

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY

An investigation of the use of an Environmental History approach in
historical research and in classroom practice

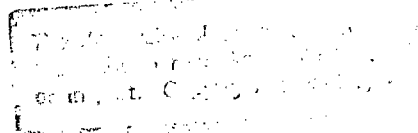
A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
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M.Ed in History Education

by

JEAN BOTTARO

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This dissertation has two components, one History and one Education, and the central unifying theme is Environmental History. The History component examines the historiography of this sub-discipline, and then applies an environmental analysis as an example of its use in historical research.

The second component explores the use of Environmental History in the teaching of school history, and presents a curriculum model which uses this approach.

Both components use the Liesbeek River valley in the Cape Peninsula as a case-study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I need to start off by thanking the person who provided the spark from which this dissertation grew: in June 1994, when I was rather desperately casting about for a research topic which would satisfy both the historical and education components of the course, Howard Phillips of the History Department at UCT mentioned the term "Environmental History". With a background in teaching both history and geography, I was immediately "hooked", and the long hard search began. I soon found out that, at that stage, very little on the topic had been published in South Africa, and that the information available on environmental history in the UCT libraries was extremely limited. An inspired suggestion from Howard that I contact Jane Carruthers at UNISA proved to be all that I needed to get me going, and I am indebted to her for all the references, help and encouragement that she provided.

Although it was Howard who first suggested the topic, my real debt of gratitude is to Nigel Worden, who has overseen the on-off progress of this work since the latter half of 1994. It is his incisive criticism, sound advice and infectious enthusiasm which have kept me going. I thank him for these and for always being willing to give time and encouragement. The education component owes much to the useful suggestions and helpful criticisms of Rob Sieborger. I am grateful to him for these, and for the valuable personal time he gave up to search for references for me in the UK.

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PART 1: ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

As this dissertation employs an environmental history approach, it is important to clarify at the outset precisely what this sub-discipline of history encompasses. Chapter 1 examines the historiography of environmental history. It focusses firstly on its origins, showing that, although it was initially linked to the Environmental Movement of the 1960s in the USA, it has developed beyond that now, with historians increasingly using an environmental perspective to analyse the histories of other areas of the world. Secondly, an examination of the content and methodology of the sub-discipline reveals that there is still much debate amongst environmental historians themselves about these issues. The third section explores the uses of environmental history and suggests that it has value both to historians and to natural scientists. Finally, the chapter examines the current status of environmental history in South Africa, showing that although Environmental Studies is a growing field in South Africa, most of the work has been done by geographers, archaeologists, anthropologists and natural scientists, rather than by historians.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT: ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

The origins of Environmental History

Since the publication in 1967 of Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*¹, which traced the broad interaction between Americans and their environment, the subject of the reciprocal influences between humans and nature has received increasing attention from historians. It was Nash who coined the term 'Environmental History' and

¹ Nash, R.: *Wilderness and the American Mind*
Yale University Press, New Haven, 1967

defined it as "the past contact of man with his total habitat"². It was seen as part of the 'New Left' history of the time, as part of the revisionist trend to make history more inclusive. Historians were uncovering hidden layers of gender, race and class, so why not dig deeper to the land itself as both a presence and an agent in history, with the environment perceived as an historical document, reflecting human culture and traditions? This was the very essence of history from the bottom up, with land as the exploited element. Linked as it was to the environmental movement of the 1960s, environmental history therefore started with a strong moral purpose and a political agenda.

Later environmental historians, however, brought a wider viewpoint, with the emphasis shifting to an examination of the reciprocal influences between humans and nature, rather than a dirge of what people had done to the land. One of the most prominent and prolific writers in this field, Donald Worster, has argued that although environmental history was born out of a strong moral concern, as it has matured it has become an intellectual enterprise with no simple or single moral or political agenda to promote³. Cronon suggests though that many if not most environmental historians want to contribute to contemporary environmental politics by writing histories which are useful, not merely in helping us understand the past, but in helping us change the future⁴.

The interest was not confined to the United States. Many of the American Environmental historians themselves suggest that their work has been influenced by the French historian, Braudel, who saw the environment as a timeless element, shaping human life over great distances and long time spans, the '*longue duree*', to be measured in centuries rather than in decades⁵. In his study of the Mediterranean in the 16th

² Nash, R.: 'American Environmental History: A New Teaching Frontier'
Pacific Historical Review, Volume XLI, Number 3, August 1972 p 363

³ Worster, D.: 'Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990 p 1089

⁴ Cronon, W.: 'The Uses of Environmental History'
Environmental History Review, Volume 17, Number 3, 1993 p 3

⁵ Braudel, F.: *On History*
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1980 p 27

century, he stressed the insignificance of political, social and military events in comparison with the influence of the environment on human affairs. He too saw it as a reciprocal process, and did not overlook the impact of harmful human interference on the environment.

The Content and Methodology of Environmental History

Partly as a result of an increasing awareness of environmental concerns in the past few decades, environmental history has emerged as a significant sub-discipline, with courses in it being offered at several American universities. During this time historians have debated its content and methodology. Worster sees the subject matter of environmental history as operating on three levels: nature, technology and ideology⁶. By nature he means the natural environments of the past, which historians need to reconstruct with the help of the natural sciences, although historical documents themselves may be a source of untapped information, of value both to historians and scientists. Technology includes material culture, modes of production and productive technology, as it interacts with the environment. In the process of transforming the environment, people have restructured themselves and their social relations. Thus the environmental historian needs to examine who has lost or gained power, how gender roles have changed, or how the institutions of a society have developed as a result of changes in productive technology. For example, a fishing community will have different institutions, gender roles and seasonal rhythms from a sheep-rearing community, as will a hunting one from a peasant agricultural one. On the third level, people's ideas about the environment - their perceptions, myths, ethics, attitudes, the choices made, the laws passed, the systems of ownership - need themselves to be recognised as agents of ecological change.

However, this attempt by Worster to classify the subject matter and define the methodology has been critically received by other environmental historians. Cronon believes that the analytical framework is too narrow, that the structure does not allow for

(First published in French as *Ecrits sur l'histoire* in 1969)

⁶ Worster, D.: *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*
Appendix: 'Doing Environmental History'

Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, pp 298-307, and

Worster, D.: 'Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

the full diversity of possible approaches, that environmental history is too young a field to be committed to so rigid a research agenda, and that the existing historiography already shows a wider range of trends⁷. While agreeing with Worster's broad definition of the content of environmental history, White too disagrees with his methodology. He sees Worster's analytical structure as imposed and inappropriate, and prescriptive rather than descriptive⁸.

In the 25 years since the publication of Nash's book, the focus of environmental history has shifted from an initial concern with "wilderness" to a greater emphasis on the rural environment generally. Worster argued strongly for an "agroecological" perspective⁹, an examination of ecosystems re-organised for agricultural purposes. More recently, a plea has been put forward for a greater urban focus and the inclusion of the built environment within the scope of environmental history. Rosen and Tarr argue that, as cities cover an increasingly larger part of the earth and are the physical context in which most people live, they are an essential component¹⁰. They believe that not only should the obvious impact of the city on the natural environment be studied, but also the impact of the natural environment on the city. This would include an examination of those environmental factors determining the location of the city (such as rivers, natural harbours, fertile river valleys), as well as those shaping infrastructures and social structures (such as the impact of natural forces like floods, fires or epidemics on city planning, city politics or health care; or the influence of favourable or less favourable natural conditions on the location of affluent and working class residential areas). Rome focusses even more specifically on the impact of residential development on the

⁷ Cronon, W.: 'Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

⁸ White, R.: 'Environmental History, Ecology and Meaning'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

⁹ Worster, D.: 'Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

¹⁰ Rosen, C.M. and Tarr, J.A.: 'Towards an Urban Perspective in Environmental History'
Journal of Urban History, Volume 20, Number 3, May 1994

environment¹¹.

Writing in Britain, Simmons stresses the long-term view. In his *Environmental History - A Concise Introduction*¹² he divides the last 10 000 years of human history into different types of environmental relations, and examines the impact of human actions in each phase. For example in his first stage 'Hunter-gatherers and Early Agriculture', he concludes that, despite the fact that 70-80% of the large mammals in America were wiped out (though only 14% in Africa), in fact humans made little impact on the environment as their numbers were so small. A later stage, 'The Atlantic Industrial Era', he sees as having the greatest impact, with the city itself being a potent transformer of the environment. Clapp's *Environmental History of Britain since the Industrial Revolution*¹³ examines the effects of industrialization and laws passed to regulate them. He fails to examine, though, the reciprocal nature of the process, the constraints imposed by nature, the "agency of nature" itself which Worster and others see as an essential component of environmental history. Worster believes that some of the work done by environmental historians has been too homocentric, too concerned with policies and human actions (such as studies of conservation politics, or the creation of national parks), and that the idea of nature as an active agent in shaping the past has sometimes been ignored¹⁴. He suggests furthermore that we should regard nature as participating in an "unending dialectic with human history ... intertwined in an ongoing spiral of challenge-response-challenge, where neither nature nor humanity ever achieves absolute sovereignty, but both continue to make and re-make each other"¹⁵.

¹¹ Rome, A.W.: 'Building on the Land: Towards an Environmental History of Residential Development in American Cities and Suburbs'
Journal of Urban History, Volume 20, Number 3, May 1994

¹² Simmons, I.G.: *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction*
Blackwell, Oxford, 1993

¹³ Clapp, B.W.: *An Environmental History of Britain since the Industrial Revolution*
Longman, London, 1994

¹⁴ Worster, D.: 'Seeing beyond Culture'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

¹⁵ Worster, D.: *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West*
Oxford University Press, New York, 1985 p 22

Adding a new dimension to the discipline, historians have applied an environmental analysis to the history of other areas of the world too, focussing on aspects such as the ecological impact of the expansion of Europe, and the environmental impact of colonialism. Crosby examines the biological impact on the 'neo-Europes', those areas of the world considered to be most suited to the extension of European settlement¹⁶. Bolton's *Spoils and Spoilers* examines the impact of Australians on their environment, both in the pre-colonial period and, more especially, in the past 200 years¹⁷. In *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, Gadgil and Guha focus on aspects such as the relationship between ecological change and social conflict in modern India¹⁸. Grove has focussed attention on the impact of colonization on the environments of former colonies, such as the Indian Ocean islands, India and the Eastern Caribbean¹⁹. He has shown too that the colonial experience had a central significance in the formation of western environmental attitudes²⁰. A series of *Studies in Environment and History* have examined the interaction between the two in case studies in contexts as diverse as Brazil, Mexico, the Mediterranean and Equatorial Africa²¹.

¹⁶ Crosby, A.: *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900*
Cambridge University Press, New York, 1986

¹⁷ Bolton, G.: *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians make their Environment 1788-1980*
George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985

¹⁸ Gadgil, M. and Guha, R.: *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*
University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992

¹⁹ Grove, R.: 'Conservation and Colonial Expansion: A Study of the Evolution of Environmental Attitudes and Conservation Policies on St Helena, Mauritius and in India, 1660-1860'
University of Cambridge, Ph.D. Thesis, 1988, and
Grove, R.: *Green Imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism 1600-1860*
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995

²⁰ Grove, R.: *Green Imperialism*, p 3

²¹ *Studies in Environment and History*
Editors: Donald Worster and Alfred Crosby
Cambridge University Press

Series titles include:

Harms, R.: *Games against Nature: An Eco-cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (1987)

Steinberg, T.: *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the waters of New England* (1989)

McNeill, J.R.: *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An Environmental History* (1992)

Environmental history, therefore, is currently enjoying considerable attention and generating lively debate, especially in American journals, such as the *Environmental History Review*²², and the more recently established British journal, *Environment and History*²³.

The Value and Uses of Environmental History

Environmental historians emphasize its inter-disciplinary nature, and believe that the cross-curricular co-operation involved is useful. They recognize the need to draw on geology, climatology, soil chemistry, ecology, anthropology, archaeology and, above all, geography, for information. But just as environmental historians need to draw on the work of other specialists, so too can their own investigations inform others. For example, Worster suggests that historical records can inform natural scientists about ecological conditions in the past²⁴. Williams points out the similarities between environmental history and historical geography, showing that both try to synthesize and integrate environmental phenomena with social and economic change²⁵. But whereas the historical geographer is primarily concerned with the reconstruction of past landscapes, this is only one element of environmental history.

The close link between these two disciplines is reflected in the choice of theme by the Organisation of American Historians for their National History Day in 1994 - 'Geography in History - People, Places and Time'. In an edition of their journal

²² *Environmental History Review*

Publication of the American Society for Environmental History

Editor: H.K. Rothman

Published by the New Jersey Institute of Technology

²³ *Environment and History*

Editor: Richard Grove

Published by The White Horse Press, Cambridge, U.K.

²⁴ Worster, D.(Ed): *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*

Appendix: 'Doing Environmental History'

Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988

²⁵ Williams, M.: 'The Relations of environmental history and historical geography'

Journal of Historical Geography, Volume 20, Number 1, 1994

devoted to this theme, they point out that human interaction with the environment is a central theme of both history and geography, and that both play a part in weaving isolated places and events together into a meaningful synthesis²⁶. Simmons believes that the close relationship between geography and history in the French education system inspired the comprehensive approach to understanding the past found in the work of Braudel and other French historians of the Annales school²⁷. Braudel himself coined the term '*geohistoire*', in which geographers should pay more attention to time and historians to place in such a comprehensive approach. East supports this view, saying that since all historical events occur in space as well as time, the historian cannot neglect the problems of location²⁸. Simmons believes that both history and geography lie astride the boundaries between the social sciences and, respectively, the humanities and the natural sciences²⁹.

Environmental historians may hold differing views about the nature and content of their subject, but they generally agree that it has an important contribution to make. Opie believes that it brings the viewpoint of the humanities into environmental science, by bringing the individual into the landscape³⁰. He believes that it thus operates in the gulf between science and the humanities, and between the ecological ideal and historical reality. Crosby believes that historians are the only people with sufficiently wide skills and methodologies to incorporate the work of specialists and synthesize them³¹. He

²⁶ Danzèr, G.(Ed): *Magazine of History*
Organization of American Historians, Bloomington, Indiana
Volume 7, Number 3, 1994

²⁷ Simmons, I.G.: *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction*
Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, p viii

²⁸ East, W.G.: *The Geography behind History*
Nelson, London, 1965, p 10

²⁹ Simmons, I.G.: *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction*
Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, p viii

³⁰ Opie, J.: 'Environmental History; Pitfalls and Opportunities'
Environmental Review, Volume 7, Spring 1983

³¹ Crosby, A.W.: 'An Enthusiastic Second'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

believes further that when ecologists talk of restoring environments, they need to examine their pasts to know what they are capable of, and this is a role which the environmental historian can play.

White suggests that environmental history has helped to transform ecology by pointing out how far back human manipulation of the environment goes³². Ecologists now realise that they need to study social and economic, as well as biological, processes.

Environmental history is therefore central to the discipline of ecology as a whole, because it is concerned with the interaction and intersection between the natural and the cultural. In a useful analysis of the contributions made by environmental historians, Cronon argues that they serve several different audiences and have lessons for each. These include fellow historians, natural scientists, policymakers, and environmental activists. But, equally important to Cronon is the general public: he believes that environmental history can profoundly inform public understanding of contemporary environmental issues, partly by placing them in a broader historical context, and also by making scientific insights available to wider audiences by the use of the narrative literary style commonly used in history³³.

Steinberg suggests that the essential task of the environmental historian is to investigate the role which the natural world has played in the historical process. He believes, too, that an environmental perspective can complement the work of the social historians, as there is a close connection between the way a culture tends to its natural resources and the way it employs its human resources³⁴.

Worster believes that the primary goal of environmental history is to broaden our understanding both of how humans have been affected by the natural environment over long periods of time, and also conversely and, "perhaps more importantly in view of the

³² White, R.: 'Environmental History, Ecology and Meaning'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990

³³ Cronon, W.: 'The Uses of Environmental History'
Environmental History Review, Volume 17, Number 3, 1993

³⁴ Steinberg, T.: *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the waters of New England*
Cambridge University Press, New York, 1991, p 11

present global predicament", how they have affected that environment and with what results³⁵. Echoing this thought, Simmons believes that environmental history has acquired an "urgent contemporary relevance"³⁶.

Environmental History in South Africa

In South Africa the environment has received little attention from historians. Historians here are relatively unfamiliar with French historiography and the French language, and thus the Annalist influence; also British rather than American historiographical trends have been more influential; and the Marxist paradigm, both structuralist and culturalist, has tended to predominate in historical analysis. But environmental studies which have an historical dimension have been written by historical geographers, anthropologists, archaeologists and natural scientists. Examples include Pollock and Agnew's *Historical Geography of South Africa*³⁷ and Christopher's *Impact of Past Geographies*³⁸. The historical geographer, Leonard Guelke, has paid considerable attention to the interaction between human actions and the environment in his studies of Dutch South Africa³⁹. Another example is Fuggle and Rabie's *Environmental Management in South Africa*⁴⁰ which traces the history of environmental legislation, examining, for example, the issues which, in the early colonial period, caused concern. They also examine the impact of the Roman-Dutch legal system on the environment; for example, the issue of the

³⁵ Worster, D.: 'Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History' *Journal of American History*, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990 p 1089

³⁶ Simmons, I.G.: *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction*
Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, p ix

³⁷ Pollock, N.C. and Agnew, S.: *An Historical Geography of South Africa*
Longman, London, 1963

³⁸ Christopher, A.J.: *South Africa: The Impact of Past Geographies*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1984

³⁹ For example, Guelke, L.: 'Ideology and landscape of settler colonialism in Virginia and Dutch South Africa' in Baker, A. and Biger, G.: *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective*
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992

⁴⁰ Fuggle, R.F. and Rabie, M.A.: *Environmental Management in South Africa*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1994

than ecological terms, with conservation seen as a tool of state policy and thus a site of rural resistance. She considers that there is much room still for detailed analytical monographs and interpretive works of synthesis⁴⁵.

Beinart points out that although Environmental Studies is a growing field in South Africa, it tends to pursue a technical perspective. He believes that historians who want to record ecological change in the context of the political economy of colonialism have a critical contribution to make⁴⁶. Khan believes that, for an effective environmental ethic to be developed in South Africa, it is crucial to examine first how attitudes towards environmental issues have been shaped by historical and political forces⁴⁷. Two recent publications have added to the historiography of environmental history in South Africa: they are Chenje and Johnson's *State of the Environment in Southern Africa*⁴⁸, in which the chapter devoted to history tends to view environmental change as "a journey away from some pre-colonial Eden"⁴⁹; and Beinart and Coates' *Environment and History: the Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*, which emphasises the way people have transformed, rather than destroyed, their environments, but nevertheless tends to view it as a one-way process, with humans affecting the environment, but not the environment influencing society⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ Carruthers, J.: 'Towards an Environmental History of Southern Africa: Some Perspectives' *South African Historical Journal*, Volume 23, 1990.

⁴⁶ Beinart, W.: 'Empire, hunting and ecological change in southern and central Africa' *Past and Present*, Volume 128, August 1990

⁴⁷ Khan, F.: 'Looking back to find a way forward' *Earthyear*, Cape Town, 1990, and
Khan, F.: 'Black environmental history as a facet of current South African environmental perceptions' H.N.R.E. Report for the H.S.R.C., Pretoria, 1992

⁴⁸ Chenje, M. and Johnson, P.: *State of the Environment in Southern Africa* Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, Harare, 1994

⁴⁹ Driver, T.: 'The North-South Eco-Divide'. Review article for the *Southern African Review of Books* December, 1995 pp 30-31

⁵⁰ Beinart, W. and Coates, P.: *Environment and History: the Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*, Routledge, London, 1995

Environmental History and the Liesbeek River Valley

Against this background, is there room for a small localised study? White has suggested that the best way for environmental history to proceed would be an analysis of a specific region as a laboratory of social and environmental change at work⁵¹. Supporting this call for a series of small-scale, well-focussed local studies, analysing specific social and economic changes, Cronon suggests that the larger metanarrative can come later, that environmental historians need to shift their attention to a more limited focus⁵².

Believing that one of the pitfalls facing environmental historians is the tendency to generalize, he suggests that a better methodology would be "to locate in a given historical situation the critical linkages between people and the ecosystems they inhabit"⁵³.

Despite a new interest in the social history of Cape Town in recent years, much of which has appeared in the seven volumes to date in the *Studies in the History of Cape Town* series, published by the History Department of UCT, the field of environmental history has yet to be applied to any analysis of Cape Town's history.

It seems therefore that in the historiography of environmental history, both overseas and locally, there is place for a focussed study of the interactive processes of human activities and the environment in a small well-specified area. For these reasons this dissertation will focus on the Liesbeek River valley in the Cape Peninsula. Worster has pointed out that as water is critical to the making of human history, "to write history without putting any water in it is to leave out a large part of the story"⁵⁴. This study will seek to establish the role that this river has played in the historical developments that have occurred along its valley, and how the river in turn has been affected in the process. Although much of the history of the area has been recorded, none of the existing histories examine the

⁵¹ White, R.: 'American Environmental History: The Development of a new Historical Field'
Pacific Historical Review, Volume 54, 1985

⁵² Cronon, W.: 'Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History'
Journal of American History, Volume 76, Number 4, 1990 p 1130

⁵³ Cronon, W. op' cit p 1126

⁵⁴ Worster, D.: *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West*
Oxford University Press, New York, 1985 p 19

reciprocal relationship between human history and the natural environment over a long period of time. This study therefore will provide a different kind of history, one which attempts to show, in the words of William Cronon, the "dialogue between humanity and nature in which cultural and environmental systems powerfully interact, shaping and influencing each other, without either side wholly determining the outcome"⁵⁵. The study will feature the historical personalities who have appeared in other histories of the area, those who used the environment and modified the landscape - the Khoikhoi pastoralists, the Dutch farmers, the British gentry, the Scandinavian entrepreneurs, the washerwomen and flower-sellers, and the urban dwellers of more recent times - but it will also include another element, often overlooked as an active agent in shaping history, the river itself.

⁵⁵ Cronon, W.: 'The Uses of Environmental History'
Environmental History Review, Volume 17, Number 3, 1993 p 13

PART 2: A CASE STUDY - THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY

This case study is not a general history of the Liesbeek River valley. Rather it is an attempt to show how an environmental history approach can be applied in a South African context. In addition, it will hopefully suggest how such an approach can provide a fresh perspective and new insights about familiar events. A study of a changing environment reveals far more than merely ecological information: it tells us too about social and economic developments, as well as political and cultural attitudes.

Although much has been written about different aspects of the history of the Liesbeek River area, there is no comprehensive history which covers a long time period, nor is there any historical study of the area which uses an environmental approach. This case study will give an overview of developments, beginning with the natural environment and examining how it has been modified by successive forms of land-use. As an environmental historical approach favours a long-term view, it will cover the changes over time from the pre-colonial period to the present. It will not attempt to be a comprehensive history of all the activities that have occurred there. The focus instead will be on the impact of these activities on the natural environment and, in particular, the river. At the same time it will also examine the reciprocal influence of environmental factors on human activities.

In order to illustrate the process of change which occurs, the study will focus on four specific periods, to give a sense of change over a long period. Chapter 2 examines the pre-colonial period, looking at both the natural environment as well as the pre-colonial inhabitants. During this time the river was a valuable source of water for both human and animal consumption, and the vegetation of the valley provided highly prized grazing, food and shelter. Chapter 3 covers the period of Dutch East India Company (VOC - Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie) control of the Cape, between 1652 and 1795, when the pre-colonial environment was profoundly altered. The valley became a highly contested resource and, briefly, a site of resistance, as two opposing agricultural systems, operating in opposition, competed for control. The river was perceived and used as both a frontier and a boundary between two worlds. Chapter 4 examines the impact of the

arrival of the British administration, and the vast increase in commerce, industrialization and immigration which accompanied it. These developments had a significant impact on the environment. More people, industries and transport in the valley had a negative impact, and the river became polluted and degraded. Ironically at the same time it was romantically portrayed in descriptive passages, paintings and photographs. Finally Chapter 5 traces developments affecting the valley in the 20th century, showing how the river, which was once the soul of the valley, no longer functioned as a river. It was confined to a concrete straightjacket, was barely visible on maps and aerial photographs, and served merely as a convenient conveyer of floodwater and stormwater.

The case study will focus predominantly on the upper and middle sections of the river, from Kirstenbosch to Mowbray. It is this region that perhaps best illustrates the process of change that occurs, both on terms of land-use and changing perceptions. It is also the site of a large number of schools which may find the curriculum model which is based on this case study a useful innovation.

Few commuters nowadays using the main road in Newlands are probably even aware that the Liesbeek River exists, and that they are crossing a ford where travellers were sometimes delayed for hours or even days by floodwaters, or the need to water their draught animals at the Westerford outspan. This study will seek to demonstrate the declining importance of this river as a factor in Cape Town's history. Once perceived as a key resource, a frontier, a determinant in the siting of roads and railways, the river played an important role until well into the 19th century. Since then it has been steadily dwarfed by suburban development and technology. This case study will trace this process.

In addition to the usual historical sources, this case study has used the findings of archaeologists, the descriptions of travellers, the paintings of artists, the investigations of scientists, and the recommendations of town planners. It is a history that does not record only human actions against the background of the Liesbeek River valley, but the interactive processes between nature and human activities in the valley. In doing this, it is an attempt to demonstrate to scientists that to understand present ecological problems, a knowledge of the historical processes which shaped them is important; and an attempt to suggest to historians that environmental factors are an additional element that needs to be taken into account in order to understand the full history of an area.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRE-COLONIAL ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment

The historical and archaeological records of much of the Cape Peninsula, and in particular of the Liesbeek River valley, during pre-colonial times, are extremely limited in use to an environmental historian. This is because of the absence of written records which reveal any evidence about the environment, and the fact that the area experienced extensive residential and industrial development before any formal archaeological research could be undertaken¹. We are dependent, therefore, on written records from the early colonial period to reconstruct the pre-colonial landscape. Of particular value is the journal kept by Van Riebeeck during his first few years as commander at the Cape for descriptions of the relatively undisturbed natural environment². Ever mindful of the need to impress the directors of the VOC back in Holland, he immediately noted the commercial potential of the natural environment. In September, 1652, he records finding "splendid forests with thousands of fine, thick, fairly tall and straight trees" and that one could get "thousands of complete masts for ships from them"³. From his descriptions one can deduce that the main forest covered most of the lower slopes of the mountain from Rondebosch to Constantia Nek⁴. We learn too that the eastern slopes of Table Mountain, stretching down to the Liesbeek itself, were covered by extensive forests which were "so dense from the top to the bottom, close to the river, that no opening could be found"⁵. There is no clear record of what these forests contained. Van Riebeeck notes that some of the trees resembled beech and ash, but botanists are undecided about which

¹ Wahl, B.: 'The Archaeology of the Liesbeek River Valley'
Unpublished paper, Department of Archaeology, UCT, 1993

² Thom, H.B. (Ed.): *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck Volumes 1-111*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1952

³ Van Riebeeck Journal, 18/9/1652, Volume 1 p 60

⁴ Luckhoff, C.A.: *Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1951 p 109

⁵ Van Riebeeck Journal, 26/7/1658, Volume 11 p 317

of the indigenous tree varieties these could have been. A later Journal entry, recorded after Van Riebeeck's departure, identifies some of the trees in the forests as yellow-wood, cripplewood (kreupelhout), elder, pear, and assegaai⁶.

In the search for forests, the Journal records that Van Riebeeck found "the finest and richest arable and pasture land in the world, wide and level" through which "countless fresh rivulets wind", the largest of which was "half as wide as the Amstel"⁷ and "quite deep"⁸. It is accepted that this was the first historical reference to the Liesbeek River, although it was not referred to by that name until 1657⁹. Earlier references call it various names, such as the Soete, Varshe and Amstel. Another description of the area records a "singular calm in those valleys, which have such rich, beautiful soil and are so well watered by pleasant, rushing rivers of fresh water"¹⁰. The origin of the name of the Liesbeek is uncertain, although it seems to be commonly accepted that 'lies' meant reed and 'beecq' stream in Dutch¹¹.

From the early descriptions it would appear that the river was somewhat larger in pre-colonial times. A visitor to the Cape in 1654 noted that the river was "not more than twelve or fourteen feet wide.....but on the other hand it is very deep"¹². A later description of the river notes that "the Liesbeek River could with little trouble be made

⁶ Report on the Peninsula forests drawn up by the Fiscal and the Master Carpenter, recorded in the Journal of Zacharias Wagenaer, 27/11/1663.

Boeseken, A.J. (Ed): *Dagregister en Briewe van Zacharias Wagenaer 1662-1666*
Government Printer, Pretoria, 1973 pp 107-108

English translation in Spilhaus, M.W.: *Indigenous Trees of the Cape Peninsula*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1950 p 6

⁷ The river which runs through Amsterdam.

⁸ Van Riebeeck Journal, 18/9/1652, Volume 1 p 60

⁹ Van Riebeeck Journal, 3/12/1657, Volume 11 p 190

¹⁰ Van Riebeeck Journal, 4/10/1655, Volume 1 p 350

¹¹ Burman, J.: *Safe to the Sea*
Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1962 p 25

¹² Johan Nieuhof in 1654, quoted in Raven-Hart, R.: *Cape Good Hope 1652-1702.*
The first fifty years of Dutch colonization as seen by callers Volume 1
Balkema, Cape Town, 1971 p 13

navigable for small boats from the fort and through the Salt River to this point" (ie what is now called Bishopscourt)¹³. The same Journal entry also records that the river was so thickly grown with sharp nipah¹⁴, water plants and wild rushes up to two fathoms high, that a proper inspection of the river itself was not possible. At least two drownings in the river are recorded by Van Riebeeck: in 1658 a farmer drowned while trying to place a fishing net in position in the river¹⁵, and in 1660 Corporal Elias Giers and his horse were drowned¹⁶. We are not told what kinds of fish were present in the river, but we do know that an eel was caught "twice as thick as a man's arm, fleshy and tasty"¹⁷.

It should be noted that, unlike the streams on the other side of the mountain in Table Valley, the Liesbeek and other streams on the eastern slopes were perennial. Whereas the lack of summer rainfall caused the streams to dry up and the vegetation to turn brown in Table Valley, the angle of Table Mountain to the prevailing summer south-westerlies ensured that there was always sufficient moisture to keep the streams flowing¹⁸. This was to have significant historical implications, as it meant that the valley became one of the most sought after, and hence contested, areas in the Peninsula.

The area in and around the valley is recorded as teeming with various species of game. The Journal lists "harts, hinds, small roe, eland, hares" as well as "geese, duck, partridge, snipe and numerous other large and small fowl"¹⁹. The presence of predators is also noted: the Journal refers to a "tiger", "lion" and "large wolf" at Rondebosch²⁰. Gijsbert

¹³ Van Riebeeck Journal, 26/7/1658, Volume 11 p 317

¹⁴ A Malay word for a type of stemless palm.

¹⁵ Van Riebeeck Journal, 18/1/1658, Volume 11 p 215. As this drowning occurred in mid-summer, he is unlikely to have been caught unawares by sudden floodwaters.

¹⁶ Van Riebeeck Journal, 8/8/1660, Volume 111 p 248. Corporal Giers is recorded as having been "rather drunk at the time".

¹⁷ Van Riebeeck Journal, 14/9/1660, Volume 111 p 257

¹⁸ Interview with Dr Dan Sleight, Wynberg, 1/6/95

¹⁹ Van Riebeeck Journal, 18/9/1652, Volume 1 p 61

²⁰ Van Riebeeck Journal, 5/6/1656, 29/7/1656, and 2/8/1656, Volume 11 pp 38, 54 and 55 respectively.

Heeck who visited the Cape in 1655 described the overgrown banks of the Liesbeek as providing "a convenient hiding place for all wild beasts", and he reported having seen the still fresh tracks of lions, "tigers", "wolves", jackals, deer and "terribly large baboons"²¹. Over twenty years after the natural environment had been disturbed by the activities of colonists, the presence of wild animals in the vicinity of the Liesbeek was still being noted. In 1676 Abraham van Riebeeck observed that the Liesbeek was "in some places difficult to cross because of its depth, in others because of the presence of tigers or leopards"²². Later still, in 1694, Christoffel Langhansz sought refuge in a nearby farmhouse when he heard the growling of a large lion while journeying inland along the river²³.

From these early colonial records one can form a fairly clear picture of the natural environment of the Liesbeek River valley in pre-colonial times. It was comparatively sheltered and had an abundant water supply, with dense and varied vegetation covering the valley itself and the mountain slopes. The river itself was deep but fordable in places. Wildlife was plentiful: herds of antelope grazed in the fertile pastures of the valley, hippopotami wallowed in the rivers, and lions, leopards and hyenas kept watch, while a variety of water birds visited the marshes along the lower Liesbeek²⁴.

The pre-colonial inhabitants

Just as we need to reconstruct the pre-colonial landscape from later historical references,

²¹ Gijsbert Heeck in 1655, quoted in Raven-Hart, R.: *Cape Good Hope 1652-1702. The first fifty years of Dutch colonization as seen by callers* Volume 1
Balkema, Cape Town, 1971 p 34

²² Abraham van Riebeeck in 1676, quoted in Raven-Hart, R.: *Cape Good Hope 1652-1702. The first fifty years of Dutch colonization as seen by callers* Volume 1
Balkema, Cape Town, 1971 p 191

²³ Christoffel Langhansz in 1694, quoted in Raven-Hart, R.: *Cape Good Hope 1652-1702. The first fifty years of Dutch colonization as seen by callers* Volume 11
Balkema, Cape Town, 1971 p 407

²⁴ For another reconstruction of the pre-colonial natural environment based on Van Riebeeck's Journal see Louw, J. and Malan, L.: *The Louws of Louwvliet: The Story of the first South African Louws and their neighbours 1659/60 - 1724*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1984 p XII

we need to use isolated archaeological artefacts to shed light on the earliest human inhabitants of the Liesbeek area. Handaxes from the Early Stone Age have been found at Kirstenbosch and Bishopscourt, and in the alluvium of the Liesbeek tributaries²⁵. The area has thus been occupied for tens of thousands of years, but we know little of the social activities or behavioural patterns of the earliest inhabitants. By analogy with similar tools from formally excavated sites elsewhere, we assume, therefore, that they were hunter-gatherers, who would have been attracted to the area by the presence of edible plants and abundant game in the forests and river valley. The river would have been a prime hunting-site, as animals came in search of fresh water. We assume, too, that these hunter-gatherers would have made little impact on the natural environment. Simmons has pointed out that, partly because their numbers were so small, the impression which hunter-gatherers made on the landscape was, in the main, light and often temporary²⁶. Evidence from hunter-gatherer sites all over Southern Africa shows that their use of the environment revolved round the procurement of food, firewood and raw materials for weapons, and that as their populations were small and their daily needs relatively simple, they did not cause any significant changes to the environment²⁷.

One must not make the naive assumption that they lived in a kind of ideal and utopian harmony with nature. Cronon has pointed out that there is overwhelming evidence which suggests that descriptions of historical eras in which human populations were supposedly in eternal equilibrium with equally stable natural systems are myths²⁸. Khan suggests, however, that without mythologising the pre-colonial past as an untouched utopia, we need to recognise that the pre-colonial land ethic of hunter-gatherers was based on a non-destructive use of natural resources, as well as a perception of the

²⁵ Goodwin, A.J.H.: 'Early Man in the Cape Peninsula' in Mabbutt, J.A.: *The Cape Peninsula* Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1952 pp 128-9

²⁶ Simmons, I.G.: *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction* Blackwell, Oxford, 1993 p 9

²⁷ Chenje, M. and Johnson, P. (Eds): *State of the Environment in Southern Africa* Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, Harare, 1994 p 24

²⁸ Cronon, W.: 'The Uses of Environmental History' *Environmental History Review*, Volume 17, Number 3, 1993 p 13

individual as an integral part of the environment²⁹.

At some unknown time in the pre-colonial period, these hunter-gatherers were succeeded by Khoikhoi pastoralists. Certainly accounts by European mariners who started sailing round the Cape from the early 16th century, confirm that these herders were already present on the Cape Peninsula³⁰. A well-established pattern of land-use seems to have been established, with the dominant Goringhaiqua claiming grazing rights over the whole Peninsula, although some of it was shared with the Gorachoqua and the stockless Goringhaicona. During the summer months the Peninsular Khoikhoi were partially displaced by the arrival of the powerful Cochaqua, from the Saldanha Bay region, and were forced to move to different parts of the Peninsula. Each group seems to have had clearly defined areas where they pastured their herds at different times of the year. Although there are many travellers' accounts of the Khoikhoi, there is little about the adaptive strategies they adopted as pastoralists. Their transhumant pattern of grazing was determined by ecological factors, such as rainfall which affected the availability of grazing, and soil type which affected the quality of grazing and made mobility crucial to compensate for deficiencies in certain veld types³¹. Smith believes that a reason for this pattern of movement lies in the concepts of conservation that seem to have existed amongst the Khoikhoi, who sought to avoid the degradation of the environment caused by over-grazing³².

Within each grazing area, the Khoikhoi needed to be constantly on the move to make optimal use of available grazing and water. The Liesbeek valley with its perennial water supply and fertile soil would presumably have offered sought-after pastures. Bredekamp notes that one of five favourite camping sites of the Goringhaiqua was at Bosheuwel, on

²⁹ Khan, F.: 'Looking Back to find a Way Forward'
Earthyear 90, Cape Town, 1990 p 14

³⁰ Raven-Hart, R.: *Before Van Riebeeck: Callers at the Cape from 1488 to 1652*
Struik, Cape Town, 1967

³¹ Smith, A.: 'Environmental Limitations on pre-historic pastoralism in Africa'
The African Archaeological Review, Volume 2, 1984 p 100

³² Smith, A.: 'The Disruption of Khoi Society in the 17th Century'
Africa Seminar, UCT, 1983

the upper Liesbeek³³. Gijsbert Heeck described a "Hottento" village on the banks of the Liesbeek in 1655, noting that he saw no signs of cultivation, fishing or bird-catching³⁴. The Journal mentions the existence of a large Khoikhoi camp, numbering 1000-1200, in the valley the following year³⁵.

