

FOOD FOR TO-DAY IN THE LAND OF TOMORROW (1940, 1941)

John Robert (Rob) Midgley
September 2026

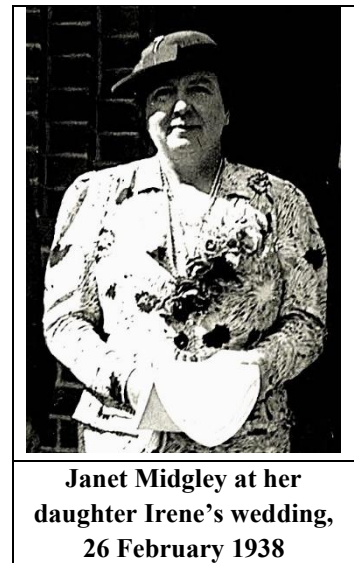
As part of the War Effort and in aid of the Maseru Branch of the Victoria League, Janet Midgley compiled a cookbook called *Food for Today in the Land of Tomorrow* (1940), published by the Mazenod Institute outside Maseru in October 1940. Although she had been the sole compiler, Janet and Elizabeth R Dyke were the project convenors.

Planning and Preparations

Janet presented her idea to the League at a meeting on 16 January 1940 at which an executive committee for the project was elected.

Competitions were held for the cover design and title, with 31 May 1940 as the closing date. A handy 4-page advertising flyer leaflet with the core information was produced and Janet also prepared a more detailed pamphlet setting out the competitions' purpose and rules.

Recipes would be sought from all over world, as long as the submitters have a Basutoland connection. The following is an extract from her preparatory thoughts which are repeated in the pamphlet, with slight modification:



Every variety of recipe & useful hint will be welcomed, not forgetting a few of those used in Basutoland in the comparatively recent "old days", before the advent of the motor car, & electricity & the many modern comforts we have now.

It is hoped to produce an interesting & informative book, one which will be both worthy & typical of our Territory & which may remain a useful stand by to Basutoland housewives, when the days of peach return once more.

The rules stipulated:

The design for the cover should portray to some extent, the idea of a Basutoland Book, if possible, while the title should be in the form of a slogan, also typical of Basutoland and the nature of the book.

The project, after all, was a fundraising exercise and each competition entry attracted a 1/- entrance fee and each hint or recipe submitted had to be accompanied by a 2/- subscription. The book was ultimately priced between 2/6 and 3/-, so these fees seem to have been quite steep. Nonetheless, a substantial number of recipes were received. Basutolandians were

apparently willing to support the cause; or perhaps, given their names would be printed next to the recipes they had submitted, they suffered from FOMO.¹

