related to this activity was superfluous. Many of the Huguenots had to abandon their trades. Some examples useful in France, were “spinning flax, olive culture, silk-worm industry,” although considered useless at the Cape (de Villiers, J. C. 1996 (b)).

When they arrived, they and their meagre baggage were transported by wagon to Drakenstein. The Company supplied provisions that would last a few months, plus “planks to build temporary shelters” and “the ground which had never been tilled since the world began, was so overgrown with bush and roots” that it “would take several years to produce some return” (Botha 1921). Furthermore, the unfamiliar climate was not helpful. Their initially dire distress was such that Commander Simon van der Stel requested financial support from their Batavian Treasury. The money was distributed among the grateful French community as well as, from the Commander, a present of oxen (Botha 1921). It was not uncommon for repatriation to Europe after their five year contract was over (de Villiers J. C. 1996 (b)).

It was to the de Villiers brothers’ advantage that they were trained vine growers, cultivators and wine-makers. As attested to by their, previously mentioned, letter of introduction that preceded them to the Cape. That their families prospered is reflected in the numerous wine farms owned. Furthermore, history has shown that, although not the most numerous family of Huguenot origin in South Africa, they have done well in professions such as judiciary, “engineers, architects, scientists, economists, authors, poets, journalists, agriculturalists, farmers, educationists, soldiers and doctors” (de Villiers, J. C. 1996b).

Of the three brothers, Pierre married Elizabeth Taillefert in 1694 and had six children, three sons and three daughters. Abraham married Susanne Gardiol in 1689 and had seven children. Five daughters and two sons one of which died very young. Jacob married Marguerite Gardiol in 1691 and had twelve children. Seven sons and five daughters. Two sons died very young. One son listed as Jacobus (Jacob de Jonge) is curious. He could have been adopted. David (circa 1704-1770) married his 1st cousin, Marie, daughter of Pierre de Villiers (Botha 1921, Malherbe, J, and Malan, A (1996) Genealogy section). Our side of the family is descended from David and Marie. This means my brother, sister and I are 9th generation South Africans. See the following section and the appendix. The brothers de Villiers were powerful leaders in the Huguenot community in the Cape. One can read through very few Huguenot documents without their names being mentioned. A few interesting relations are noted below:

Cornelis Janse(n) de Villiers (1814 to 1885), a descendant from Jacob de Villiers, was a Kommandant in the 1858-1865 Basuto war. Also, Kommandant David Jacobus de Villiers in the Boer War. The Boer War General Petrus Johannes de Villiers, was a Pierre de Villiers descendent.

Another descendant from Jacob de Villiers, is Jacob Eliza de Villiers. In 1917, he responded to a plea in *Die Burger* for donations to the *Helmekaarfonds* (help each other fund) for destitute Afrikaansers by pledging in the newspaper, £500 if 500 others would pledge £100. Within 9 weeks the fund had £118 700 (worth about R12 million in 1996). The surplus became the not for profit *Helpmekaar* education fund, which still sponsors students (Malherbe, J, and Malan, A (1996) Genealogy section and *Helpmekaar Studiefonds*).

It is worth noting that the Reverend Martinus Lourens de Villiers (born 1885) composed the music in 1921 for *Die Stem* (Malherbe, J, and Malan, A (1996)), the original national anthem of South Africa. The words were written in an Afrikaans poem by Langenhoven.

The title Baron de Villiers was created in the Peerage of the United Kingdom in 1910 for John Henry de Villiers KCMG (1842-1914), Chief Justice of South Africa. His wife was Baroness Aletta Johanna Jordaan. He was fifth generation South African descended from the same Pierre/Jacob de Villiers as my family. The second Baron was Charles Percy de Villiers (1871-1934). The 3rd Baron being twice married Arthur Percy de Villiers (1911- 2001) and the current, inherited in 2001 and thrice married, 4th Baron is Alexander Charles de Villiers (born 1940) who in 2003 moved to Kameu, Auckland, New Zealand (Malherbe, J, and Malan, A (1996) Genealogy section, The Peerage and Wikipedia (e)). There is no heir to the Barony. As of February 2025, he was still resident in Auckland.

The peerage ranks in ascending order are; baron, viscount, earl, marquess and duke. The Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George in ascending order (with flippant explanations) are; CMG (Call Me God), KCMG (Kindly Call Me God) and GCMG (God Calls Me God).