Sleigh has suggested that the whole lifestyle of the Khoikhoi was bound up with the river. It provided abundant water for their stock, cattle requiring as much as 44 gallons per day each; it provided fresh green pastures for cattle and sheep on its banks; and the harrebus reed used in the making of the reed houses (matjeshuise) grew in reed beds along the river³⁶. In addition, the ground in the valley was a source of edible bulbs and roots, such as the uintjie or iris bulb, which were highly prized by the Khoikhoi³⁷.

The impact of the Khoikhoi on the natural environment of the Liesbeek valley would have been far greater than that of the hunter-gatherers. Simmons notes that any group which kept domesticated animals would have had the capacity to affect the ecology of a forest without actually felling the trees, through the grazing patterns of their stock, especially cattle³⁸. Another way in which pastoralists would have affected the environment would be in their use of fire to burn off dead vegetation at the end of a dry season, mainly to encourage new growth. There is evidence that the Khoikhoi made

³³ Bredekamp, H. and Newton-King S.: 'The Subjugation of the Khoisan during the 17th and 18th Centuries', University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 1984 p 8

³⁴ Gijsbert Heeck in 1655, quoted in Raven-Hart, R.: *Cape Good Hope 1652-1702. The first fifty years of Dutch colonization as seen by callers* Volume 1
Balkema, Cape Town, 1971 p 34

³⁵ Van Riebeeck Journal, 17/12/1656, Volume 1 p 80

³⁶ Interview with Dr Dan Sleigh, Wynberg, 1/6/1995

³⁷ In the peace treaty drawn up between the Khoikhoi and the Dutch in April 1660, after the first war, the Khoikhoi asked specifically for permission to cross the Liesbeek for the purpose of digging for these bulbs.

³⁸ Simmons, I.G.: *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction*
Blackwell, Oxford, 1993 p 84

extensive use of this practice³⁹.

The pre-colonial natural environment of the Liesbeek River valley, therefore, was not entirely unaffected by human activities, although, as we have seen, any effect that the hunter-gatherers had would have been minimal. On the other hand, the grazing patterns and veld burning carried out by the pastoralists would presumably have made some impact, but we can only assume what this was, as we have no historical or environmental evidence. Khan suggests though that their impact on the environment could be deemed to be "soft", citing as evidence the descriptions of the prolific plant and animal life found by callers to the Cape prior to, and in the early days of, Dutch settlement⁴⁰.

³⁹ Luckhoff, C.A.: *Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1951 p 111

⁴⁰ Khan, F.: 'Looking Back to find a Way Forward'
Earthyear 90, Cape Town, 1990 p 14

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE DUTCH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The arrival of the Dutch in 1652 was to have profound effects on the environment of the Liesbeek River valley, even though the initial intention was neither to establish a colony of settlers, nor to extend the settlement beyond Table Valley. Like the early European settlers in New England¹, and in both cases in contrast to the pre-colonial inhabitants who preceded them, the Dutch introduced a culture which viewed the land, and what was on it, as a source of profit. The natural vegetation was removed; exotic plants, animals and pests were introduced; the soil was cultivated for the first time; and water was harnessed as a source of power. In perhaps less obvious ways too the impact was significant: it has been suggested that the colonizing process disrupted the delicate balance that had existed between traditional communities and their environment², and in the process helped shape future black South African perceptions of the environment³; the colony which was established by the Dutch incorporated values of white supremacy and bourgeois individualism which shaped the way people lived and used the environment⁴; and the introduction of the Roman-Dutch legal system was to have important environmental implications⁵.

The destruction of the forests

The first impact on the Liesbeek River area was felt in the forests. Timber was in great

¹ Steinberg, T.: *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the Waters of New England*
Cambridge University Press, New York, 1991 p 13

² Chenje, M. and Johnson, P.(Eds): *State of the Environment in Southern Africa*
Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, Harare, 1994 p 29

³ Khan, F.: 'Looking back to find a way forward'
Earthyear 90, Cape Town, 1990 p 15

⁴ Guelke, L.: 'Ideology and landscape of settler colonialism in Virginia and Dutch South Africa'
in Baker, A. and Bigger, G.: *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective*
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 p 144

⁵ Fuggle, R. and Rabie, M.: *Environmental Management in South Africa*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1994

demand for a multitude of purposes, and although Van Riebeeck had brought a fair amount and continued to ask that more be sent, the VOC was reluctant to send it in sufficient quantities. Timber was needed for all building purposes - houses, storehouses, the outer case of the fort, a jetty and other harbour works, a watercourse, redoubts - as well as ship repairs. It was also the sole source of fuel, for cooking, lime and charcoal burning, the blacksmith, and to supply to fleets. In addition, the palisades for the boundary hedge which Van Riebeeck later built used a considerable amount of wood⁶.

The necessity for timber in such vast quantities began to have a devastating effect on the Bosbergen (Rondebosch), Paradijs (Newlands), and Leendertsbosch (Kirstenbosch), as the forests along the Liesbeek came to be known. But despite numerous proclamations, threats and penalties imposed to prevent the wastage of timber and fuel, the authorities failed to apply the real remedy of replanting where they felled, and this soon resulted in the almost complete destruction of the forests in all but the most inaccessible kloofs⁷. The first trees to be used up were the yellowwoods, followed by the rooiels and wild olive⁸. A report on the Peninsula forests drawn up by the Fiscal and Master Carpenter in 1663 attests to the disappearance of many tree species⁹. Recommendations which they made for more carefully planned utilization of the forests were not carried out. Wood was used so extensively that by 1665 it is reported that there was not enough to build coffins¹⁰. Ten years after Van Riebeeck's departure, when timber was needed for a new redoubt, no tree with a circumference larger than 7 inches could be found in the Bosbergen, and when timber was needed in the building of a new stone castle in the

⁶ "The palisades of his historic hedge...represented the death of hundreds of trees."
Spilhaus, M.W.: *The First South Africans and the Laws which governed them*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1949 p 149

⁷ Luckhoff, C.A.: *Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1951 p 110

⁸ Compton, R.H.: *Kirstenbosch, Garden for a Nation*
Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1965 p 20

⁹ Boeseken, A.J. (Ed): *Dagregister en Briewe van Zacharias Wagenaer 1662-1666*
Government Printer, Pretoria, 1973 pp 107-108
Journal entry for 27/11/1663

¹⁰ Karsten M.: *The Old Company's Garden at the Cape and its Superintendents*
Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1951 p 65

1670s, it had to be imported from Holland¹¹.

It was not only the demand for timber and fuel which led to the destruction of the forests. In 1657 the land along the Liesbeek in Rondebosch was cleared for agriculture, and a considerable area of forest land must have been cleared for Van Riebeeck's 101 morgen personal farm at Bosheuvel (Bishopscourt). These were followed in 1660 by the clearing of the new lands (Nieuwelande) for an additional Company farm in Newlands. To protect these cultivated lands, a highly symbolic hedge of indigenous trees and shrubs was created in an attempt to enclose the whole area of settlement, effectively creating "an administrative island with a permanent timber shortage"¹².

Other than the reports of the scarcity of timber, there is no record of the broader environmental impact of the destruction of the forests. The numerous regulations passed to protect them may be seen more as attempts to protect resources for the future use of the Company, rather than as environmental conservation measures. Obviously the felling of trees in such vast numbers stripped the ground of cover and left the felled forest bare of the chance to renew itself¹³. The disappearance of the forests would in time, too, have affected the flow of the Liesbeek¹⁴. Early on the Dutch introduced exotic tree species such as oaks from Holland, and stone and cluster pines from Italy. After the arrival of Van der Stel in 1679, efforts to re-forest began, with the planting of exotics proceeding on a huge scale, from the Company garden at Rustenburg which was the centre of the tree planting industry. We are told that in 1687, 50 000 young trees were awaiting

¹¹ Spilhaus, M.W.: *The First South Africans and the Laws which governed them*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1949 p 149

¹² Grove, R.: *Green Imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995 p 136

¹³ Spilhaus, M.W.: *Indigenous Trees of the Cape Peninsula*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1950 p 3

¹⁴ "Much of our water has evaporated with our forests."
Spilhaus, M.W.: *Indigenous Trees of the Cape Peninsula*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1950 p 2

removal from there for planting¹⁵. The impact of all of this was that the natural landscape of the Liesbeek valley was irreversibly altered. The destruction of indigenous tree species would have had two direct effects on the river: their long root systems protected the river banks from erosion, and they provided food for the numerous animal and micro-organisms living in the river because they shed their leaves gradually from spring right through to summer¹⁶. Exotic tree species, on the other hand, shed their leaves rapidly in autumn, thereby affecting food inputs into the river, and, because their absorption and transpiration rates are out of harmony with the indigenous vegetation, they would have had an adverse affect on the water flow¹⁷.

The introduction of agriculture

A development of even greater significance was the introduction of agriculture to the valley in 1657. As the Company gardens established in Table Valley were proving to be inadequate to provision the fleets, a decision of far-reaching consequences was made: land was granted in freehold to former Company employees released for the purpose of producing a quantity and variety of crops based on models of European intensive agriculture¹⁸. The area selected for these land grants to Free Burghers was in the Liesbeek River valley, where they had adequate water for irrigation from springs and perennial streams, fertile soils, protection in the lee of the Peninsula mountain chain, and where there was natural forest and associated forest scrub in an overall setting not richly endowed with trees. For all these reasons, the Liesbeek River valley was "for many years the area close to Cape Town which was best suited to the pursuits of the

¹⁵ Fairbridge, D.: *Historic Farms of South Africa: the wool, the wheat and the wine of the 17th and 18th Centuries*
Oxford University Press, London, 1931 p 57

¹⁶ Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Plight of an Urban River'
Earthyear 6, Cape Town, 1994 p 20

¹⁷ Villet, H.: 'An Examination of Open Space in Urban Planning'
Unpublished thesis, Dept of Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1974 p 19

¹⁸ "The formation of a society of free white farmers was probably the most significant event in the history of modern South Africa, and it would one day affect the lives of millions of the region's inhabitants."

Elphick, R.: *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa*
Ravan, Johannesburg, 1985 p 110

Dutch East India Company¹⁹. In addition, the Company itself established orchards and wheat gardens on the land between the river and the 100 metre contour, from Rustenburg to Newlands, where the soils were richer than those found elsewhere in the Peninsula, the rainfall more reliable, and the South East winds less destructive²⁰. Cultivation replaced pastoralism as the predominant form of landuse in the Liesbeek valley.

To protect the new farms, a series of redoubts (or *buiteposte*) was built in the valley as part of a circle of defence in the early days of the settlement²¹. The most versatile of these was De Schuer (later Groote Schuur), which housed a granary and kraal where all the Company's cattle were later stationed. Manure from here was used to fertilise the gardens in Table Valley and Rustenburg, with over 500 wagon loads annually being recorded in 1671²². The first bridge across the Liesbeek, situated at Rondebosch, was built "to enable the cattle to proceed from the kraal to the pastures beyond the river"²³.

The most immediate impact of this new development was the disruption of the established pattern of pastoral transhumance. The new farmers were soon complaining that the Khoikhoi were stealing from their gardens and allowing their herds to trample the crops. Not only had the Khoikhoi lost some of their most favourable pastures²⁴, but

¹⁹ Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D.: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study*
City of Cape Town, 1989/90 p 9

²⁰ Whittingdale, J.: 'The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town
1652-1972'
Unpublished M.A. Thesis, UCT, 1973 p 5

²¹ Sleight, D.: *Die Buiteposte: VOC Buiteposte onder Kaapse bestuur 1652-1795*
HAUM, Pretoria, 1993

²² Boeseken, A.J. (Ed): *Memorien en Instructien, J. Hackius - I Goske, 12/3/1671* p 109
Quoted in Sleight, D.: *Die Buiteposte: VOC-buitepot onder Kaapse bestuur 1652-1795*
HAUM, Pretoria, 1993 p 177

²³ Van Riebeeck's Journal, 30/11/58, Volume 11 p 383

²⁴ "Initial land grants were...located in the very choicest traditional Khoikhoi pasturage, along the Liesbeek River."
Guelke, L. and Shell, R.: 'Landscape of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi Strategies of Survival, 1652-1780'
Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 18, Number 4, 1992

their access to traditional sources of water was blocked by the new farms²⁵. In addition, the ploughing of the soil destroyed the edible roots and bulbs which formed an important part of the Khoikhoi diet²⁶. The new developments also had far-reaching implications: the establishment of farms suggested that the settlement had assumed a more permanent nature; and the European concept of ownership and exclusive rights to land were alien to the Khoikhoi belief that land and water were to be used in common or serially²⁷. The Dutch tried to resolve the potential conflict to their own advantage in 1658 by reaching an agreement with some of the Khoikhoi: "The Kaapmans shall permanently dwell on the eastern side of the Salt River and the fresh river Liesbeeck, as the pastures on this side are not even sufficient for our own needs"²⁸. The Dutch perceived the Liesbeek as a convenient boundary, a means of protecting their cattle and other possessions: "The Liesbeeck River seems to offer a favourable barrier: it can be forded only at a few places because of its depth and general marshiness"²⁹ and "It was found that the Hottentots could be warded off below the Liesbeeck River near where the Company's forest is situated"³⁰. For a while attempts were made to implement this suggestion by clearing the river, but the plan was superseded the following year by the decision to build a wooden fence, which was supplemented by the planting of a wild almond hedge. Neither of the plans was really practical: in the first place, the Free Burgher farms spanned both sides of the Liesbeek; and in the second instance, it was soon realised that the area enclosed by the fence was insufficient for the needs of the fledgling colony: "The pasturage enclosed by the protective fence we have made and the Liesbeeck River is scarcely sufficient for the cattle of the Free Burghers"³¹.

²⁵ Bredekamp, H. and Newton-King, S.: 'The subjugation of the Khoisan during the 17th and 18th Centuries'.
University of the Western Cape, Bellville, 1984 p 10

²⁶ Interview with Dr Dan Sleight, Wynberg, 1/6/1995

²⁷ Smith, A.: 'The Disruption of Khoi Society in the 17th Century'
Africa Seminar, UCT, 1983 p 10

²⁸ Van Riebeeck Journal, 5/7/1658, Volume 11 p 301

²⁹ Van Riebeeck Journal, 15/7/1658, Volume 11 p 313

³⁰ Van Riebeeck Journal, 24/7/1658, Volume 11 p 316

³¹ Van Riebeeck Journal, 20/12/1660, Volume 111 p 307

Matters came to a head in 1659 when the Khoikhoi embarked on the first organised attempt to resist the European intrusion of their lands. Free Burgher cultivations were destroyed and livestock seized and driven away. Although the farmers and their families took refuge in the fort, they did not abandon their farms, and continued ploughing and sowing under armed protection. With Khoikhoi superiority in numbers balanced against Dutch firepower, the war ended in stalemate. The implications of the peace agreement which was reached in 1660 were disastrous for the Khoikhoi: they had to recognize the sovereignty of the Dutch over the Liesbeek valley. The significance of this is perhaps best voiced by a wounded Khoikhoi captured by the Dutch during the war: When asked why the Khoikhoi had waged war, "he replied by asking why the Dutch had ploughed over the land of the Hottentots and sought to take the bread out of their mouth by sowing corn on the lands to which they had to drive their cattle for pasture; adding that they had never had other or better pasture"³². The Khoikhoi were never again able to pose a serious threat to Dutch possession of the Peninsula, and the frontier of contact and conflict now moved further inland.

This contest for control of the valley can be interpreted as a typical frontier situation, with two opposing agricultural systems in opposition, where the system of the stronger group ultimately dominates³³. Agriculture brought with it the clearing of land, the ploughing of fields, the erection of fences and buildings and, crucially, the blocking of access to water and pastures. Pre-colonial ecological patterns were totally displaced and a new ecological relationship established. Beinart sees this as "an intrinsic part of the process of conquest"³⁴. In their war against an alien, farming community, the Khoikhoi had sustained a crucial defeat: they had been forced to recognise its existence and hence its likelihood of expansion, as well as the destruction of their economic independence³⁵.

³² Schapera, I. and Farrington, E.: *The Early Cape Hottentots*
Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town, 1933 p 15

³³ Interview with Dr Dan Sleight, Wynberg, 1/6/1995

³⁴ Beinart, W.: 'The Politics of Colonial Conservation'
Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 15, Number 2, 1989 p 147

³⁵ Elphick, R.: *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*
Ravan, Johannesburg, 1985 p 114

Quite apart from the effect which the new farms had on the Khoikhoi, they also had a major impact on the environment. The land had to be cleared of indigenous vegetation, fields prepared, fences put up, drainage ditches dug and farmhouses and outbuildings erected³⁶. This impact, however, is rarely recorded. We are told that when the Company needed reeds for the thatching of the granary at De Schuer in 1658, these had to be obtained three hours' walk away, as all the reeds growing locally had been used by the Free Burghers³⁷. Considerable amounts of natural vegetation were replaced by imported cereal crops, fruits and vegetables³⁸. A wide variety of crops were tried on an experimental basis: wheat, barley and oats, as well as many types of European fruits and vegetables thrived in the new setting, while others, imported mainly from Dutch colonial possessions in Asia, such as rice, bananas, sugar-cane, paw-paws and coconuts, failed. Vines were particularly successful at Bosheuvel (Bishopscourt), and the first wine was pressed in 1659³⁹. Although tobacco was grown successfully, the Company later prohibited the cultivation of it, lest the Khoikhoi should get hold of the seed and be more reluctant to barter with the Dutch⁴⁰. The introduction of crop cultivation, in place of nomadic pastoralism, had negative consequences on the land in terms of soil fertility and pasture quality⁴¹.

³⁶ Guelke, L.: 'The transformation of a colonial settlement: the Cape Colony 1652-1780' in *Historical Understanding in Geography: An idealist approach* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982 p 74

³⁷ Van Riebeeck Journal, 25/1/1658, Volume 11 p 221

³⁸ Agriculture had not previously been practised here, as the SW Cape is a winter-rainfall area, and indigenous African cereal crops, such as millet and sorghum, are summer-rainfall crops: "Agriculture had to await the arrival of the Europeans with their wheat and barley adapted to winter rainfall conditions."

Smith, A.: 'Prehistoric pastoralism in the Southwestern Cape.' *World Archaeology*, Volume 15, Number 1, 1983-4 p 85

³⁹ Leipoldt, C. Louis: *300 Years of Cape Wine* Stewart, Cape Town, 1952

⁴⁰ Spilhaus, M.W.: 'They Planted the Cape - The Story of the Introduction of Agriculture to the Cape; of European Forest Trees, Fruits and Viticulture 1652-62' *Historia*, Volume 11, Number 2 p 133

⁴¹ Guelke, L.: 'Ideology and landscape of settler colonialism in Virginia and Dutch South Africa' in Baker, A. and Biger, G.: *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 p 140

The establishment of agriculture would also have affected game and its habitat. Quite apart from the deliberate extermination of predators of cattle and sheep, such as jackals, lions and leopards, or of animals which interfered with crops, such as baboons and hippopotamuses, there were also indirect effects⁴². These include the disappearance of bush and forests, the erection of fences, the blocking of access to water, and the introduction of new vegetation, pests and diseases. The abundant wildlife in the Cape Peninsula, recorded in the early days of Dutch settlement, could not survive the expansion of settler-controlled farming.

European livestock were introduced as well - cattle, sheep, horses and pigs. Attempts to prevent interbreeding between the pure-bred Dutch sheep, which did not do as well on the natural pasture, and the fat-tailed sheep of the Khoikhoi failed, and the former soon disappeared as a distinctive breed⁴³. Horses were a prized and scarce commodity. When Corporal Giers and his horse drowned in the Liesbeek, it was the loss of the horse which was lamented: "the best Cape mare and also in foal. Moreover the horses, which are suitable as mounts, arouse great awe amongst the natives, because of the miracles which, in their eyes, we have performed with them"⁴⁴. We do not have any clear record of how successful the introduction of European livestock was. In comparing the situation here with other areas of the world which were colonized from Europe, the American environmental historian Alfred Crosby suggests that the pace and success of the introduction was slower and much more limited, because "livestock had to share the veldt with some of the largest and most dangerous animals now extant, and with more livestock parasites and pathogens, living in and on the local wildlife, than in any of the Neo-Europes"⁴⁵. As an example, he goes on to state that fifty years after the introduction of horses into South Africa, they numbered only 900 and they remained

⁴² Beinart refers to them as the "*unintended consequences of the imperial presence or settler colonialism*".

Beinart, W.: 'Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change in Southern and Central Africa' *Past and Present*, Number 128, August 1990 p 169

⁴³ Thom, H.B.: *Die Geskiedenis van Skaapboerdery in Suid-Afrika* Swets & Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1936 p 246

⁴⁴ Van Riebeeck Journal, 8/8/1660, Volume 111 p 248

⁴⁵ Crosby, A.W.: *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986 p 275

domesticated. By contrast, in the same period, horses in the wild in South America had multiplied into hundreds of thousands.

Attempts at intensive agriculture along the Liesbeek failed due to a combination of economic and climatic factors. Foremost amongst these was the reluctance of the farmers to follow labour-intensive practices such as crop rotation, fallowing, careful weeding and manuring⁴⁶. Instead, they began to rely on extensive forms of pastoralism to supplement their income from crop cultivation. The result was that the Liesbeek settlement never produced sufficient quantities to supply the fleets of the VOC, and the settlement began to expand into the interior. The use of unimproved land to pasture stock became critical to economic survival, as the agricultural yield was small and the soil became exhausted after a few years of cultivation⁴⁷. Little manure was used on the farms for fertilization: in a country where timber was scarce, cowdung was used instead for fuel or floors⁴⁸. Van Riebeeck's dream of a community of hard-working, self-sustaining small-holders never materialised⁴⁹. In its place was a system of marginal farming, where burghers resorted to livestock trading, fishing, hunting, and selling wood as additional income-generating activities. Even the VOC officials were forced to accept this situation: "We can even say, if all these agriculturists had to subsist entirely from arable farming, and could not haul wood, fish and shoot big game inland now and then for the support of their families, the majority of them would sink into poverty"⁵⁰. It was also a system based on slave labour, with the Company farms at Rustenburg and Newlands employing slaves on a large scale. The former was also used as a place of imprisonment and exile

⁴⁶ Guelke, L. in Elphick, R. and Giliomee, H. (Eds): *The Shaping of South African Society* Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1979 p 47

⁴⁷ Van der Merwe, P.J.: *Die trekboer in the geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie 1657-1842* Cape Town, 1938

⁴⁸ Pollock, N.C. and Agnew, S.: *An Historical Geography of South Africa* Longmans, London, 1963 p 52

⁴⁹ Guelke, L. and Shell, R.: 'Landscape of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi Strategies of Survival, 1652-1780.' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 18, Number 4, 1992

⁵⁰ *Uitgaande Brieven*, p 119, C499, SA Archives
Quoted in Guelke, L.: *Historical Understanding in Geography: An idealist approach* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982 p 78

for political prisoners from the Dutch conquests in the East.

The establishment of the first industries

The presence of the river and other sources of fresh water attracted two of the first industries at the Cape to the Liesbeek valley: milling and brewing. In 1693 the Free Burghers were granted permission to build their own mill at Molenvliet on the Liesbeek (near Mowbray). Brewing started in earnest when the first trained brewer was granted land at Papenboom above the Liesbeek in Newlands in 1696 which was "provided with the finest and best water for his purpose"⁵¹. Although the impact of these two activities on the environment is not recorded, we must assume that the operation of the mill required the building of sluices in the river, and that the brewery would have needed fairly substantial amounts of wood for fuel.

The impact of VOC control and the Roman-Dutch legal system on the environment

Numerous placaaen were issued in the early years of Dutch settlement, which Fuggle and Rabie interpret as evidence of a concern for the protection for the environment⁵². Placaaen were promulgated to protect gardens, lands and trees from destruction⁵³; to prohibit the starting of grass fires⁵⁴; to control the felling of trees for firewood and timber⁵⁵; to protect drinking water from contamination⁵⁶; and to protect wild animals by

⁵¹ Council of Policy report to the Seventeen in Holland 11/8/1696 quoted in Fairbridge, D.: *Historic Farms of South Africa: The wool, the wheat and the wine in the 17th and 18th Centuries* Oxford University Press, London, 1931 p 62

⁵² Fuggle, R.F. and Rabie, M.A. (Eds): *Environmental Management in South Africa* Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1994, p 13

⁵³ Placaaen of 14/10/1652; 21/12/53; 22/8/54; 10/4/55; 12/4/55; and 20/7/57

⁵⁴ Placaaen of 19/11/58; 16/12/61; 8/4/80; 11/6/80; 19/2/87 and 20/2/87

⁵⁵ Placaaen of 1/10/59; 26/9/60; 6/12/70; 1/7/71; 4/7/71; 10/7/76 and 17/2/83

⁵⁶ Placaaen of 10/4/55; 12/4/55; 26/8/56; 6/2/61; 16/12/61; 22/12/76; 5/1/77; 10/2/87 and 11/2/87

controlling excessive hunting⁵⁷. At the same time the authorities encouraged the extermination of "problem" animals, such as lions and leopards, by offering increased bounties⁵⁸. Although some of these measures may be interpreted as attempts to protect the property of the Company, it has been suggested that the Dutch response to deforestation and environmental change at the Cape and in other early colonial possessions showed a consciousness of the need to institute conservation measures and thereby minimise environmental damage⁵⁹. A contemporary observer in the late 18th century remarked on the differences between the land management strategies adopted by the English on St Helena and the Dutch at the Cape: "I do not think I go too far in asserting that was the Cape now in the hands of the English it would be a desert as St Helena in the hands of the Dutch would as infallibly become a Paradise⁶⁰."

The issue of the influence of the Roman-Dutch legal system on the environment is the subject of debate. Some scientists suggest that the Roman law principle that all rivers should be considered as public property was disregarded in Roman-Dutch law, owing principally to the oversupply of running water in Holland⁶¹. The effect of abundant water is evident in the opinions of many of the Roman-Dutch writers: Voet states that a landowner may use any water arising on the land, and that water may be diverted from a public stream not in use; and Grotius supports the view that, unless expressly forbidden,

⁵⁷ Placaaten of 1/1/57; 23/7/65; 3/10/67; 25/10/67; 3/9/68; 11/9/68; 8/4/80; 9/4/80; 20/1/88; 20/7/90 and 23/8/90

⁵⁸ Placaat of 31/8/62

⁵⁹ Grove, R.: *Green Imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of Environmentalism* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995 p 126

⁶⁰ Sir Joseph Banks, diary entry dated May, 1771, in Beaglehole, J.C. (Ed): *The Endeavour Journal of Sir Joseph Banks, 1768-1771* Volume 2, Sydney, 1963 p 266

⁶¹ Davies, B.R., O'Keeffe, J.H. and Snaddon, C.D.: 'Water law and its impact on South African rivers' in *A Synthesis of Ecological Functioning, Conservation and Management of South African River Ecosystems* Water Research Commission Report No TT 62/93, Pretoria, 1993 p 197, and O'Keeffe, J.H., Uys, M. and Bruton, M.N.: 'Freshwater Systems' in Fuggle, R.F. and Rabie, M.A. (Eds): *Environmental Management in South Africa* Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1994 p 296

anyone may divert water onto their land⁶². It is suggested that the effect of this was to allow ownership of rivers and river banks by individual landowners⁶³. Legal experts however disagree with this: De Wet suggests that there is no indication that Roman-Dutch law had departed from Roman law in this respect⁶⁴. Referring to Resolutions of the Council of Policy at the Cape, Hall shows clearly that the principle of state (ie Company) ownership of streams was applied at the Cape under the Dutch regime⁶⁵. For example, he shows that the Free Burghers, alongside or through whose land the water of a stream ran, had no water rights. They were merely given permission by the Company to use the water for a short period of the day only; in other words, the state had the right to grant the use of water as a privilege, and not as a right⁶⁶. A further resolution makes it clear that whenever the interests of the Company clashed with those of the landowners with regard to the use of water, the Company asserted its rights and the farmers had to be content with what it allowed them to take⁶⁷. All of this was to change under the influence of English law during the 19th Century, when the principle of riparian ownership was entrenched.

The impact of the environment on the early Dutch settlement

We have examined in some detail the impact of the Dutch settlement on the environment of the Liesbeek River valley, but we need to look too at the influence of the river on the growth of the settlement. There is no doubt that the river played a key role in the early years of the Dutch settlement. The location of the farms and the

⁶² Vos, W.J.: *Principles of South African Water Law*
Juta, Cape Town, 1978 p 2

⁶³ Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Plight of an Urban River'
Earthyear 6, Cape Town, 1993 p20-21

⁶⁴ De Wet, J.C.: 'A Hundred years of Water law'
Faculty of Law, UCT: *Acta Juridica 1959*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1959 p 32

⁶⁵ Hall, C.G.: *The Origin and Development of Water Rights in South Africa*
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1939 p 2

⁶⁶ Resolution of the Council of Policy, 15 December 1761. C53. (Hall p 13)

⁶⁷ Resolution of the Council of Policy, 1 March 1774. C66. (Hall p 16)

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF THE BRITISH ON THE ENVIRONMENT

During the course of the 19th century the character of the Liesbeeck Valley changed fundamentally. At the beginning of this period, the valley was still agricultural with scattered settlement and minimal industry, and the river played a key role as the sole source of water for domestic and agricultural use. An 1811 description attests to the rural aspect of the landscape: "We crossed the Liesbeecks River, a plentiful streamlet, at a place called the Westervoort Bridge. Hereabouts the country becomes exceedingly beautiful, every where shaded with groves, and large trees of luxuriant growth, between which are interspersed vineyards, gardens, and many handsome buildings"¹. Even in 1845 the rural characteristics were remarked upon: "The mornings were spent wandering among fields and forests....on natural history excursions in the Rondebosch area"². But by the end of the century it was a far more densely settled suburban area, with increasing industrial use. The demands for water were outstripping the capacity of the river, and the potential for pollution had greatly increased. References to the condition of the river record it as being "very offensive indeed"³, "dangerously polluted"⁴ and "seriously insanitary"⁵. The sylvan setting of the Westerford Bridge, described above, had changed to such an extent a century later that, it was suggested, "no prudent person would allow his cattle to drink there"⁶.

¹ William Burchell, quoted in Bradlow, F.: 'Some early visitors to Rondebosch and their impressions' in Wagener, F.J. (Ed): *Rondebosch down the Years* Rondebosch, 1957 p 11

² Rudner, J.: 'A Swede at the Cape in 1845 - Baron von Duben' *CABO*, Volume 2, Number 3, 1980 p 20

³ Findings of a Public Works Commission investigation, reported in the proceedings of the Rondebosch Council, 30/5/1902. Cape Archives, CO 7738 1710

⁴ Councillor E.J.Sherwood of Mowbray in discussions over the proposed Cape Peninsula Water Supply Bill, 1906. Cape Archives, 3/CT 4/1/5/681 F1165/5

⁵ The Mayor of Mowbray, J. Parker, in discussions over the proposed Cape Peninsula Water Supply Bill, 1906. Cape Archives, 3/CT 4/1/5/681 F1165/5

⁶ Report on the Westerford Outspan drawn up for the Town Clerk, 1913. Cape Archives, 3/CT 4/1/3/27

The impetus for this change was the incorporation of the Cape into the British imperial system, "vastly larger and more dynamic than that of the VOC"⁷. This change of government at the beginning of the 19th century affected the Liesbeek valley, both directly and indirectly. The main causes of change were the increase in immigration to the Colony generally⁸, resulting in a much greater population density in the Liesbeek valley; a general economic upswing⁹, which involved greater commercial and industrial activity and an improved transport infrastructure in the valley; and administrative and legal changes, which, for example, had far-reaching consequences on issues of ownership and control of rivers¹⁰. The most obvious effect of these changes was that the Liesbeek valley lost its largely agricultural character and became increasingly residential, with the river itself becoming a magnet for limited industrial activity, either as a source of power or for use in the manufacturing process. A more subtle change, perhaps, was the transformation of the valley in an attempt, whether conscious or otherwise, to create a landscape reminiscent of England: English country villas, with the appropriate gardens and trees, Victorian architectural styles, Anglican churches, cricket and rugby clubs, and English villages and pubs all became characteristic features of the area, as indeed they did in other parts of the Colony too. This in turn gave rise to somewhat romanticised perceptions of the valley, portrayed in travellers' descriptions and artists' impressions.

This chapter will examine in turn the growth of population, transport and industry in the valley, and the impact which these had on the environment of the river. It will examine, too, issues relating to the ownership and control of the river, and to perceptions and reality about the Liesbeek valley during the 19th century.

⁷ Freund, W.M.: 'The Cape under the transitional governments, 1795 - 1814' in Elphick, R. and Giliomee, H. (Eds): *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1820* Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1979 p 215

⁸ The population categorised as 'inhabitants' or 'Christians' rose from 22 000 in 1798 to 37 000 in 1815. Freund *ibid.* p 217

⁹ Freund *ibid.* pp 215-217

¹⁰ Hall, C.G.: *The Origin and Development of Water Rights in South Africa* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1939 p 2

The growth of population in the Liesbeek River valley

In its last years of control, the cash-strapped VOC had started to sell off its land in the Liesbeek valley, resulting in the subsequent sub-division of some of the larger original farms¹¹. The advent of the new British administration, temporarily in 1795, and confirmed in 1814, was to have more far-reaching effects. The Cape Colony now became part of a large empire, with political and economic links all over the world. A key element in the control of this empire was the Royal Navy, and it is significant that one of the first concerns of the new administration was to improve the harbour facilities at Simonstown, which now assumed new importance as a naval base. This in turn necessitated the improvement of the main road through the Liesbeek valley, as the main access route linking Cape Town and Simonstown. Accordingly, Thibault, the Surveyor-General, was commissioned to re-build the old road and to survey all properties along its length, with a view to the sale of excess land to raise revenue¹². The availability of additional land and the improved road attracted more people to the area, and led to the growth of villages along the road.

The villages which developed in the Liesbeek valley as a result of the new road were Driekoppen (Mowbray), Rondebosch and Claremont. Largely because of their mild climate and convenient distance from town, they developed into elite residential areas, where many politicians, as well as leading figures in commerce and industry, chose to stay¹³. After the British takeover, Rondebosch became "an assemblage of pretty villas and fine gardens" which "became increasingly the summer resort of the fashionables and grew in prettiness as its gardens developed"¹⁴. Accounts by visitors and semi-official publications emphasize the desirability of a Rondebosch, Newlands or Claremont address, and devote pages to descriptions of the grandeur of the houses and the lavish

¹¹ Rustenburg, Groote Schuur and Newlands were all sold in 1791 to private individuals. Lewin Robinson, A.M.: 'The Old Estates of Rondebosch and District' in Wagener, F.J.(Ed): *Rondebosch down the Years*, Rondebosch, 1957 pp 12-14

¹² Pama, C.: *Wagon Road to Wynberg*
Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1979 p 32

¹³ Knox, C.: *Victorian Life at the Cape*
Fernwood Press, Cape Town, 1992 p 39

¹⁴ Laidler, P.W.: *The Growth and Government of Cape Town*
Unievolks Pers, Cape Town, 1939 pp 407-8

scale of hospitality. The Cape of Good Hope Almanac for 1840 speaks of "the many beautiful villas and agreeable rural retreats"¹⁵, while another contemporary reference notes that these areas are "deliciously cool and free from wind, and very much resorted to by those who can at all afford the luxury"¹⁶. We learn too that the "most populous and fashionable suburban resorts are the tree-embowered villages of Mowbray, Rondebosch, Newlands, Claremont and Wynberg" where "in these pleasant sylvan retreats the city merchants and Government officials delight to dwell"¹⁷. The perceived attraction of favourable environmental factors is evident in the wording of an advertisement for plots of land for sale in Rondebosch in 1839. They are described as being "delightfully situated on that healthy and salubrious spot" and "where the Soil is excellent and worthy of attention of Persons desirous of erecting Country Residences"¹⁸. Inns, hotels and boarding-houses, too, were established, some to accommodate the 'Anglo-Indians', British officers and officials from India who chose to spend their long leave at the Cape. A Swedish visitor in 1845 describes "the so-called Liesbeeck Cottage, a vast collection of buildings where soldiers returning from India's hot, devastating climate have a pleasant and popular resort"¹⁹.

Improvements in public transport during the 19th century led to the gradual transformation of these villages into suburbs²⁰, as people were able to use first the horse-drawn omnibuses and, from the 1860s, the suburban railway to commute to Cape Town, which remained the administrative and commercial centre. The significance of the new

¹⁵ *Cape of Good Hope Almanac 1840* quoted in Murray, J.: *Claremont Album*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1958 p 15

¹⁶ Ross, W.H.: *Life at the Cape a Hundred Years Ago*
Struik, Cape Town, 1963 p 50

¹⁷ Noble, J.: *Descriptive Handbook of the Cape Colony: its condition and resources*
J.C. Juta, Cape Town, 1875 p 43

¹⁸ Advertisement from Elliott Bros. Auctioneers in *Cape of Good Hope Gazette*
October 1839

¹⁹ Rudner, J.: 'A Swede at the Cape in 1845 - Baron von Duben'
Cabo, Volume 2, Number 3, 1980 p 19

²⁰ An example of this was the sub-division of Great Westerford into 83 lots in 1850 -
Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study*
City of Cape Town, 1989/90 p 13

railway was that it "made long ribbons of countryside close to urban centres accessible to the middle and upper classes"²¹. A further impetus to urban growth came with the emancipation of slavery in 1834, when ex-slaves established small settlements on the fringes of the farms they used to work²²: "ex-slaves established humble dwellings on the fringes of Cape Town and next to the farms where they continued to labour, including those by the village of Driekoppen" (Mowbray)²³. A direct consequence of the increase in population in the valley was the establishment of schools. Initially these were private establishments or church schools, the first being St Paul's Mission School established in 1843²⁴, but towards the end of the century the need for more schools became apparent as the villages developed into well-populated residential areas.