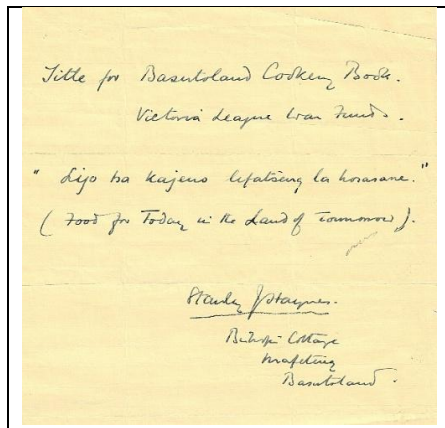
THE BASUTOLANDERS' BOOK <i>Proceeds to be devoted to War Funds</i> Under the auspices of the Victoria League, an effort is being made to compile a book of Basutoland Recipes & Household Hints to be contributed by "Basutoland & Old Basutoland". Every variety of recipe or hint will be welcomed, and the names and addresses of the senders will be printed below each one. It is hoped to receive contributions from all "Old Basutoland" both men and women who may be living elsewhere at present and it will be greatly appreciated if every one will try to get at least one friend to send a contribution. Send this to a friend. P. T. O.	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Patron <i>Mrs. Richards.</i> Conveners <i>Mrs. H. W. Dyke.</i> <i>Mrs. P. R. Midgley.</i> Treasurer <i>Mrs. Derry.</i> Secretaries <i>Mrs. K. Hocking.</i> <i>Miss Mc Kendrick.</i> <i>Miss Butler.</i> Send this to a friend.	Basutoland Victoria League Today the auspices of the Victoria League, an effort is being made to compile a Book of Recipes and Household Hints collected from Basutoland, and those living in the country at the present time, and such old Basutoland as are now living elsewhere. The proceeds from the sale of the Book to be devoted to war funds. At a well attended meeting convened by Mrs. Midgley on Tuesday, January 10th, the idea was well received and an association of ladies was formed to assist in the work of preparing the "Basutoland Book" in being. The following Executive Committee was elected— Mrs. Richards, patron; Mrs. H. W. Dyke and Mrs. P. R. Midgley, joint conveners; Mrs. Derry, treasurer; Mrs. K. Hocking, Mrs. McKendrick, and Miss Butler, secretaries. COMPILATION OF BOOK OF RECIPES It was decided to appeal to all Basutoland throughout the country to assist the scheme and only by sending hints and recipes themselves or by writing to friends and relatives over home dispatches, who may at some time have lived in Basutoland and asking them also to contribute. It will be necessary to collect at least 100 recipes in order to make the publication of the book possible, and the committee earnestly beg for a whole-hearted response to the appeal. All Basutoland are invited to help wherever they reside, and the conveners hope to receive material from every possible source—the Camps, the Missions, the Trading Stations, and from all over South Africa, as well as overseas. Every variety of recipe and useful hint will be welcomed, not forgetting a few of those used in Basutoland in the not far distant "old days" before the advent of electricity and motor cars, and before the harsh winter of Basutoland had the inclement weather enjoyed by them today. It is hoped to produce an interesting and instructive book, one which will be both useful and typical of our Territory, and which may result in a useful standby to Basutoland households, where the days of peace return once more. COMPETITIONS In connection with the scheme outlined above, there will be two competitions to which a large number of entries are earnestly invited. 1st Competition: An artistic design for the cover of the book. 2nd Competition: A Title for the book. The design for the cover should portray to some extent, the idea of a Basutoland Book, if possible, while the title should be in the form of a slogan, also typical of Basutoland and the names of the book. Entry details will be published in the advertisement columns from time to time, but those who wish may commence at once to send in their contributions. Both recipes and competitions are open to all Basutoland, every wage, man, woman, and child, and all contributions may be sent to— Mrs P. R. Midgley, Box 6, Maseru. CONTRIBUTIONS Any number of recipes or entries may be sent by the same person. Each hint or recipe to be accompanied by a subscription of 2/-. Each entry for the competitions to be accompanied by 1/- entrance fee. The names and addresses of the senders of hints and recipes will be printed below the entries. Prizes to be determined later will be awarded to the winners of the competitions, should the contents of designs require their drawings to be returned, they must please state this, and enclose postage to cover the return. Otherwise the drawings will be considered to be the property of the Association, and will be disposed of in aid of war funds. Contributions may be sent in at any time and for a period of three months.
RULES Each recipe and hint sent to be accompanied by a Subscription of 2/-. Any number of recipes may be sent in by the same person, if accompanied by a Subscription. This section is not a competition but an appeal in aid of War Funds, and the Committee earnestly beg for a good response. CLOSING DATE MAY 31st, 1940. Send this to a friend. P. T. O.	COMPETITIONS Competition 1. Design for book-cover. Competition 2. Slogan Title for Book. Prizes will be given. RULES 1. Fee of 1/- for each entry. 2. The decision of the judges is final. 3. The number of entries for each person is not limited. 4. Competitors desiring to have their designs returned should enclose postage to cover. 5. Unreturned designs to be used for War Funds at the discretion of the Committee. Communications to— Mrs P.R. Midgley, Box 6, MASERU. Send your contributions & entries without delay. CLOSING DATE MAY 31st, 1940.	The pamphlet setting out the competition rules

The book also contained some advertising material. The charge for a full-page advertisement was £4.²

VICTORIA LEAGUE Basutoland's Book—In aid of War Funds. Send in your Recipes and Household Hints without delay. Subscription 2/-. Do not forget the competitions for Cover and Title. Entries 1/-. All communications to— Mrs. P. R. MIDGLEY, Box 6, Maseru.	VICTORIA LEAGUE WANTED FOR BASUTOLANDERS' BOOK: More Recipes, More Entries for Competitions. Do not delay. Your name must be in the Book. Closing date extended to July 31st, 1940. All Communications to: MRS P. R. MIDGLEY, BOX 6, MASERU.
Basutoland News 13 February 1940	Basutoland News 11 June 1940

¹ Fear of missing out.

² Correspondence from Nestlé (SA) Ltd, 20 August 1941.



The Rt Rev Stanley J Haynes, Assistant Bishop of Bloemfontein (living in Maseru) contributed the title³ and David Ambrose told me that it was probably inspired by William Westrup's novel *The Land of Tomorrow* (1912), which is set in Basutoland and features life on a trading station.

The Bishop died in August 1940, before the book was published, and his prize 'a beautiful crocodile skin writing case' was presented to his daughter.⁴

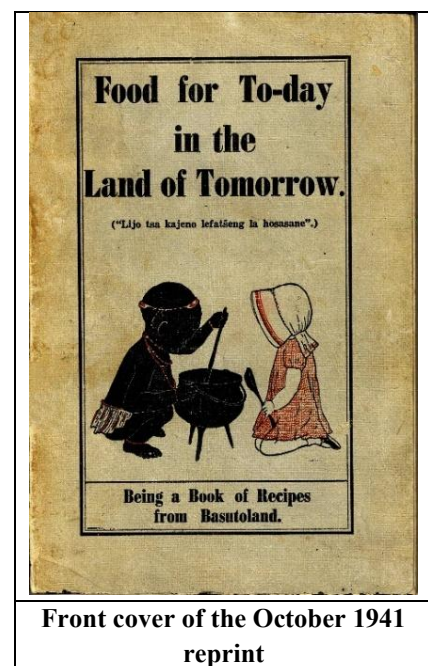
I have been unable to obtain information on Miss K Walsham How, who designed the cover and Mrs L Lloyd who produced the frontispiece, which subsequently became the cover for the second edition. Janet thanked Mrs Lloyd in that edition's Compiler's Note. The Walsham How family apparently lived in Basutoland for many years and both would have been Maseru residents. Mrs D Walsham How and also Marion How of Maseru contributed a few recipes and in the second edition.

