

## HISTORY OF THE BRINK/BREAKWATER BAY

Originally all the land belonged to the Gericke Family. As the years went by, part of this extensive seaside property were sold off to The Urbans, Fields and later different areas were developed namely the farm Denneseerus, Monate, Oubaai and Breakwater Bay and lastly The Brink.

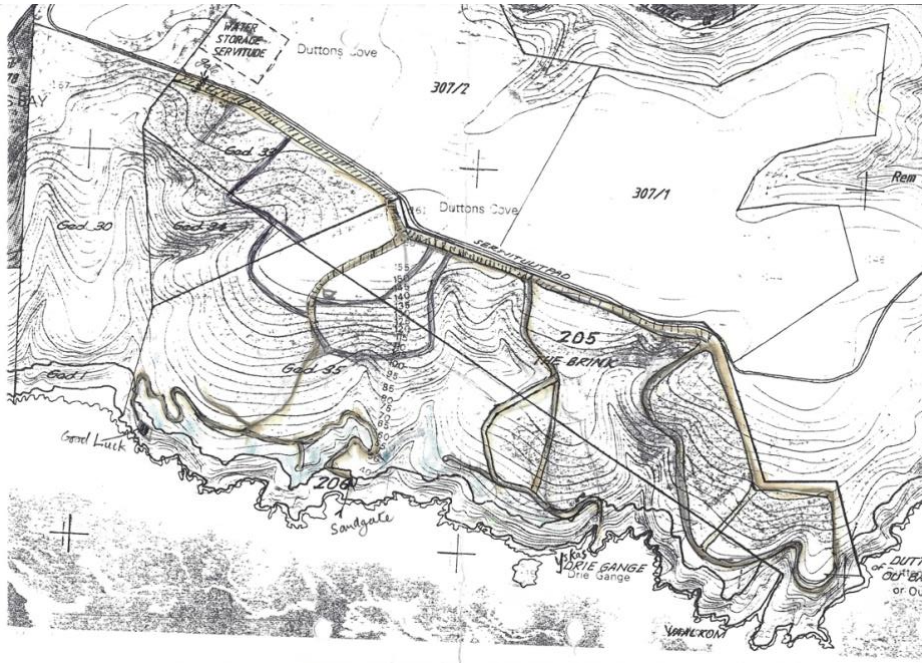
Why did John Urban buy The Brink and Breakwater Bay? Because he had to pay 2 shillings at the gate, in order to reach the cliffs which led down to fishing places with names like: Vaalkom, Yskas, Sandgate and Slaapplek. These names were used when Herolds Bay Height's streets had to be named.

John Urban took his sons, Ossie, Claude, Alan and sons-in-law Sydney Rogers and Fred Stone for fishing trips using a rough ground road (close to Oubaai's fence). It was a secluded bay then, and known in the family circle as the best spot to collect bait and catch musselcrackers.

In the summer of 1960/61 John Rogers (grandchild) caught a kabeljou at "Die Venster" – it was recorded as the biggest kabeljou caught off the coast of Southern Africa in 1960.



Oupa John Urban went on fishing expeditions often and thought he was spending too much money on fishing. He bought the property in 1952. He decided to build his own roads closer to each fishing spot.



He also decided to use the land by planting pine tree plantations. Saplings were planted by a team of men but also with the help of the grandchildren. The trees grew tall and proud in spite of cynics who thought the plantation too close to the sea and in the salty sea breeze. Patches of the farm were open fields where cattle were grazing. About 50 years later the pine trees were harvested when they were mature enough.

In 1956 John Rogers started building the first road which ended at the quarry close to the first boom, (parking area) (Brink). Gravel from the quarry was used to give the roads a better foundation. The family used The Brink as a regular Sunday picnic destination. The bulldozer was an essential piece of equipment. When at last the road had reached the Dollies shore, John Urban's brother Ossie started the shack Good Luck. "Good luck" was the traditional toast when family members were invited to join the group on the stoep for oysters and a drink. It was also heard when you passed there on your way to hopefully catch a fish.



The tidal pool was built by rocks and stone off the beach - a great barrier built to keep out the high tide. They decide to seed oysters in the pool and sow also some swimming mud prawns from Sedgefield were brought to inhabit and breed in the sand. The next engineering job was to build a tidal pool for swimming when the tide was in and the gulley's were dangerous.

The wonderful mosaic art that can be seen on the wall at Dollies is the work of Mel Walton – made from shells and glass collected along the beach.

Sandgate was another fishing spot where the family civil engineers, John, Claude and Ossie made a winding road right down to a rocky bay. It is a sandy fishing spot. There in front of the narrow rocky bay, under the cliffs, the swells well up from very deep waters and churn up the trapped sand into what appears to be great cart-wheels of sand under the surface.

Later the cabin Sea-Quest were built.

On a Sunday afternoon on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November in 1958 John Urban started the steep walk to the truck – he collapsed having a massive heart attack. His whole family and especially the 28 grandchildren grieved his passing – it marked the end of an era blessed with family fun – a family united by him.