The growth of a transport infrastructure and industries

The increasing population demanded, and the new road to Simonstown facilitated, improvements in the provision of public transport, with horse-drawn omnibuses soon providing a regular service between Wynberg and Cape Town²⁵. These were later put out of business by the building of a suburban railway in the 1860s. Just as the original wagon road had followed the course of the Liesbeek for part of its way, so too did the new railway follow this route. In 1860 certain Rondebosch landowners were sufficiently alarmed at the impact that this might have that they petitioned the Governor to prevent

²¹ Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D.: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study*
City of Cape Town, 1989/90 p 13

²² Taylor, L.: 'Re-development' Proposals for the Liesbeek/Black River area'
Unpublished thesis, Dept of Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1990 p 8

²³ Western, J.: *Outcast Cape Town*
Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1981 p 32

²⁴ Millard, P.A.: *Centenary of the parish of Rondebosch*
St Paul's, Rondebosch, 1934 p 8.

²⁵ Coates, P.R.: *Track and Trackless: Omnibuses and Trams in the Western Cape*
Struik, Cape Town, 1976

the railway company from diverting the course of the Liesbeek.²⁶ The river, once perceived as the lifeblood of the valley and a resource worth fighting for, was now having to make way for technology. But the river still had the capacity to influence human activities. For example, floods on occasion caused severe problems: regular winter flooding of the main road in Rondebosch caused the authorities to consider converting the upper route behind St Paul's Church to become the main road when Thibault was rebuilding it, although this was not implemented²⁷. The river also influenced the route of the railway, giving rise to the third parallel line of communication through the valley, but whereas for a time the river had functioned as a boundary, from the 1860s it was the railway which effectively cut the valley from north to south, impeding movement. Where the river had once been an obstruction to the free movement of cattle and people, the new railway line was to serve a similar function in impeding the flow of people and traffic in these suburbs, necessitating the building of bridges over the line. A reference guide for tourists of 1904 reported that "owing to the terrible loss of life in the proximity of Claremont Railway Station, caused by the inhabitants being compelled to cross the line where trains meet almost every half hour of the day", a bridge had been built²⁸.

The advent of the British administration provided a major impetus to industrial development, not only because of the increase in population and commercial activities, but also because of the de-regulation of the economy through the cancellation of monopolies. Milling and brewing continued to be the key industries in the Liesbeek valley, but the scale of operations was enlarged considerably. The lifting of restrictions led to a spate of private mill-building in the early years of British rule, and soon there were four water-driven mills in the Liesbeek Valley - Papenboom (or Anneberg) Mill, De Hoop (or Albion) Mill, Ekelenberg (or Lothian) Mill, and Dreyer's Mill²⁹. On

²⁶ Memorial to Governor, requesting that the Railway Contractor be instructed not to divert the course of the Liesbeek. Cape Archives, CO 4115 256

²⁷ Thibault's plan of 1812 clearly shows the upper road as the main road.

²⁸ *The Cape Town Guide: An Illustrated Volume of Reference for Travellers*
Dennis Edwards & Co, Cape Town, 1904 p 393

²⁹ Walton, J. (Ed): *The Josephine Mill and its owners: The Story of Milling and Brewing at the Cape of Good Hope*
Historical Society of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1978 pp 13-15

account of declining water levels in the river during the dry summer months, water needed to be stored to maintain constant levels for the operation of these mills, so sluice gates were built to dam the river at various points. These became a source of complaint from riparian landowners lower down the river, and were later blamed for the pollution problems which arose as water consumption in the valley increased. The Ekelenberg Mill, at Belmont Road Bridge in Rondebosch developed into a major flour-milling operation, John Forrest & Co, and, although steam power was introduced to augment water power in the 1880s, this industry continued to rely on water from the river until well into the 20th century³⁰. Scandinavian entrepreneurs made a significant contribution to industrial development in the valley³¹, and the first of these, Jakob Letterstedt, built the Josephine Mill alongside Dreyer's Mill.

The other long-established industry in the valley, brewing, was dependent on fresh water from the springs and timber for fuel from the forests. In the early years of the British administration, Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, the owner of the Papenboom Brewery, which had long held the monopoly of beer-brewing at the Cape, attempted to extend his property to have access to more timber so as to increase the scale of operations of his brewery. However, this request was turned down, and Van Reenen was obliged to reduce the size of his operation³². The brewing industry also underwent expansion after the demise of the Company's monopoly, and several smaller breweries emerged to compete with the Papenboom Brewery. Amongst these were the Cloetes' Griffin Brewery, the Hiddingh's Newlands Brewery, and Letterstedt's Mariedahl Brewery. It was another Scandinavian, Anders Ohlsson, who revolutionised the brewing industry by buying the latter two, building the Annaberg Brewery, and merging all three in 1889 into Ohlsson's Cape Breweries, the largest and most modern brewery in South Africa at the

³⁰ Whittingdale, J.: 'The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town 1652-1972'

Unpublished MA Thesis, UCT, 1973 p 176

³¹ Winquist, A.H.: *Scandinavians and South Africa - Their impact on cultural, social and economic development before 1900*

Balkema, Cape Town, 1979

³² Rosenthal, E.: *Tankards and Traditions*

Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1961 p 42-3

time, and the largest industrial company outside the mining industry³³. When the Suburban Municipal Waterworks took over the Cape Town District Waterworks Company in 1898, Ohlsson, a major shareholder in the latter, received a guarantee that his brewery would receive 175 000 gallons of water daily free of charge from the Albion Spring, and that no other brewery would be supplied from it³⁴. One social result of the expansion of brewing was the growth of "Irish Town" in Newlands, where many immigrant brewery workers lived³⁵.

Other industries, also dependent on water from the river or the nearby springs, were a tannery, Mossop & Son, on the east bank of the river, opposite the flour mill in Rondebosch, and, at various times, mineral water companies such as Pillans and Pegrams, which operated from the Albion Spring. Another industry in the valley, which was started by yet another Scandinavian, Karl Lithman, was the Rosebank Match Company.

The effects of these developments on the environment

Before examining the effects of these developments on the environment, it is perhaps instructive to note who exactly was using the river during this period. Firstly, the river was the main source of supply of water for domestic usage, for all but the wealthy who could afford to sink their own wells³⁶. With the problem of a decreased water supply during the summer months, the river and many of the wells became contaminated, resulting in regular outbreaks of diphtheria and typhoid. Even with the establishment of the Cape Town and Districts Waterworks Company in 1888 (after which most houses in the valley were supplied from a safe and pure source of water, the Albion Spring), a Health Report of the Rondebosch Municipality for 1895 notes that there were still a

³³ Rosenthal *ibid.* p 43

³⁴ Grant, D.: 'The Politics of Water Supply: The History of Cape Town's Water Supply 1840-1920' Unpublished MA Thesis, UCT, 1991

³⁵ Scott, P.: 'Cape Town: A Multi-Racial City' *The Geographical Journal*, Volume 121, 1955 p 151

³⁶ Murray, J.: *Claremont Album* Balkema, Cape Town, 1958 p 47

number of wells in daily use, the water from which had been found by a government analyst to be "utterly unfit for human use"³⁷. Provision was also made for the watering of draught animals at the river, for example at the Westerford Outspan and at Rondebosch Bridge. In 1884 the Liesbeek Municipality drew the attention of the Divisional Council to the dirty state of the latter, saying that it was a "great nuisance and injurious to health"³⁸.

The owners of estates along the river used the water for irrigation purposes or to drive mills. Dreyer's Mill on Louwvliet was the subject of complaint in 1818 when he dammed the river close to Westerford Bridge and led his mill-stream right across the main road, "to the detriment of the river and the masonry bridge" and causing inconvenience to the public³⁹. Numerous memorials and letters requesting permission to lay sluices to lead water to a mill⁴⁰, or to build a dam across the river⁴¹, or complaining about misuse of water from the river by other riparian owners⁴², are a clear indication of its importance to landowners along its banks. Increasing sub-division meant greater demand for water from property owners with riparian rights. Prior to the British occupation, the Batavian administration had sought to regulate water rights and usage⁴³. But matters were by no means settled and by 1818 the British authorities were being petitioned by aggrieved property owners along the Liesbeek⁴⁴.

³⁷ Health Report for 1895. Cape Archives, 3/RBH/120

³⁸ Letters despatched by the Liesbeek Municipality. Cape Archives, 3/LBK 7.

³⁹ Walton, J. (Ed): *The Josephine Mill and its Owners: The Story of Milling and Brewing at the Cape of Good Hope*
Historical Society of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1978 p 15

⁴⁰ An example is Cape Archives, CO 3993 85.
William Hunt to Governor Benjamin D'Urban (1837)

⁴¹ An example is Cape Archives, CO 4003 31. James Smith to Governor Napier (1839)

⁴² Examples are: Cape Archives, CO 3976 68. Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Bird (1835); and
Cape Archives, CO 4028 173. Letter from H. Cloete and son (1846)

⁴³ Resolution of the Governor and Council of Policy of the Cape of Good Hope 4/4/1804.
Cape Archives, CSC 2/1/1/284

⁴⁴ An example is a memorial from Hendrik Cloete. Cape Archives, CSC 2/1/1/284

The older industries, milling and brewing, as well as the more recently established ones, such as the tannery, were dependent on the river, or its adjacent springs in the case of the breweries, either as a source of power or in the manufacturing process.

Another group of users were the 'Malay' washerwomen who plied their trade in the Liesbeek and adjacent streams, and were cited as contributing to the polluted state of the river as early as 1837⁴⁵. In 1848 a group of washerwomen complained that the Rondebosch police had stopped them from doing their washing in the river although they had "been accustomed from times immemorial to wash in the Liesbeek River"⁴⁶. Several visitors commented on the presence of the washerwomen: "At the streamlets there are the inevitable groups of Malay women washing clothes, and brown babies sprawling about"⁴⁷. They were also the subject of paintings by several landscape artists: Charles D'Oyly's *View of the Devilberg from the River Liesbeek* (1832) shows busy washerwomen in the foreground, as does E.H. Evrington's *Washing in the Liesbeek* (1853)⁴⁸. Despite their novelty to visitors and their aesthetic appeal to artists, they were viewed in a different light by officialdom: the Select Committee which reported on Cape Town Sanitation in 1888 found the custom of washing clothes in the Liesbeek River to be most undesirable: "The public who have their clothes washed in this manner run considerable risk"⁴⁹.

Another use for the river which has perhaps been overlooked was as a source of water for extinguishing fires. Although the records do not mention whether it was used in 1856, when a large number of houses along the main road in Rondebosch were burnt to

⁴⁵ Memorial from 16 residents of Rondebosch to Governor Benjamin D'Urban, complaining about the state of the river. Cape Archives, CO 3994 143

⁴⁶ Complaints from washerwomen about their having been prevented from washing in the Liesbeek. Cape Archives, CO 4041 48

⁴⁷ Extract from Lady Duff Gordon's Letters from the Cape p 37 (19/10/1861). Cape Archives, CAD 2/1/1/58

⁴⁸ Copies of these paintings can be seen in the resources for Worksheet 3D: *The Liesbeek Washerwomen* included in Chapter 8 of this dissertation

⁴⁹ Evidence given before a Select Committie on Cape Town Sanitation. Cape Archives, 3/RBH/131

the ground in a very destructive fire⁵⁰, we do know that when the house on the Zorgvliet estate was burning in 1880, the schoolboys from Diocesan College "formed a human chain to pass buckets of water from the Liesbeek to the house, but in vain"⁵¹.

The impact of the increasing population in the valley, dependent on the river and springs for all their water requirements, was considerable. Initially there was no official provision for water, sewerage, or garbage removal, and everyone made their own arrangements, with the result that the Liesbeek River became "little better than a cesspool"⁵² and "the open sewer and washerwomen's trough for the district"⁵³. The records reveal that there was concern about the polluted state of the river from as early as 1837, when residents of Rondebosch were filled "with apprehension lest their healths should suffer using water rendered impure" by activities along the river⁵⁴. The building of residential housing in ever increasing quantities had a considerable impact on the surrounding environment too. Already denuded of indigenous timber, the foothills of the mountain were rapidly overrun by spreading Victorian suburbs⁵⁵. However, because much of the upper Liesbeek valley was a fairly elite residential area, plot sizes remained large on the whole, and housing density consequently far less than it was lower down the valley, in Observatory for example. The provision of drainage and the paving of roads and pavements, all had detrimental effects on the river: the "hardening" of the landscape reduced its capacity and increased its potential for flooding. The reduced flow, coupled with the growing population and use, increased too the potential for pollution, and this

⁵⁰ Wilmot, R. *A Cape Traveller's Diary*
A. D. Donker, 1984 p 99-100

⁵¹ Pama, C.: *Wagon Road to Wynberg*
Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1979 p 38

⁵² Rosenthal, E.: 'When Rondebosch was a town on its own' in Wagener, F.J. (Ed):
Rondebosch down the Years Rondebosch, 1957 p 32

⁵³ Laidler, P.W.: *The Growth and Government of Cape Town*
Unievolks Pers, Cape Town, 1939 p 405

⁵⁴ Memorial from 16 residents of Rondebosch to Governor Benjamin D'Urban, complaining about the state of the river. Cape Archives, CO 3994 131

⁵⁵ Kench, J.: *Know Table Mountain*
Chameleon Press, Cape Town, 1988 p 31

was exacerbated by expanding industrial activity. The effects of added industrial use were primarily a greater demand for water, and, in some cases, additional sources of pollution.

Issues of ownership and control

Under the influence of English Law the conception of the state as the owner of public streams disappeared, and that of riparian ownership as the basis of rights to water took its place⁵⁶. In a landmark and controversial decision in 1856, the Cape Supreme Court granted exclusive water rights to riparian landowners⁵⁷. This meant that no-one except landowners had any claim to the use of water in a public river⁵⁸. It also followed that the use of river banks was not a right which the public could exercise, as river banks were regarded as private property⁵⁹. The owners of the estates along the Liesbeek now had clear legal title to their respective stretches of the river, and some memorials suggest a proprietorial attitude towards the use of the river⁶⁰.

After complaints from landowners and other residents, the authorities took steps to control the use and reduce the abuse of the river by passing Ordinance No 6 of 1852 "To prevent the Commission of Nuisances in the River Liesbeek"⁶¹. Referring to the increasing number of families dependent on the river for their drinking water, strict guidelines were laid down, with provision for severe penalties of fines or imprisonment for up to three months, with or without hard labour: washing of laundry in the river was

⁵⁶ Hall, C.G. : *The origin and development of water rights in South Africa*
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1939 p 2

⁵⁷ Retief v Louw (1856)

⁵⁸ Rabie, M.A. and Day, J.A.: 'Rivers' in Fuggle, R.F. and Rabie, M.A.: *Environmental Management in South Africa*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1994 p 657

⁵⁹ Rabie and Day *ibid.* p 258

⁶⁰ An example is the complaint about the use of the river by the washerwomen.
Cape Archives, CO 3994 131

⁶¹ *Ordinances of the Legislative Council of the Cape of Good Hope 1848-52*
A.S. Robertson, Cape Town, 1855

prohibited, as was the discharge of washing water, sewerage, offal, carcasses, blood and rubbish into the river; and the building of dams and sluices was to be strictly regulated. This ordinance gives us an indication of how the river was being used at the time, and perhaps at some of the pollution problems. Evidence that the authorities were willing to act to enforce the ordinance is provided in an 1858 petition to the governor concerning a fine which had been imposed for burying a dead horse too close to one of the streams feeding the Liesbeek River⁶². The regulations were later re-promulgated (1881)⁶³ and extended (1882)⁶⁴. However, the son of Anders Ohlsson who knew the river well between 1883 and 1892, remembered the river as being "very contaminated" during this period⁶⁵.

Environmental issues played a role in local politics. Between 1883 and 1886 the villages united to form the short-lived Liesbeek Municipality, which had an estimated population of 20 000⁶⁶. Common concerns included water supply, with the streams running off Table Mountain rapidly becoming inadequate for the growing population, and regulation of the use of the river, especially in the dry summer months when contaminated water supplies were causing health problems. One of the reasons for the disintegration of the Liesbeek Municipality was, in fact, differing opinions about alternative rural water supplies⁶⁷. The problem of water supply was temporarily solved in 1888 by the establishment by Ohlsson of the Cape Town and Districts Waterworks Company, which provided a source of pure water from the Albion Spring, one of the main sources of

⁶² Petition from Johannes Jacobus Cruywagen of Claremont to Sir George Grey requesting the remission of a fine imposed for contravening the Liesbeek River Ordinance. The fine was duly imposed despite his plea. Cape Archives, CO 4101 C42

⁶³ Regulations for the Management of the Village of Rondebosch under the Villages Management Act of 1881

⁶⁴ Government Notice No 1884 - Colonial Secretary's Office 16/2/82

⁶⁵ Letter from Mr D.A. Ohlsson, published in *Piscator*, Number 21, March 1952, recording his surprise that the river had become clean enough for trout to thrive in.

⁶⁶ Cape Post Office Directory (1886), quoted in Rosenthal, E.: 'When Rondebosch was a town on its own' in Wagener, F.J. (Ed.): *Rondebosch down the Years* Rondebosch, 1957

⁶⁷ Van Heyningen, E.: 'The Small Greek Cities of the Cape Peninsula' *Contree* Number 10, July 1981

water of the Liesbeek River. One of the conditions of this arrangement was that 500 000 gallons of the 1 375 00 daily yield of the spring had to flow into the river, as part of the legal share of other riparian owners⁶⁸.

Control and use of the water from the river was still deemed sufficiently important that seven owners of property along the Liesbeek instituted legal action against this company in 1891, asking that the latter be ordered not to "impede the even and continuous flow" of water from the Albion Spring into the Liesbeek causing the water "to flow otherwise than it has been accustomed to flow for fifty years and upwards"⁶⁹. When the Suburban Municipal Waterworks took over control of the spring from Ohlsson's company in 1898 the division of the water supply was a key element of the agreement reached between the four municipal partners in the scheme⁷⁰, and the spring continued to be the main source of water for the municipalities of Claremont, Rondebosch, Mowbray and Woodstock⁷¹.

Perception and reality

In stark contrast to the picture of pollution and filth created by the wording of the Liesbeek Ordinances, the image of the area portrayed in descriptions and paintings, is one of rural tranquility and genteel and gracious living. The 1847 Almanac boasts that "When at Rondebosch the traveller is completely in the country and here, amid groves and gardens, is diffused around an attractiveness and beauty far surpassing all the

⁶⁸ Report of a Commission appointed to enquire into and report upon certain matters affecting Cape Peninsula Municipalities and the Cape Divisional Council
Cape Archives, G 21 - 1903, Volume 1 p 14

⁶⁹ Plaintiffs' Declaration of H.W. Struben, J. Forrest, E.J. Young, C. Ayres, J.R. Reid, J.C. Wensch, J.F.J. Wensch vs The Cape Town District Waterworks Company in the Supreme Court of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope 1/6/1891.
Cape Archives, CSC 2/1/1/284

⁷⁰ Grant, D.: 'The Politics of Water Supply: The History of Cape Town's Water Supply 1840-1920
Unpublished MA Thesis, UCT, 1991

⁷¹ Report of a Commission appointed to enquire into and report upon certain matters affecting Cape Peninsula Municipalities and the Cape Divisional Council
Cape Archives, G 21 - 1903, Volume 1 p 5

boasted charms and gaiety of town life"⁷².

Another perception that emerges is that the villages and scenery resembled England, and visitors record with approval the similarities to "home". The landscape was being anglicised. In some respects this is backed by changes that were taking place: although the ownership of the remnants of many large estates remained in Dutch hands, the owners of new sub-divisions were more likely to be English⁷³. Visitors to the Cape remarked on the English nature of the villages which grew up along the Liesbeek. Charles Bunbury, an English visitor to Rondebosch in 1838, thought that "the broad level road, bordered by high hedges, and shaded by oak or fir trees, the neat cottages and gardens by the wayside and the public houses with English names on their signs, put me much in view of my own country"⁷⁴. Another visitor thought that travelling along the road in Mowbray "you might fancy yourself on the road from Tunbridge Wells to Tunbridge, so wide is the prospect, so fair the scene, and all so thoroughly English"⁷⁵. Anglican parish churches were built (St Paul and St Thomas in Rondebosch; St Andrew in Newlands, St Saviour in Claremont), and even the Dutch Reformed Church which was later built in Rondebosch conducted its services in English, and was seen as "Die nuwe Engelsche Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk te Rondebosch"⁷⁶.

⁷² Coates, P.R.: *Track and Trackless: Omnibuses and Trams in the Western Cape*
Struik, Cape Town, 1976 p 30

⁷³ For example, Rygersdal was sold by H. de Vos to W.D. Jennings in 1817 and Ekelenburg was sold by H. Cloete to J.B. Ebden in 1835.
Lewin Robinson, A.M.: 'The Old Estates of Rondebosch and District' in
Wagener, F.J. (Ed.): *Rondebosch down the Years*
Rondebosch, 1957 pp 14-15

⁷⁴ Bradlow, F.R.: 'Some Early Visitors to Rondebosch and their impressions' in
Wagener, F.J. (Ed.): *Rondebosch down the Years*
Rondebosch, 1957 p 11

⁷⁵ Ross, W.H.: *Life at the Cape a Hundred Years ago*
Struik, Cape Town, 1963 p 52

⁷⁶ "Die beskikbare gegewens asook uitsprake uit die tyd dui daarop dat dit aanvanklik niks anders is as 'n Engelse Nederduitse Gereformeerde gemeente was nie".
'Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Rondebosch 1891-1966'
Feeskommittee van die N.G. Kerk, 1966 p 110

The landscape too bore the imprint of English colonialism. Opulent Victorian villas abounded on the sub-divided estates, and the exotic trees considered appropriate for a gentleman's estate - Norfolk pines, magnolias, chestnuts - still dot the landscape⁷⁷. A 'place in the country' was seen not only as a sign of successful business but also a result of "the urge of the English countryman to own his own piece of land"⁷⁸. English games left their mark on the landscape of the valley as well: in 1887 the Western Province Cricket Club acquired part of Mariendahl Farm and established the Newlands Cricket ground. The club had previously investigated the site of Kenilworth racecourse, but had rejected it as being too sandy, with no shade, no protection from the southeaster, and too far from the station. In contrast, the banks of the Liesbeek provided fertile soils, shade, shelter, proximity to the station and free water: part of the deal was that the club would get free water for at least 35 years⁷⁹. The following year the Western Province Rugby Union also acquired part of the same farm, where it established the Newlands Rugby Ground. Large areas of ground were thus converted to sports fields (and later stadiums to accommodate spectators) instead of being further sub-divided, and Newlands early on earned the title of "the Mecca of South African sport"⁸⁰.

Barely featuring in such accounts are the "hidden" residents of the area, the brewery workers at "Irish Town" (Newlands Village); the ex-slaves, who formed distinctive communities at Protea, Newlands, Claremont and Mowbray; the labourers on the estates and in the milling, brewing and tanning industries; and the 'Malay' washerwomen. Although they are not always listed in the street directories of the time, we know that the numbers of people in these communities were not insignificant. For example, the children attending St Paul's School in 1858 were classified as "81 European children, 149

⁷⁷ Interview with Owen Kinahan, Josephine Mill, 11/10/94

⁷⁸ Murray, J.: *Claremont Album*
Balkema, Cape Town, 1958 p 10

⁷⁹ West, S.E.L. and Luker, W.J.: *Century at Newlands 1864-1964: A History of the Western Province Cricket Club*
W.P.P.C., Newlands, 1965

⁸⁰ Playne, Somerset. (Ed): *Cape Colony: Its History, Commerce, Industries and Resources*
Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1910/1911 p 72

of this distant outpost of the British Empire⁸⁷. The imposing homesteads of the area were another favourite subject: examples are Bowler's *Rustenburg*, Barrow's *Papenboom*, Longmore's *Protea*, and *Groote Schuur* by Lady Walker. Other artists focussed on the natural landscape, such as Thwaite's *Liesbeeck River* and Cole's *The back of Table Mountain from Protea*. All of these provide useful information on both the natural and historical landscape of the time, although the paintings which feature the river do not suggest any of the dirt and pollution which written records from the time show. It must be remembered that these 19th century landscape painters were British settlers or visitors who, in most cases, had been trained as portrait painters, and they produced landscapes which portrayed a vision of England rather than the reality of the Cape. They were painting mainly for the colonial market where they were restricted by more rigid artistic conventions, and their work does not reflect the social conscience seen in some European paintings of the same period.

A major transformation of the Liesbeeck River valley had occurred during the course of the 19th Century, and the river was no longer the vital resource that it had previously been. It no longer played such a decisive role and human dependence on it was decreasing. More people, houses and industries had resulted in the pollution of the river and the degradation of the environment. More was to follow in the 20th Century.

⁸⁷ Berman, E.: *Painting in South Africa*
Southern Book Publishers, Halfway House, 1993 p 4

CHAPTER 5

THE 20th CENTURY ENVIRONMENT

Most of the processes affecting the river and its environment which had started during the 19th Century became more pronounced during the 20th century. The sub-division of land continued, bringing with it more houses and more people, but in other respects the nature of land-use along the valley underwent changes. The main concerns regarding the Liesbeek were the deteriorating condition of the river and problems caused by flooding. These resulted in the departments of the Town Clerk, City Engineer and the Medical Officer of Health of the recently united (1913) Cape Town City Council devoting considerable attention each year to issues relating to the problems and control of the Liesbeek. The first concern was solved to a large degree by the adoption in 1925 of a comprehensive management plan, and the second was addressed in succeeding decades by the canalisation of sections of the river. This process of canalisation had a devastating impact on the natural environment of the river. But the flooding problems of the early decades of the century seemed to be solved to the satisfaction of residents of the valley. After this, though, "the Liesbeeck River, once an informant to urban development, no longer played a significant role, other than as a stormwater carrier"¹. However, with the increasing environmental awareness which characterised the 1980s and, more especially the 1990s, new attitudes, perceptions and policies resulted in attempts to rehabilitate the Liesbeek River and restore it, not to exactly the same river it had been in pre-colonial times, but as a valued resource to the people of the valley. At the same time a renewed public interest in heritage led to the establishment of museums and a growing appreciation of the historical significance of the area.

Changing Land-use and River Usage

The nature of land-use began to change, with certain functions assuming a far more significant role and others falling away. The suburban development of the area as a residential suburb proceeded at a great rate, with the sub-division of larger plots

¹ Taylor, L.: 'Redevelopment Proposals for the Liesbeeck/Black River area'
Unpublished thesis, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1990 p 15

providing relatively low density middle class housing. For example, Naude describes how an area she refers to as "the village green" with its cricket pitch, which was situated between the old Rondebosch Police Station and the Liesbeek in the early decades of this century, was sub-divided into roads and plots, with a Dutch property developer called Wiersma building many small houses there². In 1914 this same Wiersma requested permission from the Council to purchase loads of sand from the Liesbeek River at 1 shilling per load, a request which was refused as the sand was being used to fill stagnant pools in the river³. In the 1930s, a new aspect of the increasing residential development of the area was the building of blocks of flats⁴. This represented a fairly significant change in land-use as it encouraged a further increase in population density. These developments were accompanied by the provision of paved roads and pavements, as well as stormwater drainage, all of which played a role in contributing towards the "hardening" of the catchment area of the river, reducing the capacity of the environment to absorb water falling as rain, and resulting in accelerated run-off to the river, thereby increasing the potential for flooding.

However, there were certain specific factors which prevented the further sub-division of significant amounts of land, thereby reducing the impact of residential sprawl on the environment considerably. One was the development of the area as a premier educational centre⁵. Substantial parts of some of the original Liesbeek farms became the grounds and playing fields of a number of leading schools, with the result that portions of the estates remained intact⁶. The existence of these large open spaces reduced the detrimental effects of urbanisation on the environment, although much of the open space

² Naude, N.: *Rondebosch and Round About*
David Philip, Cape Town, 1973 p 60

³ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/1/167

⁴ See Figures 81 to 88 in 'Archival Photographs and Architectural Drawings' in Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D.: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study* Cape Town, 1989/90

⁵ Immelman, R.F.M.: 'Rondebosch as an Educational Centre' in Wagener, F.J. (Ed): *Rondebosch down the Years*, Rondebosch, 1957 pp 39-41

⁶ Examples include Rustenburg (Rustenburg), Rondebosch (Canigou), Westerford (Westerfoort), Sans Souci (Sans Souci), SACS (Montebello), St Josephs (Ecklenberg), Diocesan College (Woodford Farm), and Groote Schuur (Keurboom)

was covered by what one environmental historian terms "the resource-consuming, pollution-producing lawn"⁷, thereby contradicting the common perception that all planted landscapes are environmentally sound. He cites the use of artificial fertilizers, petrol-driven lawnmowers and exotic grass species as evidence to the contrary. Equally important was the Rhodes bequest whereby large portions of the original Company holdings of Rustenburg, Grootte Schuur, Klein Schuur and Kirstenbosch, which had been bought by Rhodes in the 1890s, were bequeathed by him to the nation, with certain portions being designated for specific purposes, "thereby saving a large part of the slopes of Table Mountain from encroachment by speculators"⁸. The botanical gardens at Kirstenbosch, the official residence at Grootte Schuur, the zoo, the university⁹ and the paddocks above De Waal Drive all covered significant amounts of land, and further urban development was severely curtailed. The environmental significance of this cannot be underestimated: instead of being covered by yet more roads and buildings, much of the area remained undeveloped, thereby allowing part of the catchment area of the river to remain in a relatively natural state. In the opinion of J.H.R. de Smidt, son of the owner of Grootte Schuur in the 1880s, it was fortunate that "this magnificent estate did not fall into the hands of the land-jobber or jerry-builder as unhappily has been the fate of many another fine property in the Cape Peninsula"¹⁰.

Another development which reduced residential development was the establishment in the valley of further sporting facilities. The headquarters of the Western Province Lawn Tennis Association were established in Rondebosch and an olympic size swimming pool was built in Newlands, on the very banks of the Liesbeek, where "the swimming bath lounging terraces are strangely remote from the river - as though the natural stream must

⁷ Rome, A.W.: 'Building on the Land: Towards an Environmental History of Residential Development in American Cities and Suburbs 1870-1990'

Journal of Urban History, Volume 20, Number 3, May 1994 p 418

⁸ Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D.: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study* City of Cape Town, 1989/90 p 14

⁹ "No doubt the greatest of the development of the lands along the Liesbeek" - Pama, C.: *Wagon Road to Wynberg*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1979 p 37

¹⁰ De Smidt, J.H.R.: 'The History of De Grootte Schuur, with some account of its various proprietors' in Wagener, F.J.: *Rondebosch down the Years*, Rondebosch, 1957 p 24

be shunned by its chlorinated, tiled cousin¹¹. Both developments contributed to the hardening of the river catchment, with ever larger areas being covered by bricked, tiled or tarmacked surfaces. Further downstream at Mowbray and Observatory, the location of sports fields close to the river, such as the Liesbeek Sports Club and Hartleyvale, accommodated the flooding hazards of the river, but led to the problem of waterlogging because of the high water table¹². It is interesting to note that despite the increased use of the valley for recreational purposes, these new developments ignored the natural environment and amenity value of the river, and the facilities created were entirely imposed.

The residential expansion was accompanied by rapid commercial expansion. What had been the centres of the Victorian villages along the wagon road became important business and retail centres, with the type of shop reflecting the changing nature of land-use in the valley. Whereas in 1912 there were no fewer than 10 blacksmiths and farriers operating in the valley between Mowbray and Claremont¹³, 25 years later this number had dwindled to only two¹⁴. As the area became increasingly built up, its appeal to visitors must have dwindled: the number of hotels in the valley in 1912¹⁵ had almost halved in the same period, with a number of the rest advertising themselves as 'bars' rather than hotels¹⁶. A more recent development has been the building of large office blocks, either on remnants of the old estates, such as the Southern Life headquarters on the Great Westerford site, or on former industrial sites right on the river banks, such as

¹¹ Villet, H.: 'An Examination of Open Space in Urban Planning'
Unpublished thesis, M. in Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1974 p 23

¹² Taylor, L.: 'Re-development Proposals for the Liesbeeck/ Black River area'
Unpublished thesis, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1990

¹³ *Juta's Directory of Cape Town, Suburbs and Simonstown 1912*
J.C. Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1912 pp 514-515

¹⁴ *Cape Times Directory 1937*
Cape Times Ltd, Cape Town, 1937 p 757

¹⁵ *Juta's Directory of Cape Town, Suburbs and Simonstown 1912*
J.C. Juta & Co, Cape Town, 1912 pp 534-5

¹⁶ *Cape Times Directory 1937*
Cape Times Ltd, Cape Town, 1937 pp 798-799

Tannery Park on the site of Mossop's Tanneries, or the office blocks on the sites of the Sasko flour mills and the Albion Springs.

Some of the industries dependent on the river during the 19th century went through phases of expansion, with for example Ohlssons becoming South African Breweries and expanding their plant, and John Forrest's becoming Sasko. John Forrest's had been augmenting water power with steam power since the 1880s and in 1917 water power was dispensed with altogether¹⁷. But in the latter half of the century most of these closed down their operations in the Liesbeek valley and re-located, due to factors such as rising land-values, the non-availability of land for expansion, and complaints about their operations in a primarily residential area. One exception was the S. A. Breweries which expanded its Newlands operation, and still uses water from the Newlands Spring in the manufacture of its beer. At the beginning of the century there were still a number of nurseries in the area, presumably using water from the river. Naude mentions "De Groot's huge nurseries on the banks of the Liesbeek River next to the Catholic Church"¹⁸; Murray mentions Harmon's Nursery Garden in Palmyra Road which was swamped in the severe winter of 1902¹⁹, and Charles Ayres who owned a horticultural farm and nursery in Rōsebank was cited as one of five remaining servitude holders who had a right to free water, in a report drawn up by the City Engineer in 1921²⁰. But these too later closed or moved, mainly because of rising land values and the building of roads which cut them off from the river.

Although the provision of public transport had played a significant part in the development of the Liesbeek villages in the 19th century, during the 20th century it assumed a less important role. This pattern became more marked after the Second World War when private cars became the norm for the area. This necessitated the

¹⁷ Whittingdale, J.: 'The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town 1652-1972'. Unpublished MA Thesis, UCT, 1973

¹⁸ Naude, N. : *Rondebosch and Round About*
David Philip, Cape Town, 1973 p 82

¹⁹ Murray, J.: *Claremont Album*
Balkem, Cape Town, 1958 p 56

²⁰ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/2/85 46

building of improved road networks which affected the environment. The building of Liesbeek Parkway in Rosebank and Mowbray cut off many properties from the river, including the farm of Starke Ayres Nursery, forming a barrier between the community and the river²¹. And the building of the Rhodes Drive-Paradise Road-Edinburgh Drive road link had considerable impact: a newspaper report of the time refers to the course of the Liesbeek River being diverted near the bridge at Paradise Road to allow for the swing right of the new double carriageway which was being built²².

It is interesting to trace who exactly was using the water from the river and its environs during the 20th century. The brewery got its water supply from the Newlands and Albion Springs, while the Pegrams (later Schweppes) Mineral Water Company also utilised some of the flow from the Albion Spring, but in terms of a Supreme Court Order of 1892, 500 000 gallons of this spring water had to be allowed to flow into the river daily²³. Many of the pollution problems in the early decades of the century were a result of the fact that this water was being used instead by the Council to augment the city's water supply while the supply from the Steenbras River Dam scheme was being upgraded, and it was only after 1927 that the position was rectified²⁴. Before this, certain riparian owners lower down the river, who were obviously disadvantaged by the reduced flow and who needed large amounts of water for industrial, horticultural or agricultural purposes, had servitudes entitling them to specified amounts of water free of charge in lieu of their being able to draw water from the Liesbeek. These servitude holders were Forrests, Mossops, Ayres, Struben and Willmot²⁵. The servitudes were the topic of much heated debate in the early 1920s, with other riparian owners demanding to know why

²¹ Taylor, L.: 'Re-development Proposals for the Liesbeek and Black River area'
Unpublished thesis, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1990

²² *Cape Argus* 5/10/62

²³ Report of a Commission appointed to enquire into and report upon certain matters affecting Cape Peninsula Municipalities and the Cape Divisional Council
Cape Archives, G.21 - 1903, Volume 1 p 14

²⁴ Report from the Medical Officer of Health, 15/8/27. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/551 E 1389/5

²⁵ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/2/85 46

they too were not entitled to free water²⁶. Residents living along the river were entitled to pump water from the river, and another user was Kirstenbosch, which drew water from the Nursery Stream, one of the major sources of the Liesbeek²⁷.

Despite the ban on the washing of laundry in the river in the Ordinance of 1882, the practice continued. A photograph taken at the Durban Road Bridge in about 1900 shows this clearly²⁸; a report from the Mowbray Police Station in January 1902 mentions that "three coloured women" were recently prosecuted by the Council for washing clothes in the river²⁹; and as late as 1962 it was reported that at the weir on the Liesbeek near the Settlers' Way Bridge "every Sunday, Coloured women may be found doing their washing, as they have done for generations"³⁰. Other small-scale users were the flower-sellers, such as those at Rondebosch Fountain³¹. Some places along the river became a refuge for homeless people: in 1926 a Newlands resident complained about the presence of people living in "motor chassis and old bag tents, breaking stones from the river bed for a Mr Nelson at a rate of five loads per month"³², and more recently the Belmont Road bridge provided shelter for the "street children" of Rondebosch.

Apart from trout fishing, which started after 1947 when trout were introduced after the

²⁶ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/4/314

²⁷ Kiemel, M.: 'The Liesbeek River project - an ecological environmental survey'
Unpublished paper, Dept of Environmental and Geographical Science, UCT, 1983

²⁸ "View of Durban Bridge over Liesbeek River, Durban road, Mowbray, showing women doing laundry in river". A.G. 1626

²⁹ Letter from Mowbray Police to Rondebosch Municipal Clerk (1902)
Cape Archives, CO 7738 1710

³⁰ Burman, J.: *Safe to the Sea*
Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1962 p 27

³¹ Cornell, D.: 'The Constant Liesbeek'
Southern Suburbs Tatler, February 1982

³² Complaint from J.W. Patrick to the Town Clerk, 23/6/1926.
Cape Archives 3CT 4/2/1/1/581 100/26

pollution problems had been sorted out³³, the river itself was not used for recreational purposes. A 1945 report from the Town Clerk mentions that notices had been erected prohibiting bathing in the river on health grounds, and cited typhoid and other infectious diseases as the main concerns³⁴, and a 1948 request to the Council asking permission "to ply for hire pleasure dinghies on the Liesbeek River" was turned down as the Council stated that it did not own the river and hence could not grant permission³⁵. But its value as a place for informal recreation should not be overlooked: Norah Henshilwood writing about her childhood in Claremont in the early decades of the century, remembers being forbidden to dig caves and trenches in the river bank, as "there had been too many fatal accidents ... when children burrowing into the steep banks of the Liesbeek River had been smothered by a sudden landslide"³⁶. A young father in Manenberg, remembering his own childhood in Mowbray, before the community was disrupted by the Group Areas Act in the 1960s, lamented that there was nowhere for children to play in Manenberg: "In Mowbray there was a park, the Liesbeek River and the Common"³⁷.