More recently, during World War II, Pierre Henri de Villiers (1918-1964) was in the SAAF during World War II. While in high school, I had an opportunity to go on a flip (a short flight as they called them then) arranged through my uncle Eric. My father was against it. During World War II he had a nasty crash. I remember seeing scars on his chest and stomach. He never talked about it. Nor did my mother, although I do not think he ever told her much about it. She was 11 years younger than him. He was very protective of her. He died shortly before my 16th birthday.

Some years ago, Adrian was investigating the deaths of some soldiers in Korea during the Korean War. Their remains had recently been found and he was asked, in his capacity as a British officer, to investigate whether they were British, if so which regiment. This entailed checking the war diaries at the Kew National Archives, to determine if the remains were found where the British had been present and when. Appears they were not British. Now war diaries are not the sort of dairies ordinary people keep. They are a detailed day by day account of all British war activity and include minute details such as rations, who was on the ration list receiving them and why stopped, etc.

Out of interest, he looked at activities in North Africa. Although the SAAF was a separate force they were totally under British command. Their war diaries also detailed SAAF personnel. He found evidence of a Lt Pierre Henri de Villiers repatriated from North Africa to Durban. Exactly the names (and spelling) of my father. This meant repatriated by sea, although military personnel were also repatriated by air.

He mentioned this, because I told him what I found in a book I have (Becker, Dave. 1995, On wings of eagles. Walker-Ramus Trading Co, Durban). It stated that: At 18h40 hours on 16 June (1942 – my insert), 14 Kittyhawks of 2, 4 and 5 Sqns set out as an escort to Bostons of 24 Sqn. Maj Frost, top scoring ace at 5 Sqn was shot down and killed along with Lt de Villiers of 2 Sqn and Lt R F Derham of 5 Sqn. They are thought to have been shot down by Oblt H J Marseille and F W Steinhausen of 1/JG27 flying Bf109s.

Reading it to the letter, it could mean that only Frost was killed, the rest shot down. The record could also not be entirely correct. I spoke to my younger brother in New Zealand about it. Turns out he knew more than he ever told me. After my father died when I was 16, he became close to a close friend of my father, Barry Braithwaite. When we were children the two families would visit each other regularly, braais, birthdays, etc. A father figure I suppose and a religious connection. My brother told me that Barry told him there was mention of a medal and that he was shot down behind enemy lines, eventually getting back to base.

THE DE VILLIERS BROTHERS

These brief biographies of the three brothers at the Cape were translated from Afrikaans and summarised from the genealogy section in *Familie de Villiers family in South Africa vol I and II*, compiled by Juna Malherbe, and Alet Malan (1996) with cross-reference to *The French refugees at the Cape* by Colin Graham Botha (1921). The brothers arrived at the Cape 1689-05-06 on board the *Zion*

Pierre de Villiers (1657-1720)

From La Rochelle, France. Although, probably born at Bar-sur-Seine in Champagne, France (not definite) the son of Pierre (de) Villiers and Elisabeth Secault. Died on his farm Picardie or La Brie, Paarl, 22nd January 1720.

His wife was Marie Elisabeth Taillefer married 1691, borne 1674 at Chateau Thierry, province Brie. Died Picardie et La Brie, Paarl 1735. Daughter of Isaac Taillefer and Suzanne Briet who came to the Cape in 1688 on the *Oosterland*. Pierre and Marie had six children: Elizabeth (circa 1691-1744), Susanna (circa 1693-1752), Pierre (1695-1765), Isaac (1697-1755), Jean/Jan (1699-1744) and Marie (1701-1749).

Apart from these two farms he had another farm in Paarl with no buildings and name unknown. As well as the farm Burgogne in Olifantshoek (now Franschhoek). The farm was granted to him in 1694, although most likely allocated to him upon arrival in 1689, but first received the title deed in 1713, There were still no buildings on this farm when he died.

He was appointed a deacon of the Drakenstein congregation from 1700-12-18 to 1708-12-13 and again from 1709-12-10.

At his death his estate, in addition to the four farms, consisted of 26 cattle, 180 sheep, 3 male slaves, 1 old wagon with fittings, 1 plough with fittings, 20 empty (leather) vats each 582 litres, 2 vats with wine, 2 vats with brandy, 1 old brandy still with hose, copper kettles to make cooking wine, trunks, a table, stools and benches, house furniture and 10 “muddens” (bushels 1 mud = 100 litres) wheat and f 2 000 debt.