First Edition October 1940

The first edition appeared in October 1941, targeting the Christmas season. A book notice appeared in the *Basutoland News* on 3 December 1940 and most of the reviews in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Bloemfontein newspapers were written in December.

The initial print run was 2,000 copies,⁵ priced at 2/6 per copy plus 6d to cover postage and packing, 'to any given address either in Africa or Overseas'.

Even though it had never been formally advertised, with marketing only by word of mouth and newspaper reviews, the book proved to be a success. A reprint followed in October 1941. This time, 1,000 copies were printed.⁶ Janet wanted a second reprint, but the Mazenod Institute would not do so without the Victoria League's go-ahead. Although popular, by June 1942 only 1164 copies had been sold, with 1846 remaining in stock.⁷ Apparently, by 1945 the first edition had been sold out.⁸



³ See also *Basutoland News* Tuesday, 3 December 1940 p6.

⁴ 'Cookery from Basutoland' *The Cape Argus* 2 May 1941.

⁵ Undated article, *Cape Times*; Letter Mrs Haynes to Janet, 12 September 1940.

⁶ Undated review published, possibly, in *The Star*.

⁷ Letter from the Manager, Mazenod Institute, 25 June 1942. The numbers don't tally, but that is of no import.

⁸ Compiler's note in the second edition.

Reviews

The Basutoland Cookery Book VICTORIA LEAGUE UNDERTAKING The Maseru branch of the Victoria League announces that The Basutoland Cookery Book is now ready for sale, and orders are invited. The book has been compiled by Mrs P. R. Midgley. It consists of two hundred and fifty pages, and is full of useful information on all branches of cookery. There are hundreds of rare and well-tryed recipes and household hints which have been collected from Basutoland and South Africa) and abroad. There are also chapters on Invalid Cookery, Child Feeding, Preserving and Bottling of Fruit and Vegetables, and an Appendix by Dr H. W. Dyke, C.B.E., on "Cookery Methods of The Basuto." The book has a most attractive cover, designed by Miss H. Walsham How, and a beautiful frontispiece by Mrs I. Lloyd, depicting a familiar and typical Basutoland scene. It is called "Food for Today in the Land of Tomorrow" (Lijo tsa kajeno le-fatseng la hosasane), and this apt and appropriate title was contributed by the Rt. Rev. Stanley J. Haynes, late Assistant Bishop of Bloemfontein, before his death which occurred so recently. There is a "Foreword" by Mrs Dyke and a note by the compiler, while amusing verses and quotations are to be found here and there throughout the book. The cover is in duplicate, so that the outer one may be removed when soiled and a new cover remains underneath. The book is to be sold for the modest sum of 2/6, and will be a charming and useful souvenir of Basutoland and of the war work of the Victoria League. It will constitute a most acceptable Christmas gift for friends, and the Committee confidently expects the first edition to be sold before Christmas, so please book your orders without delay. Copies are obtainable from Mrs Derry, P.O. Box 4, Maseru. The proceeds will be used for War Funds under the auspices of the Victoria League. The Cookery Book Association is prepared to pack and send the books direct to any address either in Africa or Overseas, should purchasers desire them to do so. The price of the book post free in Africa would then be 2/9, and 3/- for Overseas.	RECIPES FROM BASUTOLAND HOUSEWIVES will find much to interest them in the Basutoland cookery book, which has been published under the charming title of "Food for To-day in the Land of Tomorrow." Publication is under the auspices of the Maseru branch of the Victoria League. The book, which has been compiled by Mrs P R. Midgley, consists of 250 pages and contains practical information on all branches of cookery: There is also a wide collection of well-tryed, as well as unusual, recipes and household hints collected by Basutoland and South Africa) and abroad. There are also chapters on invalid cookery, child feeding and preserving and bottling of fruit and vegetables.	The Cover The cover, which has been designed by Miss H. Walsham How, depicts a squatting piccanin stirring a large black cauldron, and being watched by a small European child. The cover is in duplicate so that the outer one may be removed when soiled. The title of the book was contributed by the Right Rev. Stanley J. Haynes, late assistant Bishop of Bloemfontein, who died recently. The book will be sold for 2s. 6d. a copy and proceeds will be given to war funds. As it would make an excellent seasonable gift, as well as being a useful souvenir of Basutoland and the Victoria League's war work, the organising committee expects that the first edition will be sold out in a few days. The Cookery Book Association is prepared to pack and send books direct to any address, either in Africa, or overseas. The price of the book, post free, in Africa, would be 2s. 9d., and 3s. for overseas. Copies are obtainable from Mrs. B. Derry, P. O. Box 4, Maseru.
Basutoland News 3 December 1940	The Star, December 1940	

"Food for To-day"

DURING the week I met Miss Jennie Armitage, who has come down from Basutoland with the intention of joining the Military Nursing Service.