Although the issues of ownership and control tended to become less important as dependence on the water from the river decreased, they were highly contentious in 1905 when the Cape Town Council sought authority from the Cape Colonial government to impound the flood waters of the Liesbeek. This occasioned both strong protests from the Municipal Clerk of Claremont who regarded it as "an act of gross injustice to the riparian owners on the Liesbeek River" and a joint letter from the affected municipalities and prominent landowners along the river which cited reasons for the opposition: that the springs might be prejudicially affected; that floodwaters were necessary to "purify a watercourse which runs through a thickly populated residential area"; that there was no

³³ Villet, H.: 'An Examination of Open Space in Urban Planning'
Unpublished thesis, M. in Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1974 p 20

³⁴ Report from Town Clerk. 8/5/45. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/1/1085 18/11/6

³⁵ Letter from B. Gray to the Council. 18/10/48. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/1/1085 18/11/6

³⁶ Henshilwood, N.: *A Cape Childhood*
David Philip, Cape Town, 1972 p 84

³⁷ Western, J.: *Outcast Cape Town*
Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1981 p 256

evidence that there was indeed any excess of water not required by riparian owners for domestic and other purposes; and that if there was any excess, it should be regarded as "the natural right of the inhabitants of Claremont, Rondebosch and Mowbray" and that it should be impounded in the Newlands Reservoir for their benefit alone³⁸. In view of the "weighty representations which had been received" the Government turned down the request from the Cape Town Council.

Problems and Complaints about the river

During the early decades of this century, there is much evidence to suggest that the river was seriously polluted. In 1901, in response to a communication from the Plague Advisory Board, the municipalities of Mowbray, Rondebosch and Claremont investigated possible causes of pollution and reported on the steps which they were implementing to solve the problem³⁹, but in 1902, the Mowbray police complained that the stench coming from the river was "unbearable" and "prejudicial to health"⁴⁰. The Chief Inspector of Public Works reported in 1905 that the lower reaches of the river were practically only "very slightly diluted sewage"⁴¹. When A.C. Harrison, later to become Secretary of the Cape Piscatorial Society, arrived in South Africa in 1907, he found that "a most distinctive local odour" emanated from the river⁴². A 1915 petition from landowners and tenants of properties near the river, which referred to the "vile odours" that were "overpowering and decidedly detrimental to the health of the occupants"⁴³, was supported

³⁸ Proposal to tap Headwaters of the Liesbeek (1905-6). Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/681 F1165/5

³⁹ Letters from the three municipalities to Langham Dale, the Under Colonial Secretary.
Cape Archives CO 7738 1710

⁴⁰ Letter from the Mowbray Police Station to the Municipal Clerk of Rondebosch. Cape Archives
CO 7738 1710

⁴¹ Cape Archives PWD 2/5/98 E118

⁴² Harrison, A.C. and Lewis, D.C.: 'Twenty One Years of Trout Fishing in the Liesbeek' in
Piscator, Number 74, Summer 1968/9 p 130

⁴³ Petition asking the Council to clean and disinfect the river. 5/2/1915. Cape Archives 3/CT
4/1/2/43 D65/2

by the Town Clerk who found the odours to be "powerful and obnoxious"⁴⁴. In 1923, Mr J. Mossop, owner of the tannery in Rondebosch, reported that when his company had been founded in 1846 "there was no better water in the world than that in the Liesbeek River; but that today they could not use the river water"⁴⁵.

Matters came to a head in 1925 when the Mowbray Ratepayers Association, apparently exasperated by the seeming unwillingness or inability of the Council to solve the problem, appealed directly to the Administrator of the Cape: "Instead of having a river, which should be a thing of beauty and an asset to the district, we have an evil-smelling ulcer spot that is a danger to the neighbourhood and that seriously depreciates the value of all property along its banks"⁴⁶. Spurred into action, the Council commissioned a full investigation, which was carried out by a Consulting Chemist, E.H. Croghan, who produced a detailed nine page report, as well as a chemical examination⁴⁷. This report has been described as "a shining example of how such things should be done, a really great piece of work which was completely effective in gingering up the City Council to rescue the Liesbeek for posterity"⁴⁸. The report found that there were three main causes of pollution: from the stormwater drains, which transported a considerable amount of rubbish and dirt from streets, gutters and yards in rainy weather; from the tipping of rubbish into the river, which both polluted the river and obstructed its flow; and from pollution by factory effluents. The report specifically named Ohlsson's Breweries, Pegram's Mineral Water Factory (later Schweppes) and Forrest's Grain Mills as being guilty in this respect, but found that there was no evidence of pollution from Mossop's

⁴⁴ Town Clerk to City Engineer. 12/1/1916. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/2/43 D65/2

⁴⁵ Minutes of a special meeting of the Waterworks Committee of the City Council. 30/1/23.
Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/4/314 F39/4

⁴⁶ Mowbray Ratepayers' Association to Administrator. 29/4/25. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/551
E1389/5

⁴⁷ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/551 E/1389/5 and 3/CT 1/7/1/24 p 31-33

⁴⁸ Harrison, A.C. and Lewis, C.D.: 'Twenty One Years of Trout Fishing in the Liesbeek' in
Piscator, Number 74, Summer 1968/9 p 131

Tannery⁴⁹. Believing that it was "possible without much difficulty to restore it to something like its primitive condition of purity", the report made certain recommendations, the main ones being: that the dumping of rubbish into the river should be prohibited; that the owners of properties not yet connected to the sewers should make the necessary alterations; that the discharge of industrial effluents into the river should cease; that the Council should clean the river bed each summer; that all dams put into the river bed by riparian property owners should be demolished; and that all the water from the Albion Spring should be allowed to flow into the river⁵⁰. It has been suggested that all of these recommendations were carried out by the Council with complete success so that "the Liesbeek was restored to its natural condition of an upland stream capable of holding imported trout"⁵¹, which were subsequently introduced into the river. There is evidence though that matters did not proceed quite as smoothly as this may suggest. In 1927 the Joint Council of Cape Town Ratepayers' Associations were complaining that the pollution problems had not been solved, mainly because the private dams had not been abolished and the Albion Spring water was still being used as part of the municipal water supply, instead of being allowed to flow into the river⁵². With the absence though of further complaints in any significant numbers from ratepayers' associations or any other bodies, it must be assumed that the problems were substantially reduced by the institution of this overall management plan.

Canalisation and its effects

The other major problem and source of complaint was flooding, and the damage and inconvenience it caused. For example, after the severe floods of 1917 many property owners claimed damages from the Council, saying that the roads and bridges built alongside or over the river had caused the flooding of their properties⁵³. Western

⁴⁹ Report drawn up by Croghan and presented by the Medical Officer of Health. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/551 E 1389/5 pp 5-7

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp 7-8

⁵¹ Harrison, A.C. and Lewis, D.C. in *Piscator*, Volume XX11, No 74 p 128

⁵² Report from the Medical Officer of Health. 15/8/27 Cape Archives 4/1/5/551 E 1389/5

⁵³ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/1/44/314 386/4

describes a zone of "Coloured settlement" in lower Mowbray as "muddy and ill-drained in parts, low lying and susceptible to inundation from the Liesbeek River....which presumably accounted for the unattractiveness and low value of this land to the Whites"⁵⁴.

The Council's solution to the problem of flooding was to canalise small sections of the river, to engineer it "to route stormwaters in the most direct and rapid way out of the city"⁵⁵. In 1918 the Council voted £8000 for the concreting of the river bed between the Westerford and Belmont Road Bridges, and £3300 for the bed between the Belmont and Burg Road Bridges, in response to a report of the Medical Officer of Health⁵⁶. Complaints and concerns about a severe mosquito and fly problem in Rondebosch in the 1920s, which was said to originate mainly in the Black River but also in the Liesbeek, contributed to the decision to extend the canalisation scheme⁵⁷.

The Cape Argus of 11 May 1933 reported that the Rondebosch Ratepayers' Association, "having discussed the matter at our meetings no fewer than 49 times in the last five years", was organising a "petition against the Liesbeek" in a bid to persuade the Council to canalise it⁵⁸. Shortly after this, the City Engineer and Survey Department of the Council drew up a report on the viability of a canalisation scheme, pointing out various changes that would need to be made if such a scheme were to be implemented. These included the need to re-build the bridges over the Liesbeek; the need to widen the river in several places which would "necessitate the acquisition of territory for this purpose"; and the need to straighten the existing course of the river and eliminate "several

⁵⁴ Western, J.: *Outcast Cape Town*
Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1981 p 161

⁵⁵ Davies, B.R., O'Keeffe, J.H. and Snaddon, C.D.: *A Synthesis of the Ecological Functioning, Conservation and Management of South African River Ecosystems*
Water Research Commission Report No TT 62/93, Pretoria, 1993 p 190

⁵⁶ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/1/1085 18/11/6

⁵⁷ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/4/240 E164/4

⁵⁸ *The Cape Argus*, 11 May 1933

atrocious bends"⁵⁹. The same report also refers to letters received from Mr M.E. Pillans and Mr V.A. van der Byl, "deprecating any proposal to canalise the Liesbeek River", and saying that the natural beauty would be destroyed⁶⁰.

The canalisation of the river proceeded over the next few decades. Between 1930 and 1945 the river banks between the Newlands Rugby Grounds and Schweppes were lined with a wall to prevent the undercutting of the bank; and between 1945 and 1950 this wall lining was continued from Schweppes to the railway line at Rondebosch to prevent undercutting which was threatening the roads in the area and to control the meandering of the river⁶¹. In 1949 residents of Esme Road in Newlands wrote letters to the Council asking that the river in their area be canalised, as had been done in other parts, to stop the damage to gardens and the loss of livestock⁶². Between 1955 and 1960 the river was canalised from the railway line at Rondebosch to Settlers' Way, to prepare the surrounding land for parkland development; and from Edinburgh Drive to Sans Souci to prevent damage to the roads from undercutting of the river banks, with several small weirs being built along this section to control the velocity of the water. In addition, the river was re-routed from the Royal Observatory to its confluence with the Black River, to control the flooding of surrounding lands. The old river channel still existed but was used for drainage purposes only. Finally, in 1969 the section from Kildare Road to the Blue Cross Hospital was canalised⁶³. The result of this programme of canalisation was that, from about two kilometres below Kirstenbosch, the river was canalised along its entire

⁵⁹ Assistant City Engineer to Liesbeek River Sub-Committee. Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/551 E1389/5 p 3

⁶⁰ Cape Archives 3/CT 4/1/5/551 E1389/5 p 4

⁶¹ Kiemel, M.: 'The Liesbeek River Project - an ecological environmental survey'
Unpublished paper, Department of Environmental and Geographical Science, UCT, 1983

⁶² Cape Archives 3/CT 4/2/1/1/1085 18/11/6

⁶³ Information on canalisation between 1955 and 1969 from Kiemel, M.: 'The Liesbeek River Project - an ecological environmental project'
Unpublished paper, Dept of Environmental and Geographical Science, UCT, 1983

length, except for a few short stretches⁶⁴.

The implementation of the programme did not go unchallenged. Canalisation of some sections of the upper river was halted by the protests of residents, led by "The Wanderer" of the *Cape Argus*, who wrote that "the final indignity for the Liesbeek may come if the plan is carried out to treat the stream like a sewer and run a concrete throughway over its length from Bishopscourt to the Salt River mouth"⁶⁵. Subsequently an association of riparian owners was formed to halt the further canalisation of the river, and in 1959 it received an undertaking from the Town Clerk that the river would be maintained in "as natural a state as possible"⁶⁶.

Canalisation was seen by the city engineers to have several functional advantages: it would prevent flooding by speeding the run-off of floodwaters, and it would ease the cleaning of uncontrolled litter and pollution, as the concrete river bed could be swept in the dry season⁶⁷. Other perceived advantages were that it afforded protection to property; that once the canal was laid very little expense would be necessary for the maintenance of the river; and that the canal gave privacy to those residents with gardens bordering the river⁶⁸. The detrimental effects of canalisation, however, were considerable from an environmental perspective: describing concrete-lined irrigation channels in the American West, the environmental historian Worster sees the process of canalisation as "a sharply alienating, intensely managerial relationship with nature"⁶⁹. The concrete environment of the Liesbeek could no longer support life and the river became a non-

⁶⁴ Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Plight of an Urban River'
Earthyear 6, Cape Town, 1994 p 21

⁶⁵ "Talk of the Tavern" column, *Cape Argus*, 21/8/57

⁶⁶ *Cape Argus*, 26/2/59

⁶⁷ Villet, H.: 'An examination of Open Space in Urban Planning'
Unpublished thesis, M. in Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1974

⁶⁸ De Korte, D.: 'The Effects of Canalization on the Liesbeek River'
Unpublished paper, Dept of Environmental and Geographical Science, UCT, 1981

⁶⁹ Worster, D.: *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West*
Oxford University Press, New York, 1985 p 5

functional ecosystem⁷⁰, providing neither shelter, food nor diversity of habitats to animal and insect life. The river could not influence the surrounding vegetation, so there was no growth along its banks, and consequently no shade or shelter. In fact, canalisation has been described as "the most devastating action that can be taken against a river"⁷¹, and the Liesbeek River as "an open sewer with no ecological function"⁷². The river's importance as a natural asset had declined and what remained of its unique qualities and potential amenity values had been destroyed⁷³.

Apart from the problems created by canalisation, two other problems affected the river. One of these was the private ownership of sections of the river bank which prohibited access and afforded little control over problems of erosion. In addition, many of the private owners altered the course of the river and, "in a totally uncontrolled manner, engineered its banks to suit their own purposes - essentially to gain more land"⁷⁴. Private ownership made it difficult to implement any overall rehabilitation plan: "It is unfortunately these enthusiastic individuals who are likely to cause most of the obstruction to the establishment of continuity in a river amenity system available to all"⁷⁵. The other problem was the lack of a single controlling body on the City Council. Different departments, such as Stormwater and Sewerage, Parks and Forests, Town Planning, and Amenity Developments, were each responsible for different aspects: the

⁷⁰ Davies, B., O'Keeffe, J. and Snaddon, C.: *A Synthesis of the Ecological Functioning, Conservation and Management of South African River Ecosystems* p 190

⁷¹ Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Plight of an Urban River'
Earthyear 6, Cape Town, 1994 p 18

⁷² Professor Bryan Davies, Freshwater Research Unit, Department of Zoology, UCT, quoted in Van Niekerk, L.: 'Face-Lift for the Liesbeek'
Conserva, May/June 1993 p 17

⁷³ Taylor, L.: 'Re-development Proposals for the Liesbeek and Black River area'
Unpublished thesis, Department of Regional and Urban Planning, UCT, 1990 p 13

⁷⁴ Davies, B., O'Keeffe, J. and Snaddon, C.: *A Synthesis of the Ecological Functioning, Conservation and Management of South African River Ecosystems*
Water Research Commission Report No TT 62/93, Pretoria, 1993 p 190

⁷⁵ Villet, H.: 'An Examination of Open Space in Urban Planning'
Unpublished thesis, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UCT, 1974 p 21

river had been "bureaucratized". Consequently there was a fragmentation of management responsibilities, resulting in the absence of any comprehensive management plan⁷⁶.

Changing perceptions - A resource re-discovered

The process of degradation was reversed by two trends, separate but complementary, which co-occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, and resulted in a gradual change in perceptions, attitudes and policies. The one was the impact of environmentalism, and the other the emergence of an interest in heritage, conservation and historical roots.

Linked obviously to a more general environmental awareness and concern which characterised the western world in the 1980s, the impact of environmentalism resulted in the realisation that a valuable resource had been lost and a critical examination of how this had happened. This provided hope that it was not too late to rehabilitate the river - not to restore it to what it originally was - but as a valuable resource of a different kind. It is difficult to pinpoint precisely when the change started, but certainly a key event in this process was the adoption in 1982 by the Cape Town City Council of the *Greening the City* report, in which rivers were regarded as vital recreational and aesthetic amenities and conservation corridors running through the urban environment⁷⁷. The Liesbeek River, linking the mountain to the sea through the heart of the southern suburbs, came to be regarded as a key feature of this new plan, which envisaged an eight kilometre riverside trail along the river. Part of this trail was subsequently built, in part with private sector finance, such as the section of the trail opposite the Josephine Mill which was sponsored by the Southern Life Association. Although this development was welcomed by many in a positive light⁷⁸, some ecologists were critical of the way the plan was being

⁷⁶ Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Re-habilitation of Over-engineered Urban Rivers;; Options for the Liesbeek River in Cape Town'
Earthyear 7, Cape Town, 1994 p 3

⁷⁷ City Engineer's Department: *Greening the City: Open Space and Recreation Plan for Cape Town*
Report No 214/1982, Cape Town City Council, 1982

⁷⁸ Van Niekerk, L.: 'Face-lift for the Liesbeek'
Conserva, May/June 1993

implemented⁷⁹, and suggested that the rehabilitation of the river required more than cosmetic walkways along the river bank. Citing the work that was currently being done in the UK, USA and Australia, where many urban rivers were being rehabilitated effectively⁸⁰, these critics called for a more environmentally sensitive implementation of the Greening the City philosophy⁸¹. A subsequent extension of the riverside trail at the Albion Spring site incorporated some of their suggestions, such as the breaking open of holes in the concrete bed of the river⁸², thus reversing some of the effects of canalisation. In the past few years, the rehabilitation of the river became the topic of lively debate, and the Liesbeek River itself, "although squeezed by the city, has become a rallying issue for environmentalists, both professional and amateur"⁸³. A "Friends of the Liesbeek" group, backed by the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa, generated public awareness and community involvement in the welfare of the river, by arranging talks, walks, displays, and photographic competitions, and establishing an environmental centre⁸⁴, focussing on the river. In its mission statement, the society undertook "the task of re-discovery, rescue and rehabilitation of the beautiful waterway of the historic Liesbeek River" and, in return, hoped that the public would "regain the freedom of the river, both for present and future generations"⁸⁵.

One stumbling-block which is seen as a hindrance to the rehabilitation of the river is the

⁷⁹Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Rehabilitation of Over-engineered Urban Rivers; Options for the Liesbeek River in Cape Town' *Earthyear 7*, Cape Town, 1994

⁸⁰ Professor Davies has cited the Torrens River in Adelaide in South Australia as a good example of the rehabilitation of an urban river. *The Argus*, 3/12/92

⁸¹ Davies, B., O'Keeffe, J. and Snaddon, C.: *A Synthesis of the Ecological Functioning, Conservation and Management of South African River Systems* Water Research Commission Report No TT 62/93, Pretoria, 1993 p 192

⁸²E.P.M.: 'Landscaping and Ecological Rehabilitation of Urban Riverway: Liesbeek River, Albion Springs, Rondebosch' *Environmental Planning and Management*, Volume 6, Number 3, May 1995

⁸³ Anthony Wain, landscape architect, quoted in *EPM* *ibid.* p 27

⁸⁴ Situated in the grounds of Valkenberg Hospital, near the Liesbeek River in Observatory

⁸⁵ *The Argus* 3/12/91

controversial issue of riparian rights to river banks and streams. Ecologists believe that private ownership of river banks is undesirable as it limits public access and also restricts the implementation of a comprehensive management plan: they have called for a revision of South African water legislation, or at least a revival of the Roman Law principle that the use of river banks is available to the public⁸⁶. This is linked to broader issues regarding South African water law: that it is unsuitable for an essentially dry country; and that it enshrines the rights of property owners, thereby denying the broad public access to water resources. The effects of such extensive ownership and control over water are seen by environmental historians to be far-reaching: "Control over water has again and again provided an effective means of consolidating power within human groups - led, that is, to the assertion of power by some people over others"⁸⁷. This has led to calls for a drastic revision of our water legislation by ecologists and politicians⁸⁸.

The other reason for the renewed interest in the river in the 1980s was the emergence of a strong public desire to re-discover the past and conserve the cultural heritage. Partly in response to this, the City Council commissioned several conservation studies, one of which focussed on the Liesbeek River valley area, from Rondebosch to Mowbray⁸⁹. The aim of the study was to identify buildings and other features of historic or cultural interest as part of a comprehensive conservation plan being drawn up by the Council. Although the emphasis of these conservation studies was on the built environment, the trend later shifted towards a more holistic idea of environment. Along with the increasing public interest in the history of the valley came the restoration of the Josephine Mill by the Historical Society of Cape Town and the establishment of a milling museum there, and the restoration of the historic part of Ohlsson's brewery and the establishment of a museum, focussing on the history of brewing in the valley. The public was starting to discover the historical significance of the valley and also the links

⁸⁶ Fuggle, R. and Rabie, M.: *Environmental Management in South Africa* p 659

⁸⁷ Worster, D.: *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West*
Oxford University Press, New York, 1985, p 20

⁸⁸ Minister of Water Affairs Kader Asmal's opening address at a Wilderness Leadership School initiative. *The Argus*, 22/2/95

⁸⁹ Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D.: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study*
City of Cape Town, 1989/90

between the environment and human activity there. Both museums demonstrated the importance of the location for the siting of these first industries, and hence the industrial development that later occurred; conducted walks along the river organised by the Friends of the Liesbeek focussed on both the natural environment and the history of the area⁹⁰; and even the pre-colonial environment was not forgotten in the wording on an information plaque erected on the Liesbeek River Trail: *The Liesbeek and neighbouring forests were used by indigenous pastoralists for centuries before colonisation*⁹¹.

As in other places, commerce was not slow to cash in on the "Heritage industry" that thrived with this new awareness. The public were invited to participate in guided walks along the historic Liesbeek River, to enjoy twilight music concerts on the banks of the Liesbeek, and to spend New Year's Eve on the banks of the Liesbeek at the restaurant in the converted Albion Spring pump-house - all at a price of course! The Liesbeek River valley was again being perceived as a resource worth exploiting.

It is interesting to note how changes in perception affected the river during the 20th century. Initially ignored as a recreational amenity, dreaded as a health hazard and feared as a flood nuisance, the reaction was to get rid of the river. It was no longer regarded as relevant or useful and was consigned to a concrete channel where it could pose no threats to the comfortable lives or property of the residents. Later, though, came the realisation that this solution had been too drastic, that in subjecting the river to the ultimate human control, humans themselves were the losers. With a perhaps misguided nostalgia for an amenity which for so long had been ignored or deprecated, the river was "re-discovered". But it was not to be the reality of the river as it had been a hundred years or so ago, polluted but still useful. It was instead to be something different: a leisured, recreational kind of river, with walkways and cycle paths providing the access that had so long been denied; and a more serious river, too, providing a convenient case-study for zoologists, ecologists, urban planners and environmental historians.

⁹⁰ The walks were advertised as covering everything from "geology and topography to river conservation, pre-colonial and modern Cape history, birds, bees and trees". *Argus* 12/12/95

⁹¹ Wording on plaque erected on the banks of the Liesbeek opposite the Josephine Mill by the City Council.

This case study has been an attempt to trace the history of the Liesbeek River valley through the eyes of an environmental historian, tracing, selecting and focussing on those historical sources which shed light on the interaction between people and nature. It has tried to show both how humans have affected the river, and in turn been affected by it; how they have perceived the river and how it has shaped their own cultural perceptions.

Over the long time period that this study covers, the perception and use of the river has undergone fundamental changes. The earliest historical records suggest that it was highly prized by both Khoikhoi pastoralists and Dutch cultivators: control of the natural resources of the valley was a key element in the conquest and dispossession of the Khoikhoi in the Cape Peninsula. For a considerable period after this the river continued to play a key role, influencing the shape of settlement patterns and the direction of transport routes, and providing water for domestic use, irrigation for agriculture and water-power for mills. Changes came during the 19th century as farms were sub-divided, firstly into estates and then into suburban plots, and settlement became more dense. The river was required to provide drinking water for many more residents, irrigation water for nurseries and the remaining estates, a livelihood for washerwomen, and water for the newly established industries along its banks. In the process, what was still an important resource became polluted and degraded, so that it came to be regarded as a nuisance rather than a resource. This perception intensified in the 20th century when increased suburban settlement affected the river catchment to such an extent that flooding began to pose considerable problems, and the nuisance became instead a liability. The solution implemented was the disappearance of the river in all but name. Its recent re-discovery affords some hope for its future.

APPLYING AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY APPROACH IN THE CLASSROOM

PART 3: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The second half of this dissertation is concerned with educational theory and classroom practice. There is currently no subject or teaching approach which is recognised as "Environmental History", and this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate that, in terms of both content and methodology, the use of an environmental history approach can add a new perspective to the teaching of history in the high school.

CHAPTER 6

A RATIONALE FOR USING AN ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH

For some years now there has been concern, both in South Africa and overseas, about the declining number of school students who select history as an option for the senior secondary course¹. In South Africa, studies have attributed this to a variety of factors, such as the political bias of the syllabuses of the past² or the

¹ Van den Berg, O. and Buckland, P.: *Beyond the History Syllabus: Constraints and Opportunities* Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1983 p 1

² Owen, D.: *A New South African Challenge: Teaching History in Multicultural Schools* Albany Museum, New History Series One, 1991 pp 1 - 2

system used in the external examination³, in which good students often fail to realise their true potential, and therefore opt for subjects in which they receive more tangible rewards for their efforts. Another reason which is often cited is that history is not relevant or useful, and that it does not prepare the student for the realities of the working world⁴: in an increasingly utilitarian society, both students and their parents do not see that a study of history has any real use⁵. A frequently voiced criticism is the political history focus of most syllabuses: one result of the introduction of the 'New History' in Britain some twenty years ago was a greater emphasis on economic and social history, rather than political history, but up to now syllabuses in South Africa have not followed this trend, and political themes still dominate. A further reason is that history lessons are too often seen as being boring, because they are invariably classroom-bound, teacher-dominated and dependent on textbooks or other written sources.

The use of an environmental history approach can, it is maintained, change these perceptions, both in content and methodology.

In terms of content, the application of some of the ideas and perspectives of the environmental historians can be used to demonstrate that history is a relevant component which should be included in any environmental study, and that it is useful in warning us of the increased risk to ourselves and to the environment of our cumulative actions of the past⁶. This could help to change the perception that history, although at times interesting, is neither relevant nor useful.

³ Kallaway, P., Sieborger, R., Bottaro, J. and Hiscock, D.: 'The Assessment of History in the Senior Secondary phase'. Sub-report C of the HSRC Education Research Programme No 27: *The Teaching of History in the RSA*, HSRC, Pretoria, 1992

⁴ "One of the forces that is responsible for displacing history in the curriculum is that of vocationalism".
Kros, C. and Vadi, I.: 'Towards a new history curriculum: reform or reconceptualisation?' in Taylor, N. (Ed): *Inventing Knowledge: Contests in Curriculum Construction* Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1993 p 96

⁵ Van den Berg, O. and Buckland, O.: *Beyond the History Syllabus: Constraints and Opportunities* Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1983 p 2

⁶ Goodall, S.(Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum* David Fulton, London, 1994, p 61

There has been a growing interest over the past 25 years in investigating environments of the past. Environmental history has emerged as a significant branch of history which has attracted not only historians, but also geographers, ecologists, anthropologists and archaeologists, all of whom are interested in the historical relationship between nature and human society. Environmental historians such as Worster, Cronon and White have produced much evidence on the social and economic determinants of the changing environment⁷. They have shown for example that:

- * perceptions of the environment have changed over time;
- * that all environments present choices about how they are fashioned, but what choices are made are determined by the societies involved;
- * that two historical trends are primarily responsible for the transformation of the world's environment (namely the movement of European populations across the world, and the rise of capitalism and the modern industrial economy);
- * and that the evolving relationship between humans and the environment is very much conditioned by prevailing values and attitudes⁸.

The curriculum model outlined in Chapter 8 will attempt to show that only by understanding these historical processes can we use the lessons from past decisions about the environment to inform present decisions and future choices about the world. As Kerr has pointed out: "Environmental history is playing a vital role in educating people about how the decisions of past societies have shaped not only the world in which we live but our view of that world"⁹. But environmental history can do more than that: historians stress that the reciprocal relationship between human actions and nature is one of its key elements. Thus an

⁷ See for example, Worster's *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988; White's 'Environmental History, Ecology and Meaning', *Journal of American History*, Volume 76, Number 4, March 1990; and Cronon's 'The Uses of Environmental History', *Environmental History Review*, Volume 17, Number 3, 1993

⁸ Goodall, S. (Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum* David Fulton, London, 1994 p 61

⁹ Kerr, D. in Goodall, S. (Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum* David Fulton, London, 1994, p 61

environmental history approach will analyse not only the impact which humans have had on the environment, but also the impact of nature on the shaping of cultures and history, which Worster has described as "an idea that is both obviously true and persistently neglected"¹⁰.

Environmental history moves away from the "Great Men" and political history focus of the past, is more inclusive and interactive, and involves a flexible approach more suited to a changing working environment. It has been suggested that a developing South Africa "urgently needs highly adaptable people with broad verbal, analytical, and basic mathematical skills, not people trained for jobs that may be obsolete by the time they seek actual employment, and history can play a crucial role in helping to educate such people"¹¹. Environmental history, with its integrated links, can play a central role in this.

As it makes use of a variety of student-centred teaching activities, involving fieldwork and links with other subjects, environmental history can also play a role in helping to transform the traditional way in which history is too often taught in the classroom. Although the teaching of history has been revolutionized in recent years by the methodologies of the "New History", especially the critical interpretation of sources, history remains by and large a classroom-based subject. In students' eyes it therefore compares unfavourably with other subjects which use fieldwork as an integral part of their teaching methodologies. The curriculum model explores ways of teaching and learning history outside the formal classroom, with students being actively involved in learning about the history of the environment of their own area.

While many teachers may well want to involve their students in first-hand investigation of the history of their own area, they may be discouraged by the lack of relevant information and ideas about teaching local history in South African schools. British journals such as *Teaching History* abound with ideas and debates

¹⁰ Worster, D.: *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West* Oxford University Press, New York, 1985 p 22

¹¹ Bam, J. and Visser, P.: 'Teaching a New History for a New South Africa' Manuscript, Publication forthcoming, 1996 p 6

about the teaching of local history in schools there, and local history study units have been incorporated into Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the English National Curriculum. This in turn has resulted in the publication of books specifically designed to help teachers with finding and using local history sources¹². In Australia, too, useful guides have been produced for the teacher of local history¹³. In contrast to this, very little work on teaching local history in a South African context has been published. A 1984 publication by the Natal Education Department contains some useful suggestions for using the local environment in history teaching, but it is restricted in scope and focus¹⁴.

Suggestions for new curricula, especially at the Junior Secondary level, indicate that some curriculum designers favour the inclusion of history as part of integrated studies¹⁵. It has been suggested that in this way historical knowledge can be placed in its wider context and its special relationship to other disciplines demonstrated¹⁶. Some researchers have found that there is a great deal of support for the development of a broad understanding of the social, economic and political factors underpinning interaction with the biophysical environment¹⁷. However history educators are often opposed to the submergence of history in the

¹² An example is Griffin, J. and Eddershaw, D.: *Using Local History Sources* Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1994

¹³ Such as Gilbert, L.A., Driscoll, W.P., and Sutherland, J.A.: *History Around us: an Enquiry Approach to Local History*, Hicks Smith & Sons, Sydney, 1974, and *Local History: Ideas and Suggestions for Teachers (an integrated approach)* National Trust of Australia and the Heritage Council of New South Wales, Sydney, 1981, and Anderson, M. and Ashton, P.: *Focus on Australian History* Macmillan, Melbourne, 1994

¹⁴ Van Biljon, J. (Ed): *Local History* Bulletin 39 of the Natal Education Department, 1984

¹⁵ Rees, J. and Lowry, S.: 'History for a New South Africa - An Integrated Curriculum' *Perspectives in Education*, Volume 12, Number 1, 1990, pp 73-76

¹⁶ McCormick, J.: 'Integrated Studies'. Address given at the 1992 History Workshop history teachers' conference, Johannesburg. Proceedings published in the History Education Group's *History Matters*, Heinemann-Centaur, Houghton, 1993 p 32

¹⁷ Fuggle, R. and Blignaut, J.: 'Alternative Options for Environmental Education in Schools' *Human Needs, Resources and the Environment Report* for the HSRC, Department of Environmental Affairs, Pretoria, 1992 p 12

wider discipline, as they believe that, too often in such a study, the skills of history are largely omitted, and the historical dimension in the integrated study is superficial. By addressing questions such as "What role can history play in a study of the environment?", this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate that history can claim a central role in an integrated study.

The curriculum model to be presented here is based on a study of the Liesbeek River valley in the Cape Peninsula. There are a higher than average number of schools in this area and it is hoped that this model may be of some use to them. But in many ways the Liesbeek River valley is merely an example of the forces which have affected all urban rivers in South Africa: dispossession, changing land-use, population shifts, and the impact of industrialisation, suburbanisation and technology. Therefore, even though the teaching materials apply to a specific area, it is hoped that the methodology and examples will have a wider application, by serving as a model for a local study in a South African context. The need for such a model may well become more urgent in the future with the inclusion of local history modules a possibility in new syllabuses.

Too often "local history" at school level has been perceived either as ethnic history, or as national history which happened to occur in the locality. The model proposed is neither of these, and instead presents an opportunity for doing local history of a different kind. However, a danger involved in doing a local history topic is that it can be seen as "safe" and uncontentious: "Because of the complex and conflict-ridden history of South Africa, teachers might easily be tempted to focus on these small (though still important) areas of concern while safely sidestepping the broader socio-economic and political issues"¹⁸. But Bam and Visser proceed to point out that choosing a local topic does not necessarily mean that the larger context is overlooked. An environmental history of a local river, for example, can be much more than simply a study of who lived along the river, who used it and how they affected it. It can explore issues of dispossession, ownership and control over resources; it can generate discussion on issues such as who has benefitted and who has lost as a result of the changes over time; and it

¹⁸ Bam, J. and Visser, P.: 'Teaching a New History for a New South Africa'
Manuscript, Publication forthcoming, 1996 p 47

can investigate both the tangible and the hidden historical record.

In the past ten years or more the Liesbeek River has become the focus of attention of scientists and educationists. Students in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at UCT have regularly used it for case-studies on a variety of ecological issues, and the Freshwater Unit in the Department of Zoology has monitored developments affecting the river¹⁹. It has been featured as a case-study in a report prepared for the Water Research Commission²⁰ and in various environmental publications²¹. It has been the subject of Masters' dissertations in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, which examined the role and place of the river in town planning initiatives²², and in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science, which examined, for example, ecological aspects of the rehabilitation of the river²³. Its educational value for schools has been realised in its use for projects, fieldwork and clean-ups; and schools have adopted sections of the river as part of environmental awareness programmes. For example, the on-going activities of the Liesbeek River Action group at Westerford High School are designed to promote the skills and attitudes necessary to enable students to contribute towards the preservation and rehabilitation of urban river systems. In addition, students at the Cape Town College of Education have compiled resource packs and created teaching models on the use of the Liesbeek River in primary school environmental education

¹⁹ EPM: 'Landscaping and Ecological Rehabilitation of Urban Riverway'
Environmental Planning and Management, Volume 6, Number 3, May 1995, p 24

²⁰ Davies, B., O'Keeffe, J. and Snaddon, C.: *A Synthesis of the Ecological Functioning, Conservation and Management of South African River Ecosystems*
Water Research Commission Report No TT 62/93, Pretoria, 1993 pp 190-192

²¹ Davies, B. and Luger, M.: 'The Plight of an Urban River', *Earthyear*, No 6, 1993 pp 18-21
Van Niekerk, L.: 'Face-lift for the Liesbeek', *Conserva*, May/June 1993, pp 14-17
Luger, M. and Davies, B.: 'Environmentally Insensitive Design and Construction: The Liesbeek River Walkway', *Environmental Planning and Management*, Vol 5 No 2, 1993 pp 4-11

²² Villet, H.: 'An Examination of Open Space in Urban Planning' (1974)
Taylor, L.: 'Redevelopment Proposals for the Liesbeek/Black River area' (1990)

²³ Tilanus, E.: 'The Conservation Worthiness of the Environment of the Black and Liesbeek River Confluence area' (1994)

lessons²⁴.

However, this use of the river for research or educational purposes has not focussed on the history of the river valley, or the historical interaction between people and the environment. Educational programmes have concentrated on ecological or geographical aspects, and most have been geared towards outdoor education at the primary school level. The curriculum model will show how the local environment of the Liesbeek River valley can be used as an example of environmental history in the high school classroom. It will also attempt to show how historical research, curriculum design and the development of resources can inform each other. The trend in the past has been for historians, syllabus designers, textbook writers and teachers to function as separate entities, with insufficient links between historical research, curriculum planning and resource development.

Chapter 7 examines the educational theories relating to environmental education, fieldwork in history, integrated studies and local history, and shows how elements of all of these can be used in the teaching of Environmental History. Chapter 8 presents a curriculum model which applies this theory to a case-study of the Liesbeek River valley.

²⁴ For example, the work done by the students of Mr Ed Chantler

CHAPTER 7

A THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

The theoretical context involves the selection and application of pedagogical and methodological approaches from four fields - primarily from environmental education, but also aspects of fieldwork in history, integrated studies and local history. In many respects there is a considerable degree of overlap between the four, which is seldom recognised in most methodology books and journals which treat them as four separate entities.

A definition of Environmental Education

There have been an increasing number of courses in recent years, especially in Britain, aimed at 12 to 14 year olds, which have gone under the general title of Environmental Education. But there seems to be little agreement on what exactly this term means, or which subjects should be included. There are no universally accepted answers to questions such as: Does the term imply the social as well as the natural environment? Is it only concerned with the present, or does it also have a time dimension, and include past environments? What about the spatial dimension? Does it refer only to the immediate environment, or does it have wider dimensions?