Abraham de Villiers (1659-1720)

From La Rochelle, France. Although, probably born at Bar-sur-Seine in Champagne, France (not definite) the son of Pierre (de) Villiers and Elisabeth Secault. He died on his farm Lekkerwyn, Drakenstein, 31st March 1720.

The farm Champagne in Olifantshoek (now Franschhoek) was granted to him in 1694, although most likely allocated to him upon arrival in 1689, but first received the title deed in 1711. In 1702 he bought the farm Meerrust until his death in 1720 and Boschendal, which he sold to Jacob in 1716. In 1716 he bought Lekkerwyn which remained in the family until the estate was wound up in 1730 after the death of his wife, Susanne in 1729. Champagne was sold in 1721.

Abraham married Susanne Gardiol (after 1674-1729) on the 5th October 1689. Born in La Costé Province, France, the daughter of Antoine Gardiol and Marguerite Perrotette. Abraham and Susanne had seven children: Elisabeth (1690-1765), Rachel (1694-1773), Marguerite (1696-

1764), Susanne (1697-1730), Jean (1699-died young), Maria (1702-circa 1744), Jacob (1705-1736).

Abraham de Villiers was part of a group of French Huguenots who, in 1689, lobbied Commander Simon van der Stel that they be granted their own church council. In 1691 a Consistory, or Council of the French congregation in Drakenstein was established with the proviso that the elders and deacons preferably be bilingual in French and Dutch. Abraham was appointed a deacon on the first church council of the Drakenstein congregation. He served a 2nd term from 1701-12-30. Again 1705-12-19 to 1709-12-10. 1711-12-24 to 1713-10-17 he served as an elder. The church was too small and became dilapidated. A request was made to build a new church. Abraham was a signatory to the new request.

From 1704-12-24 to 1709-12-24 Abraham was a Drakenstein village councillor. He did not execute his duties as faithfully as he should, because on the 5th July 1707 the magistrate of Stellenbosch complained that the village councillors, Anthonie van der Lith, Abraham de Villiers and Jan Schupping, neglected their obligation to attend meetings of the magistrate and village councils of Stellenbosch. Consequently, the other village council could not make decisions and had to return home with unresolved business. The Political Board decided to send a letter to each of them to request them to attend meetings.

1706-08-14 Abraham was appointed Captain of the Burger Cavalry Corps at Drakenstein. 1713-09-12 he requested to be released seeing that he was mostly sickly, very infirm and aged. His request was granted and he was replaced by Matthys Krugel.

As with many of his fellow burghers, Abraham sometimes had problems with the indigenous population and neighbours. The 9th June 1702, Abraham laid a complaint with the magistrate of Stellenbosch against a Hottentot chief known as Little Chief. His complaint was that in 1701, Hottentots killed his dog, stole a lamb from its pen, also stole a pig from a kraal (all the animals in the kraal escaped, but the thieves did drive the other animals back into the kraal), stole a wether (castrated ram) from a grazing flock in the veld. In May 1702, thieves came from a different kraal on the other side of the mountains and stole an ox. Five slaughter sheep were also missing, but he was not certain who stole them. This event occurred while he went to the governor to submit a complaint. Also in May, a Hottentot came into his house. He gave him a “klap” (slap) and said “What are you doing here, you thief” and chased him out of the house. The Hottentot told him “Watch out old beast, I will come and set your house on fire.”

Little Chief, in a long worded reply to these accusations at magistrate and village council hearing, admitted that one of his Hottentots stole the lamb, he saw a Hottentot from the Haikwa-kraal take the pig, one of his Hottentots, Oostiri, stole the wether and the ox was stolen by Jan Cook, not from his kraal. He also declared that he had offered cattle to Abraham to make good the damage but that he refused the offer.

In February 1710 Abraham was involved in a dispute about a black mare with a Jan Hofman. This also appeared before the magistrate. Also before the magistrate, in January 1717, Abraham and Jacob de Villiers brought a case against Anthonie Lonbard regarding “kwaard gepraat” (cross words) against them and their wives and daughters. However, witnesses Jean and Paul Jourdan, said they did not hear the cross words.

Additional information regarding the grievance brought against the Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel (mentioned elsewhere) was that he lost financially when he had to make a wagon

available for four or five days. His oxen were so “moeg” (tired) one died. This cost him fifty gulden (guilders). Furthermore, reading between the lines, it appears that he believed he was being discriminated against because for two consecutive years he had been prevented from delivering wine to the Company by the “kelldermeester” (cellar master) at great cost to himself because he had to take the wine back.