She came out from Lincolnshire about three years ago, and has fallen under the spell of Basutoland, as most people do.

She previously spent three months in Bechuanaland and says that she likes this place even better. She found the natives in

Basutoland did far more for their children than those in Bechuanaland. If there is one child in a large family who shows any promise the parents make efforts to have him educated. "Of course," added Miss Armitage with a smile, "he is expected to support the family afterwards."

One of the things which Miss Armitage is treasuring is a cookery book published in Basutoland. It is called "Food for To-day in the Land of To-morrow" and was compiled by Mrs. P. R. Midgley, in aid of the Victoria League, Maseru Branch, war funds.

It was a big undertaking—leaflets were sent round to European housewives asking for their pet recipes, and a fee of

2s. 5d. was paid by them towards the printing. After a good deal of hard work a large bookful of recipes was collected and 2,000 copies printed and quickly sold out.

Friends' Voices

The cover design, which shows two small figures over a Kaffir cooking pot, is most attractive, and was drawn by Miss K. Walsham How.

I liked the idea expressed in the foreword by the conveners of the book, Mrs. Midgley and Mrs. Elizabeth R. Dyke: "We have endeavoured to gather together recipes and names so that when we prepare dainty dishes for our households we may see, in our mind's eye, faces of friends and hear again the sound of their voices."

Names and addresses of the

senders are given with the recipes. While the majority come from Basutoland, all parts of the Union are represented—I noticed Cape Town and Knysna among them.

Miss Armitage told me that Basutoland women were making valiant efforts to assist war funds. The native women knit for the Basutoland Native Corps, with its 250 picked men, and the Basuto Women's Association in each Camp help with sewing and knitting.

Cape Times

The Cape Argus

CAPETOWN.

The attached article appeared in The Cape Argus of **2-MAY 1941** and is forwarded for your perusal with the compliments of the Editor:—

Cookery from Basutoland Useful Book in Aid of War Funds

"Food for To-day in the Land of To-morrow." (Lijo tsa Kajeno lepatseeng la Hosasane.)

Basutoland has made a very notable contribution to war funds, and one of the most successful efforts recently organised by the Victoria League in order to provide gifts and comforts for the troops, has been the publishing of a most original cookery book. Residents of Basutoland, past and present, were invited to send in recipes, each recipe to be accompanied by a fee of 2s. The result is a most useful and comprehensive little book which should certainly find a place on all household bookshelves.

The contents comprise recipes for delicious dishes of every variety, many of them quite unusual and novel which should provide a welcome change in many household menus. The directions for jam making and preserves are particularly helpful, and there is a section devoted to useful household hints.

A very interesting article is contributed by Dr. H. W. Dyke, principal medical officer of the territory, dealing with cookery methods of the Basuto which includes a number of dishes and beverages as prepared by the natives themselves.

Mrs. Walsham How, whose family has lived in Basutoland for many years, contributes three very interesting recipes used by native women.

In addition to inviting contributions of recipes the committee organised two competitions, one for a design for book cover and the other for a title for the book. A prize was offered and the winners were asked to

Bishop's slogan. To this she gladly agreed and the prize, a beautiful crocodile skin writing case was forwarded to the Bishop's little daughter.

The book has been most admirably compiled by Mrs. J. M. Midgley, and has met with a very ready sale. A few copies still remain to be sold, and those who purchase them will become the possessors of a most useful household book and will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping forward the work of the Victoria League in providing gifts and comforts for our troops.

Copies are obtainable from Mrs. M. S. Derry, P.O. Box 4, Maseru, Basutoland. The price is, post free, South Africa, 2s. 10d., post free, overseas, 3s.

The Victoria League, Maseru, will post the book to any address given by the purchaser, and will insert a complimentary card if this is given by the sender.

"**F**OOD for To-day in the Land of To-morrow," a book of recipes from Basutoland, has been sent to me from Maseru. It has been compiled by Mrs. P. R. Midgley, in aid of funds for the Maseru branch of the Victoria League, the recipes having been contributed by members of the League. The sale of the book already exceeds one thousand copies, and the proceeds will be used to purchase materials for comforts and necessities for the troops. The clever title was given to the book by the late Bishop Stanley J. Haynes, and the charming cover design is by K. Walsham How. There are more than two hundred pages of recipes and household hints in the book, which is moderately priced at 2s. 10d., post free in the Union. Copies are obtainable from Mrs. Derry, P.O. Box 4, Maseru.