Many of the definitions which have been put forward do not clarify these uncertainties. The first International Working Meeting on Environmental Education in the School Curriculum, held in Switzerland in 1970, defined Environmental Education as "the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship among man, his culture, and his biophysical surroundings"¹. A more practical working definition was suggested by Williams in 1984, when he defined the subject matter of Environmental Education as being those aspects of the natural environment, both natural and man-made, which can

¹ Saveland, R.N. (Ed): *Handbook on Environmental Education*
John Wiley & Sons, London, 1976 p 4

profitably be used by teachers and observed first-hand by pupils². He went on to state that, even though such a study might be based in the local environment, the primary aim was for pupils to learn the skills which they could later apply to studies of areas and historical developments outside the immediate area.

In 1988 a Resolution of the Ministers of Education of the Council of the European Community strongly supported the inclusion of Environmental Education into many areas of the curriculum, stating that its main objectives were "to increase public awareness of the problems in this field, as well as possible solutions, and to lay the foundations for a fully informed and active participation of the individual in the protection of the environment and the prudent and rational use of natural resources."³

In the absence of a clear definition or precise guidelines as to the exact nature and content of Environmental Education, many books have been written and courses developed which reveal a wide range of interpretations of the term. While most such studies incorporate elements of geography and the natural sciences, there is no general agreement as to whether there should be an historical dimension. Even where the inclusion of history may be supported in theory, in practice this is not always carried through: a Northern Ireland Curriculum Council guide for teachers on Environmental Education lists suggestions about the potential contributions of history to the subject⁴. And yet, the example of an environmental study of a local riverbank in the same publication is confined only to science and geography, and has no historical component whatsoever⁵.

However with the emergence of Environmental History as a significant sub-

² Williams, M.: *Designing and Teaching Integrated Courses*
Geographical Association, Sheffield, 1984

³ Goodall, S. (Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum*
David Fulton, London, 1994 p 5

⁴ Northern Ireland Curriculum Council: *Environmental Education: A Guide for Teachers*
Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, Belfast, 1994 p 61

⁵ Ibid p 40

discipline in the past two decades, particularly in the United States, a growing number of geographers, geologists and anthropologists, as well as historians, are examining the reciprocal influences between humans and nature, and realising that to understand the environment of the present, one needs to know something about the environments of the past. There is consequently growing support for the inclusion of history into Environmental Education. However, there are two groups of people who need to be convinced of this - namely, the majority of scientists, as well as history teachers themselves.

The importance of including history in Environmental Education

Waites suggests that a crucial characteristic about the environment is that it demands an inter-disciplinary approach, and that it is impossible to be a specialist when making a study of the landscape⁶. One needs to be a geologist, geographer, biologist, historian, archaeologist and conservationist. The importance of history in this is that it investigates the thoughts and actions of people in the past who contributed to the evolution of the present day environment. One cannot therefore fully understand the present landscape without reference to the past.

Agar echoes this thought: "It is only possible to understand the environment if the historical conditions that have contributed to the form and structure of our surroundings are themselves fully comprehended"⁷. He suggests that no environment can be satisfactorily explained without reference to the human historical background. As an example, he refers to the subtle differences between the countryside of Northern France and Southern England. Whereas the former reflects the victory of the peasant proprietors in the French Revolution, the latter shows the power of the landed gentry who consolidated their position in the early 19th Century while the independent peasantry disappeared. Another important contribution which he believes that history can make to a study of the

⁶ Waites, B.: 'The Past Environment' in Martin, G. and Tanner, E. (Eds):
Environmental Studies
Blond Educational, Leicester, 1972

⁷ Agar, N.: 'The Place of History in Environmental Education'
Teaching History, Number 10, November 1973 p 129

environment is that it encourages a sense of proportion. One cannot take into account only the physical factors; it is essential to consider the human elements as well. As an example, he explains that the chain of lakes which form the Norfolk Broads are not a natural feature but result from medieval peat diggings. He pleads too for an urban focus in environmental education, pointing out that most environmental problems today are a result of urbanisation and industrialisation. It is therefore appropriate that environmental studies focus on the urban environment, where the growth of cities is very much a topic of historical study.

Kerr suggests that history can warn environmentalists of the increased risk of our cumulative actions. Only by understanding historical processes can we use the lessons from past decisions about the environment to make present decisions and future choices⁸. In the context of environmental education, history can encourage pupils to develop a critical analysis of society, by understanding that decisions about the environment are heavily influenced by social, economic, political and cultural factors, and that this changes over time.

Shah believes that history has an integral part to play in environmental education by providing students with adequate knowledge and understanding of the background to environmental issues, and developing appropriate attitudes and skills⁹. As examples of these she makes the following suggestions: knowledge and understanding of the complex interplay of political, social, economic and other human factors on the environment; attitudes of inquisitiveness, care and responsibility towards the environment; and skills to locate, comprehend, interpret and evaluate the evidence on the natural environment¹⁰.

The value of Environmental History

Kerr believes that the relationship between history and environmental education

⁸ David Kerr in Goodall, S. (Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum*
David Fulton, London, 1994 p 61

⁹ Shah, S.: 'An historical perspective on environmental education' in *A Common Purpose: Environmental Education and the School Curriculum*
World Wildlife Fund (U.K.), 1988 p 48

¹⁰ Shah *ibid* p 50

has not been readily accepted by history teachers, and that they have not fully explored its potential. While they may accept that the relationship between people and their environment is important, they see this as being the responsibility of other areas of the curriculum, notably geography and science. He suggests rather that history provides the ideal means by which to put the different components of environmental education (which he summarises as education *about, for and through* the environment) in historical context, in order to understand present approaches in the light of past experiences in other periods and other cultures¹¹.

Writing over 20 years ago, Stewart listed his reasons for favouring an environmental approach: it is relevant to life, accessible and three-dimensional; it necessitates the study and evaluation of primary sources of both physical and documentary evidence; and it encourages correlation between subjects, with the historical component acting as the basis and link for environmental education in its widest sense. Above all he feels that "History learned through an environmental approach is more likely to be remembered with affection because it is within their capacity and is seen to be related more directly, at least in its beginnings, to their lives"¹². Writing about the primary school age group, Mays believes that an environmental approach is one of the best ways for children to develop a sense of time: "The time-scales in the child's immediate environment provide the stepping stones to the historical time-scale, the one that involves the whole of society"¹³.

Some writers see the issue as a reciprocal process, with both history and environmental education benefitting from the link. Agar believes that "The study of history has much to contribute to the study of the environment and

¹¹ David Kerr in Goodall, S.(Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum*
David Fulton, London, 1994 p 61

¹² Stewart, L.W.: 'History and the Environment'
Teaching History, Number 7, May 1972 p 203

¹³ Mays, P.: *Teaching Children through the Environment*
Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1985 p 122

furthermore, observation of the environment on the part of the student has much to contribute to his understanding of history"¹⁴. Writing more specifically about urban studies, Goodson suggests that "historical work can be a major contributor to an inter-disciplinary urban study, but it is a two-way process....Historical work can lead to a geographical investigation with some possibilities for sociological survey work which suggests more historical work and so on. To limit an urban study to historical research alone denies the student entry to this interaction of disciplines and in the process limits the possibilities for historical study"¹⁵.

Perhaps because of the uncertainty about the place of history in environmental education, as well as the lack of clarity about the form and content of the latter, a wide variety of approaches have been suggested about ways of integrating history into Environmental Education. These range from theoretical discussions about objectives, skills and methodology, to more practical suggestions about content.

Agar suggests that there are two ways of using history in an environmental study: one is the provision of historical information as a context so that students doing geographical or biological fieldwork can understand the development of the environment in which they are working. But he feels that the contribution that history can make goes far beyond the provision of background information for fieldwork. It is very important for students to realise that the attitude of people towards the environment is conditioned by their own historical experience, and that this in turn has a profound influence on the environment itself¹⁶.

Kerr believes that there is an overlap between history and environmental education in certain aims, knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to be

¹⁴ Agar, N.: 'The Place of History in Environmental Education'
Teaching History, Number 10, November 1973 p 126

¹⁵ Goodson, I.: 'The Role of History in an Urban Study'
Teaching History, Number 10, November 1973 p 120

¹⁶ Agar, N.: 'The Place of History in Environmental Education'
Teaching History, Number 10, November 1973 p 127

developed and in the approach to learning¹⁷. For example, both are based on the interpretation of evidence and the development of rational arguments and decisions based on evidence, often on controversial issues. Secondly, both aim to develop skills and attitudes which will enable pupils to reach informed conclusions. He thinks that there is sufficient overlap between the two for environmental education to be incorporated successfully in numerous contexts across the history syllabus, but that this needs to be carefully planned. It is not enough to assume that the aims of environmental education will filter through.

In the Schools Council Project on Environmental Studies, participating schools experimented with a wide variety of approaches, only some of which included an historical component. One such was an urban study which concentrated on social and economic, rather than political, history, and dealt with sections of historical time in which there was a tangible link with the area, such as the origin of place names, and the movement of successive waves of people into the area¹⁸. Stewart believes, however, that the local study should be used as a vehicle to lead into broader historical issues: "Although valuable skills are acquired in local studies we have probably failed if our pupils remain blinkered in parochialism in a shrinking world requiring more international understanding for purposes of trade and survival"¹⁹.

The Committee of Education Ministers of the Council of Europe recommended in 1971 that member states try where possible to introduce themes relating to environmental education, when revising curricula. Suggestions given for history were: the increasing mastery of nature - from prehistoric tools to modern technology; disorders and wars following disturbances to the balance between humans and their environments; mass migrations; and the decline of civilizations

¹⁷ David Kerr in Goodall, S. (Ed): *Developing Environmental Education in the Curriculum*
David Fulton, London, 1994 p 61

¹⁸ Schools Council: *Environmental Studies Project: Case Studies*
Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1972

¹⁹ Stewart, L.W.: 'History and the Environment'
Teaching History, Number 7, May 1972 p 206

caused by wrongful use of natural resources²⁰.

It is apparent from the above brief summary that there is no established curriculum model for an integrated environmental study incorporating an historical component. Even the term 'environmental study' is interpreted differently, with some of the writers seeing it simply as a local study, without any reference to the reciprocal influences between humans and nature, which is how environmental historians would interpret the term.

Related fields of study

Many of the methodologies discussed under the terms 'Fieldwork in History', 'Integrated Studies' and 'Local History' make use of the environment in a variety of ways. It would appear that there is considerable overlap between them in this respect, and that each has ideas which can be adopted in environmental education.

Fieldwork in History

A comprehensive study of the use of fieldwork in the teaching of history in South Africa has been made by Graves who notes that there are broad areas of overlap between the aims of history and outdoor education²¹. Her analysis shows that the whole concept of fieldwork in history has been interpreted in a variety of ways, each with its own objectives. For the majority of teachers, it means simply a study of the local environment, using the same skills and insights as are required for broader historical studies, where students are introduced to the wider nature of evidence in terms of their immediate area. Others see it differently. To some teachers it is a means of making national historical trends more relevant and comprehensible to students; to others it is an opportunity to practise the skills of the historian utilizing the variety of resources available in the environment; while

²⁰ Saveland, R.N. (Ed): *Handbook on Environmental Education*
John Wiley & Sons, London, 1976

²¹ Graves, F.E.: 'History outside the Classroom - An investigation into the use of fieldwork for History education with particular reference to Transvaal schools'
Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, Witwatersrand, 1982

others see it as a means by which students can be given perspectives on the past through empathy and self-knowledge²².

Anderson and Moore believe that history outside the classroom plays a vital role in developing students' knowledge and understanding of the nature of history and its relevance to their lives²³. They believe that the historic environment consists of three elements - the landscape, the built and the portable. While the third element is to be found in museums and galleries, the other two can only be seen in the field. Through their examination of the landscape and built elements of the historic environment, students learn to understand the nature of change and chronology, and of cause and effect by asking questions such as 'What is this place like now?', 'Has it always looked like this?', 'How has it changed?' and 'Why and when did these changes take place'? They believe that studies like these enable students to develop truly cross-curricular skills and interests. Furthermore they believe that, if properly guided, students can make a lasting contribution to the historical knowledge of their locality, and in this way be involved in valid historical research, which many will find a rewarding experience.

These two examples suggest that the kind of historical study labelled as 'History outside the classroom' is in fact a study of the historical aspects of the environment. The aims, activities and skills suggested thus have a great deal to offer for the historical component of environmental education.

Integrated Studies

Many studies have been published on the integration of history and geography in the curriculum, and many teachers recognize the benefits for both subjects that such a link can bring about. This is illustrated in the selection of the theme for the National History Day 1994 by the Organisation of American Historians - *Geography in History: People, Places, Time*. In an edition promoting this theme, it is suggested that the link between the two subjects is appropriate: as human

²² Graves *ibid.* p 125-6

²³ Anderson, C. and Moore, A.: 'Making history happen outside the classroom' in Bourdillon, H. (Ed): *Teaching History*
The Open University, Routledge, London, 1994

interaction with the environment is a central theme of both history and geography, together they can play a part in helping students weave isolated places and events together into a meaningful synthesis²⁴. An experiment in the integration of these two subjects described by Andain and Johnson, is seen by the authors as "an attempt to enrich and expand the child's understanding of his environment, in the development of which both history and geography play a vital and often inseparable role"²⁵. In this experiment, they regarded fieldwork as an integral part of the course, to provide students with the necessary environmental experience of the features to be studied.

Other studies move into the broader nature of integrated studies, involving more than just history and geography. Such studies are often loosely termed environmental studies, which Chaffer and Taylor define as a study involving learning by direct investigation of the locality²⁶. They discuss the development of the Schools Council Environmental Studies 8-13 project, where the initial exclusion of history and concentration on geography and biology was recognised as inadequate and subsequently rectified by the inclusion of an historical component.

Another Schools Council initiative, the Integrated Studies Project, defined integrated studies as "the exploration of any large theme, area or problem, which requires the help of more than one subject for its full understanding", and where each subject is seen as a distinctive tool of enquiry²⁷. An important characteristic of integrated studies is that the emphasis is on the development of skills, concepts and ways of expression, rather than on mastering a body of content. Bolam

²⁴ *Magazine of History* Volume 7, No 3
Organisation of American Historians, Bloomington, Indiana, 1993 p 30

²⁵ Andain, I. and Johnson, S.: 'History and Geography - An Experiment in Integration' in *Teaching History*, No 10, November 1973 p 125

²⁶ Chaffer, J. and Taylor, L.: *History and the History Teacher*
George Allen & Unwin, London, 1975 p 97

²⁷ Bolam, D.: 'History and Integrated Studies' in Jones, R.B. (Ed): *Practical Approaches to the New History*
Hutchinson Educational, London, 1973 p 257

believes that as history is a record of human experience, it has a remarkable amount to offer to integrated studies, because "its breadth of interest provides a common ground with every school subject"²⁸. The kinds of skill development which history can offer to integrated studies are the handling of evidence, the analysis of complexity and the perspective for judgment. One of the great demands of history is to distinguish and recognise relationships between a complexity of factors, such as the reasons for and consequences of changes. Furthermore history tends to counteract slick assessments by recognising complexities - for example, by showing the length of time a change in society may take, or by offering contrasting value systems from the past²⁹.

Portal believes that a local integrated study has much to offer in the development of historical skills, but he cautions that, if the historical aspect of it is to be properly handled, it may require a more formal programme of work than is usually associated with an environmental study³⁰. Brits points out that it was the work of the French Annalist historians who emphasised the importance for historians to utilise the knowledge of other social sciences, such as anthropology, archaeology, geography, sociology and economics, that brought about the increased interest in social and economic history³¹. It is this wide focus that is reflected in some of the integrated studies being done at school level.

From the examples discussed here, it can be seen that the term integrated study can be narrowly applied and involve no more than two subjects. More generally though it is used in a broader sense and involves several subject disciplines. It is instructive to note that the terms 'Integrated Studies' and 'Environmental Studies' are sometimes used interchangeably.

²⁸ Bolam *ibid.* p 265

²⁹ Bolam *ibid.* p 275

³⁰ Portal, C.: 'The Place of History in Integrated and Interdisciplinary Studies' in Burston, W.H. and Green, C.W.: *Handbook for History Teachers* Methuen Educational, London, 1972

³¹ Brits, J.: *Doing History* Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1993 p 18

An interesting local innovation has been the development of an integrated studies course for Junior Secondary level at the Sacred Heart College in Gauteng, aimed at teaching a wide range of skills rather than detailed content. However, in the series of books which are based on the course, the different subject areas are not completely integrated, and the History/Economics textbooks³² are separate from the Geography/Environment ones.

Local History

The methodology of local history also has something to offer. Mathews *et al* suggest that local history offers some distinct advantages as a topic for school history³³: it deals with what is familiar and can be studied at first hand; it exemplifies the educational principle of going from the known to the unknown; it can give the past a sense of reality; it provides the opportunity for students to collect and classify their own materials; it can provide students with an understanding of their own heritage and lives; and it involves the integration of many school subjects.

A local history project in England, devised and described by Waddington-Feather, grew into an integrated course which, although not labelled as such, certainly includes the elements of what would be considered to be environmental education³⁴. The course outline includes sections on 'The Development of the Landscape' and 'The Changing Environment'³⁵. In another study, Graham suggests that the skills needed in a local history project are so universal as to

³² Potenza, E.: *The Broken String*
Heinemann-Centaur, Johannesburg, 1992 and
Potenza, E. and Favis, D.: *Hands-on History*
Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1994

³³ Mathews, J., Moodley, K., Rheeder, W. and Wilkinson, M.: *Discover History: A Pupil-centred Approach to History Method*
Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1992 pp 88-9

³⁴ Waddington-Feather, J.: 'Sixth Form Local Studies' in
Teaching History, No 11, 1974

³⁵ Waddington-Feather, J. *ibid.* p 220

justify the 'local history study' as the centre piece of an integrated curriculum³⁶.

In a comprehensive account which traces the study and teaching of local history in Britain, Douch has shown that as early as the 1940s, pioneers in the establishment of local history as a recognised branch of historical study at the University of Leicester, were suggesting a fundamental link between local history and the study of the environment³⁷. He points out, however, that many environmental studies enthusiasts know little history, and relatively few history teachers have questioned the traditional approach to their subject or have experimented with environmental studies. He suggests that as all children will become adults and citizens, while few will become historians, the purpose and methods of studying history in school need to be reconsidered, and to be related more to everyday concerns. The emphasis should be on the present and future, with the past being used to help explain the present and to contrast with it. He recommends that all history teachers should investigate the nature of their local environment and the broad opportunities it offers, not merely for historical research, but as a means of educating. He believes that this will help to implement what he sees as the main aim of school history, namely "to enable children to know themselves and their world better and to live in it more satisfyingly and more effectively"³⁸.

These remarks suggest that what might traditionally have been termed a local history study could also be considered an environmental study. Once again the overlap between the different methodologies is apparent. Shah has developed the link further by listing ways in which a local history study can contribute to environmental education: for example, by tracing the history as far back as possible, and highlighting the early natural environment; by analysing changes in the natural and human-made environment, their causes and consequences; by

³⁶ Graham, E.J.: 'Local History Studies in the Classroom' in *Teaching History*, No 53, 1988 p 28

³⁷ Douch, R.: 'Local History' in Ballard, M. (Ed): *New Movements in the Study and Teaching of History* Temple Smith, London, 1971 p 106

³⁸ Douch *ibid.* p 109

studying all evidence relating to the local environment, including relevant artistic and literary evidence; by including issues of environmental importance and their significance in the historical narrative; and by using the kind of teaching approaches which involve student participation in problem-solving exercises related to historical and contemporary events³⁹.

The following chapter presents an example of the application of environmental history at school. It is a curriculum model which draws on the pedagogical theory and methodological approaches of the four different fields examined here. Although it is presented as an application of environmental history, the model includes some of the theory and methodology of the other related fields. It is in some respects a local history study which uses some of the activities generally labelled as fieldwork in history. But, by bringing in aspects of other disciplines, especially geography, it also draws on some of the ideas used in integrated studies.

But the model is, first and foremost, a history curriculum model, which could also function as the historical component of an integrated studies module. Many of the ideas and activities are not new, but what is perhaps different is the environmental focus, which tries to demonstrate the links between human activities and the environment. It is not always possible to do this though, and critics would be justified in seeing some of the activities as examples of social or urban history rather than anything completely new. Environmental history itself is a relatively new sub-discipline which has yet to be fully applied in a South African context. Environmental history in a school setting is an even newer field and the author is not aware of any publication relating to its systematic application elsewhere. The proposed teaching model is therefore experimental and somewhat speculative.

³⁹ Shah, S.: 'An historical perspective on environmental education' in *A Common Purpose: Environmental Education and the School Curriculum*
World Wildlife Fund (U.K.), 1988 p 50

CHAPTER 8

**ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AT SCHOOL - A CURRICULUM MODEL BASED ON
A STUDY OF THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY**

TITLE: AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY

LEVEL: This curriculum model¹ has been designed for Junior Secondary students (ages 13 to 14 years) in a mixed ability class. However, although the activities have been designed with this age group in mind, the nature of some of the written sources might require teacher guidance in their use and interpretation, because of their language and complexity.

SUMMARY: This model is a local history study, using an environmental approach. In it students learn about the interaction between history and the environment, using the Liesbeek River valley as a case-study. It is not a chronological account of everything that happened in the valley; it focusses instead on different themes which lend themselves to the types of activities in which students themselves can investigate the history of their locality.

The model could also be used as the historical component of an integrated environmental study, which includes other subjects such as geography, biology and science. As such, it can be used to establish a place for history in environmental education as it uses historical sources to amplify our understanding of current environmental data, by comparing for example the current state of the river with historical records from other periods.

GENERAL AIMS:

1. To convince the history teacher that there is value in the adoption of an

¹ The use of the term "curriculum model" is by no means intended to imply that what is presented here should serve as a model of what such a study *ought* to be. The teaching units and worksheets are presented merely as examples of the kinds of historical activities that students can do in the local environment.

environmental approach in history.

2. To convince the non-historian that there is a place for history in environmental education.
3. To create in students an interest in the historical exploration of the environment as a worthwhile, interesting and lifetime leisure activity.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

1. To extend students' knowledge and understanding of the environment, and to enable them to be aware of the role it has played in influencing human history.
2. To enable students to understand the interrelationship between environmental issues and the social, economic, political and cultural conditions which influence them.
3. To make students aware of the visible remains of the past in the cultural landscape, and to demonstrate that they are as important an historical resource as written documents or oral accounts.
4. To equip students with the knowledge, skills and techniques which will enable them to identify and interpret these remains, and place them in their wider historical context.

In addition to these objectives which apply to the whole model, each teaching unit contains specific objectives appropriate to the content and activities of the unit.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW²:

Environmental history is a relatively new sub-discipline of history in which the relationship between nature and human history is explored. It is not a history of the environment which traces the climatic, biological and ecological changes that occur over a period of time. It is instead an examination of the interaction between human actions and the environment and the way each has affected the other. As an example of the effect humans have had on the environment, it has been suggested that the decision to introduce sheep to the central plateau of Spain during the Middle Ages was the major factor responsible for the arid, semi-desert conditions there today. An example of how the environment has affected human activities is well illustrated by a local example: the Dutch decision to locate their settlement in Table Bay, rather than the more sheltered

² For a detailed discussion of Environmental History, and the full references of the works referred to here, see Chapter 1. See also Part 1 of the Bibliography.

anchorage of Saldanha Bay, was due to the absence of a fresh water supply in the latter.

Environmental history is a fast-growing interest which emerged in the United States in the 1960s. However, its roots have been attributed to the French historian of the Annales school, Fernand Braudel, who, in his epic study of the Mediterranean world in the 16th century, stressed the relative insignificance of political, social and military events in comparison with the influence of the environment on human affairs. The kinds of topics which the American environmental historians explored were, for example, the impact of the frontier on the American consciousness, the creation and impact of the Dust Bowl, and the importance of the control of water resources in the conquest of the American West. During the 1980s and 1990s historians started to apply environmental analyses to the history of other areas of the world as well. Clapp's *Environmental History of Britain since the Industrial Revolution* examined the effects of industrialisation and the laws passed to regulate it, while Bolton's *Spoils and Spoilers* focussed on the impact of Australians on their environment, especially in the past 200 years. In *This Fissured Land* Gadgil and Guha explored issues such as the relationship between ecological change and social conflict in modern India. One of the most recent developments in the field has been the application of the environmental approach to colonial contexts: for example, in *Green Imperialism*, Grove focussed attention on the impact of colonization on the environments of former colonies on the Indian Ocean islands and in India; while Melville examined the environmental consequences of the conquest of Mexico in *A Plague of Sheep*. Environmental history is currently enjoying considerable attention and generating lively debate in journals such as the *American Environmental History Review* and the *British Environment and History*.

In South Africa the environment has received little attention from historians, although other studies which have an historical dimension have explored different aspects of the relationship between humans and the environment. For example Fuggle and Rabie's *Environmental Management in South Africa* traced the history of environmental legislation, examining the issues which caused concern in the early colonial period. They also examined the impact of the Roman-Dutch legal system on the environment; for example, the issue of the control and ownership of water resources. The historical geographer, Leonard Guelke, devoted considerable attention to the relationship between the environment and settlement in early Dutch South Africa. In archaeology the

emphasis has shifted towards more ecologically focussed research, based on the premise that to understand the actions of past people, one has to know something about past environments. Of the relatively little done by historians in this field, much of it has focussed on issues such as the politics of soil conservation or of national parks. The historian most closely involved in the field of environmental history, Dr Jane Carruthers of UNISA, has suggested that these studies should be seen as analyses of human relationships against a broad environmental backdrop, rather than an examination of the interactive processes between humans and nature. A recent publication by the historians Beinart and Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*, examines how changing societies transformed, rather than destroyed, their environments, but they do not really address the issue of how environmental factors may have affected history. Some environmentalists believe that there is a critical need for more environmental history research in a South African context: they suggest that for an effective environmental ethic to be developed here, it is crucial to understand how attitudes towards environmental issues have been shaped by historical and political forces.

Environmental historians believe that their work can be useful in two ways. Firstly it can inform ecologists about the nature of past environments: historical sources can inform us about ecological conditions in the past, and can demonstrate how far back human manipulation of the environment goes. To understand present environments, one has to study social and economic, as well as biological and geographical processes, as no environment can be fully understood without reference to the human historical background. History examines the thoughts and actions of people in the past who contributed to the evolution of the present day landscape; only by understanding these historical processes can we use the lessons from past decisions about the environment to make present decisions and future choices. For these reasons, environmental historians believe that their subject has acquired an urgent contemporary relevance; they want their histories to be useful not just in helping to understand the past, but in helping to shape the future.

Furthermore, environmental historians believe that the use of an environmental approach adds another dimension to historical research; that "nature" is as important a category of historical analysis as race, class and gender. They suggest that environmental history

offers the opportunity of synthesis, of exciting opportunities for seeing things as a whole, not just between different sub-fields of history, but between different disciplines, because it operates in the gulf between science and the humanities. Students learn that decisions about the environment are heavily influenced by social, economic, political and cultural factors, and that these factors have changed over time. Environmental history is interdisciplinary by nature, and involves cross-curricular co-operation with geologists, climatologists, archaeologists, anthropologists, ecologists and, above all, geographers. For this reason, educationists see it as being valuable because it encourages correlation between subjects, with the historical component acting as the basis and link for environmental education in its widest sense.

STRUCTURE AND SUGGESTED TIME ALLOCATION:

The model is divided into 5 units, each of which has student activities, worksheets and sources. To allow sufficient time for fieldwork in the locality, it is suggested that a full ten-week term be used to teach it.

Unit One: Establishing a link between history and the environment

The activities in this unit provide an historical framework for the study.

Unit Two: Searching for history in the landscape

Students learn to identify and interpret the visible remains of the past in the cultural landscape.

Unit Three: Interpreting attitudes and perceptions

Students explore issues of perception and reality and their impact on human actions and the environment.

Unit Four: Examining economic changes

Students use examples of commercial and industrial economic activities to investigate how these have changed over time.

Unit Five: Creating an environmental history trail

Students are encouraged to use their creative abilities to design a trail, which reflects the history of both human activities and the environment.

TEACHING APPROACHES:

The overall teaching approach is an interactive one, with the emphases on student involvement and variation in methodology. In addition to teaching content, the model can be used as a vehicle for teaching skills and for using a variety of teaching methods. Specific skills are identified in each unit. The teaching activities are designed to allow students themselves to be actively involved at all stages. Teacher input in terms of content is minimal, but the teacher acts as facilitator for the activities, and a source of reference for questions relating to content. All of the units involve group work, using groups of different sizes depending on the size of the class and the type of activity.

Summary of Teaching Methods used in each unit:

- Unit 1:** Brainstorming ideas and compiling a table and a chart
Using sources (primary and secondary written sources, and maps)
Oral presentation
- Unit 2:** Interpretation of maps and aerial photographs
Fieldwork (investigating land-use)
Individual research (place-names)
Fieldwork (graveyard study)
Fieldwork (discovering places of historical interest)
- Unit 3:** Using sources (paintings, travellers' accounts, petitions, ordinances, official reports, photographs, slave register, secondary sources)
- Unit 4:** Using sources (directories, advertisements, descriptions, oral interviews)
Fieldwork (doing an urban transect)
Museum visits
Conducting interviews
- Unit 5:** Designing, testing and evaluating a history trail

RESOURCES FOR THE UNITS:

Unit 1: Documentary sources and maps.

Unit 2: Maps, aerial photographs, buildings, monuments, gravestones, street names

Unit 3: Paintings, travellers' descriptions, ordinances, memorials, secondary sources

Unit 4: Museum brochures, street directories, old advertisements, oral evidence

Unit 5: Heritage trails, Waterfront storyboards, museum brochures

HISTORY IN OUTLINE:

What follows is a teachers' guide to using Chapters 2 to 5, which present an environmental history of the Liesbeek River valley from pre-colonial times to the 20th century.

Chapter 2: The pre-colonial environment

Most of our information about the pre-colonial landscape comes from the early Dutch period. Van Riebeeck's journal is particularly useful for descriptions of the forests (p17), the river (p18), and the game (p19). From these early colonial records one can form a fairly clear picture of the natural environment of the valley: it was sheltered, with an abundant water supply, dense vegetation covering the valley and mountain slopes, and plentiful wildlife. There is little surviving evidence of the earliest hunter-gatherer inhabitants (pp20-21), but the presence of the Khoi pastoralists who succeeded them is well documented (pp22-23). While the effect of the hunter-gatherers on the environment would have been minimal, the activities of the herders had a greater impact (p23). However, from the descriptions of the prolific plant and animal life which the first Dutch settlers found at the Cape, it can be assumed that the land-ethic of the pre-colonial inhabitants was based on a non-destructive use of natural resources (pp23-24).

Chapter 3: The interaction between the Dutch and the environment

The arrival of the Dutch had profound effects on the environment in both obvious and less tangible ways, shaping future perceptions of and attitudes towards the environment (p25). The most immediate impact was the destruction of the forests (pp26-27) which, apart from resulting in the immediate shortage of timber, had other far-reaching consequences (pp27-28). The introduction of agriculture to the valley in 1657 (p28) disrupted the traditional pattern of pastoral transhumance of the Khoi herders, as pastures were ploughed up, fences erected and access to water denied (p29-30). The

river briefly became the frontier between traditional and alien systems in contest for control of the resources of the valley (p31). The effects of the new farms on the environment were perhaps less dramatic but none-the-less profound: not only was natural vegetation destroyed and replaced by exotic trees and imported crops (p32), but local wildlife was exterminated or driven away by the destruction of natural habitats, and new species introduced (p33). The resources of the valley also attracted two of the first industries: a brewery using the pure water of the Newlands springs, and a flour-mill utilising the water-power of the river (p35).

The destruction of the natural environment did not go unchecked: numerous *placaaten* were issued in an attempt to control the process (p35), and it has been suggested that the Dutch impact was considerably more benign than, for example, an English one might have been (p36). The issue of the influence of the Roman-Dutch legal system on the environment is a subject of debate among scientists and legal experts (p36-37). But the interaction between the Dutch and the environment was not a one-way process: the river played a key determining role in the early Dutch settlement (p37-39).

Chapter 4: The impact of the British on the environment

The advent of the new British administration resulted in a wave of immigration and an economic upswing, and the valley lost its rural character and became increasingly residential and industrialised (p40). The adoption of English styles and institutions also affected the landscape (p41), and fashionable English villages developed along the valley (p42). The impetus for the growth of population in the valley was the improvement in transport, and the villages later developed into suburbs (p43-44). Industrial activity in the valley increased, especially in the milling and brewing industries as industrialists took advantage of the cancellation of Company monopolies (p45). Scandinavian entrepreneurs played a key role in these developments (p46-47).

The river remained the main supply of water for domestic use until the last decade of the century (p47). Other users included the owners of estates along the river, industries, and washerwomen (p48-49). The increasing population had a considerable impact on the river, and there were concerns about pollution from as early as the 1830s (p50). The surrounding environment was also affected by the building of residential properties in ever increasing quantities (p50).

The influence of English Law also made its mark on the environment, as the courts recognised the rights of riparian ownership of streams and river banks (p51). As landowners adopted a more proprietorial attitude, the authorities took steps to control the use and reduce the abuse of the river (p51). Environmental issues also played a role in local politics, and one of the reasons for the disintegration of the Liesbeek municipality was differing opinions about water supplies (p52).

In contrast to the picture of filth and pollution alluded to in the Liesbeek ordinance of 1852, are the images of rural tranquility and gracious living in a landscape comfortably reminiscent of England (pp53-54). Victorian architecture, English pubs, exotic trees and gardens, Anglican churches, and English schools and sports clubs all transformed the landscape (p55). These were portrayed in romanticised paintings by English landscape artists (p56). By the end of the 19th century, the river was no longer the vital resource it once had been. It had become polluted and the surrounding environment degraded (p57).

Chapter 5: The 20th Century environment

These processes became more pronounced during the 20th century. The sub-division of land continued, further "hardening" the catchment of the river and reducing its flow (pp58-59). But significant amounts of land were saved from further sub-division by the emergence of the area as a premier educational centre, the Rhodes bequest and the creation of major sporting facilities (pp60-61). Some of the industries on the river went through phases of expansion, but gradually most closed down their operations in the valley and re-located (p62). The increased use of private motor vehicles necessitated the building of improved road networks which affected the environment, cutting off properties from the river bank and diverting the flow of the river (p63). However, the river still had its uses: for agriculture, industry and horticulture; for the botanical gardens at Kirstenbosch; for the Liesbeek washerwomen despite the ban; for trout fishermen, after the introduction of trout in 1947, and for other forms of informal recreational use (pp63-65).

Evidence suggests that the river was seriously polluted in the early decades of the century (pp66-67). But this situation seems to have been partially solved by the adoption of a comprehensive management plan by the City Council in 1925 (pp67-68). Another major

problem and cause of complaint was flooding. The Council's solution to this was canalisation, and in succeeding decades large sections of the river were confined to a concrete channel (p68-70). This process had a devastating impact on the environment of the river (p71). After this it no longer played any significant role, other than as a conveyer of stormwater.

However the increased environmental awareness of the 1980s brought about new attitudes, perceptions and policies (pp72-73). Attempts were made to re-discover, rescue and rehabilitate the river (p74). Linked to this, a renewed public interest in heritage led to the establishment of museums on its banks and a growing appreciation of the historical significance of the valley (p75). Commerce was not slow to cash in on the "heritage industry" that thrived with the new awareness, and the Liesbbek River began to be viewed once again as a resource worth exploiting (p76).

Changes in perception have had a marked impact on the river in the 20th century: initially dreaded as a health hazard and feared as a flood menace, it was no longer seen as relevant or useful and consigned to a concrete channel. But later the river which for so long had been ignored and deprecated was "re-discovered" and this affords some hope for its future (pp76-77).

TEACHING UNITS, ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHEETS:**UNIT 1: Establishing a link between HISTORY and the ENVIRONMENT**

Worksheet 1A: The relationship between human activities and the environment

Worksheet 1B: The pre-colonial environment of the Liesbeek River valley

Worksheet 1C: History and environment in the Liesbeek River valley

Resources for Worksheet 1C: Resource pack on Dutch foresters, farmers,
millers and brewers

UNIT 2: Searching for HISTORY in the LANDSCAPE

Worksheet 2A: Learning the past from maps

Worksheet 2B: What's in a Name?

Worksheet 2C: Down among the Deadmen

Worksheet 2D: History around us

Resources for Worksheet 2A: A map history of developments along the Liesbeek
Worksheet 2C: Figures 1 - 4 for cemetery survey and analysis

UNIT 3: Interpreting ATTITUDES and PERCEPTIONS

Worksheet 3A: The Khoi, the environment and the Dutch

Worksheet 3B: Where are the slaves?

Worksheets 3C: Image and reality: Perceptions of the river in the 19th century

Worksheet 3D: The Liesbeek Washerwomen

Resources for Worksheet 3A: Views of the Khoikhoi

Worksheet 3B: Slavery in the Liesbeek River valley

Worksheet 3C: The 19th Century - Image and Reality

Worksheet 3D: Sources on the Liesbeek Washerwomen

UNIT 4: Examining ECONOMIC CHANGES

Worksheet 4A: Shops and Shopping

Worksheet 4B: Industry on the banks of the Liesbeek

Worksheet 4C: Do you remember?

Resources for Worksheet 4A: Shopping in Rondebosch in the 1920s

Worksheet 4A: Shopping in Rondebosch in 1957

Worksheet 4A: Rondebosch Street Directory for 1957

UNIT 5: Creating an ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY TRAIL

Worksheet 5: Design Plan for Environmental History Trail

The resources for each unit are printed on yellow paper and are placed immediately after the worksheet with which they are used.

UNIT 1: Establishing a link between HISTORY and the ENVIRONMENT

This unit introduces students to the concepts of environmental history and provides a time dimension for the study. Students are given an overview of historical developments affecting the environment in the Liesbeek River valley over a long time period. The emphasis is on human activities and use of resources, rather than on different groups of people. Students examine the relationship between different human activities and the environment, showing in each case how people use and affect it, and in turn are affected by it. The unit is intended to provide a time framework and an historical overview for the content and activities of the later units.