Jacob de Villiers (1661-1735)

From La Rochelle, France. Although, probably born at Bar-sur-Seine, France (not definite) the son of Pierre (de) Villiers and Elisabeth Secault. He died at Boschendal sometime between 12th and 17th May 1735.

The farm La Bri, Olifantshoek (now Franschoek) was granted to him in 1694, although most likely allocated to him upon arrival in 1689 and received the title deed in 1712, possessing the farm until his death in 1735. Obtained the farm Leeuwendans in 1715, adding 40 morgan (34 hectare) leasehold land in 1732. He bought the farm Boschendal from Abraham in 1717. It remained in his possession in his estate after his death until 1738 when it was inherited by his son Jean. The farm Lekkerwyn was bought in 1730 from Abraham's estate.

There is some confusion whether his name was Jacob or Jacques, almost invariably in documents Jacob de Villiers is written and/or signed, as well as in his will.

Jacob married Marguerite Gardiol (1670-1749, although born 1794 in her will) in 1691, the sister of Abraham's wife Susanne. The two sisters and their mother, Marguerite Perrotette arrived in the Cape in 1689. Jacob and Marguerite had twelve children. Two died young. One curious entry Jacobus (Jacob de Jonge). Was he adopted? The twelve children were; Jean (circa 1692-died young), Susanna (circa 1694-1770), Marie Elizabeth (circa 1693-1757), Janne (Johanna) 1697-1763), Jacob (1699-died young), Jacobus? (Jacob de Jonge 1703-1734), David (circa 1704-1770), Marguerite (1705-1776), Abraham (1707-1763), Rachel (1710-1762), Isaac (baptised 1712), Jean (1717-1796).

Jacob was also a deacon in the Drakenstein congregation 1702-1711 and elder 1715-1717. In 1713 and 1716 he was a signatory to the request to the church council for a new church and a minister/pastor. He was also a member of the Drakenstein Mounted Military until release in 1717.

In 1702, the magistrate of Stellenbosch gave an order that residents, specifically those in Franschoek must transport thatch to the governor's farm, or lose their right to sow and plough their land. Jacob protested that he only had seven draught oxen and could not manage two wagon loads. The reply was do it or lose it. In the end he and other Franschoekers clubbed together to comply.

The Huguenots were frequently in mutual disputes. On one occasion, in 1694, Jacob was asked to provide a statement to the Stellenbosch magistrate regarding an event in 1691 by Antoine Martin. For no apparent reason Jean Imbert hit Martin (who had one hand) on the head with a pistol. Jacob disarmed Jean, whereupon Jean proceeded to throw Martin to the ground and hit him until he pleaded for mercy. Apparently, the two, Jean and Martin subsequently became friends and even formed a partnership.

DE VILLIERS COAT OF ARMS



The de Villiers family coat of arms dates from late in the 12th century. The belief is that a coat of arms was awarded to a de Villiers family knight for outstanding services rendered to the French royal family during the Crusades, which took place between the 11th century and late 13th century. As well as peerage titles, such as Baron and Count. The copy on the left “is a photograph of the original, painted in France in the second half of the 19th century, after detailed studies of French heraldic records in the archives in Paris,” The painting was commissioned by Jacob Isaac de Villiers, a prominent attorney in Paarl, after he was satisfied that it was a “true and genuine” copy (de Villiers, J. L. 1996).

A number of countries, including France, began keeping heraldic records during the second half of the 12th century. Up to that time, it had been acceptable for a family to alter the design of its coat of arms from time to time, according to changed circumstances. When record-keeping was introduced, details of coats of arms remained unaltered unless there were compelling reasons for change. In the Netherlands heraldry became enshrined in Roman Dutch law and the heraldic tradition was carried on in Dutch colonies, such as South Africa.

References to the rest of this section are; de Villiers J. L 1996, Wikipedia (e) and Wolf J. C (a) and (b).

The complete coat of arms is called an Achievement. The Achievement consists of five parts. The specific meaning of the elements of a coat of arms is subjective. Never refer to the family crest. It is the family coat of arms.