Sunday Times, December 1940

SUCCESSFUL COOKERY BOOK

So great has been the success of the cookery book, "Food for to-day in the Land of To-morrow," issued by the Maseru branch of the Victoria League, that another thousand copies have been ordered and are now on sale from Mrs. Derry, P.O. Box 6, Basutoland.

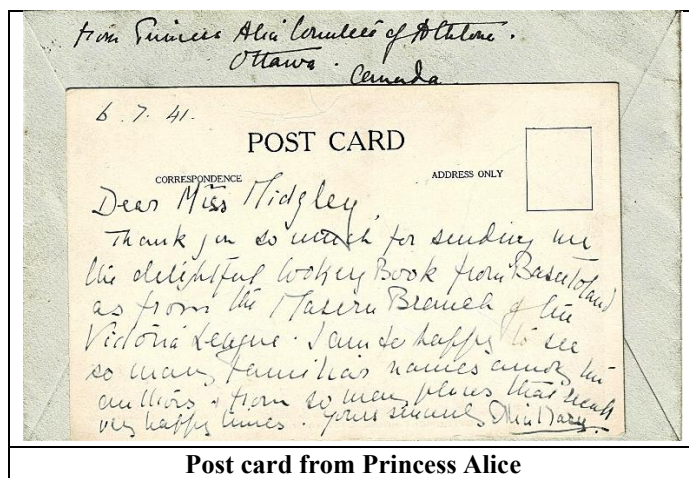
This attractively bound book, full of tried recipes from Basutoland housewives, has found its way to many South African homes. A letter received recently from the compiler says that the demand for the book has been exceptional, not only from the towns but from people in outlying districts, who are anxious to buy the book and help war funds.

Cape Argus, 2 May 1941

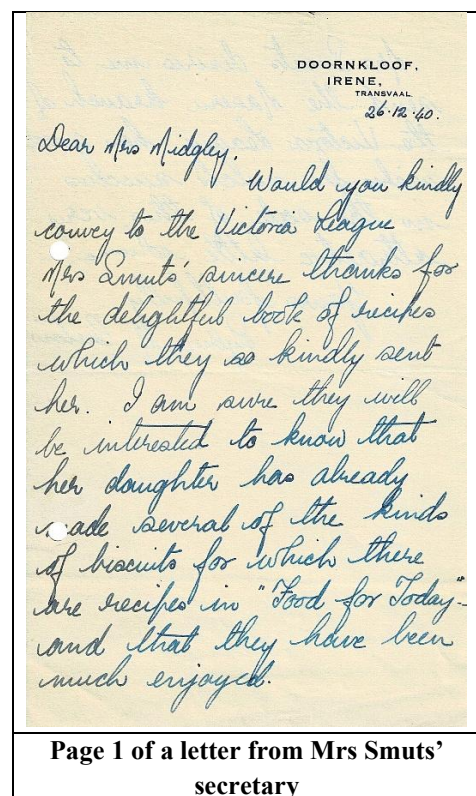
The Star, 1941

Cookery Book Another cookery book to be sold in aid of war funds has made its appearance. This is The Basutoland Cookery Book, quite a substantial volume of 250 pages. Compiled by Mrs P. R. Midgley, it will be sold in aid of the Maseru branch of the Victoria League. "Food for Today in the Land of Tomorrow," is the title of the book, which contains hundreds of recipes and household hints collected from Basutoland both in Basutoland and in South Africa, and abroad. Christmas Gift There are also chapters on invalid cookery, child feeding, preserving fruit and vegetables, and an appendix by Dr H. W. Dyke on "Cookery Methods of the Basuto." The title of the book, incidentally, was contributed by the Rt. Rev. Stanley J. Hayes, late assistant Bishop of Bloemfontein, whose death occurred recently. It has been suggested that the book would be a most acceptable Christmas gift, and this seems an excellent idea. Priced at 2/6, it is real value for money and the money will go to one of the worthiest of causes. Copies are obtainable from Mrs Derry, P.O. Box 4, Maseru. To Any Address The Cookery Book Association is prepared to send the book direct to any address, either in Africa or overseas. The price anywhere in Africa, post free, is 2/9 in Africa and 3/- overseas. It is confidently expected that the first edition will be sold out before Christmas, so an early order is advisable.	Kitchen Philosophy The Basutoland cookery book about which I told you the other day contains not only recipes for the kitchen, but also a little philosophy. As a kind of preface this appears. It is entitled "recipe for happiness":— "Equal parts of health, honest work, rest and recreation, mixed most carefully with diligence, contentment, cheerfulness and an even temper." Hard Lumps "Sift the above through the sieve of determination to get rid of any hard lumps of idleness, covetousness or despondency, and then bring the whole to a cream by adding milk of kindness and spirits of consideration and sympathy, stirring each gently, with an unsparing hand. "Add to the whole a light sprinkling of smiles and colour and laughter. Keep it where it can be seen. "In season at all times. Cost: a mere thought and a few illusions. This mixture can be made at home by anyone." Apt Quotation There is also the apt quotation of a verse by Robert Louis Stevenson:— Go, little book, and wish to all, Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall, A bin of wine, a spice of wit, And a house with love enclosing it.
Two 'The Rambler's Columns', <i>The Friend</i>, December 1940	

Janet was also not shy in seeking support from prominent people. She sent copies of the book to Jan Smuts' wife, Issie, and to Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, the wife of a former Governor-General and High Commissioner in Cape Town. who was by then was Viceroy of Canada. Both women sent Janet thank you letters. (Janet had met Lady Athlone several times before when she had visited Maseru. She later claimed someone else had sent the copy, but from the thank you letter, one can deduce that it might not have been the case.)