Specific objectives:

1. To encourage students to think critically about the relationship between history and the environment.
2. To teach students to use sources critically.
3. To enable students to select and synthesize information.

Skills to be developed:

Interpretation of sources

Selection, categorisation and synthesis of information

Key concepts and ideas to be conveyed:

1. The relationship between history and the environment is an interactive one: human activities both influence and are influenced by nature. The way people use resources has an effect on the environment, but the environment itself often plays a determining role in historical decisions and actions.
2. The historic record is not complete: we sometimes need to make informed decisions about the past. In South Africa the pre-colonial past has to be reconstructed from early colonial records and archaeological evidence.
3. Natural resources and the way nature is used and perceived change over time. In this example, a river which once played a key determining role gradually diminishes in importance. In the process it is fought over, utilised, jealously guarded, admired, abused, criticised, transformed, re-discovered and rehabilitated.

Outline of historical content:

After an exercise on the relationship between history and the environment in a general sense, students use historical sources to answer questions about the pre-colonial environment of a specific area. Then, to provide them with an overview of human use of the Liesbeek River valley and its subsequent historical development, information packs on four periods are supplied:

- * The pre-colonial period: Hunter-gatherers and pastoralists
(The river attracts game, the fertile valley provides good pasture, and there is abundant water for humans and livestock)
- * The Dutch period: foresters, farmers, millers and brewers
(The river irrigates crops, drives mills, provides a protective barrier, and helps the Dutch gain control of the land)
- * The British arrive: large estates, growing suburbs and expanding industry
(The river provides water for increasing domestic and industrial use, and in the process is negatively affected)
- * The 20th Century: more people, more houses, more roads, more damage
(The river becomes a polluted drainage system, posing a flood threat to suburban dwellers. The century draws to a close with attempts to re-discover, rescue and rehabilitate the river)

Student activities:

1. Working in groups, students brainstorm ideas and draw up a table to illustrate the interactive relationship between human activities and nature. The main objective here is to get students thinking about this concept. It is not really important whether they draw up a comprehensive table or not. The table included here as Worksheet 1A is a reduced version of the actual size of the table.
Worksheet 1A: The relationship between human activities and the environment (Page 116)
2. Working individually, students study sources relating to the pre-colonial and early colonial period, and answer questions. They then return to their groups and compare

answers. A representative from each group reports to the class on

- (1) Points on which they all agreed;
- (2) Any points on which they differed.

Worksheet 1B: *The pre-colonial environment of the Liesbeek River valley* (Page 117)

3. Students investigate the historical record of the relationship between humans and the environment in the valley. Rather than the whole class trying to cover all the material, the class is divided into groups, each specialising on one period. Each group is given a resource pack, containing both primary and secondary sources, and a blank chart. The group works through the sources, completes the chart, and presents their information orally to the rest of the class. The charts are displayed in the classroom as a source of reference for later units. The chart included here as Worksheet 1C is a reduced version of the actual size of the chart.

Worksheet 1C: *History and environment in the Liesbeek River valley* (Page 118)

Resource packs on the following periods would need to be compiled and provided:

- * *The pre-colonial period: Hunter-gatherers and Khoikhoi pastoralists*
- * *1657 - 1795: Dutch farmers, millers and brewers* *
- * *19th Century: British settlers and industrialists*
- * *20th Century: Urban dwellers*)

* *The resources for one of these is included after page 118 as an example. The sources are set out in such a way that they can be photocopied, cut up into individual sources and placed in a folder or envelope. This makes for easier handling for group work.*

Sources:

Worksheet 1B: The Pre-colonial Environment of the Liesbeek River Valley

Raven-Hart, R. (Ed): *Cape Good Hope 1652-1702: The first fifty years of Dutch colonization as seen by callers* Balkema, Cape Town, 1971

Thom, H.B.: *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck* Volumes 1-3 Balkema, Cape Town, 1952-58

Worksheet 1C: Resource Pack No 2

Boeseken, A.J.: *Geskiedenis Atlas vir Suid Afrika*, Nasionale Boekhandel, 1948

- Bredekamp, H. and Newton-King, S.: 'The Subjugation of the Khoisan during the 17th and 18th centuries', Paper No 1, Conference on Economic Development and Racial Discrimination, UWC, Belville, 1984
- Fairbridge, D.: *Historic Farms of South Africa: the Wool, the Wheat and the Wine* OUP, London, 1931
- Guelke, L. and Shell, R.: 'Landscape of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi strategies of survival', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol 18 No 4, 1992
- Karsten, M.: *The Old Company's Garden at the Cape and its Superintendents*, Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1951
- Laidler, P.W.: *The Growth and Government of Cape Town*, Unie Volkspers, Cape Town, 1939
- Leipoldt, C. Louis: *300 Years of Cape Wine* Stewart, Cape Town, 1962
- Luckhoff, C.A.: *Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years*, Balkema, Cape Town, 1951
- Mossop, E.E.: *Old Cape Highways*, Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1927
- Newton-Thompson, J.: *The Story of a House*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1968
- Sleigh, D.: *The Company's Outposts*, CABO, 1992
- Spilhaus, M.W.: *The First South Africans and the Laws which governed them* Juta, Cape Town, 1949
- Spilhaus, M.W.: *Indigenous Trees of the Cape Peninsula*, Juta, Cape Town, 1950
- Stockenstrom, E.: *Historiese Atlas van Suid Afrika Pro Ecclesia*, Stellenbosch, 1928
- Thom, H.B. (Ed): *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, Balkema, Cape Town, 1952
- Wagener, F.J.(Ed): *Rondebosch down the Years*, Rondebosch, 1957
- Whittingdale, J.: 'The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town', Unpublished thesis, UCT, 1973

WORKSHEET 1A

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

(The "environment" in this worksheet is a river and the surrounding valley)

GROUP OF PEOPLE	What does the environment offer them?	How do they use it?	What is their attitude towards it?	How does their use and attitude affect it?
Hunter- Gatherers				
Pastoralists				
Foresters				
Cultivators				
Brewers				
Millers				
Laundrywomen				
Suburban residents				
Schools				
Shops/Offices				
Recreation seekers				

WORKSHEET 1B

THE PRE-COLONIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY *HISTORICAL SOURCES AND QUESTIONS*

*We found forests of fine, thick tall trees
(suitable for ships' masts) growing
right down to the river.*

Journal 18/9/1652

*The Liesbeek is not more than 14 feet
wide, but it is very deep.*

Johan Nieuhof (1655)

*It was found on inspection that the Liesbeek
could be made navigable from the Salt River
right up to Bosheuwel [near Kirstenbosch]*

Journal 26/7/1658

*A Free Burgher
drowned while placing
his net in the Liesbeek*

Journal 18/1/1658

**All the reeds growing in and along
the Liesbeek River have been used up
by farmers for thatching.**

Journal 25/1/1658

*Thick forests stretch from the mountains to the Liesbeek River, so thick
that no opening could be found. No cattle could be driven from this wood.*

Journal 26/7/1658

**Van Riebeeck sailed on the Liesbeek in
a small boat, examining the shallows for
marshes and soft ground.**

Journal 15/7/1658

*We saw a lion splashing
about in the river.*

Journal 3/11/1657

*Corporal Elias Giers and his
horse drowned in the Liesbeek.*

Journal 8/8/1660

*The overgrown banks of the Liesbeek provide a convenient
hiding place for all wild beasts. I saw the still fresh tracks
of lions, tigers, wolves, jackals, deer and terribly large baboons.*

Gijsbert Heck (1655)

*The Liesbeek River is in some places difficult to
cross because of its depth, in others because of
the presence of tigers or leopards.*

Abraham van Riebeeck (1676)

**There is a singular calm in those valleys, which
have such rich, beautiful soil and are so well-
watered by pleasant rushing rivers of fresh water.**

Journal 4/10/1665

[The Journal refers to the one kept by Jan van Riebeeck as Commander of the Dutch settlement at the Cape 1652-1662]

QUESTIONS:

1. What favourable resources for human use did the valley seem to offer?
2. What indications are there that the Liesbeek was considered a fair-sized river?
3. Why do we need to rely on Dutch accounts to learn about these things?
4. How reliable do you think these sources are as evidence of the pre-colonial environment?
5. Write a paragraph (about 10-12 lines) to describe what the valley must have been like in about 1650.

WORKSHEET 1C

HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read through the information in your Resource Pack which contains sources relating to one historical period. Select and sort the information to fill in each of the blocks on the chart below.

HISTORICAL PERIOD:.....

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:.....

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AFFECTING HUMAN ACTIVITIES		HUMAN ACTIVITIES AFFECTING THE ENVIRONMENT	
<i>What did the environment offer them?</i>	<i>How did the environment affect the development of the area?</i>	<i>What was their attitude towards the environment?</i>	<i>What effects did they have on the environment?</i>

* This worksheet will need to be enlarged to enable it to be used as a chart for wall display.

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 1C:

RESOURCE PACK 2: 1657-1795 FORESTERS, FARMERS, MILLERS and BREWERS.

A. In 1657 Van Riebeeck was granted a plot of ground [of about 101 morgen] on the south-east bank of the Liesbeek River near its source. This land was rich and well-watered, with ample shelter against the south-easter wind. The first vineyard that in South Africa had any pretension to be so called was planted here. This farm became known as Bosheuwel [Bishopscourt].

C. Louis Leipoldt: *300 Years of Cape Wine* p 18

B. The Dregterland brought Rutgert Mensing and his family, to set up as a free brewer here, and we have given him 30 morgen of land named Papenboom, about one and a half hours distant from the Castle, above the Liesbeek River, near the Schuur - a place, according to his own statement, provided with the finest and best water for his purpose.

Council of Policy to the Here Seventien in Holland 1/8/1696

C. Van Riebeeck soon realised that the future of maritime replenishment lay in the exploitation of resources outside the security of the Table Valley. The fertile, well-watered and windless Liesbeek Valley, some twenty kilometers to the southeast, then was fenced, fortified, occupied and farmed. Behind this boundary the Company eventually managed to supply the requirements of meat, wheat, vegetables, fuel, timber and draught animals, with the assistance of the Free Burghers and the Company's outposts, or buiteposten.

Sleigh, D.: *The Company's Outposts* p 3

D. Timber was in great demand by the new settlers. It was needed for all building purposes - for houses, the fort, the jetty, redoubts, a watercourse, for the repair of ships. It was also the sole source of fuel. By the time Van der Stel arrived in 1679 little accessible timber remained on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. Attempts to control tree-cutting in Van Riebeeck's time met with little success, and had not prevented the almost complete destruction of the forests.

Luckhoff, C.A.: *Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years* p 109

E. Some seamen were busy clearing the fresh river Liesbeecq, which was found to be the depth of a pike's length in many places. If deepened in some places where it is more shallow, it will, it is hoped, afford excellent protection to the cattle of the Company and those freemen living on this side of it.

Van Riebeeck's Journal 21/11/1658

F. Wood was used so extensively by the settlers that by 1665 it was reported that there was not enough wood to build coffins.

Karsten, M.: *The Old Company's Garden at the Cape and its Superintendents* p 65

G. A wooden palisade [fence] was built in an arc from the mouth of the Liesbeek River to Bosheuvel [Bishopscourt]. This was designed to keep the Khoi off their old pasturage, which had been appropriated as farm land for the freemen, and to resist their attempts at reprisals in the form of stealing the farmers' cattle. The palisades of this historic hedge represented the death of hundreds of trees.

Spilhaus, M.W.: *The First South Africans and the Laws which governed them* p 149

H. The Liesbeek River was then so considerable a stream that it was navigable by boats; the settlers were allowed to fish in it with hooks, for the supply of their own tables, but at first not for the sake of profit, so that agriculture, which was their main purpose, should not suffer.

Fairbridge, D.: *Historic Farms of SA: The wool, the wheat and the wine* p 24

I. Despite numerous proclamations, threats and penalties imposed to prevent the wastage of timber and fuel, the authorities failed to apply the real remedy of replanting where they felled, and this soon resulted in the almost complete destruction of the forests in all but the most inaccessible kloofs.

M.W. Spilhaus: *Indigenous Trees of the Cape Peninsula* p 4

J. The newly sown lands of the Free Burghers have been submerged by the floodwaters of the Liesbeek, seemingly a regular inundation. The wagon road to the forests is impassable, with water up to the oxen's bellies. Some careless wagon-drivers have let three of the oxen drown.

Van Riebeeck's Journal 28/6/1657 and 3/7/1657

K. All the life of the early settlement was centred along the crescent curve of the Liesbeek, and it is interesting to note how to this day the earliest roads of the southern suburbs conform to the requirements of the riparian farms along its upper reaches.

Mossop, E.E.: *Old Cape Highways* p 17

L. The Liesbeek was blocked by the rubbish of those who lived along its lower reaches, which caused flood after heavy rain. The owners of farms received instructions to keep them clean.

Resolution of the Council of Policy 7/1/1744

M. There is a need to provide some defence to prevent the Khoi from stealing the cattle of the Company and the Free Burghers. For this purpose the Liesbeecq River seems to offer a favourable barrier: it can be forded at only a few places because of its depth and general marshiness. We therefore believe that if a little trouble be taken with it, the cattle could easily be stopped there.

Van Riebeeck's Journal 15/7/1658

N. To increase grain production, a number of officials were allowed to leave the service of the Company, and were settled on small farms along both banks of the Liesbeek River. The refreshment station was developing into a colony. These farms all had adequate water for irrigation from springs and perennial streams.

Whittingale, J.: *The Development and Growth of Industries in Greater Cape Town* p 5

O. The Company's transport system, using ox-waggons, was based at De Schuur (in Rondebosch). This outpost consisted of about 120 men and slaves, workshops for wainwrights and blacksmiths, cattle pens and many acres of grazing. By 1760 there were about 2000 oxen and 30 waggons at this post.

Sleigh, D.: *The Company's Outposts* p 4

P. A bridge has been built across the Liesbeek River at Rondebosch to enable the cattle to proceed from the kraal [at Groote Schuur] to the pastures beyond the river.

Van Riebeeck's Journal 30/11/1658

Q. After a disastrous storm in 1737, during which 8 ships were wrecked in Table Bay, the Company decided to use Simonstown as a winter anchorage, and therewith the Table Bay-False Bay Road, which crossed the Liesbeek at Westerfoort, was confirmed in its role as the major axis of settlement for the next two centuries.

Whittingale, J.: *The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town* p 6

R. The Company was obliged to get reeds for the thatching of the granary at Groote Schuur about 3 hours walk away, as all the reeds growing locally had been used by the Free Burghers.

Van Riebeeck's Journal 25/1/1658

S. Our forests disappeared principally because, from the arrival of the first settlers, they were ruthlessly exploited and never replanted. The necessity to have timber in such vast quantities was to be the cause of much further destruction, stripping the veld of cover and leaving the felled forest bare of the chance to renew itself. The forests were reported to have been intersected by numerous rivulets, but much of our water has disappeared with our forests.

Spilhaus, M.W.: *Indigenous Trees of the Cape Peninsula* p 1

T. After the establishment of farms along the Liesbeek River in 1657, Van Riebeeck ordered the Khoikhoi to remain east of the river. This instruction meant to them the loss of their best grazing lands and traditional sources of water.

Bredekamp, H. and Newton-King, S.: 'The Subjugation of the Khoisan during the 17th and 18th Centuries' p 10

U. In addition to the lands granted to the Free Burghers, the Company itself established orchards and wheat gardens on the land between the Liesbeek and the 100 metre contour, from Rustenburg to Newlands, where the soils were richer than those found elsewhere in the Peninsula, the rainfall more reliable, and the South East winds less destructive.

Whittingale, J.: *The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town* p 5

V. Van Riebeeck's vision was for the Peninsula to be densely settled by farmers along the lines of the intensive farming practised in Holland, combining crops and livestock in a limited area. Initial land grants were therefore small, averaging 29 acres, and located in the very choicest traditional Khoikhoi pasturage, along the Liesbeek River.

Guelke, L. and Shell, R.: 'Landscape of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi Strategies of Survival, 1652-1780'

W. Were it not for this stream(the Liesbeek), there would be no settlers at Rondebosch and the development of this part of the Peninsula would have taken quite a different course.

Pama, C.: *Wagon Road to Wynberg* p 7

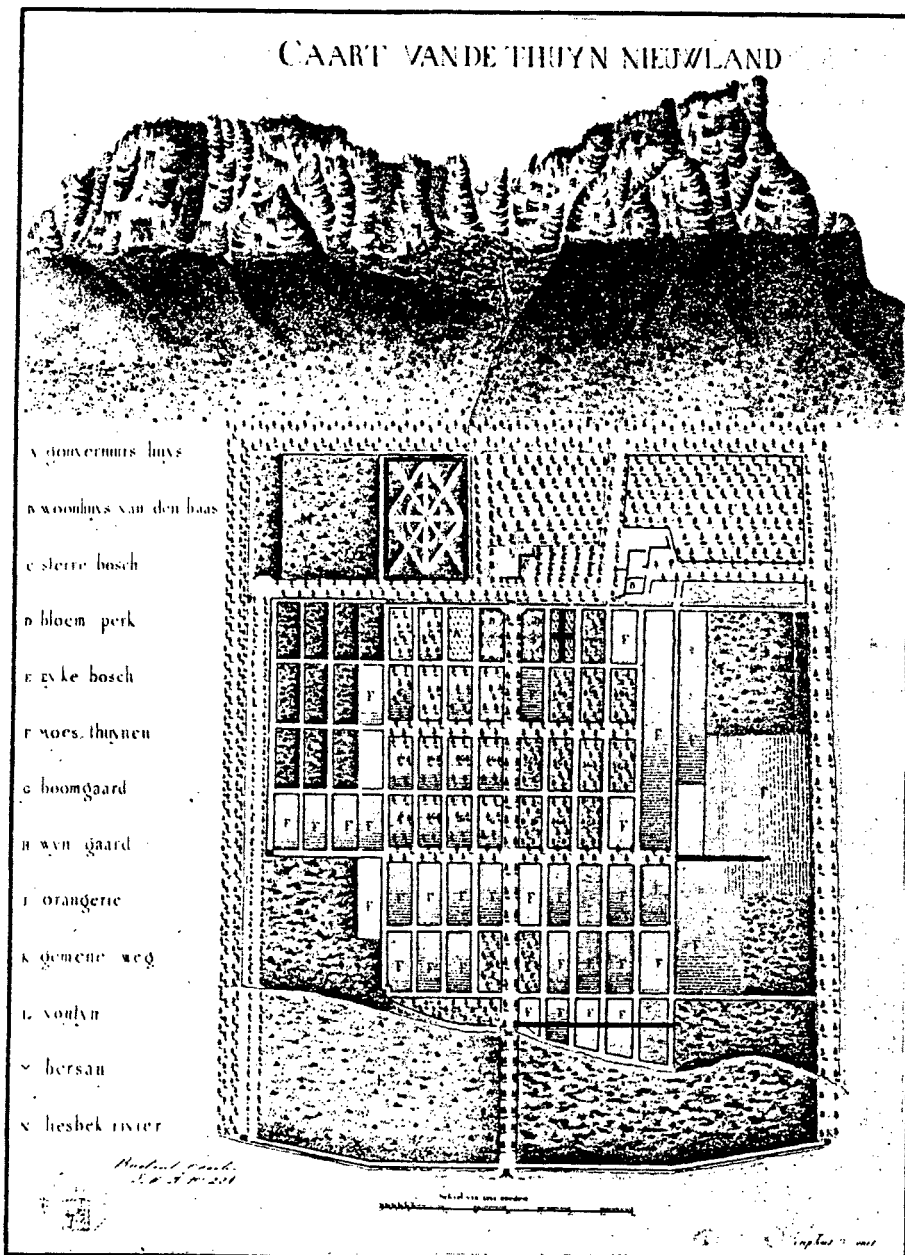
X. In 1659 a lion attacked a horse pulling a loaded wagon in broad daylight in Rondebosch. Lions had become so bold that neither man nor beast could venture out. Wouter Mostert saved himself by hastily climbing a tree.

Pienaar, W.J.B.: *Rondebosch and the first Free Burghers* p 7

Y. The Company's farmers shot a lion near De Schuur. Three others are still roaming about among the farmers and are daily doing damage among their cattle. During the night one robbed a farmer of two of his sheep and another, pushing open the door of the house, carried off the dog from inside.

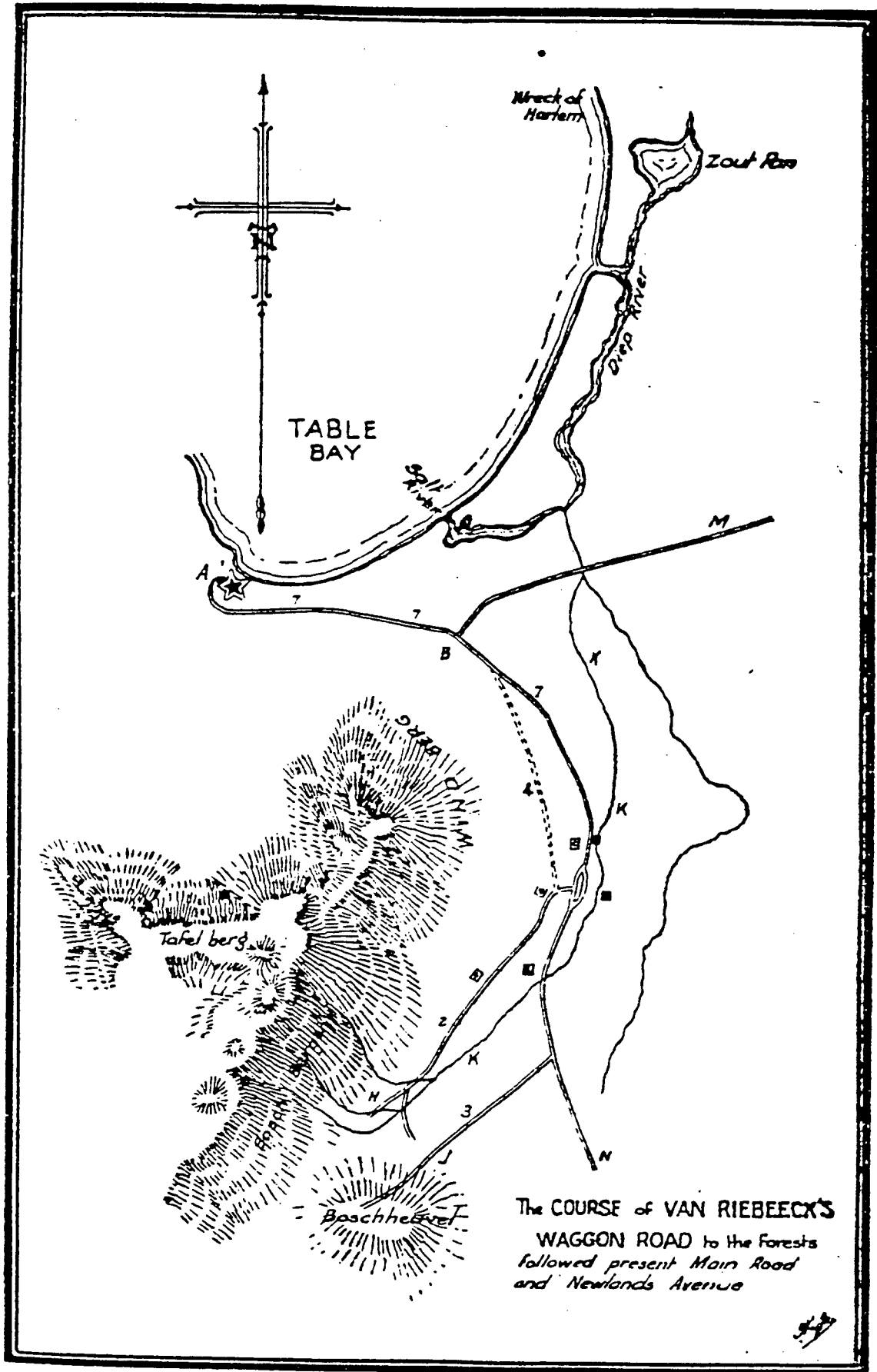
Van Riebeeck's Journal 17/10/1661

MAP 1

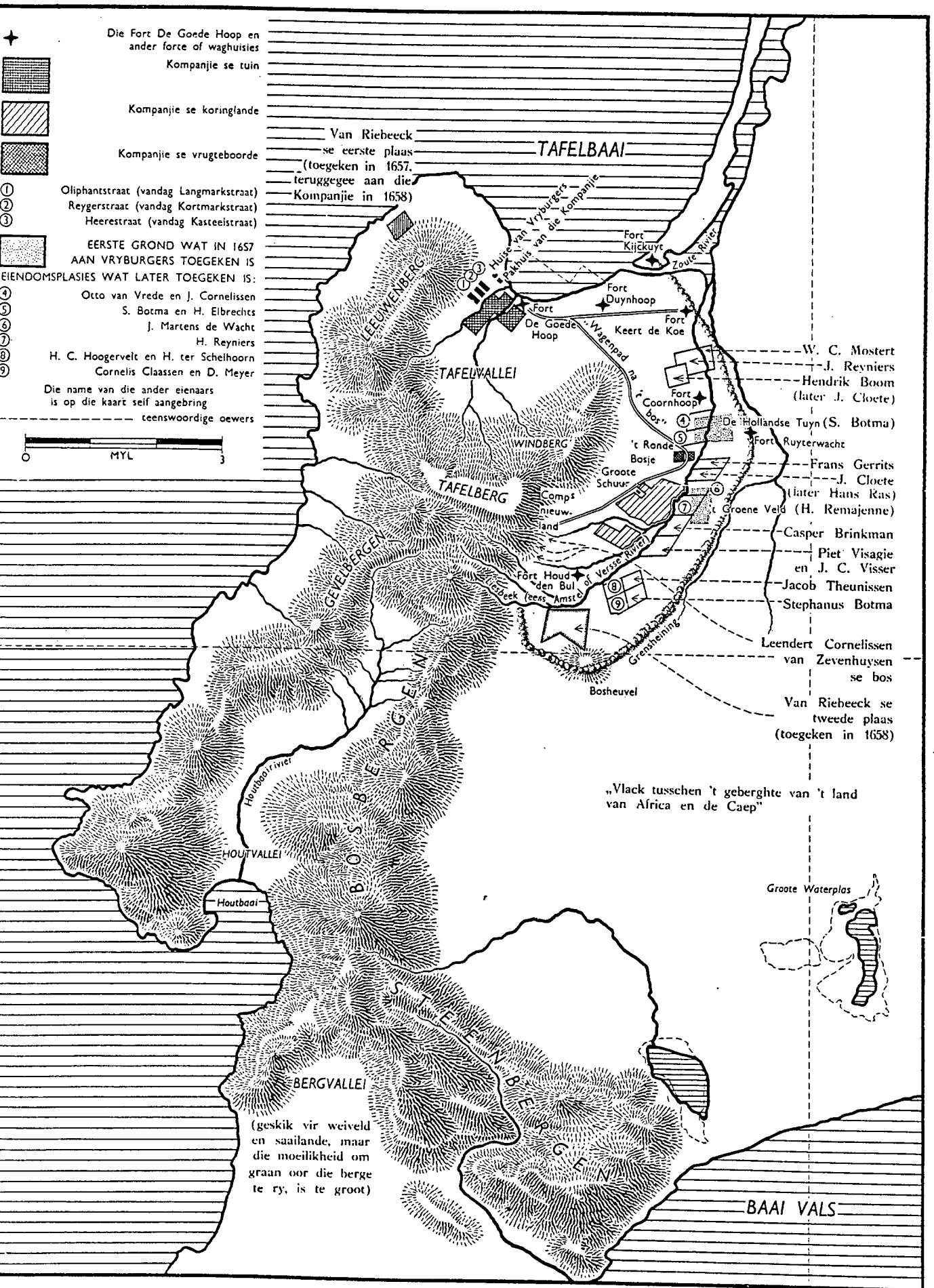


The *Caart Van De Thuy Nieuwland*, preserved in the Netherlands Topographische Dienst. Drawn in 1791 by Josephus Jones who worked with Louis Michel Thibault, it shows the trees planted by Willem Adriaan van der Stel, Tulbagh and others around the manor house (indicated by a line at top centre adjoining the star garden) which is substantially the same today. Some of these trees have survived but the orderly plots for growing fruit, vegetables and flowers have disappeared. The property is seen to extend over the Liesbeeck River. The water course of Cannon stream between Devil's Peak and Table Mountain, which supplied the property may clearly be seen

MAP 2



MAP 3



UNIT 2: Searching for HISTORY in the LANDSCAPE

In this unit students investigate a series of maps, and in the process learn about the spatial dimension of the middle reaches of the Liesbeek River valley. They also learn how to identify the visible remains of the past in the area, and how to view critically and interpret features of the cultural landscape. These can include buildings and architectural styles, gardens, place-names of streets, schools, suburbs and houses, graveyards and tombstones, and historical monuments. Some of the activities in this unit focus on the social history of the area, rather than on the link between history and the environment, as a means of introducing variety and human interest.

Specific objectives:

1. To demonstrate the value of maps, both as an historical source and as a vehicle for conveying information.
2. To teach students to be more observant and questioning about their surroundings.
3. To encourage them to investigate the origin of local place names, and build up a data bank of information for use by others.
4. To teach students to use and interpret other types of historical sources, apart from written ones, and to think critically about them.
5. To develop a sense of empathy by focussing on an individual tragedy from the past.

Skills to be developed:

Interpretation of maps and aerial photographs

Researching information and recording data

Observation skills

Analysing information

Developing empathy

Key concepts and ideas to be conveyed:

1. There is a close link between history and geography as both deal with human interaction with the environment. All historical events occur in space as well as time, so historians cannot ignore location. Therefore maps are an essential source for the historian.
2. The physical features of the environment can play a crucial role in determining

historical decisions, such as the location of a settlement or an industry. Subsequent developments, such as the site of transport routes or the form and shape of the settlement, can also be influenced by physical features.

3. Many of the places and buildings we pass every day have an interesting history and can be a valuable source of information about the past. We sometimes ignore and neglect places of interest on our own doorstep.
4. Place names tell us more than simply the origin of the name: they are also an indication about attitudes in the past. They often reflect attitudes about race, class and gender, about power structures, about who and what was perceived as important.
5. School students can perform a valuable service to the community by compiling a record of information which can be stored in the local library, or on the internet. A comprehensive and systematically compiled record of all the place names could be a useful and informative resource for residents of the area.
6. Cemeteries can be a fascinating source of information relating to social history, revealing details about death-rates, infant mortality, fashions in names, ideas about death and much more. Many cemeteries have fallen into disuse, are subject to neglect and are being earmarked for development. In this way part of the cultural heritage of an area will be lost.
7. History is not something that is only found in books and taught in the classroom. Although written sources tend to dominate historical study, there are many other sources which can be used as well.

Outline of historical content:

1. The maps, both primary and secondary, and the aerial photographs, show the Liesbeek River valley at different historical periods. The key ones are:
 - * the maps showing the Free Burgher farms in the 17th century. These show the overriding importance of the river in determining the location of the farms.
 - * Thibault's survey in the early 19th century. This shows that the rural character of the valley had not yet altered.
 - * the Surveyor-General's Cape Flats series maps from circa 1890. These show the sub-divisions which occurred during the 19th century.
 - * the contemporary map and aerial photographs show the intensive land-use of the 20th century. The photographs also show that the river has become almost invisible in the landscape.

2. Many of the original place names from the early Dutch period have been retained, although some have been anglicised. Substantial portions of some of the original farms have become the grounds and playing-fields of the large number of educational institutions in the area. Other place names reflect the economic activities and entrepreneurs of the 19th century.
3. The cemetery at St Paul's Church in Rondebosch has burials from about 1840 to 1890, and so does not cover a long enough period to show changing trends in, for example, infant mortality or fashions in tombstones. It does however provide an accessible example for a study in social history in which students can be actively involved.
4. The buildings and other features which are regarded as being historically important date mainly from the 19th century.

Student activities:

1. Students examine a series of maps and aerial photographs which show the process of change in the Liesbeek River valley at key points in its history. They answer a series of questions which draw their attention to the key changes that have taken place.

Working in groups of 4 - 5 students, they visit a limited section of the river (from Westerford Bridge in Newlands to Durban Road Bridge in Mowbray) and record the current pattern of land-use. Different groups do different sections and then all the information is recorded on a large map back in the classroom.

*Worksheet 2A: Learning the Past from Maps** (Page 124-5)

** The resources for Worksheet 2A are included after page 125. Please note that the aerial photographs would need to be used in their original size (68cm x 68cm). The quality of the reduced size included here is unsatisfactory and does not show the necessary detail.*

2. Students are asked to find out the historical origin of some current place-names, which include streets, suburbs and schools, by consulting the sources used so far and also referring to other sources where available. In addition they are each asked to select an additional 6 names of their own choosing, and to research their origins. These can

be written up as a key to a large map which will be displayed in the classroom. In this way a data bank of place names for the whole area can be built up, and added to in subsequent years. It might be an added incentive for students if these can be stored in the local library, or on the internet.

Worksheet 2B: What's in a Name? (Page 126-7)

3. Students are taken to a local cemetery (St Paul's in Rondebosch) where they record what is written on the tombstones. Back at school, they analyse the information which has been obtained by answering questions on a worksheet. These include an empathy exercise based on the inscription on one of the tombstones. Certain pre-planning is necessary before such a survey can be carried out:

- * Permission needs to be obtained from the church concerned.
- * A preliminary visit is necessary to identify groups, rows or areas, based on the spatial distribution of the graves .
- * Forms need to be designed, photocopied and guillotined for recording the information.
- * Students need to be carefully briefed about safety aspects, working with care and not causing any damage.

As a follow-up exercise to the cemetery survey, it may be possible to compare the results with entries in the parish burial records. These records will presumably reveal that far more burials actually took place than the surviving headstones suggest.

Worksheet 2C: Down among the Deadmen (Pages 128-130)

** Included after page 130 are the resources for Worksheet 2C.*

4. As a fieldwork exercise, students visit places that are regarded as being of historic interest, and answer questions on a worksheet.

Worksheet 2D: History around Us (Pages 131-133)

Sources:

Worksheet 2A: Learning the Past from Maps

Map 1: Peter Potter's General Plan of the Cape, showing the 16 farms in the Liesbeek valley. Hague Archives, 1685
(Maps Archives, Land Survey, CCC, 578/88/E)

Map 2: Stockenstrom, E.: *Geskiedenis Atlas vir Suid Afrika*, Pro Ecclesia, Stellenbosch

Map 3: Boeseken, A.: *Geskiedenis Atlas vir Suid Afrika*, Nasou 1948

Map 4: Thibault's plan of Newlands 1812
(Maps Archives, Land Survey, CCC, 315/82/R)

Map 5: Map showing Main Farm Boundaries and Buildings c 1865
Todeschini, F. and Japha, J. and D.: *Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study*
CCC, 1989/90 Map viii

Map 6: Map of Rondebosch Municipality 1890. Surveyor-General's Cape Flats series
From Owen Kinahan at the Josephine Mill

Map 7: Map of Claremont Municipality 1889. Surveyor-General's Cape Flats series
From Owen Kinahan at the Josephine Mill

Map 8: Wagener, F.J. (Ed): *Rondebosch down the Years* Rondebosch, 1957 pp 22-23

Aerial photographs: Job No 61, Strip No 6, Photo No 121 (1944)
Job No 498/305, Strip No 5, Photo No 1515 (1992)
Trigonometrical Survey Offices, Mowbray

Worksheet 2B: Whats in a Name?

1. Radburn, A.: 'How was your street named?', *Southern Suburbs Tatler* 23/2/1984

Worksheet 2C: Down among the Deadmen

1. Gilbert L.A., Driscoll, W.P. and Sutherland, A.: *History around Us: An Enquiry Approach to Local History*, Chapter 7: 'Talking Stones'
Hicks Smith & Sons, Sydney, 1974

2. Dix, B.: 'Down among the Deadmen: Graveyard Surveys for Local Studies'
Teaching History, Number 30, June 1981 pp 3 - 7

Worksheet 2D: History around us

1. Naude, A.: *Rondebosch and Round About* David Philip, Cape Town, 1973
(Photograph of Rondebosch Fountain p 61)

2. Rhind, D.M.: 'Rondebosch Station on Record', *Jagger Journal*, Number 7, 1986/7
(Photograph of Rondebosch Station p 24)

3. Wagener, F.J. (Ed): *Rondebosch down the Years* Rondebosch, 1957

WORKSHEET 2A**LEARNING THE PAST FROM MAPS**

Study Maps 1, 2 and 3 which all show the settlement along the Liesbeek valley in the mid-17th century:

1. How did the topography (physical features) of the Cape Peninsula influence the early Dutch settlement?
2. Suggest what advantages the Liesbeek valley might have had for agriculture in comparison with Table valley.
3. Why do you think that the location of Van Riebeeck's personal farm was moved from the Green Point Common area to the Bishops court area?
4. Why was it a totally impractical decision to consider declaring the Liesbeek River as the boundary of the Dutch settlement in 1658?
5. What was the purpose of the boundary hedge (grensheining)?
6. What impact would the Dutch farms in the Liesbeek valley have had on the Khoikhoi?
7. What impact would the Dutch farms in the Liesbeek valley have had on the environment?

Study Maps 4 and 5. Map 4 is the map drawn by Thibault in 1812 when he surveyed all the property along the Main Road. Map 5 is a simplified map showing the main farm boundaries in 1865.

8. What evidence is there that even in the mid-19th century the Liesbeek valley was still largely rural?
9. Comment on the pattern of the farm boundaries. Which ones do not have any access to the river?
10. Note the two bridges over the river. Where are these bridges today?
11. Note the names of the farms and estates. Which of these names are still in use today?
12. Explain why the main road follows the route that it does. What factors would have influenced the development of subsequent roads in the area?
13. Identify the feature in the middle of the main road near Rustenburg. Suggest a reason why the road has two alternative routes here.

Study Maps 6 and 7 which are from the 1890s.

14. What changes do you notice in the valley?
15. Explain how the pattern of land-use in the valley would have been affected by these changes.

16. How would the river and the environment generally be affected by these changes?

Study Map 8 which is a modern map with the boundaries of the old estates superimposed.

