

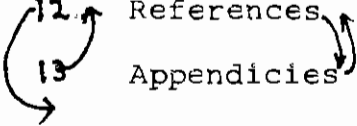
HE HELPED
~~TO~~ MAKE
HISTORY

1983

M.G. GOVENDER

12089

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the 16th November 1860, the barque S, S Truro with a party of 341 Indians dropped anchor in Durban Bay. These pioneers had travelled all the way from India in search of better prospects in a strange new land.

What motivated them to move from the safety of the known into the strange unknown? An Indian by nature is of a conservative creed and one would hardly expect him to step into the unknown merely for adventure or for the lure of wealth.

This document merely tries to find some answers about the circumstance^{of} one of these pioneer Indians, Marappa Govender.

In trying to find some answers I owe gratitude to Mr C. Kuppusami (retired Inspector of Indian Education) who knew Marappa Govender personally. Without his help I certainly would have been in the dark as to the character and circumstance of my subject, especially in his **early** life.

No significant document of my subject could be unearthed. However, photocopies of similar documents that he would have had in his possession are included in the form of appendices at the end.

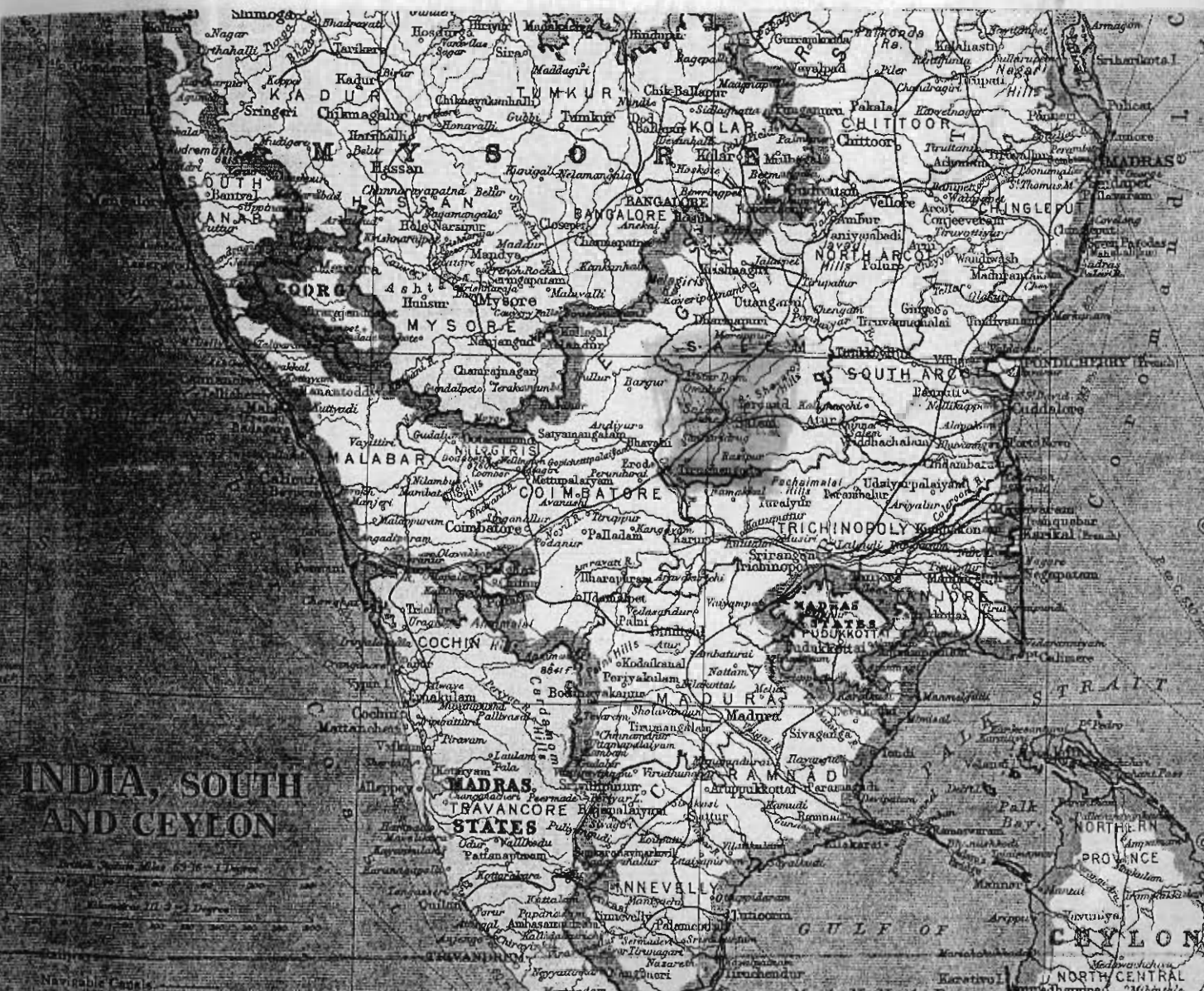
2. PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA

Marappa Govender was born sometime during 1866 in a small village of Velandapolayam in the area of Tiruchengodu in the district of Salem. This place is in the state of Madras, situated about 400 kms. away from the city of Madras. It lies 12° North of the Equator.

The mean annual temperature of this place is 80 F or 28 C. with an annual rainfall of 10 to 25 inches.

The natural vegetation of this area is mainly grassland and low pastures. The people practised a sub tropical agriculture growing rice, cotton, sugar cane, sorgum, maize and tobacco.

The map below illustrates his place of origin:-



3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

It is difficult to conclude with certainty Marappa's socio-economic background in India. However I can come to some generalised conclusions concerning this issue.

The rigidity of the caste system in South India will only allow a person of a certain caste to indulge in certain vocations. Thus Marappa who belonged to the caste GOUNDEN would only be allowed to practise those vocations open to members of his caste.

The Gounden caste were farmers although there is evidence of some members of this caste being merchants. (History of Tamilnad page 328). However tradesmen would have been exceptions rather than the rule.

Marappa arrived in South Africa with a sound knowledge of farming. Therefore he must have been occupied in farming when he was in India.

Farming in India was well organised although it was primitive. Farming implements like the hoe and plough were primitive. Farmers did not have the necessary dams but were ingenious in that they dug drains and led water from the rivers and streams into the farm lands.

Due to the primitive method of farming, farming had to be labour intensive. Trade, because of the distance from ports, was localised. This accounts for farming not being a lucrative occupation. However farmers eked out of a living by bartering goods from fellow farmers and tradesmen.

Marappa did not indulge in farming as his sole occupation. He became a self taught carpenter and put his skill to good use. He made furniture as well as carved ornaments and sold or bartered them.

Marappa's /

Marappa's education was derived mainly through the religious institutions. He learnt to read and write tamil fluently and he was well versed in the Hindu Epics.

Marappa hailed from a family of poor farmers. Living in the interior of Madras state, he had no opportunity of being involved in the lucrative trade with the British at the coastal towns. He lost both his parents when he was very young.

Both he and his younger brother were brought up by an uncle who was also involved in farming.

4. REASONS FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY

People left India for various reasons. Some were lured by the prospect of a better life elsewhere.

The departure of Indian from India during the 1860's was not a new phenomenon. Indians were already in Mauritius, Borneo(SABAH), Malaya, the Fiji Islands and Trinidad as well as British Guiana.

Some left India because of the lack of job opportunities. The introduction of cheap mill made goods into the local markets deprived the local manufacturer, eg. the hand-loom worker of his means of livelihood. Native skills, crafts and manufactures were being substituted by foreign finished products. The impact of the industrial revolution in the West during the 1860's began to have an effect in India. The railways and other quickened modes of transport diversified trade in terms of wider distribution.