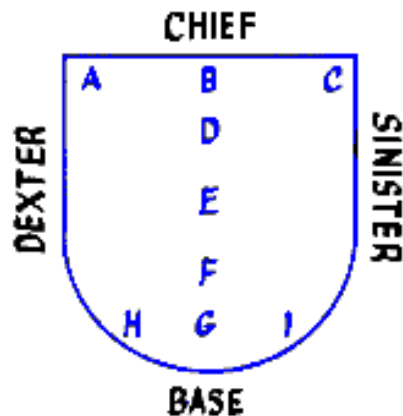
The first is the crest on top of the helmet, which consisted of items that characterised a particular family. In the de Villiers family this is a short sword (seax), held in a mailed fist. In heraldic terms a “Dexter Arm in Armour embowed grasping in the hand a Seax Argent.” This was usually made of leather, or wood and placed on top of the knight’s helmet where it could be easily seen and serve as a rallying point for soldiers.

The second is the coronet or wreath of twisted cloth scarf, which was knotted behind to hide the join between the crest and the helm. It is shown as two scarves wound together in the same two colours as the tincture (blue) and the metal (white to represent silver metal).

The third is the mantling, representing the folds of the cloak of a knight. Originally this was a cloth worn over the back of the helmet as protection against heating from the sun. If one has been in battle, it was usually shredded and torn. From this evolved the fancy mantling seen around the shield. The mantling is usually the same colour as the tincture. In the de Villiers family coat of arms it is blue.

Fourth is the helm, silver in colour, closed and lined inside in crimson. The helm falls into five

categories. First: The helm of sovereigns and blood princes. It is full-faced and garde-visure with six bars and of gold, burnished damask. Second: Dukes borne of silver, figured with gold, full faced and garde-visure, with five bars. Third: Peerage under the degree of dukedom. Borne silver, figured with gold, in profile, open and garde-visure, three bars visible. Fourth: The helmet of Baronets and Knights. Borne polished steel, figured with silver, full-faced, open and without guards. Fifth: Esquires and gentlemen. Borne polished steel and must be placed sideways, or in profile with closed beaver.



Fifth. The shield. There are 9 points on the shield by which objects on the shield can be identified. A = Dexter chief, B = Middle chief, C = Sinister chief, D = Honour point, E = Fess point, F = Nombril point, G = Middle base, H = Dexter base and I = Sinister base. The order of importance is from upper right (as it would be to the bearer of the shield. That is, top left when looking at the diagram left on the page) to bottom left.

The de Villiers shield is party, or parted Per Fess. In the upper part is an ordinary called a Bend, representative of a knight's scarf and signifying defence. The de Villiers version is a per Bend (or Dexter chief to Sinister base)

and is a red band on a silver background (white upper part). The lower part of the shield has the tincture. Colours in heraldry are called tinctures and consist of two metals (gold, or silver) and seven colours. The de Villiers family colour is azure (blue). Blue represents strength and loyalty. Some sources say truth and loyalty. Superimposed is an animal. In this instance Agnus Dei or Lamb of God, sometimes referred to as the Paschal lamb, on a blue background (lower part). A lamb carrying a staff with a cross signifies faith, innocence, bravery, gentleness, purity, resolute spirit. However, in this case, as the coat of arms is believed to have been granted during the crusades, it could also represent participation in the crusades.

Some branches of the de Villiers family have adopted different versions of the coat of arms. However, the charges, details inside, the shield cannot be changed if the adopted version is



Some examples of Huguenot shields and charges seen at Boschendal.

going to be claimed to be authentic de Villiers. The de Villiers motto, La Main L'Oeuvre (the hand to the work) is a fairly recent addition to some versions. Originally there were no mottos. Historically, it is a new fashion. Other, slightly different and wrong versions of the de Villiers' coats of arms exist.

When Jacob Isaac died in 1880, the coat of arms painting passed to his brother Paul, also an attorney. He died in 1917. It then went to his surviving son, James Henry, a medical practitioner in Rondebosch. His two sons, Lindsay and Paul were killed in the 1939-1945 World War. When He died in 1955, his daughter Doreen was custodian until Lindsay's son, John Lindsay became of age, legally recognised as an adult (de Villiers, J. L. 1996).