Post card from Princess Alice



The Content

The book cover (which was produced in duplicate “so that the outer one may be removed when soiled”)⁹ professed the publication to be a book of recipes from Basutoland, but, as the title of the first chapter suggested, it was more than that. It was:

“The Basutolander’s Book of Tried Recipes and Household Hints”

As originally intended, the names of the submitter accompanied each recipe. The first of these was ‘A Recipe for Happiness’ which my great-grandmother (Janet’s mother-in-law) contributed from England:

Equal parts of health, honest work, rest and recreation, mixed together most carefully with diligence, contentment, cheerfulness, and an even temper. Sift the above through the sieve of determination to get rid of any hard lumps of idleness, covetousness, or despondence, and then bring the whole to a cream by adding milk of kindness and spirits of consideration and sympathy, stirring each gently, with an unsparing hand. Add to the whole a light sprinkling of smiles, and colour with laughter. Keep it where it can be seen. In season at all times. Cost: a mere thought and a few illusions. This mixture can be made at home by anyone.

In addition to an array of cooking, bottling and preserving recipes, the book contains a section on *Invalid Cookery* (‘Never ask a patient what he will take; use your own judgment.’); *Child Feeding* (the box contains one of my favourite recipes); *Cookery Tips* (including how to produce two pounds of butter from one); *Household Recipes* (how to whiten hardworking hands, a ‘flower salad’ to decorate one’s table, recipes for furniture and floor polish, and ant poison); *General Household Hints* (exterminating cockroaches and getting rid of moths and bugs, keeping dogs free from ticks, cleaning paint brushes and curing dripping taps); and *Knitting and Sewing Tips* (pillow-making, repairing coats and shirt cuffs and mending trousers and children’s clothes).

PRESERVING CHILDREN

This recipe has never failed to be a success:

One large grassy field, 6 children, 1 or 2 small dogs, 1 brook with pebbles.

Method: Mix children and dogs well together and place them in the field, stirring constantly. Pour brook over pebbles and add a few dozen minnows. Sprinkle field with flowers, spread over all a deep blue sky and bake in the sun. When brown, remove children. Set to cool in a bath, or better still in lake or ocean.

Mrs Gilbey of Bloemfontein had submitted this recipe. She was my aunt Rene, Janet’s daughter.

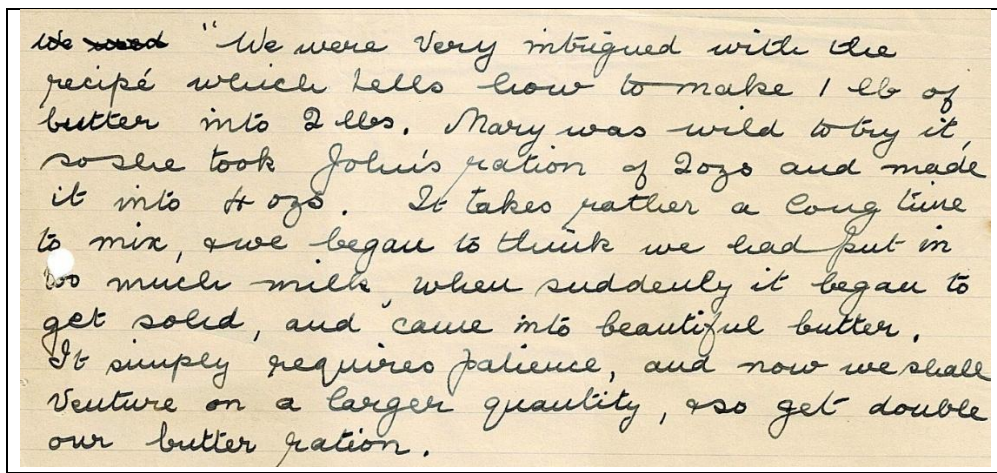
Dr H W Dyke, CBE, contributed an appendix on ‘Cookery Methods of the Basuto’ referring to “dishes or ways of preparing food peculiar to the Basuto themselves”.¹⁰ An interesting read, which would no longer be considered politically kosher. In this section, Marion How

⁹ Undated review published in *The Star*. I have yet to find a such a cover.