17. What general changes have occurred since the 1890s?
18. Large areas of some of the original estates have not been sub-divided. Select some examples and explain what they are being used for.
19. What impact would these have on the environment?

Study the aerial photographs of the Liesbeek valley. Photo A was taken in 1944 and Photo B in 1992.

20. Comment on changes which you can see in:
 - 20.1 The visibility of the river
 - 20.2 Sporting facilities
 - 20.3 Schools
 - 20.4 The location of industries next to the river

Fieldwork

Working in groups of 4-5 students, the class visits the Liesbeek River, and records the current land-use along the river, from Paradise Road Bridge in Newlands to Durban Road Bridge in Mowbray.

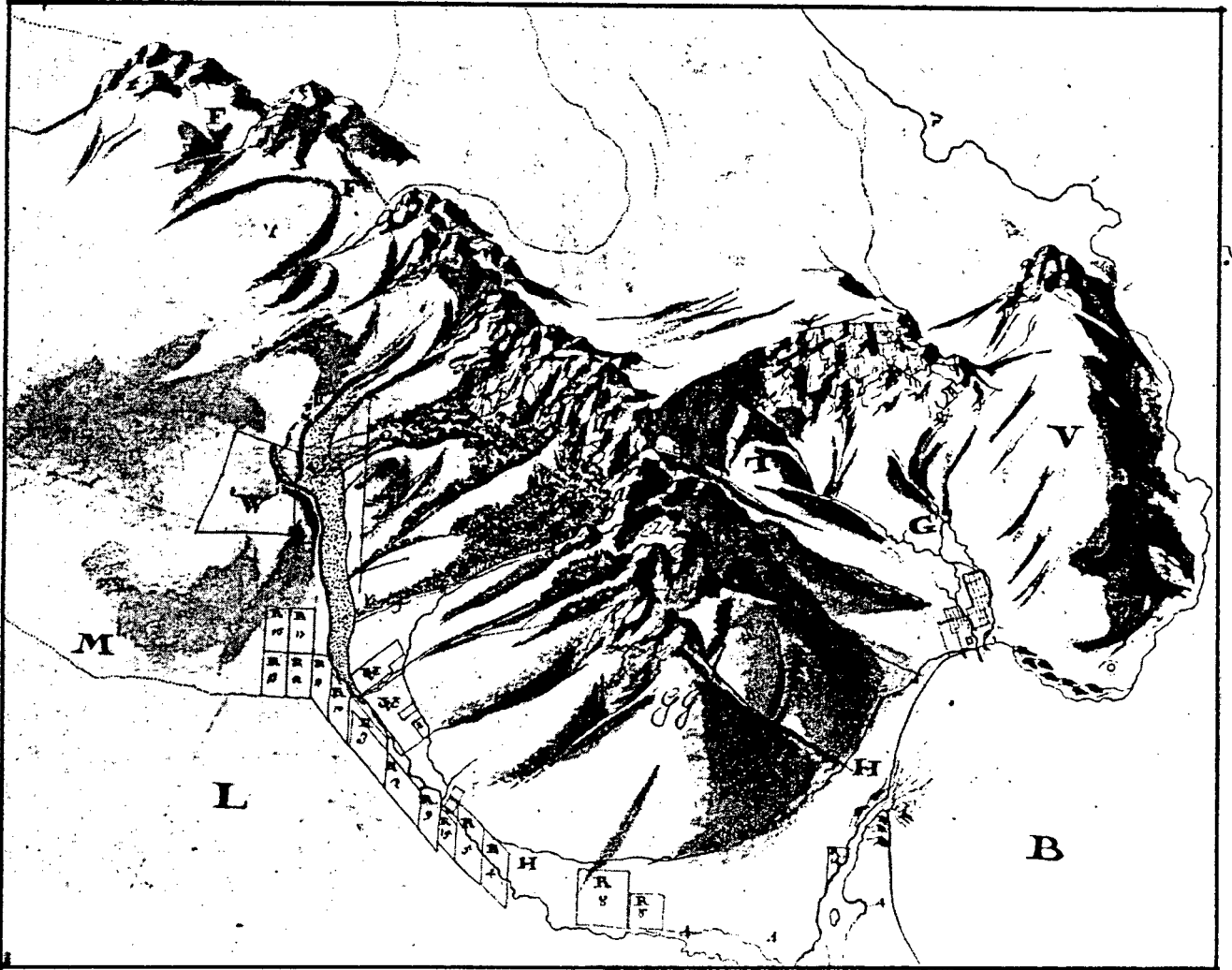
Instructions:

1. You will need: Paper, pencil, clipboard
2. Each group will be assigned a section of the river.
3. You will need to draw a sketch map as you proceed along your section of the river.
4. On it you will need to note how the land along the river valley is currently being used. You need to place each property in one of the following categories:
 - * Residential
 - * Commercial (Shops and Offices)
 - * Industrial
 - * Restaurants and Hotels
 - * Schools
 - * Sporting facilities
 - * Institutions (eg retirement homes, clinics etc)
 - * Public Open Space
 - * Transport routes

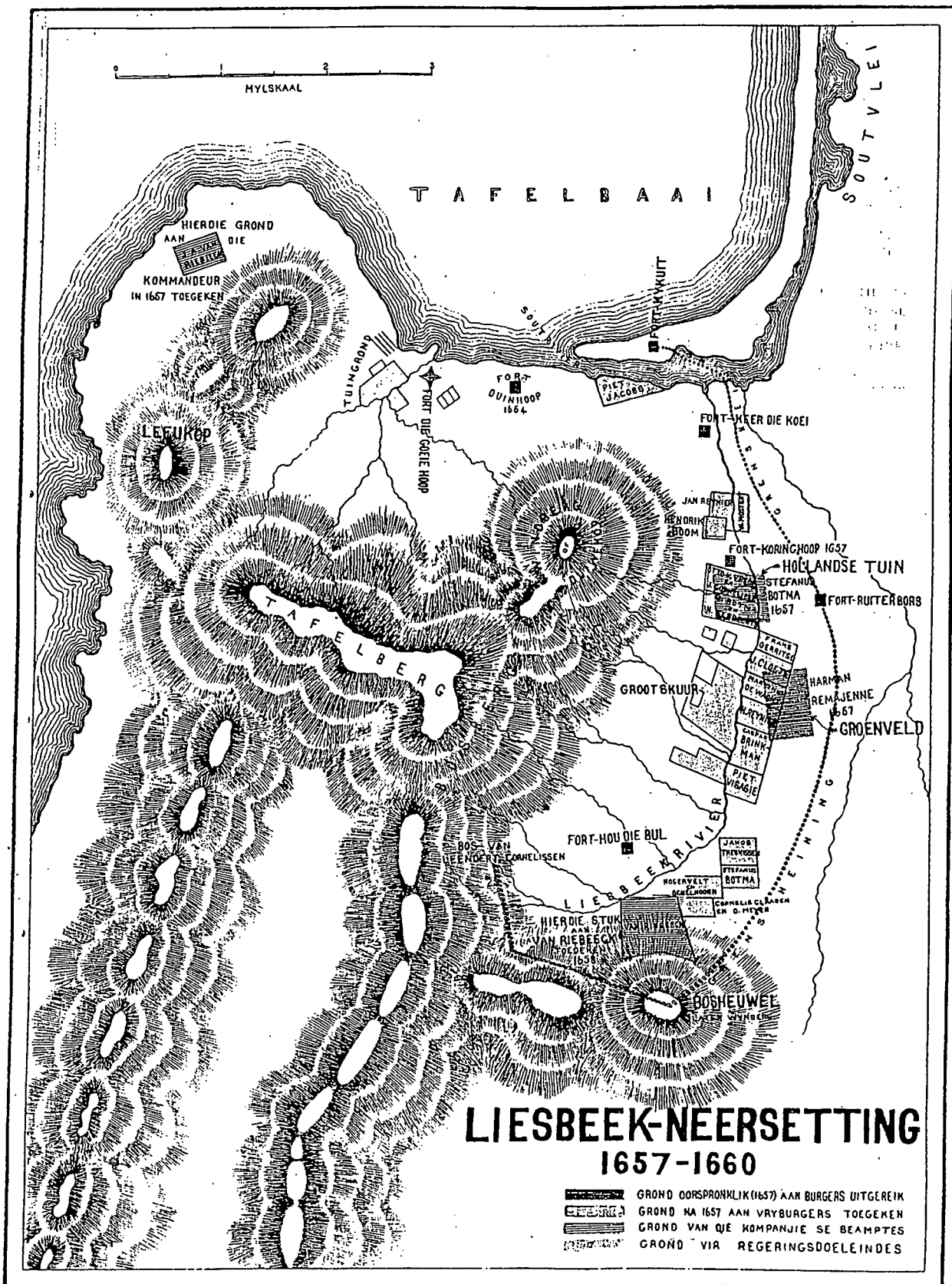
RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 2A

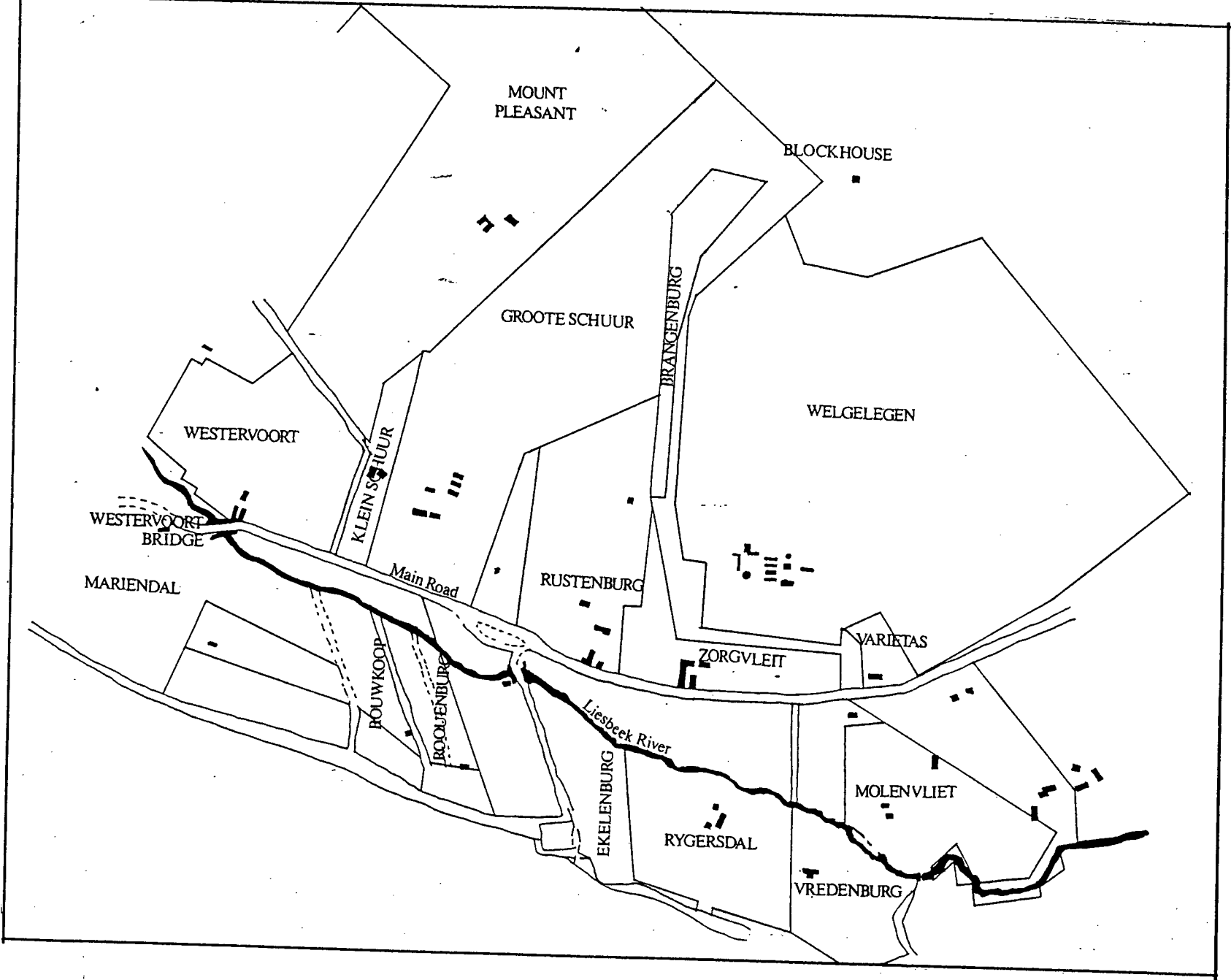
LEARNING THE PAST FROM MAPS

MAP 1: *Peter Potter's General Plan of the Cape, showing the 16 farms in the Liesbeek valley (1685)*

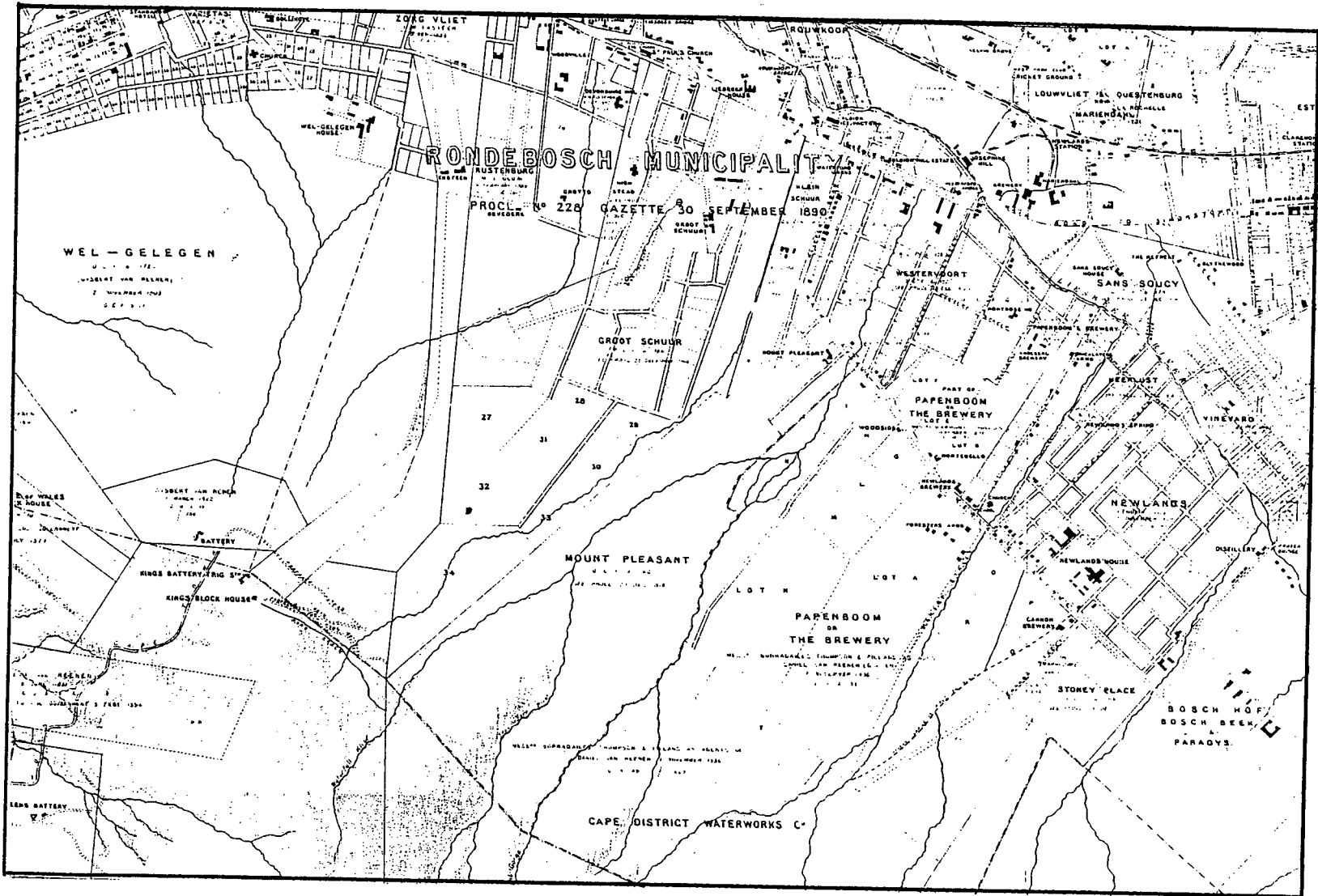


MAP 2: Liesbeek Settlement 1657-1660 (Stockenstrom 1928)





MAP 5: Map showing main farm Boundaries and Buildings (c 1865)

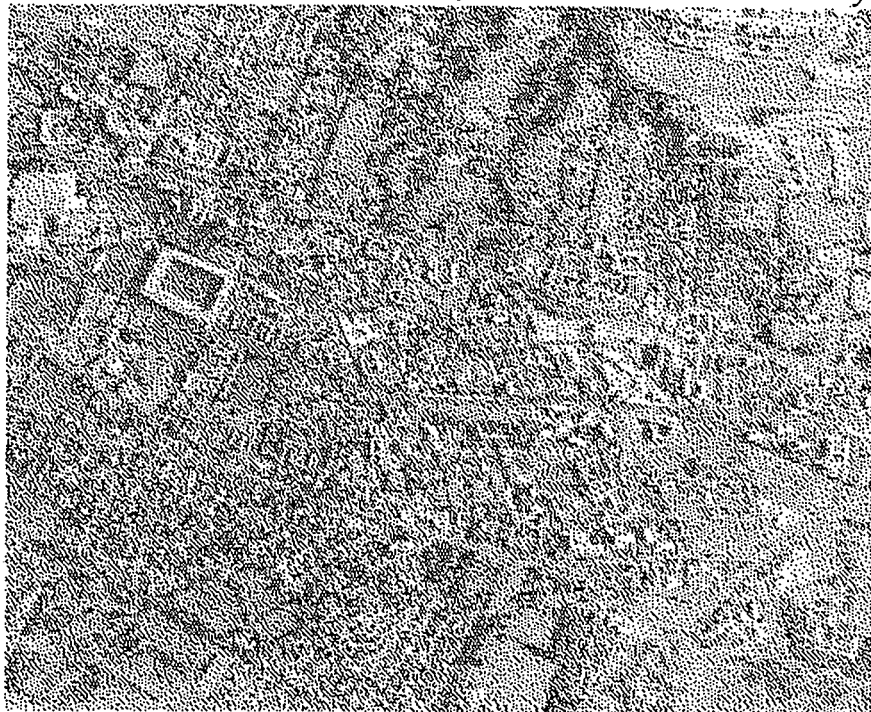


MAP 6: Map of Rondebosch Municipality (1890)

PHOTO A: *Aerial photograph of part of the Liesbeek River valley (1944)*



PHOTO B: *Aerial photograph of part of the Liesbeek River valley (1992)*



Please note that these aerial photographs would need to be used in their original size, as the quality of the reduced size used here is unsatisfactory and does not show the necessary detail.

WORKSHEET 2B**WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

1. Study the maps which you used in the previous worksheet to help you to trace the origin of the following place names in the Liesbeek River valley area:

Newlands; Rondebosch; Palmyra; Paradise; Protea; Rouwkoop; Vineyard; Rygersdal;

2. There are an exceptionally large number of schools in this part of the Liesbeek River valley today. They include Westerford, Rustenburg Junior and High Schools; Rondebosch Preparatory and High Schools, Bishops Preparatory School and College; SACS; Sans Souci; St Joseph's College; Grootte Schuur; Grove Primary and several others.

2.1 Using the same maps, work out which of the old estates each of these schools is on. Also include any others that you know of which are not on the above list. How many of them have retained the old names of the estates?

2.2 Suggest reasons why so many schools might have been built in this area.

2.3 How would the presence of so many schools affect the environment?

3. Read the following pieces of information and then locate the relevant streets named after the people or circumstances mentioned.

3.1 Ross Common was the name of a community of labourers' cottages built by Hamilton Ross, the owner of the San Souci estate between the 1830s and 1850s.

3.2 Jakob Letterstedt was a Swede who arrived at the Cape in 1820 and married the widow of the owner of the Louwliet estate, where he subsequently built the Josephine Mill on the banks of the Liesbeek.

3.3 Wiersma was a Dutch builder who built a new housing development on the banks of the Liesbeek in Rondebosch at the time of the First World War. The area had formerly been used as a cricket field by local schools.

3.4 Anders Ohlsson was another Scandinavian businessman who bought up all the existing breweries in the area - the Papenboom, Griffin, Anneberg and Mariendahl breweries - and amalgamated them into Ohlsson's Breweries, also on the banks of the river.

3.5 An area in Newlands village was nicknamed Irish Town on account of the number of Irish labourers living in that vicinity who had come to the Cape to work in the many breweries in the Newlands area. Several roads in this area still bear names of Irish origin.

4. **Select another six place names in the area (streets, schools or buildings) and do your own research on the origin of these names. Your information must be included on the key to the large map of the area displayed in the classroom.**

All the information collected in this worksheet will be used to compile a data base of place names in the area, which will be offered to Rondebosch Library for use as a source of reference. It will also be stored on the internet, and information from outside sources invited.

WORKSHEET 2C

DOWN AMONG THE DEADMEN

A cemetery survey of St Paul's Church in Rondebosch

The purpose of this worksheet is to investigate some of the people who lived in this area during the 19th century by surveying and analysing one of the local church cemeteries. Gravestones can be a unique source of local and social history.

Preparation

The class is divided into 4 groups and each is assigned an area of the cemetery (A,B,C and D). Two students in each group will be responsible for drawing a rough plan of their area and ensuring that all the graves are included [See Figure 1]; the rest will be responsible for recording the information on the headstones [See Figure 2].

Equipment needed: Clipboard; pen/pencil; paper; forms.

The survey

- * The two students in each group responsible for drawing the rough plan work ahead of the rest of the group. You should indicate the position of trees and fences, as well as the position of the graves, and assign a number to each grave (A1,A2,A3 etc).
- * Meanwhile the rest of the group, working in pairs, should start recording the information on each headstone, using a separate form for each one.
- * Back at school, the plan and forms of each group must be arranged for display in the classroom.
- * Each group is then sub-divided into two smaller groups to analyse the information.

The analysis

1. Prepare a table to catalogue the information [Use either Figure 3 or Figure 4 as an example]. Half of the groups should do a table based on Figure 3, and the other half on Figure 4. You can then share them and refer to both types of table to answer these questions:
 - 1.1 What are the dates of the earliest and latest burials in this cemetery? Suggest reasons why no burials occurred before or after these dates.
 - 1.2 Who are the youngest and the oldest people buried here?
 - 1.3 Calculate the average age of death of males and females buried here. Based on this, which group appears to have had the longest life expectancy? Suggest possible reasons for this.
 - 1.4 In which decade was infant mortality (up to 2 years) the biggest problem? Did it increase at certain times of the year?

2. Use the display of forms which record the inscription on each headstone to answer these questions:
 - 2.1 What first names appear to have been most popular? Are they still fashionable names today?
 - 2.2 Are any of the same surnames repeated over generations? Do these families still live in the area?
 - 2.3 Make a list of the symbols used on the headstones, and another list of any standard phrases which occur repeatedly (eg "sacred to the memory of" or "who departed this life").
 - 2.4 Look at the design of the headstones. Do they reflect any change over time?
 - 2.5 What views on religion and immortality do the tombstones reflect? What do you learn about attitudes towards life, death and religious faith?
 - 2.6 Do you think that this cemetery is reflective of the whole community who lived in Rondebosch at that time? Explain your answer, and suggest who would have been buried here.

3. One of the headstones bears the following inscription:

*William Edward Higgs
Died 20.11.1868 (aged 9½ years)
Drowned in the Liesbeek, Mowbray,
trying to save his brother*

- 3.1 Are any other members of the Higgs family buried here?
- 3.2 If you wanted to find out more information about this incident, what sources would you need to use?
- 3.3 **Homework exercise.** This is to be done as an individual exercise.
Select one of the following:
Imagine that you are a reporter for a local newspaper in 1868. Write an account of this incident.

OR

Imagine that you are William Edward's brother. Write a diary entry for 20 November 1868. Record your thoughts and feelings as well as the details about what happened.

4. Another headstone in the cemetery records a different but similar tragedy:

*In loving memory of Emma and Madeline Margaret,
daughters of George John and Mary Ann Nicholls,
who were drowned at Kalk Bay on 7th January 1874.
Emma lost her life in the noble attempt to save her
sister who whilst bathing had been carried away by a
heavy recoiling wave.*

- 4.1 What are the similarities and what are the differences between the two drowning incidents?
- 4.2 Are any other members of the Nicholls family buried here?

Discussion

The class is divided into 6 groups to debate the issue outlined below. The groups are:

- * Property developers
- * Concerned residents
- * The church
- * Urban planners
- * Descendents of those buried there
- * Conservationists

Each group prepares a short oral presentation to present the viewpoint of their particular group. The class listens to each viewpoint and there is time for discussion.

What should happen to this site? Developers see it as a valuable piece of real estate right in the middle of Rondebosch, where there is a shortage of land for development. Some residents see it as an eyesore, an area which is littered, neglected and overgrown, and are concerned about public safety, as old and unused cemeteries often attract vagrants. To the church it represents a responsibility, as they have to pay for its upkeep. If they wanted to sell it off to raise funds for other building projects should they be free to do so? Urban planners argue that a built-up area needs some open space, and that the area should be re-developed as an attractive park with lawns and gardens. Descendents of those buried at St Pauls think that any change will be an unacceptable desecration of a burial site, and that it should be left undisturbed. Local historians and conservationists see an old church cemetery as a valuable piece of history that should be preserved.

Homework exercise. This is to be done as an individual exercise.

This same debate has raged and is raging over other cemeteries in the Peninsula. Examples include the Dutch Reformed Church cemetery in Wynberg, the large cemetery below Groote Schuur Hospital in Observatory, and the cemetery in Rosmead Avenue next to Kenilworth Racecourse. You may also be aware of other examples. What is your opinion? What do you think should happen to old cemeteries? Write a paragraph of about 12 to 15 lines.

Follow-up

The detailed survey may be offered to Rondebosch library for inclusion in their local history section, and a summary of the results can be sent to the church.

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 2C

DOWN AMONG THE DEADMEN

FIGURE 1: *Example of a rough plan of a cemetery (Dix p 5)*

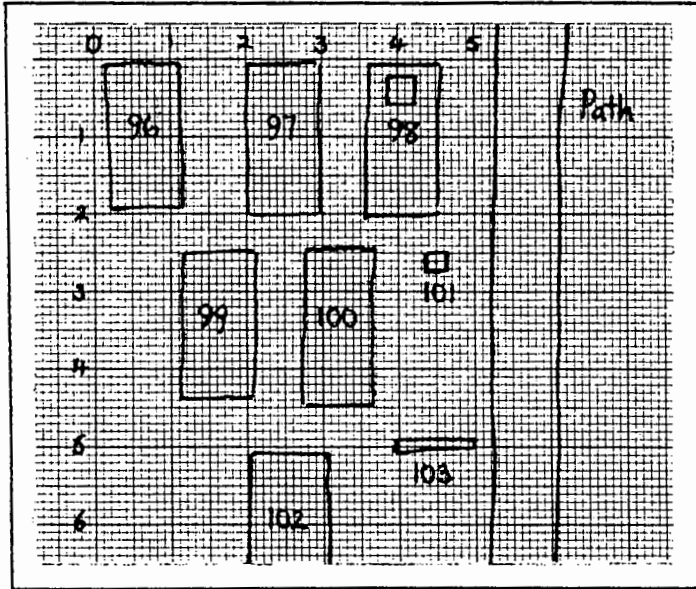
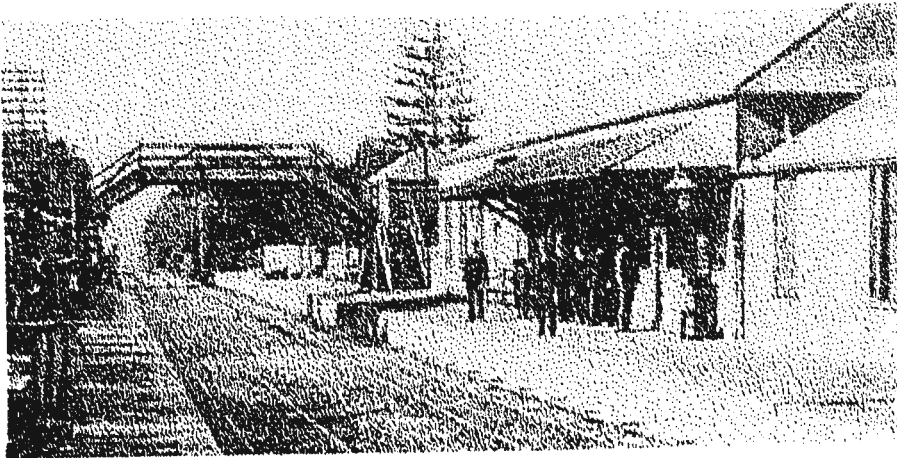


FIGURE 2: *Example of a Recording Form (Dix p 6)*

CEMETERY:	GRAVE No.:	
NAME:	CLASS:	DATE:
MEMORIAL SHAPE:		
INSCRIPTION		

WORKSHEET 2D**HISTORY AROUND US**

The answers to these questions will be based partly on your own observation, and partly by using the sources used in earlier worksheets and available in the classroom.

Rondebosch Station

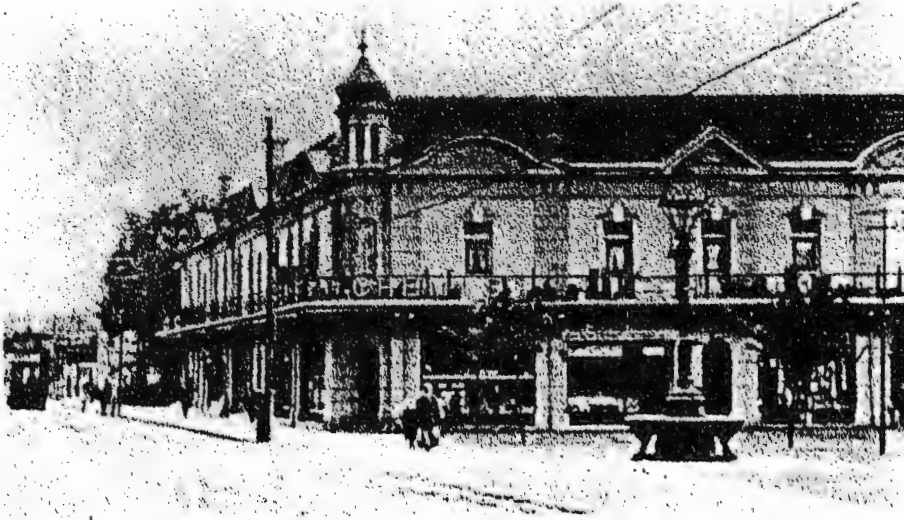
1. Study this photograph of Rondebosch Station which was taken in about 1900. Stand in more-or-less the same place on the platform at the station today. Make a note of the changes which you can see have taken place. Try to explain why some of these may have occurred. Also note anything that has not changed.
2. On which old estate were the Rondebosch Station and Town Hall built?

Rondebosch Town Hall

2. What is this building used for today? Try to find out what other uses it has had in the past.
4. Locate the stained glass coat-of-arms of the old Rondebosch Municipality. What do the terms "coat-of-arms" and "municipality" mean? When was Rondebosch a separate municipality? What is its status now?
5. Which animals are shown in the Rondebosch coat-of-arms? Explain why you think each of these was included.
6. What natural features of the landscape and which buildings are included in the scene on the coat-of-arms?
7. Copy down the words of the motto, so that you can find out what it means.

8. Imagine that you have been asked to design a coat-of-arms for Rondebosch today. What features of the old coat-of-arms would you include? Which new features would you add? What motto would you use?

Rondebosch Fountain



9. Study this photograph of Rondebosch Fountain taken in about 1910. Make a note of all the changes that have occurred since then. Look for aspects such as architecture, streets, traffic lights, transport, communications, trees and anything else you can notice. Is there anything that has not changed?
10. Explain why the fountain would have been located at this point.
11. Besides horses, what other animals would have benefitted from the fountain?

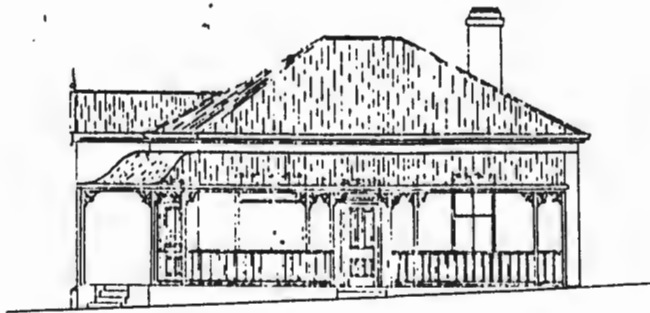
Milestone on the Main Road

12. This is one of only three remaining milestones which used to line the main road from Cape Town to Simonstown. What do you think was the purpose of these milestones?
13. What is this milestone made of? Does it measure the distance to or from town?
14. The building outside which this milestone is situated used to be called Westbrooke, and it was the home of Mr Pigot Moodie, the man who donated the fountain for the use of the people of the area. After 1910 it became one of the official residences of the head of state of South Africa. It was recently renamed by President Mandela. What is its new name? Suggest a reason for the change of name.

Architecture



15. Study the row of cottages in Mount Road. For whom would these cottages have been built? What has happened to them now - the people and the cottages?



16. Look at the architect's sketch of a shop that was erected in 1902. Locate this building in Mount or Reform Roads. What is the building used for now? Why do you think its function has changed? Has the building been altered in any way?

Plaque on the Liesbeek walkway opposite the Josephine Mill

17. Comment on the wording on the plaque. Does it show an awareness of the influence of the environment on human history? Does it try to be inclusive by mentioning all the different people who used this site?

UNIT 3: Interpreting ATTITUDES and PERCEPTIONS

In this unit students learn how perceptions can be a powerful force in shaping attitudes and actions. Four isolated and non-related examples from different periods are used to demonstrate how they can influence what we learn as history. Through a series of worksheets students are introduced to these concepts and learn how to separate the myth and the image from the reality, and how to search for hidden history that has often been ignored and neglected.

Specific objectives:

1. To introduce the concepts of attitude and perception and to demonstrate their influence in history.
2. To use sources critically to detect bias.
3. To research information and write a short history.

Skills to be developed:

Critical interpretation of sources

Using paintings as historical sources

Using primary sources to write history

Key concepts and ideas to be conveyed:

1. History cannot be an objective discipline: it is based on subjective interpretations of events. It is therefore important to examine attitudes and perceptions to see how they have influenced the way that history has been recorded.
2. The dominant perspective of certain events in South African history has been a Eurocentric one, and this has given rise to commonly-held myths. The example used here shows that interpretations of the Khoikhoi reaction to the incursion of their lands by the Dutch has given rise to myths about the Khoikhoi which have been perpetuated until comparatively recently.
3. Historical monuments do not give a full picture of the cultural history of an area. They are a reflection of what is perceived to be important about the past by those in authority.
4. Sometimes the history of certain groups of people has been totally ignored in the cultural landscape and it is difficult to piece it together. This is often referred to as "hidden history".

5. The landscape is not neutral: it can reflect historical and social changes, and as such be a source of historical evidence.
6. Although paintings may offer a very romanticised and idealised representation of reality, they can nevertheless be an interesting and informative historical source.
7. The same custom or event can be perceived in totally different ways. The same scene can serve as a source of inspiration to artists, a scene of fascination to children, an example of quaint local customs to visitors, a source of exasperation to property owners and a reason for action by authorities. But it is generally the viewpoint of the dominant group or groups that has the most influence.

Outline of historical content:

The activities and worksheets in this unit are unrelated in terms of historical content, and come from different historical periods. Their unifying theme is the importance of understanding perceptions and attitudes in history. The historical circumstances of each example is explained below:

1. The interaction between the Khoikhoi and the Dutch in the Liesbeek River valley was short and explosive. In 1657 the Dutch established farms along both banks of the river, thereby denying the Khoi access to their traditional pastures and sources of water. The Khoikhoi reaction to the intrusion of their lands was to disrupt the farming activities as much as they could, and in 1659 a full-scale war broke out. With Khoikhoi superiority in numbers balanced against Dutch firepower, the war ended in stalemate. However, the significance of the peace agreement was that the Khoikhoi had to recognise the sovereignty of the Dutch over the Liesbeek valley, and the frontier of conflict moved inland.
2. At more or less the same time as the dispossession of the Khoikhoi lands by the Dutch, slaves were introduced into the valley. The hard labour involved in the introduction of intensive agriculture to an area where no cultivation had previously been practised was undertaken largely by slaves. Yet little mention is made of them in any of the written records, and there is virtually nothing in the cultural landscape of the valley to remember them by, although they probably formed the majority of the population there for nearly 180 years.

3. After the British took over the Cape at the beginning of the 19th century, the Liesbeek valley underwent considerable changes. Not only did increased immigration change its rural character, but the landscape was anglicised. The valley was transformed in an attempt, whether conscious or otherwise, to create a landscape reminiscent of England. This in turn gave rise to somewhat romanticised images of the valley, portrayed in artists' impressions and travellers' accounts. Yet the Liesbeek River Ordinance of 1852 suggests that the reality was very different.
4. A "hidden" group of residents were the "Malay" washerwomen who plied their trade in the Liesbeek and adjacent streams. Despite their novelty to visitors and their aesthetic appeal to artists, they were viewed in a different light by property owners, who depended on the river for all their domestic water supplies, and by officialdom who took steps to try to stamp out the practice. The Liesbeek Ordinance of 1852 tried to put a stop to it, but photographs and descriptions from after 1900 show that the practice was still common.

Student activities:

1. Students read through sources and do a worksheet which includes 3 elements:

- * the use of the environment by the Khoikhoi;
- * the interaction between the Khoikhoi and the Dutch;
- * how these have been interpreted by historians.

Worksheet 3A: The Khoikhoi, the environment and the Dutch (Pages 140-1)

* *The resources for Worksheet 3A are included after page 141.*

2. As a research exercise, students study sources on Slavery in the Liesbeek River valley, and try to piece together information about the lives of these slaves. They are also required to suggest reasons why there is so little in the cultural landscape to remember them by.