Grandchildren at Herolds Bay – Mel Walton (without bonnet)



Grown-up grandchildren

JOHN URBAN

His wife Myrtle, John and seated John Rogers



In Blanco a businessman Robert Drummond took over a small shoe business and named it the 'Colonial Boot and Shoes' factory. He needed an expert tanner and Johan Augustus Urban (1854) was contracted from Brandenburg Bavaria. He met the Frei family who came from Switzerland and were given crown land near the Blanco River. Johan (named August) married one of the daughters Rosa in 1881. When the Drummond factory went bankrupt, Searle's Brothers of Great Brak who had started a shoe factory for "boots, shoes and

slippers” appointed August as their factory manager in 1886. The couple first four children were born in Blanco:

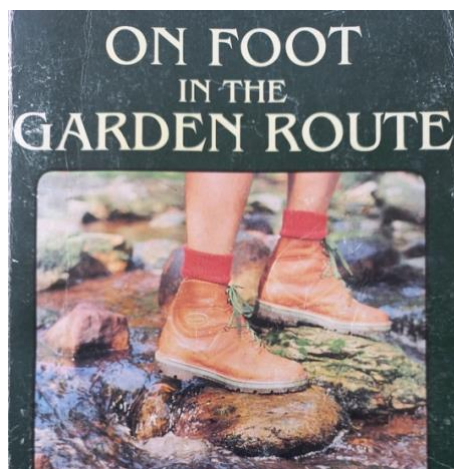
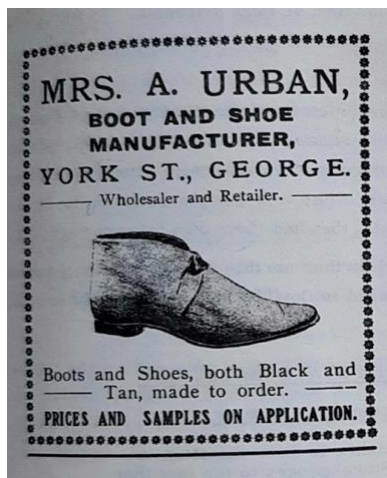
Francis, Josephine, John and Caroline. They had 11 children. John left school to help on the farm – he could speak, German, Dutch and Afrikaans. He had studied English and also took Latin classes.

In 1907 John married Myrtle de Reuck (family made wagons in Meade Street).

Cecil and then Irene was born and then Gerald (died only 5 months), Imelda, Freda, Alan and Claude. The last girl Madge was born in 1922. John had to support the family and also his mother-in-law. He often prayed “Dankie Here vir kos en kleres .... maar die veldskoen maak ek self”.

When the Great Spanish flu struck the country in 1918 John helped the Town Board to organize an ambulance service (wagons) to help flu victims to get to town. He also saved a young girl from drowning in Herold’s Bay. Because of his bravery and selflessness, John Urban was no longer seen as the struggling bootmaker but became a hero to the locals.

John’s business, J.R Urban prospered. He now owned his own tannery and his boots were sent to the mines on the Reef. Myrtle and the older children packed them and they were delivered by cart to the station. John built a new house in York Street – now Heritage House. John was elected for his first term as mayor in 1925. He also established a mission orphanage for children at Rosemore.



In 1935 the eldest daughter Irene was married to Sydney Rogers. In 1940 his daughter Imelda was married to Major Fred Stone. Hugh Shankland got married to Madge and Joe Moore to Freda. Each one of the sons-in-law joined the firm of JR Urban and Sons.

Urban’s Building became Shamrock place in 1998.

John bought Ponsonby Hodges Plantations and sawmill and the old Kraaibosch farmhouse. He believed in buying properties and not shares. In 1940 he was again elected as mayor for 5 years. He was on the George Council for 25 years – mayor for 7. John’s brother Ossie (Oswald) was exempted from military service because of his important position in the manufacturing sector for supplying leather boots to the army.

In Feb 1947 The British Royal family toured SA and paid George a visit en route. Because of threats , John suggested that the couch of the White train can be shunted into his sawmill with its special siding and platform where timber was loaded. That was how the Royal family was kept safe that night.

Fred Stone went to Tanganyika to purchase equipment for an extra-large sawmill which was built at 35 York Street. The firm's property empire kept growing – at Sedgefield - Lakes Farm in Swartvlei was bought. In the 1960's half a million cubic ft of wood was being processed at the sawmill – providing work for 400 employees. (picture below)



What happened to the huge company that John built? Several external factors.

The market was flooded with cheap shoes from Taiwan. People started to buy “white “ pine timber from America. Mel Walton's husband Patrick Walton, retired from Sasol to assist the old company and lead them through the difficult years of dismantling and downscaling Urban Industries. The Board decided to split into 2 groups.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF BREAKWATER BAY AND THE BRINK

A developer Hennie Steenkamp bought Breakwater and developed it. The money received from the sale was used to do the infrastructure of The Brink by Myrjon

The name Myrjon (Myrtle and John ) was used for the one trust – hence the name of Jonmyr Crescent in The Brink.

In 2001/2 a massive fire swept through the 2 properties –traces of burnt logs can still be seen along the coastal path.

There is a lot more to this story which I condensed for easier reading. All the information was collected from Mel Walton (Imelda's daughter) still living in Sky Lab in Herolds Bay.

The Brink and Breakwater Bay plots were now sold to many new owners and new history is being written. To be continued.....

Celestine

24 September 2022.