¹⁰ Dr Hamilton Dyke was the principal medical officer in the Basutoland Medical Services who, following the war and a stint in Bechuanaland, became the Director of Medical Services in Basutoland. The Dykes were a prominent Basutoland family (*Br Med J* 1961; 2 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.2.5267.1651-c> ; <https://www.bmj.com/content/2/5267/1651.4>).

contributed recipes for roasted locusts grinded into a powder and 'Bushman Rice' (white pupae from inside ant-heaps). Later, in 1962, Marion Walsham How, she produced her own book (with illustrator James Walton), *The Mountain Bushmen of Basutoland*, in which she details observations regarding the paintings and lifestyles of probably the last cohort of African rock artists.

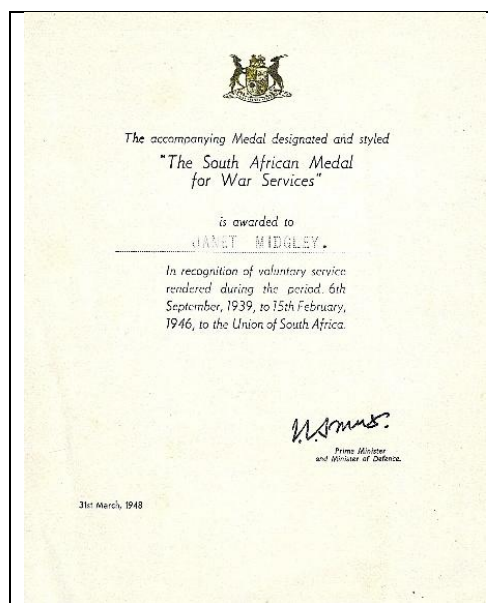
I admit to some skepticism regarding the tip on increasing one's butter, but apparently it works. Janet wrote down this comment from someone who had purchased the book, which also provides a salutary reminder that it had been written in times of war. Butter was a scarce commodity, and rationed:



~~We read~~ "We were very intrigued with the recipe which tells how to make 1 lb of butter into 2 lbs. Mary was wild to try it, so she took John's ration of 2 ozs and made it into 4 ozs. It takes rather a long time to mix, & we began to think we had put in too much milk, when suddenly it began to get solid, and came into beautiful butter. It simply requires patience, and now we shall venture on a larger quantity, & so get double our butter ration."

Recognition

In 1948 Janet received The South African Medal for War Services "in recognition of services rendered to the Union of South Africa" during the War,¹¹ presumably for the funds she had raised.



¹¹ Notice from the Secretary for Defence, DC 1682/5/3/5/57, 19.4.1948.

Appendix

In 1951, in preparation for an interview with the magazine, *Forward*, to promote the second edition of her book (*Food for To-day and Tomorrow*) Janet drafted a note detailing the book's genesis. The handwritten note is printed in full below.

Personal Notes for An Interview, J. Madgeley
(to appear in "Forward")

I came to S. Africa as a young bride in 1905. My husband lived on an out-station in Basutoland, and the early part of my married life was spent in this rather "wild & woolly" spot, and it was there that my four children three sons and one daughter were born. Basutoland is a native territory, and in those days the European population was very sparse. My nearest European neighbour, of my own sex, lived twenty miles away, while a doctor was even further away. The railway had not reached the territory either in 1905, and the nearest railhead was at Marseilles about 50 miles from my abode. Stores, groceries, post & anything else we needed came to us by oxwaggon, or were brought by riders on horseback. I had little experience of cookery or housekeeping at that time, and I found things very difficult indeed at first. Fortunately I was endowed with a fair measure of commonsense, and my education had included a working knowledge of hygiene & physiology, and I proceeded to apply this theoretical experience, as best I could, to ordinary, everyday life in the remote place where I was called upon to live. I soon realised that if I wished to keep my husband and ^{growing} family happy and healthy I must learn to make the best of prevailing

Personal Notes for An Interview (to appear in "Forward")

I came to S. Africa as a young bride in 1905. My husband lived on an out-station in Basutoland, and the early part of my married life was spent in this rather "wild & woolly" spot, and it was there that my four children, three sons and one daughter, were born. Basutoland is a native territory, and in those days the European population was very sparse. My nearest European neighbour, of my own sex, lived twenty miles away, while a doctor was even further away. The railway had not reached the territory either in 1905, and the nearest railroad was at Marseilles about 50 miles from my abode. Stores, groceries, post & anything else we needed came to us by oxwaggon, or were brought

by riders on horseback. I had little experience of cookery or housekeeping at that time, and I found things very difficult indeed at first.

Fortunately I was endowed with a fair measure of commonsense, and my education had included a working knowledge of hygiene & physiology, and I proceeded to apply this theoretical experience as best I could, to ordinary, everyday life in the remote place where I was called upon to live.

I soon realised that if I wished to keep my husband and growing family happy and healthy, I must learn to make the best of prevailing conditions. I must learn to cook, and manage my household under rather frightening circumstances.