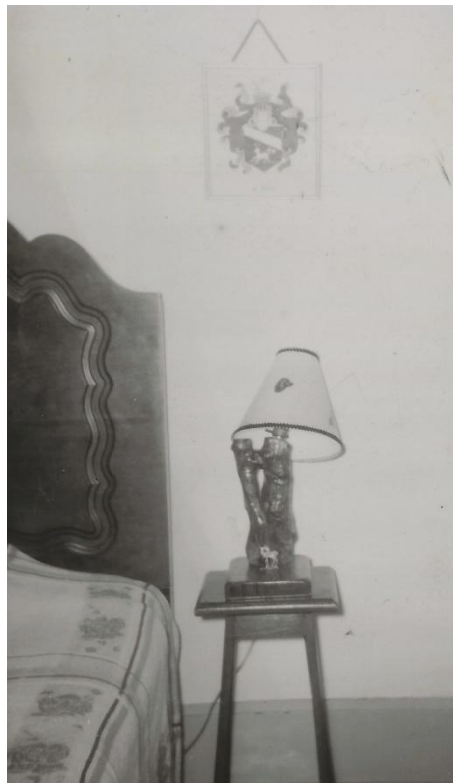


Variations of the de Villiers Coat of Arms in my possession, not regarded as the genuine article are shown below. The charges on the shields remain true to the original, although the colours vary, as well as the helm and the absence of a crest on one of them. The brown faded copy dates from circa 1950s. The annotations indicate the colours white blue and gold with a

translation of the family motto below.



The photograph, taken with my Kodak Browne box camera, dates from 1961. A framed copy of the original de Villiers Coat of Arms hangs on the wall next to my bed with my handmade lamp made from driftwood found at Fynnland Beach in Durban harbour.



VILLIERS IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND

While we have at our disposal a lot of information about the South African family, what about the history of the family in France and Britain? To properly review the family history in France we have to go back to the middle ages. The prefix de in French peerage denotes Royal or noble blood. In the case of the de Villiers family there is no hard proof as to which is applicable, there is however, no shortage of theories. The original de Villiers coat of arms has a forward facing golden helmet (in heraldic terms, a helm proper). In heraldry this represents the helm of a ruling king, because of the Salic law, France could not have a female ruler, or a member of his close or semi-extended family. So if we were to correctly read this information, the original de Villiers family must have been one of the following; Barons of 'Villers (Normandy), or Barons of La ' Roche ' Villers (Brittany). Despite the second reference, it is most likely that they were of Norman origin. Although there was a Breton contingent William the Conqueror would not have entrusted important tasks to them. The relationship between the de Villiers' and the de Bohun's was too close for the de Villiers family to have been Breton.

There are family connections with William the Conqueror. The family was present at the battle of Hastings in 1066. We can with certainty, rule out lower ranking feudal lords at this point, due to the fact that the helmet is distinctly "Royal." In all likelihood it would have been Baron de Villiers, who made a constant habit of being in active rebellion against the crown. He was related to William of Normandy through his son who was married to one of William's bastard daughters. The Duke of Normandy was in effect the king's brother-in-law. At this time being illegitimate did not stop one from inheriting.

Toward the start of 1066 William, the Duke of Normandy, became bored with plundering Brittany, Orleana, Maine, Poitou and just about every other part of France (except Normandy) so he decided to go international and "take out" Saxon England. William had visited England in 1047. Edward the confessor, the then king of England, promised William the throne of England. Harold Godwinson, the only other possible heir agreed and gave his assurance that William would become king on Edwards' death. When the old king died, Harold seized the crown. Needless to say, William was not particularly happy with the news, in fact he was rather upset.

Before setting out to conquer England, William and his companions held mass at Dives upon which is inscribed the name of Godefroi de Villers (the Huguenots introduced the second "i" as in Villiers much later). William landed at Hastings with a large Norman/Breton force, including cavalry, at Pevensey in early October 1066. The last time England was successfully invaded. On the 14th of October 1066, the Norman army brought the Saxons to battle on a field at a place now called, of all things, Battle. Among the Norman knights were the members of now great British families like de Bohun (later just Bohun), de Melville, de Spenser, de Bretts, de Glanville, de Montford, and not to forget, one of the most powerful military families at that time, the de Hazelrings, who still leave their mark on the British military establishment.

Historical documents show that among the names of the great Norman families there was a knight by the name of Comte (Count) Hugo de Villiers. Count Hugo was an officer of the van at the battle of Hastings. He was also apparently a good friend of Hugh de Bohun, who was the son of Charles de Bohun, one of William's principal advisors. There is strong evidence to suggest that Hugo was the Baron of Villiers only legitimate son. The family name can be found on the roll that William had inscribed on the west wall of the church at Dives, headed Compagnons de Gvillavme la Conqvete de Langleterre in old Norman and English (the letter

v represents the letter u). It is dated er MLXVI (1066). This gives us an idea of how ancient is the de Villiers house. We come from a long line of knights who have repeatedly proven their mettle on the field of battle for both France and England.