India was not a capitalistic country. The British system of capitalism was attempted to be introduced and this brought about great changes in the socio-economic sphere. The introduction of the railway system in certain states greatly increased the mobility of the Indians as well as creating unemployment to those who were involved in the ancient form of transport especially the boat - people and bullock cart operators.

During this period it must further be noted that India was mainly an agricultural society. There were some people involved in skilled crafts and manufacture of cloth but basically the majority of the people were involved in agriculture.

THEY/...

They thus depended heavily on the monsoons to bring rain. However if the monsoons were late then their crops were devastated by drought and the population faced large scale famine.

During the years 1876 to 1878 there was a drought that led to famine which "surpassed all previous calamities of that sort". "Nearby people on two hundred thousand square miles of territory were affected. In Madras State alone four million people died...."¹

Marappa could have lost both his parents during this famine for he was orphaned when he was about 10 years old (around 1876). Thereafter he was looked after by his parental uncle. The problems caused by this drought and subsequent famine consequently had a long - lasting and far - reaching economic and social upheaval. This, no doubt, helped to motivate Marappa to emigrate.

The debasing caste system also motivated emigration. People sought emigration as an escape from the humiliations of the caste system. The advent of the British into India helped to make the caste system more rigid. The people of the lower caste orders were exploited both economically and politically by Indians and British alike. In certain villages open revolt flared up chiefly through the caste system.

Hindu - Moslem conflicts, though not as widespread or intense as in North India, did occasionally erupt and disturb public peace.

"In 1882, the resentment of the Hindus over the building of a mosque in Salem resulted in riots, the

demolition of the building and a rather long tale of killed and wounded."²

Thus Marappa, having left behind a younger brother in the care of his uncle, emigrated to South Africa because of the appalling social and economic conditions that prevailed in his district as well as in the greater part of India.

5. DATE OF DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL TO SOUTH AFRICA

Marappa was recruited by an agent in the Salem district which was about 400 kms. from the port of Madras. He had to travel to Madras mainly by bullock cart because only certain sections of this journey had railways.

Having reached Madras they were grouped and sent aboard the paddle steamer DUNPHAILE CASTLE on 22 February 1885.

The journey by ship took 32 days and they arrived in the port of Durban, then known as Port Natal, on 14 March 1885.

However, they had to spend a day on board the ship in quarantine. On the following day they were visited by the Port ~~Natal~~ Health Officer who had given them a clean bill of health. They were then allowed to disembark. They were then placed in the transit barracks at Umgeni awaiting their prospective "owners".

6. FIRST PLACE OF SETTLEMENT

Prospective employers had to apply to the Colonial Labour Agent for the allocation of the indentured Indians.

The employer had to sign a contract with the indentured labourer concerning conditions of service. The employer had also to be responsible in providing accommodation for the labourers, the provision of rations as well as clothing. The employer also had to provide transport for the labourer from the transit barracks at Umgeni to his place of employment.

Marappa was indentured by a Mr George North who had a cane plantation at Umzinto. To the Tamilians his farm was known as "GOYA KOTRI" (meaning of Kotri being farm in Tamil).

At the farm of George North, Marappa and his accompanying workers had to first stay in a cleaned stable. They were given a day to erect their dwelling at the cost of ten shillings. It was here the Marappa's knowledge of carpentry stood him in good stead. He used as his material dried cane, sticks and mealie stalks to erect a habitable dwelling.

7. FIRST OCCUPATION

George North employed Marappa as a labourer on his sugar plantation. From the start George North proved to be a slave driver. He was determined to obtain the maximum measure of service possible in return for his outlay.

The labourers were often flogged and driven to work. The terms of their contract were never observed and George North was often guilty of withholding their wages as well as supplying unsatisfactory quantity of rations.