There seemed to be no amenities whatever – no doctor, no “butcher, baker, or candlestick-maker”, no water supply, no garden, “no nothing”, except fairly good, but almost entirely unfurnished house; above all, there was no experienced white woman near enough to help me to learn the things I didn't know!

I had a cooking stove of old-fashioned make but no fuel except “liso” or dried dung for this. Water was scarce, and I had and had to be brought from a spring at least half a mile away, until we were able to set up tanks to catch the rain, which only fell at long intervals. Needless to say there was no water “laid-on” for either sinks or baths.

Fresh fruit and vegetables were only to be had if we grew them – so I had to start to learn gardening by “dry-farming” methods, -- no easy task – but in time I learned to produce sufficient for the family needs. Fresh meat had to be slaughtered and prepared at home, and I found much work was involved before it was ready for table. It was a case of “first catch your hare”¹² as in the good old days of Mrs. Beaton.

Milk, butter, poultry & eggs were only for us after we began to keep cows & fowls. All bread and cakes must be baked at home, and so on & so on. Life was a very busy affair for me in those days, but I was young & enthusiastic and I enjoyed sharing it all with my husband. It was just a happy adventure!

Native servants were plentiful & wages low, but the natives were primitive and entirely untrained in European ways. It soon became evident that the responsibility of cooking such food as there was to be had could not be left to the raw native without disastrous consequences to the family health. The methods of a raw native in a European kitchen were, to say the least of it, both unhygienic, & very wasteful, so I simply set to work to teach myself, by “trial & error” how to make good meals from what sometimes seemed like nothing at all.

The years went by, and the difficulties gradually smoothed themselves out, and began to find that I had established for myself (quite unintentionally) a reputation for keeping a good table and a well-run home. I attribute some of this success to a natural flair as I am a Yorkshirewoman by birth, and in Yorkshire, the women are as noted for their good & economical cookery and housekeeping, as the men are for their cricket, and although I was inexperienced at first, I seemed able to pick up this kind of knowledge very quickly.

I became very interested in Cookery and Household Management. I was just a simple housewife and the mother of a family, not all a Domestic Science highbrow, but I was gaining practical experience every day, and I began to realize that the good health of families & therefore of nations had its foundation in the house and the kitchen, and gradually the idea of writing a book came to me. I became aware that the question of Food was of ever increasing importance to the world at large, and that as populations grew, the possibility of shortages must be faced. Therefore it seemed to me to be incumbent on every individual to avoid the wanton waste of food, & it also seemed that this economy should first be practised in the home. I began to did select material for a book which would help the as inexperienced as I was myself when young, and in 1940, a few months after the outbreak of World War II, the book materialized, and was an immediate success. The whole of the proceeds from the two editions of this book, “Food for Today in the Land of Tomorrow”, were given to war funds. I wished to help the war

¹² An English proverb meaning you must secure or achieve something before planning to take the matter further, or celebrating prematurely.

effort, but was not in the position to give large sums of money, and I thought the book might enable me to give more, which it did.

I had plenty of material of my own, which I had gathered and collected over the years, and I did not really need to ask for assistance in order to write the book itself, but I had to raise funds somehow for the printing & publishing. I also wanted the book to be a “Basutolander’s” book, & so I sent out a call for recipes & subscriptions to “old Basutoland”. There was a fair response & I used all recipes which were sent and attached the names of the senders, but there were not nearly enough of these to make a worthwhile book, and so I added chapters, recipe’s & ideas of my own, & in this fashion it developed into a work on Cookery written by me, rather than a collection of other people’s recipe’s. People were very enthusiastic over the idea of having a Basutoland Cookery book, & everybody helped to raise money for the costs of printing by organizing Social Evenings, Bridge Drives, & Bazaars, & I soon had the amount required & the book was launched. The first edition sold very rapidly & there was such demand for more, that the publishers offered to do further editions at their own risk & expense, & I was able to make an agreement with them regarding royalties, all of which went to charities until the end of the war in 1945, when the book went out of print, & I regarded it as finished. Only the public would not have it so and the demand for another book continued to grow, and my publishers asked me to consider a reprint.

But the war was over and I felt that the reprint of the war fund book would be out of place, so I wrote a new one in the light of present post-war conditions. I made many additions and improvements. The preservation of foods became a special feature & so I called it “Food for Today and Tomorrow”. The original book was never advertised except by one friend recommending it to another, but it had a good sale Overseas nevertheless. I had countless letters of appreciation from all over the world, amongst them, one from Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, written to me from Ottawa, Canada, in 1940. The Earl of Athlone – former Gov. Gen. for Union of S. Af. was Viceroy of Canada during the war years, & someone, I don’t know who, had sent Princess Alice a copy of my book, which she graciously acknowledged to me in her own handwriting, & sent me also a picture post-card of Rideaux Hall, where she resided at the time. I had met the Earl & Countess of Athlone on several occasions while they were in Africa, & Princess Alice’s charming personal letter made me hope she remembered me, though it seems impossible.