The Normans, at the time of the Battle of Hastings, were the foremost exponents of military warfare. It was William who first used the now widely recognised tactics of speed, mobility and surprise. His tactics at Hastings are, to this day, used as case studies for future British Army officers at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. His tactics were designed for cavalry, but a modern tank commander would have no problem in understanding them. He is to tank warfare what von Clausewitz is to infantry tactics.

In the end, despite the Saxons having the high ground, the Normans won the day and William slew Harold. William was duly crowned king of England. It is believed that Hugo de Villiers remained in England and is the ancestor of the family listed in the British peerage as Villiers de, former Dukes of Buckingham and current Earls of Clarendon and Jersey. Other known English connections are given below.

The Dukedom of Buckingham, held by the Villiers family from 1617 (earldom, 1623 created dukedom) to 1687 when the second duke died without legitimate issue.

The Earldom of Clarendon, held by the Villiers family from 1753 when Charlotte Hyde married Thomas Villiers, younger son of the Earl of Jersey and thus, because the Hydes had no male heirs, the line passed to the Villiers family.

Thomas was created Baron Hyde in 1756. In 1776, on the death of Charlotte's father, he was created Earl of Clarendon. His sons succeeded him as Earls of Clarendon. But when his last and youngest son was killed, while serving as an officer in the army, the title passed to Thomas' nephew George, who was a Tory member of parliament. George's grandson, George Villiers (1877-1955) was governor of South Africa from 1931 to 1937.

Clarendon George Herbet Hyde Villiers (1877-1955), 6th Earl and British administrator, was educated at Eton. From 1902 to 1905, he was aide de camp to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland Lord Dudley. In 1914 he succeeded to the title of Clarendon. 1925-1927 he was under-secretary for the dominions. 1927-1930 he was chairman of the BBC and 1931-1937 Governor-General of South Africa.

Following the conquest of England (1066, etc., etc.), the language of the English Court and for that matter the Scottish Court, was French. Even at the Battle of Agincourt, Henry V would have given his orders in French, despite what Shakespeare has to say about it. Over a period of time Norman-French families started to become Anglo-Norman. Members of noble Norman families married members of Saxon noble families. The de was dropped by some branches of the family in favour of just Villiers, but it was maintained by others and can be found in the current de Bretts peerage list. For example, the Earldoms of Jersey and Clarendon.

Sir Edward de Villiers, Earl of Jersey, was half-brother to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. It is difficult not to get confused, because George seems to be a favourite family name. The eldest son of the Jersey branch of the family is known as Viscount Villiers. Osterley Castle is the family seat, which was handed over to the National Trust in 1956.

The de Villiers family was also represented at the Crusades. Members of the family have played a part in just about every military venture undertaken by either France, or England. By the time of the crusades, branches of the family were firmly entrenched in both England and France and as a result, at each other's throats, despite the fact that they both still spoke French.

As far as can be ascertained, there is no record of any members of the family taking part in the first crusade. The second crusade was, however, well attended by members of the family. The 2nd crusade was led by Richard the 1st of England (Richard the Lionheart) and Phillip the 3rd of France. People like King Guy of Jerusalem played a smaller part in the campaign. There are a number of references to members of the family. For a change they are not vague and appear in fair detail. When dealing with this kind of research anything over three lines is considered a gold mine.

The most interesting of all must be James de Ilse Villers who was the commander of the knightly order of St Johns, before they became the ambulance chaps. He successfully commanded the defence of the Island of Malta against the superior forces of the Saracen army of Saladin the Magnificent. It was no small feat as Richard Plantagenet, with all his military might and undoubted talent, was stopped dead in his tracks within sight of Jerusalem. George de Villers (even at this early point George was a popular family first name), travelled to the holy land as an aide of Richard the 1st. He distinguished himself in the taking of Acre by "driving the enemy from a heavily defended breach with singular and determined courage". For his bravery Richard took the unusual step of knighting George on the field of battle. Members of the family on the French side of the crusade were also present. Henri de Villiers was a knight officer in Phillips bodyguard. Unlike Richard's bodyguard, Phillip's bodyguard never saw much action. This was most likely due to the fact that Phillip's eyesight was failing and could not tell the front from the rear.