The Indian male labourers felt it hard to accept the treatment meted out to the Indian women. To make it worse George North was guilty of fathering many illegitimate children off Indian women. No one dared complain for fear of victimisation and being sent back to India.

At first the labourers were involved in clearing the indigenous bushes around the farm. This had to be done because George North decided to extend the area of his farm. The labourers often worked late into the evening with just a short break for lunch. They were contracted to work a fifty four hour week over six days. It was not unusual for them to work a seventy hour week over seven days.

George North had a very limited knowledge of farming thus he was heavily dependent upon the Indian labourers who had come mainly from the crop raising areas of the great river plains of India bringing with them the knowledge gained over centuries of labour and struggle against the elements.

The few occasions that the labourer did not work were spent on improving their dwelling or visiting labourers on neighbouring farms. Occasionally the labourers of the different farms gathered and celebrated a religious festival so long as the day

did not fall on a working day. Being separated from their kith and kin in India these labourers did not know the auspicious days for festivals. Thus to a large extent they were becoming religiously decadent. To stop this decadence they came together and built the Esperanza Temple that still exists today. However times for recreation were few and far between. If Marappa and his fellow labourers were not involved in digging, planting, weeding, cutting or transporting the sugar cane to the mill, they were kept busy clearing ^{away} the indigenous bushes around the farm.

8. SUBSEQUENT PLACES OF SETTLEMENT AND OCCUPATION

Marappa's contract of indenture expired in March 1890. As much as he would have chosen not to renew his contract with his master he could not. Economic necessity deemed it essential that he renew his contract for a further five years. To aggravate matters the Natal government repealed the Act of 1874 by which ex-indentured labourers could be given land in lieu of free passages to India. Further Act 17 of 1895 provided that any Indian who chose to settle in the colony would be required to take out a licence on payment of £3 per year.

Because of those Acts and Marappa's wretched financial straits he was forced into a renewal of his contract. Only in 1895 was he over with his indenture. The Act of 1874 barred him from receiving land in lieu of his passage to India. Whether he was compensated in cash or kind is not known.

However, having left the services of George North he moved all the way from Umzinto into the present area of Chatsworth where he leased a small holding. Here he cultivated cash crops that included bananas, ginger and pawpaws. This he carried across his shoulders, using as his support a bamboo pole split in half to the market which was 20 kilometres away. He would begin his journey on foot before sunrise and return, after selling his produce, after sunset.

He supplemented his income by helping fellow farmers build their dwellings as well as building bodies for spring carts. Over the next three years he was able to save enough money to contemplate marriage.

9. MARRIAGE AND BIRTH OF CHILDREN

In 1898 Marappa married Mariamma Kithari who was then working on the Esperanga Estates. This marriage was arranged and concluded through a friend of his.

Mariamma had arrived in SouthAfrica on the 24th December 1888 aboard the barque INATHLAMBOO IV. This ship was commonly known as the QUATHLAMBA. Mariamma^{was} then four years old. According to the records in the history department she belonged to the Brahmin caste. This record also shows that she accompanied her mother, Thoyi Mallayappen (28), her sister Packian (8). There is no record of her father, Kithari, accompanying them. However, they could have been accompanied by one Malliah Lingappa (22) who belonged to the BRAHMIN caste as well as hailing from the same village, ROYAPURAM, in Madras. Furthermore all four were indentured to the Esperanza Estate. Marappa and Mariamma were married at the Esperanza Temple. They then made their way to Chatsworth. Of this marriage twelve children, six boys and six girls were born. A set of twin boys and another boy died soon after birth. They sent their three sons to a nearby school. However, the daughters were not sent to school but acquired a Tamil education from a private tutor who ran a school in the afternoons.

10. SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Marappa was well educated in Tamil and was well versed in the knowledge of Hindu epics. He was a well sought after man because he could read and interpret the Tamil almanac. Thus people consulted him to find out auspicious days for marriage, ceremonies and naming of children.

In the educational field he played a major role in the construction of the Chatsworth Aided School that still exists today. This school was the first school built in this area and for a number of years it served the educational needs of the Indian communities of Shallcross, Welbedacht, Cavendish and Coedmore.

In the political field, Marappa assisted in forming a Passive Resistance Branch in Chatsworth. During the campaign of 1946 many men and women were arrested and goaled. One of his grandsons served a term at Harding.

When the Group Areas Act was being enforced, the township of Umhlathuzana was proposed for Indians.

However the Group Areas Board had to first be assured that this area had been once occupied by Indians.

Marappa was one of four Indians selected by a Mr Shelin who was the township developer to give evidence before the Group Areas Board. Their evidence proved invaluable in helping to secure this area for Indian occupation.

11. CONCLUSION

Marappa died in October 1955 after a short illness. He was then eighty nine years old.

The question arises whether his emigration from India was a wise move. This is difficult to answer for I certainly do not know just how the conditions in the state of Madras affected him. However, I can conclude that both financially and socially his coming here did result in an improvement. Nevertheless, this was the result of hard work and perseverance under the most trying conditions.

Here he married a person of the BRAHMIN caste. In India he stood no chance of this happening.

Politically he was not considered fit enough for the vote, for in 1896 Indians were deprived of parliamentary franchise in Natal. Now the caste system was propagated by Whites rather than ^{by} his fellow Indians.

Lastly, slowly but surely he was beginning to shed part of his Indian heritage especially in the religious and cultural field. He even dressed in western clothed for the Indian way of dress was banned from many public places.

B.M.25

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRSCOPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	<u>22</u>
Colonial Number	:	<u>34039</u>
Date of Arrival	:	<u>15 MARCH 1885</u>
Name of Ship	:	<u>DUNPHALE CASTLE</u>
Place of Registration	:	<u>-</u>
Date of Registration	:	<u>-</u>
Number in Register	:	<u>-</u>
Name	:	<u>MARAPPA GOUNDEN</u>
Father's Name	:	<u>NALLI GOUNDEN</u>
Age	:	<u>18 YRS</u>
Sex	:	<u>MALE</u>
Caste	:	<u>GOUNDEN</u>
District	:	<u>SALEM</u>
Thanna/Taluq	:	<u>TRICHENGODUR</u>
Village	:	<u>TRICHENGODUR VELINDA POL-AYAN</u>
Height	:	<u>5'11"</u>
Bodily Marks	:	<u>A SCAR ON RIGHT WAIST</u>
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	<u>NALLI GOUNDEN (FATHER)</u>
Relations Accompanied	:	<u>-</u>
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	<u>VACCINATED</u>
Remarks	:	<u>-</u>

Certified a true copy.

B. B. B.
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

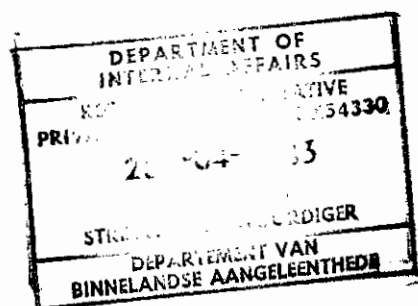
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRSCOPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	58
Colonial Number	:	37126
Date of Arrival	:	24. 12. 1888
Name of Ship	:	BARQUE ITHATHANNOO
Place of Registration	:	—
Date of Registration	:	—
Number in Register	:	—
Name	:	MARIAMINA
Father's Name	:	KITHARI
Age	:	4 YRS
Sex	:	FEMALE
Caste	:	BOATMAN
District	:	MADRAS
Thanna/Taluq	:	MADRAS
Village	:	ROYAPURAM
Height	:	—
Bodily Marks	:	—
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	—
Relations Accompanied	:	—
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	—

Certified a true copy.



REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE





MARAPPA GOVENDER (1947)

APPENDIX IV

G.P. S. 103L

Colonial Born, is at liberty to dispose of..... services.
in die Kolonie gebore, vrystaan om..... te verhuur.

Father's Name.....
Naam van Vader

Marappa Gounden

No. 34039

Mother's Name.....
Naam van Moeder

Mariamma

No. 37126

Sex.....
Geslag

Male

Age.....
Ouderdom

28 yrs (11/12/40)

Height.....
Lengte

5' 8 1/4"

Marks.....
Merke

Nil

Office Date Stamp.
Kantoor Datum Stempel.

Protector of Indian Immigrants.
Beskermmer van Indiese Immigrante.

H. Ramsay

(MAN'S)
**CONTRACT OF SERVICE WITH INDIAN
 IMMIGRANTS.**

We A Remembered,

That on this 23rd day of April
 in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-Ninety
 and Telucksing of Suckling Indian Immigrant
 No. Bandhu appeared before me,
41698 Louis H. Mason Protector of Immigrants,
 and in my presence signed (or made his mark) to the following Contract of Service:—

The said Telucksing agrees to
 hire the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and the said Indian Immigrant agrees to
 render the said Telucksing
 his services in the capacity of General Labourer for Five Years, commencing on the
23rd day of April, in the Year of our Lord
 One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-Ninety

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Indian Immigrant shall be employed as above for six days in each week, save as in such Law is mentioned, and that the hours of labour shall not be more than nine hours daily, between sunrise and sunset, with a break of at least an hour for

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Telucksing shall
 pay to the said Indian Immigrant, as such servant as aforesaid, wages at and after the rate
 of TEN SHILLINGS for the first year, ELEVEN SHILLINGS for the second year, TWELVE
 SHILLINGS for the third year, THIRTEEN SHILLINGS for the fourth year, FOURTEEN
 SHILLINGS for the fifth year, for the remuneration of the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and that such wages shall be paid on the first day of each month.

And lastly, the said Telucksing
 doth hereby bind and oblige himself to give, grant, and provide, to and for the said Indian Immigrant, and for such family as may be allotted, good and comfortable lodging, wholesome and suitable food, and proper medical attendance and medicines, during the period for which this present contract is made, and otherwise to observe and fulfil all the conditions and obligations of the Coolie Laws of the Colony so far as the same are applicable to this Contract and Agreement.

Bandhu

His X mark.

The preceding Agreement was signed by the above-named Parties in my presence, on the day and year above written, voluntarily, the same being, as far as I am able to judge, fully understood by them respectively.

L. H. Mason
 Protector of Immigrants.

Reproduction of a Certificate of Discharge given to one Mr. Ruopia.

NATAL
Certificate of Discharge.
SCHEDULE II. (SECTION 106)

No. 921 1924 22nd Dec. 1897

I HEREBY CERTIFY that Ruopia
 Indian Immigrant No. 5521 has duly completed his term of indenture
 of five years in terms of Indian Immigration Law No. 25, 1891, and is
 released from his obligation to perform further service in this Colony under
 indenture.

Father's Name Goobha
 Age 51
 Height 4 Feet 11 Inches.
 Bodily Marks Scar back of left hand
 Date of Arrival in Colony July 1894
 Ship Jason
 Last Employer J. J. Churchill

OFFICE OF THE PROTECTOR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS
 DURBAN, NATAL.

W. A. Thompson
 Protector of Indian Immigrants.

Pass under Act 17, 1895

No. 9308 **D**

Pass the Indian Immigrant Ruopia

Colonial Number 55820

Sex M Age 27 Height 4 7

Bodily Marks Scar Right side

...he having paid the Annual License of (£3) Three Pounds
 sterling, as required by Section 6, Law 17, 1895.

This Pass expires on the 23rd April 1905

and must then be renewed.

Issued at the
 R.M. Office Durban
W. A. Thompson R.M.

12. REFERENCES

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