The presence of the de Villiers family on both sides of the Channel meant that it was inevitable that de Villiers' would fight each other. Particularly during the reigns of Edward I, Edward III, Henry III, Henry IV and Henry VI of England. This was a lot of reigns as was the reign of the Plantagenets. All of the above mentioned kings embarked on wars with France. So, de Villiers (for the sake of consistency, the modern spelling of the name is used) often ended up fighting each other.

As the Earls of Clarendon and Jersey, they certainly would have been called upon to attend the French wars and to provide a body of knights and foot soldiers. An invitation they could not really refuse as it was their feudal duty. It is to this end that we are able to obtain information on the activities and movements of our ancestors during the French wars. After all, 300 hundred men have to be fed and equipped and that means paper work. It seems our ancestors kept careful records when it was their money that was being spent.

Henry III started it. His son Richard helped the French against his father. Edward Longshanks the 1st also got in on the act. Henry IV was quite successful and Henry VI finished it once and for all at the Battle of Agincourt, which was immortalised by Shakespeare. There is evidence to show that the 2nd in command of the van, under the Duke of York, who later died in his elder brother's arms after successfully leading the van, was George (yes another one) de Villiers (Viscount Villiers). The aide de camp to the Constable of France was also a de Villiers (first name unknown). His surname saved him from death after his capture. He was later ransomed by the English.

Details of family members can be found in all sorts of documents. In the United Kingdom, most references to the family are to be found in England and Wales, with one in Scotland. There appears to be no direct mention to the family in Ireland. From these documents it becomes apparent that the family seems to have been quite militarily inclined. We often find members of the family hiring themselves as mercenaries, but only as officers mind you. It appears to be genetic.

English members of the family, when not committed to England by feudal law, hired themselves to France to fight against England. This was not at all unusual. Richard the Lionheart, when he was Prince of Wales, hired himself to France, who was at that time involved in a war with England and Richards father, Henry III. The above scenario also applied to members of the French de Villiers family.

In Ireland, senior members of the family hired themselves as generals and their feudal soldiers as infantry, to the constantly waring kings of Ulster and quite frankly, to anybody else whose bid was high enough. Later history, in Scandinavia, members of the family offered their services to the kings of Sweden. Most notably Gustavus the 1st.

By the way, in addition to what Adrian has written, there is Barbara Palmer. Barbara Palmer, borne 1641, was the daughter of William Villiers, 2nd Viscount Grandison and his wife Mary Bayning. William Villiers fought on the side of King Charles I at Edgehill and died of his war wounds in 1643. He was the cousin of the 1st Duke of Buckingham. Barbara accompanied her husband, Roger Palmer, to The Hague, in Holland in 1660 to give Charles II's in exile, letters and money. The future king took more than Roger's money. They became lovers. She accompanied King Charles II to England upon his restoration to the throne in 1660. In 1661, As a reward for her services, the King created Roger Palmer Baron Limerick and Earl of Castlemaine which made her Countess Castlemaine. She outlasted other mistresses. She had six or seven children, with five alleged illegitimate children by King Charles II, which he acknowledged. However, she had so many affairs it can't be said with certainty that they were all his, as she claimed. 1670, the king created her Baroness Nonsuch and the 1st Duchess of Cleveland. She died in 1709 at the age of sixty-eight (English Monarchs and Fraser 1979).

13th October 2011 I was in London to attend an annual Energy Symposium. On the way there via the underground at Euston Station, I took a photograph of a plaque that relates to our English family history. It reads, in part, "the design of this station is based on the coat of arms of Henry Charles FitzRoy, 1st Earl of Euston, second natural son of King Charles II by Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland." FitzRoy means son of king. It was used for illegitimate royal children. He was later created Duke of Grafton. It goes on to state "the land upon which the mainline station is situated was the property of the FitzRoy Family. The family name and titles associated with it are to be found in the names of streets and squares in the surrounding areas: Euston Road, Euston Street, Euston Square, Cleveland Street, FitzRoy Square, FitzRoy Street, Grafton Street."

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APPENDIX

Data obtained from Familie De Villiers Family in South Africa Vol I & II. Huguenot Memorial Museum. De Villiers Family Trust. 1996.

The family tree

To clearly, enlarge the page and move the cursor over the page.