Worksheet 3B: Where are the slaves? (Pages 142-143)

* *The resources for Worksheet 3B are included after page 143.*

- 3.. Students are given a guided interpretation of scenes in the Liesbeek River valley as depicted by 19th century landscape artists. They are required to compare these with equally romanticised written descriptions from the same period, and to use the

information from both to create their own word picture. They are then asked to compare the romantic view with the reality of conditions along the river.

Worksheet 3C: Image and reality: Perceptions of the river in the 19th century (Pages 144-5)

* *The resources for Worksheet 3C are included after page 145.*

4. Students study sources relating to the Liesbeek washerwomen and answer questions which require a detailed examination of these sources.

Worksheet 3D: The Liesbeek Washerwomen (Pages 146-7)

* *The resources for Worksheet 3D are included after page 147.*

Sources:

Worksheet 3A: The Khoikhoi, the environment and the Dutch

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Worksheet 3B: Slavery in the Liesbeek River valley

Cape Archives, Slave Office, Registers of slaves - Cruywagen, Johannes Jacobus
SO 6/16, folios 89, 162 and 181

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Worksheet 3C: Image and Reality

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- Worksheet 3D: The Liesbeek Washerwomen**
Cape Archives - Source A and B: Adapted from CO 3994 131
Sources C and D: Adapted from CO 4041 48
Source I: CAD 2/1/1/58
Sources J, L and M: Adapted from CO 7738 1710
- Photograph (Source O): 'Liesbeek River: Washing Day in the 1890s'
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A.S. Robertson, Cape Town, 1855

WORKSHEET 3A

THE KHOIKHOI, THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE DUTCH

For many centuries the Liesbeek valley was used by Khoikhoi pastoralists who kept herds of sheep and cattle, and migrated seasonally within an established area in search of good grazing. The environment of the Liesbeek valley was well suited to their needs as it offered abundant water, good grazing, reeds for houses, and game for hunting. When the Dutch decided to use the valley for farming in 1657, this whole pattern was upset. The Khoikhoi were denied access to the river, their pastures were ploughed over, and fortifications and a boundary fence were erected to keep them out. They put up a spirited resistance to this but in the end were defeated by superior weapons, and so they withdrew from the Cape Peninsula and moved inland where the same process occurred again.

This worksheet examines perceptions about and attitudes towards the Khoikhoi. Read through the sources entitled **VIEWS OF THE KHOIKHOI** and answer the questions. In each case refer to the sources to support your answer.

Read Sources A to E:

1. What do these sources tell us about the relationship between the Khoikhoi and the environment?

Read Sources F to H:

2. Explain how these writers misinterpret and misrepresent the use of resources by the Khoikhoi.

Read Sources I to O:

3. What impact did the establishment of farms in the Liesbeek valley have on the traditional way of life of the Khoikhoi?

Read Sources P to V:

4. How has the reaction of the Khoikhoi towards the Dutch incursion of their lands been

interpreted by historians?

5. In what ways are most of these sources written from the perspective of the Dutch? Do any of them try to see things from a Khoi perspective?
6. Comment on the language used by some of the writers, selecting examples that could be considered to be (a) biased and (b) patronising towards the Khoikhoi.

Study Source W:

7. In what way does this engraving by the artist Mitford-Barberton give an inaccurate and misleading impression of what happened in the Liesbeek valley?

Study Source X:

8. In what way does the wording on the plaque opposite the Josephine Mill represent a less biased and one-sided view of the Khoikhoi?

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 3A:

VIEWS OF THE KHOIKHOI

A. "The Khoi needed to be constantly on the move to make optimal use of available grazing and water. Traditional grazing areas were used on a seasonal basis."

Smith, A.: The Disruption of Khoi Society in the 17th Century p 3

B. "Wild almonds were much gathered and eaten by the natives, who first peel them, then dry them in the sun for a few days and finally roast them on the fire."

Karsten, M.: The old Company's Garden at the Cape and its Superintendents p 61

C. "Like the San, the Khoikhoi hunted, fished and gathered roots and berries. Their herds gave them sour milk to add to their diet. Cattle were seldom killed for food, only for special occasions or in times of famine. They lived a more settled life than the San since they could stay in one place for as long as their herds had enough pasture. Usually they moved according to the seasons, for example to the coastal pastures in the summer and inland in winter."

Roberts, M.: A History of South Africa p 5

D. "In direct contradiction to the custom of the original inhabitants, the Hottentots [the Khoikhoi], the colonists turn their cattle out constantly into the same fields, and too in a much greater quantity than used to graze there in the time of the Hottentots [Khoikhoi]."

Sparman, A.: A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope (1785) p 251

E. "European ideas of land-use meant exclusive rights at the expense of traditional ideas where pasture was held in common or used serially [ie in succession]."

Smith, A.: The Disruption of Khoi Society in the 17th Century p 10

F. "With the whole wild world before them, these early incendiaries gave no thought to the extent of the conflagrations they started for these frivolous reasons. Nomadic by instinct, they simply moved on if their fires rendered one part of the country temporarily uninhabitable."

Luckhoff, C.A.: Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years p 111

G. "With the establishment of the permanent European settlement at the Cape, the purely capricious wanderings of the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] assumed purpose and direction."

Luckhoff, C.A.: Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 years p 111.

H. "Their social structure was communistic and they roamed the country in great droves and swoops."

Pienaar, W.J.B.: Rondebosch and the first Free Burghers p 7

I. "The style of farming of the Dutch came into conflict with the lifestyle of the Khoikhoi herders. The permanent settlements of the European farmers upset the seasonal movement of Khoikhoi communities as more and more land became unavailable to these communities. Also, in the past, anybody had been entitled to use water. Now settlers were denying the Khoikhoi the use of streams on the land the settlers had claimed for themselves. The Khoikhoi fought against this by using their cattle to trample the crops of the free burghers."

Potenza, E.: The Broken String p 83

J. "The Khoikhoi seemed to have misgivings about the expansion of the Dutch settlement. They only half like the idea. Watered land was not as plentiful at the Cape as all that, and here was their best pasture, along the Liesbeek River, going by the board."

Spilhaus, M.W.: The first South Africans and the Laws which governed them p 183

K. "After the establishment of farms along the Liesbeek River, Van Riebeeck ordered the Goringhaiqua to remain east of the river. This instruction meant to them a loss of their best grazing lands and traditional sources of water."

Bredekamp, H. and Newton-King, S.: 'The Subjugation of the Khoisan during the 17th and 18th centuries' p 10

L. "The aboriginal migrant herdsmen or Khoina, thus forced from an ancient feeding ground could not maintain their resistance for long against Dutch expansion."

Sleigh, D.: The Company's Outposts p 3

M. "As soon as the freeburghers put their land to the plough the Peninsular Khoikhoi realised that the European presence at the Cape would be permanent. They resented not only the loss of exceptional pastures near Table Mountain, but also the way the new farms blocked their access to watering areas on the Cape Peninsula."

Elphick, R. and Giliomee, H. (Ed): The Shaping of South African Society p11-12

N. When a wounded Khoi was captured during the 1659 war between the Khoi and the Dutch, he asked why "the Dutch had ploughed over the land of the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] and sought to take the bread out of their mouths by sowing corn on the lands to which they had to drive their cattle for pasture, adding that they had never had other or better grazing grounds."

Schapera, I. and Farrington, E.: The Early Cape Hottentots p 15

O. "It is not strange or unreasonable that these natives show their resentment because we have appropriated to ourselves the lands which they had occupied for centuries with their cattle."

Spilhaus, M.W.: The First South Africans and the Laws which governed them p 214

P. "When Van Riebeeck settled the first Free Burghers to farm along the banks of the Liesbeek River the biggest problem they encountered was the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] who continually contrived to steal their cattle and to raid their farms. Because of the thieving habits of the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] a number of forts were built. "

Muir, J.: Know your Cape p 70

Q. "An indolent people, whose wealth lay in cattle, the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] were incurable thieves and lacking in courage."

Shorten, J.: The Golden Jubilee of Greater Cape Town p 12

R. "When Van Riebeeck went round the mountain to the banks of the Liesbeek and gave out pasturage in possession to his soldiers, the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] asked: Where are we to go if the Dutch occupy our land? ... The Hottentot [Khoikhoi] was a near-naked, grease-smothered, evil-smelling barbarian, but he was intelligent. He foresaw clearly enough whither this state of affairs was trending."

Spilhaus, M.W.: The first South Africans and the Laws which governed them p 176

S. "The ploughing of land by the Free Burghers where Hottentots [Khoikhoi] grubbed for roots was the fundamental cause of the fighting that took place later between the two races."

Laidler, P.W.: A Tavern of the Ocean p 22

T. "A more serious threat came from the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] who had noted with growing misgiving that the White man was digging himself in. There were anxious sieges, ghastly fires and ruinous raids by brutal and crafty savages."

Pienaar, W.J.B.: Rondebosch and the first Free Burghers p 7

U. "The Commander grew to love the forests, and land was granted to him on the banks of the Liesbeek in an almost dangerous situation, for day and night a watch was kept upon the Hottentots [Khoikhoi] lurking in the bushes of the Hen and Chickens Hill, or secretly striving to drive their cattle across the river into the Company's grazing ground."

Juta, R.: The Cape Peninsula p 54

V. "The idea of fixing the boundary [at the Liesbeek River] was tied up with the necessity of protecting the livestock against marauding Hottentots [Khoikhoi]."

Luckhoff, C.A.: Table Mountain: Our National Heritage after 300 Years p 17

W. Engraving by I. Mitford-Barberton (1963):

Steven Ten Holder

First owner of Westervoort at the Liesbeek



X. *The Liesbeek and neighbouring forests were used by indigenous pastoralists for centuries before colonisation.*

Wording on information board on the Liesbeek River Trail, officially opened by the Mayor of Cape Town in 1993.

WORKSHEET 3B

WHERE ARE THE SLAVES?

Much has been written about certain historical events in the Liesbeek River valley, such as the establishment of Free Burgher farms there in 1657. Much has been written too about some of the famous people who lived and worked in the area, such as Simon van der Stel and Cecil John Rhodes. There are a large number of buildings or other structures which have been declared historical monuments, such as Rustenburg House, Mostert's Mill and Rondebosch Fountain. However, there were also other people who lived in the valley who are barely mentioned in historical accounts and who have no memorial to commemorate them. One such group are the thousands of slaves who worked there for nearly 175 years.

Slavery was introduced by the Dutch in 1658, the year after the Liesbeek valley was first cleared for agriculture by the Free Burghers. Most of the slaves came from places round the fringe of the Indian Ocean, such as Madagascar or Malaya. By the end of the period of Company rule, the slave population outnumbered the settlers. When the British took over the Cape, they introduced laws to improve the conditions of slavery: one of these was the establishment of a Slave Register in which the details of each slave were recorded. Slavery was finally abolished in 1838. Many of the freed slaves continued to live and work on the same estates; others formed communities in Mowbray, Newlands and Claremont.

Study Source A: It is an extract from the Slave Register of the slaves belonging to J.J. Cruywagen, the owner of two large estates in Newlands. (You can look them up on the maps you used in Unit 2).

1. Working in pairs, discuss whether each of these statements is true or false. Use evidence from Source A to support your answers, or say whether you think there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.
 - 1.1 Slaves were only capable of doing unskilled manual labour.
 - 1.2 Children were not usually separated from their mothers.
 - 1.3 Most of the slaves were born into slavery.
 - 1.4 Even child slaves were expected to work.
 - 1.5 Few slaves reached old age.
 - 1.6 Many slaves were given names by their owners.

2. Can one make generalisations about slave life from this source?

Study Sources B to F: They refer to the slaves on the Rustenburg estate, and to the existence of a slave burial ground near the Summer House (on the UCT property today, just below Rhodes Drive):

3. Who, other than the slaves, were forced to leave their homes in the East and live at the Cape?

4. According to these sources, when last was the slave burial ground still in existence?

5. It would seem that it is no longer there. Explain what you think happened to it.

Study Sources G and H, and look back at Source A:

6. What do they tell you about the type of work done by the slaves?

Study Sources I to L:

7. What do they tell you about the effects of emancipation on the lives of the slaves?

8. What few traces are there of the slaves who once lived in the valley?

9. Suggest reasons why the history of the slaves has been largely ignored.

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 38

SLAVERY IN THE LIESBEEK RIVER VALLEY

A. Extract from Slave Office, Register of slaves belonging to Johannes Jacobus Cruywagen of Newlands:

Date of registration	Name	Sex	Age or birth date	Mother	Country	Occupation	Remarks
30.4.1817	Amos	M	24		Cape	Coachman	Sold to M. Beukes, Swellendam
8.5.1817	Lafleur	M	20		Mozambique	Baker	
26.6.1817	Fortuin	M	21		Mozambique	Carpenter	Sold 12/11/17 to C A Smit, Cape Town
10.1.1818	Roosje	F	19		Mozambique	Washmaid	Sold 12/6/23 to C Beyers, Stellenbosch
" "	Africa	M	2	Roosje	Cape	"	" " " "
" "	Adonis	M	21.7.1817	Roosje	Cape	"	" " " "
24.6.1818	Stoffel	M	12		Cape	Labourer	Sold 21/10/18 to F du Toit, Stellenbosch
2.2.1819	Pamela	F	28		Cape	Housemaid	Sold 29/11/19 to Basson, Graaff Reinet
11.9.1819	Abraham	M	30.8.1819	Roosje	Cape	"	Sold 12/6/23 to C Beyers, Stellenbosch
13.7.1821	Pieter	M	24.6.1821	Roosje	Cape	"	" " " "
17.12.1821	Adriaan	M	25		Cape	Houseboy	Transferred 27/1/25 to J Martin, CT
22.3.1823	Samson	M	32		Mozambique	Labourer	Sold to C Cruywagen, Cape Town
12.6.1823	Samilia	F	5.6. 1823	Roosje	Cape	Labourer	Sold 12/6/23 to C Beyers, Stellenbosch
4.5.1824	Sina	F	17		Cape	Seamstress	
28.2.1826	Annet	F	31		Cape	Housemaid	Died 18 May 1826
" "	Catherina	F	6.9.1819	Annet	Cape	"	
5.5.1826	Jacob	M	32		Cape	Saddler	
21.4.1827	Adam	M	46		Cape	Tailor	
23.7.1828	Esau	M	28		Cape	Brickmaker	
26.8.1829	Cornelis	M	10.8.1812		Cape	Labourer	
16.1.1830	Moses	M	31		Mozambique	Labourer	
8.2. 1830	Solon	M	53		Macoa	Mason	
" "	Asia	M	43		Masind	Labourer	
27.1.1830	Carolus	M	38		Mozambique	Labourer	
14.5.1830	Francois	M	48		Mozambique	Labourer	
" "	Diana	F	23		Cape	"	
" "	Florentina	F	18.9.1827	Diana	Cape	"	
12.10.1830	Romana	F	20.9.1830	Diana	Cape	"	
10.11.1831	Dolphin	F	75		Bengal	Housemaid	
" "	Jamila	F	33		Cape	Housemaid	
" "	Benjamin	M	21.3.1818	Jamila	Cape	"	
" "	Laban	M	23.8.1819	Jamila	Cape	"	
" "	Adolph	M	4.5.1824	Jamila	Cape	"	
" "	Lodewijk	M	19.10.1825	Jamila	Cape	"	
" "	Moses	M	11.8.1827	Jamila	Cape	"	
" "	Delphina	F	1.4.1829	Jamila	Cape	"	
" "	Lena	F	12.6.1831	Jamila	Cape	"	
23.3.1832	Annet	F	22		Cape	"	
" "	Jacob	M	11.7.1829	Annet	Cape	"	
" "	Carolus	M	25.7.1831	Annet	Cape	"	
" "	Jacob	M	37		Cape	Labourer	Died 9 June 1832
3.8.1832	January	M	44		Cape	Carpenter	Sold 23/3/1832 to A Hammes, CT
22.8.1832	Gideon	M	20		Cape	"	
23.5.1833	Diana	F	16.5.1833	Annet	Cape	"	
19.6.1833	January	M	46		Mozambique	Wine packhouse boy	
" "	Louis	M	44		Mozambique	Wine packhouse boy	
27.9.1833	Jephta	M	23.9.1833	Jamila	Cape	"	
29.10.1834	Jonathan	M	14.10.1834	Jamila	Cape	"	

B. The exiled Rajah of Tambora lived at Rustenburg, or in the stables where the Macassarians of courtly rank were quartered. He had been exiled to the Cape for rebelling against the VOC. He died at the Cape in 1719. His widow and children asked to be allowed to return to Batavia, but permission was refused.

C. Pama: Wagon Road to Wynberg p 39

C. "Near the Summer House was an overgrown spot known as the Slaves Graveyard. One or two of the graves, however, were of a type which seems to indicate that persons of a station far less humble had also here found a last resting place."

J.H.R. de Smidt, whose father owned Groote Schuur estate in the 1880s

D. "Some years ago I remember going with a group of excited girls, in the terrifying hour of twilight, to see the old slave burial-place.....here were the remains of graves, old bits of tombstone, old decaying skulls - Oh! The horror and pleasure of those evening desecrations.....No person with any inheritance of old slave blood would go near a slave burial place."

Rene Juta, writing in 1910

E. "The cemetery (father always told us) was for Rustenburg slaves alone....Facing the Summer House there were about three rows of graves but those in the background were so densely overgrown that it was almost impossible to explore them satisfactorily. The front row consisted of graves of rectangular shape, the retaining walls being very ruinous in 1889. The remainder of the graves were, as far as I could make out, mere mounds, many almost indiscernible. Is it not possible that the superior type of graves were those of the Muslim exiles of rank deported hither from the East? According to our Archives some of these were imprisoned at Rustenburg and in all probability died there."

A letter from J.H.R. de Smidt to Professor Eric Walker, 7/5/1927

F. In 1728 the VOC decided to experiment with silk production at the Cape. Mulberry trees were planted at Rondebosch and Newlands whence leaves for the silkworms' sustenance had to be brought daily by slaves to the building erected for the purpose near the Slave Lodge in town.

P.W. Laidler: A Tavern on the Ocean p 69

G. In Van der Stel's time great efforts were made to grow exotic trees to replace the indigenous forests which had been destroyed. Rustenburg became the centre of tree planting activities, and slaves with a special knowledge of forestry were imported from Madagascar.

C. Pama: Wagon Road to Wynberg p 61

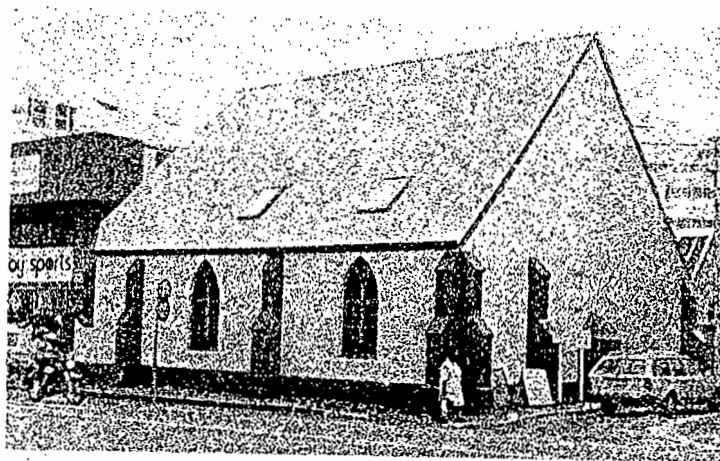
H. In 1724 three runaway slaves from Welgelegen Farm in the Liesbeek valley were executed near a crossroads tavern, and their heads impaled and displayed as a warning for all to see. The tavern immediately became known as Driekoppen, and it formed the nucleus of a hamlet which grew into a village which was called Mowbray after 1850.
J. Western: Outcast Cape Town p 160

I. When Bishop Gray took over Protea and renamed it Bishops court in 1848, all the former slaves on the estate were Muslims, going on foot or by cart to the Cape Town mosque every Friday. He made an effort to convert those living at Protea village to Christianity and entries of their baptisms, marriages and burials may still be seen in the registers of St Saviour's Church, Claremont.
Kotze, A.R.: Bishops court and its Residents p 15

J. After the emancipation of the slaves in 1834 [1838], ex-slaves established humble dwellings on the fringes of Cape Town and next to the farms where they continued to labour, including those by the village of Driekoppen, later renamed Mowbray.
J. Western: Outcast Cape Town p 32

K. Traces of slavery in the Liesbeek River valley have been covered up or lost. Former slave communities living in and having a formative influence on its development have been largely ignored or forgotten. This is due especially to the removal of whole communities under the Group Areas Act in the 1960s, when the houses they lived in were converted into eagerly sought-after "cottages". But the existence of mosques, such as those in Claremont and Mowbray, are an indication that Muslim communities once lived here. Claremont mosque, which is now surrounded by shops, was built in 1854, only 16 years after the emancipation of the slaves. Thus the only material remains of the slave communities who laboured in the valley for nearly 200 years are the gentrified remains of workers' cottages and the still functioning mosques.
N. Aldridge and P. Lenting: Slavery, Islam and Emancipation in the Liesbeek River Valley

L. Mosque, Main Road, Claremont (1996)



WORKSHEET 3C

IMAGE AND REALITY: PERCEPTIONS OF THE RIVER IN THE 19th CENTURY

Just after the beginning of the 19th century the Cape became a British colony, and large numbers of English people immigrated to the Cape. The farms in the Liesbeek valley were replaced by villages, such as Mowbray, Rondebosch and Claremont, which became the fashionable places to live. During the course of the 19th century, the landscape gradually changed and the valley began to look different:

- * English country villas in the Victorian architectural style were built;
- * exotic trees (such as Norfolk pines) were planted, and neat gardens laid out (such as Arderne's gardens in Claremont);
- * Anglican parish churches were established (such as St Paul's in Rondebosch and St Saviour's in Claremont);
- * English inns were built (such as the Forester's Arms and the Westerford Arms);
- * English games were introduced and clubs established (such as the Newlands Cricket and Rugby grounds).

People began to think of the Cape as a part of England, and this can be seen in travellers' descriptions and paintings. The impression which they created was often very different from the reality. In this worksheet you are going to examine these perceptions and attitudes.

THE IMAGE

Working in groups of 3 - 4, study the sources entitled **THE 19th CENTURY - IMAGE AND REALITY** and answer these questions:

1. The following phrases have been used to describe paintings and sketches done by English artists at the Cape during the 19th century. Study the paintings (*Sources A to F*) and decide which of these opinions can aptly be applied to each one:
 - A. "Pastoral scenes and idealised landscapes"
 - B. "A South African situation with a European atmosphere"
 - C. "Selective use of imagery - only pleasant things are shown"
 - D. "Solitary figures in contemplation with nature"
 - E. "A country gentry approach, designed to show status and material possessions"
 - F. "No emphasis on realism"
 - G. "Romanticised visions and anglicised landscapes"
 - H. "More concerned with the aesthetic effect of the picture than with trying to convey an accurate record of the situation"

2. Study the descriptions of the Liesbeek valley (*Sources G to N*). In what ways could these phrases apply to each of these written descriptions as well?
3. How useful are paintings and descriptions such as these as sources of information to an historian?

4. Homework exercise:

Imagine that you are a young lady or gentleman who has emigrated from England to the Cape Colony in the mid-19th century. You are very anxious to persuade your sister and her family to do likewise and join you at the Cape, but she is very apprehensive about leaving the familiar surroundings of England for "darkest Africa". You think that the only way to convince her is to give her a detailed description of the surroundings which she is likely to encounter when she gets here. Using the information in the written and visual sources, compose a letter to your sister to persuade her to move to the Liesbeek valley area near Cape Town. Be sure to include information on the landscape generally as well as the river. What features would you exaggerate and which would you downplay?

AND THE REALITY?

5. Read the critical comments made by the Rev H. Fraser (*Source P*) which create a very negative impression.
 - 5.1 How does this contrast with the other descriptions of the main road?
 - 5.2 Comment on the attitude of the minister towards the people who had formerly lived on the hill where St Paul's was built.

Following complaints from residents living in the Liesbeek valley, the authorities published an ordinance in 1852 (*Source Q*) which laid down a set of rules to govern the use of the river.

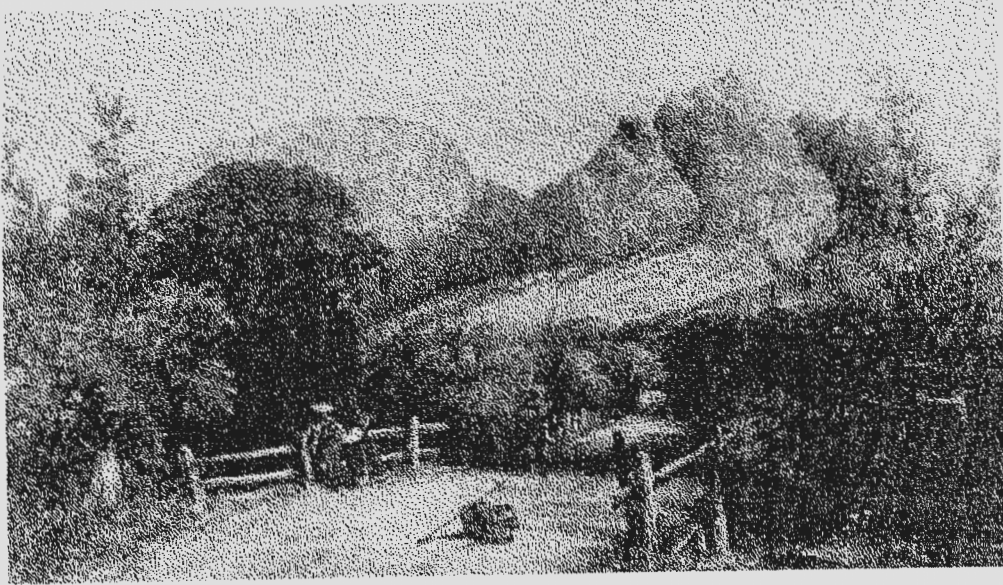
6. Working in your groups again, read through the regulations in the ordinance and answer these questions:
 - 6.1 Draw up a list of all the environmentally unfriendly ways in which people were treating the river.
 - 6.2 Who would benefit from the passing of these regulations? Who would lose out?
7. Individual question:

In what way does the picture that emerges here conflict with the image of the river that you wrote to your sister (Question 4)?

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 3C

THE 19th CENTURY - IMAGE AND REALITY

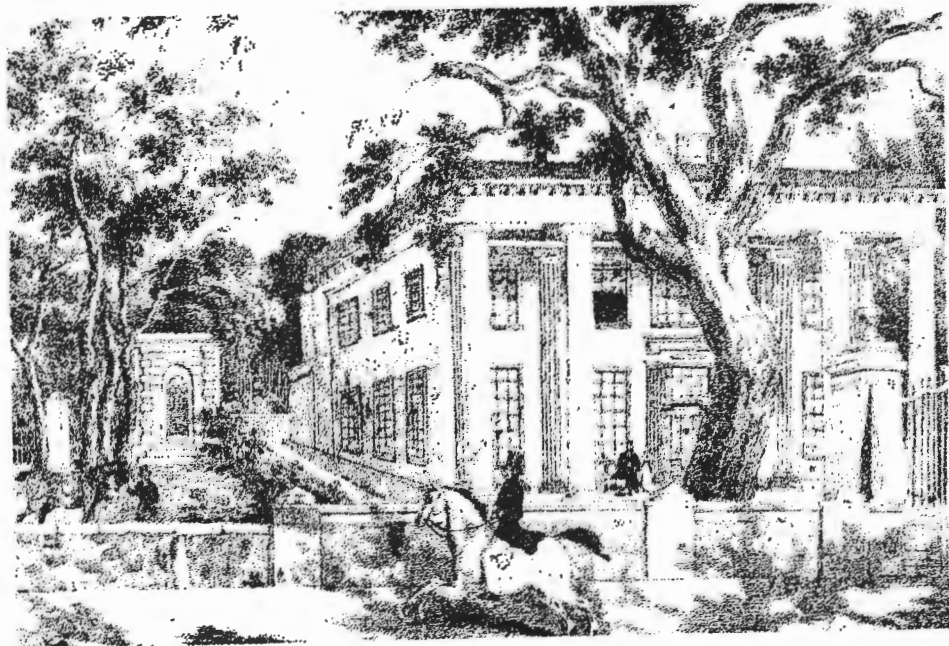
A. *Malay Couple at Rondebosch Bridge - Thomas Bowler*



B. *View in the Grounds of Protea (1832) - Charles D'Oyly*



C. *View of Mr Cloete's House at Rondebosch, Rustenburgh (1832) - Charles D'Oyly*



D. *The Liesbeek River - E. Thwaite*



E. *View of a Mass of Granite Rock in the Grounds at Protea (1833) - Charles D'Oyly*



F. *St Paul's, Rondebosch (1848) - Thomas Bowler*



G. "Rondebosch (Round-wood) is an assemblage of villas and gardens, and here many of the inhabitants of Cape Town have their country seats. A little farther on, we crossed the Liesbeecks River, a plentiful streamlet, at a place called Westerfoort Bridge. Hereabouts the country becomes exceedingly beautiful, every where shaded with groves, and large trees of lururiant growth, between which are interspersed vineyards, gardens, and many handsome buildings."

William Burchell in 1811 (Bradlow, F.: Some Early Visitors to Rondebosch and their Impressions)

H. "We went along the foot of the Devils Mountain, and skirting the flats past the pretty little village of Rondebosch; in this part the broad level road, bordered by high hedges, and shaded by oak or fir trees, the neat cottages by the wayside and the public houses with English names on their signs, put me much in view of my own country."

Charles Bunbury in 1833 (Bradlow, F.: Some Early Visitors to Rondebosch and their Impressions)

I. "When at Rondebosch the traveller is completely in the country and here amid groves and gardens, is doffused around an attractiveness and beauty far surpassing all the boasted charms and gaiety of town life."

Cape of Good Hope Almanac (1847)

J. "Travelling along the road from Mowbray to Rondebosch, you might fancy yourself on the road from Tunbridge Wells to Tunbridge, so fair the scene, and all so thoroughly English."

W.H. Ross: Life at the Cape a Hundred Years ago

K. "In no part of the world can the artist meet with finer scenery ... than that to be met in Table Valley, Rondebosch, Wynberg, Protea or Newlands."

The artist T.W. Bowler who painted many pictures at the Cape between 1834 and 1868

L. "For a time Mowbray, Rosebank, Rondebosch, Newlands, Claremont and Wynberg were combined as the Liesbeek Municipality. Many members of Cape Town's aristocracy and financial elite had their residences here; gardens were large and planted with exotic trees and sprawling flowering shrubs. There were lengthy avenues shaded by firs, oaks and bluegum trees."

C. Knox: Victorian Life at the Cape

M. "Bishopcourt was one of the showplaces of Newlands and the bishop frequently granted permission to Capetonians wishing to picnic amid the sylvan beauty of its surroundings. The walk up from Newlands Station was a treat in itself, leading along tree-shaded lanes and then up a magnificent avenue of pines."

C. Knox: Victorian Life at the Cape

N. "For Sale: Building Lots at Rondebosch

On Monday morning, the 3rd November 1837, at 10 o' clock, will be sold by Public Auction, several Lots of Ground, delightfully situated on that healthy and salubrious spot, the Camp Ground, about five miles from Cape Town. The Soil is excellent and worthy of attention of Persons desirous of erecting Country Residences."

Cape of Good Hope Gazette (1837)

O. "The most populous and fashionable suburban resorts are the tree-embowered villages of Mowbray, Rondebosch, Newlands, Claremont and Wynberg. In these pleasant sylvan retreats the city merchants and Government officials delight to dwell ... The drive along the main road is even more delightful - through the glorious avenues of pines and oaks extending onwards from Mowbray, past the Rondebosch village church."

Noble, J.: Descriptive Handbook of the Cape Colony (1875) p 43

P. "A receptacle for the veriest outcasts - a scene whereon the wretched aboriginal steeped himself in all those vices which he had learned from the ungodly stranger, a place loathsome to the eye and offensive to the ear." [From a sermon by the Rev H. Fraser, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary (1839) of the founding of St Paul's Church, in which he contrasted the present condition of the spot on which the church stood with what it had been like before]

Millard, P.A.: Centenary of the parish of Rondebosch p 7

To prevent the Commission of Nuisances in the River Liesbeek

The Governor of the Cape of Good Hope has passed this ordinance, citing as his reasons:

- * The large and increasing number of families resident in Rondebosch and neighbouring areas who are dependent on the water of the Liesbeek River for their supply of water for drinking and domestic purposes;
- * the absence of proper regulations to ensure the purity of this water, to prevent the "commission of nuisances" in the river.

1. All dams in the river are to be provided with a sluice.
2. Between September and May, all sluices are to be opened at least once a month, between 5 pm and 7 pm on the last Saturday of each month.
3. No person is allowed to build a toilet too close to the river; or allow sewage, or the offal and blood of slaughtered animals, to enter the river; or throw the carcass of any animal into the river; or drown any animals in the river; or wash wool or soak animal hides in the river.
4. No person is allowed to throw garden refuse or other rubbish into the river, or allow polluted water to run into the river.
5. Once sufficient public washing-places have been provided on the banks of the river, where anyone will be able to wash clothes free of charge, it will be illegal for anyone to do washing in the river.
6. So that people will be able to get occasional supplies of clean drinking water, no washing can be done in the river before 8 am in the morning, between September and May.
7. Any person who occupies property next to the river will be responsible for ensuring that no dirty water from the washing of clothes enters the river.
8. Any police constable will have the authority to enter any property along the river to ensure that the regulations are being observed.

The penalties for contravening any of these regulations are either a fine of between 2 and 20 pounds, or imprisonment of between one and three months, with or without hard labour.

(Adapted from the original ordinance)

Ordinances of the Legislative Council of the Cape of Good Hope 1848-52

A.S. Robinson, Cape Town, 1855

WORKSHEET 3D

THE LIESBEEK WASHERWOMEN

During the 19th and early 20th centuries washerwomen were a common sight along the Liesbeek River. They were dependent on the river for their livelihood, and, in the days before washing-machines and laundromats, many people depended on them to do their laundry. They provide an interesting example of the effects of different attitudes and perceptions. Some people regarded them as a nuisance and wanted their use of the river to be stopped by the authorities. Others viewed their activities in a far more tolerant light and watched them, painted them, photographed them and wrote about their activities in letters to friends. In this worksheet you will examine some of the sources which show these different attitudes and perceptions.

Read Sources A - D and answer these questions:

1. What reasons do the writers of Source A give for the pollution in the Liesbeek River?
2. What suggestion is there that the Liesbeek was cleaner in the late 1830s than it was in the late 1840s?
3. Give two different reasons why the washerwomen think that they should have access to the river.
4. What indication is there that they trust that the Governor will help them?
5. Look at the responses of the Civil Commissioner and the Resident Magistrate. Whose point of view do you think they support?
6. Imagine that you were the Governor in the late 1840s. What solution would you offer?

Read Source E:

7. Do the ordinances show an openness on the part of the Cape officials to the needs of all people involved in this situation? Explain your answer.

Look at Sources F, G and H:

8. How would you describe the attitude of the artist towards the washerwomen in each of the paintings - neutral, or favourable, or condescending and patronizing? Explain your answer in each case. Study the caption as well as the painting when you consider your answers.

9. How useful are these paintings as evidence to learn about the washerwomen?
10. In what ways do the paintings present a different view of the activities of the washerwomen in comparison with some of the written sources?

Read Sources I, J and K:

11. Identify words which indicate the attitude of the writer towards the washerwomen in each extract.
12. Suggest two reasons why the report (*Source J*) might have been written.
13. How does the child's view (*Source K*) differ from the official documents?

Read Sources L and M:

14. In what ways are these sources contradictory?
15. Suggest reasons why the two reports are different.

Look at Sources N and O:

16. Why might some people think that the tone of Source N was patronizing?
17. Write an account of a typical day from the point of view of one of the washerwomen in Source O.

General question:

18. Suggest reasons why there are no longer any washerwomen using the Liesbeek River as a source of livelihood.

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 3D

SOURCES ON THE LIESBEEK WASHERWOMEN

A. "The Liesbeek River is a source of drinking water, but it cannot function as such because of the practice which occurs all along its banks of washing linen and polluting the waters with soap and filth. We ask that washing in the river be prohibited, at least on those banks near residences."

Sixteen residents of Rondebosch to the Governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, 15/12/1837

B. You referred the petition from the Rondebosch residents to me and asked for my opinion on this matter: the washerwomen will be cautioned against washing in or otherwise polluting the river, but without a law to enforce this, the authorities can take no action against them.

Civil Commissioner to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, 31/3/1838

C. "We have been accustomed from times immemorial to wash in the Liesbeeck River, from the Westerfoort Bridge to the Montague Bridge. But on Friday, 22 December, a policeman from Rondebosch, on whose authority we do not know, prevented us from washing anymore in the said river. Washing is our sole dependence and livelihood, and we are mothers of families which we have to provide for. We beg your Excellency to investigate this case and grant us the right which we have enjoyed for so long."

Ten washerwomen from Rondebosch to the Governor, Sir Harry Smith, 26/12/1848

D. You referred the petition from the washerwomen of Rondebosch to me for an opinion. There is no legislation to prevent any nuisance in that river. "Although the water is often so filthy as to be totally unfit for domestic purposes, the people living in that neighbourhood must bear with it, or a law must be made to meet the case."

Resident Magistrate of Rondebosch to Sir Harry Smith, 21/2/1849

E. **Ordinance No 6 of 1852**

To prevent the Commission of Nuisances in the River Liesbeek

6. It has been decided to erect suitable washing-places on the banks of the river, furnished with necessaries and conveniences for washing clothes, at which washing-places all persons shall be at liberty to wash clothes, free of charge. After a sufficient number of such washing-places have been provided, it shall not be lawful to wash or place dirty clothes in the bed of the said river, the penalty for doing so not exceeding £2, nor less than 5 shillings, failure of which to pay shall result in imprisonment, with or without hard labour.

10. In order that the public may be able to obtain occasional supplies of fresh water, comparatively free of impurities, until such time as a sufficient number of washing-places

have been erected, no washing of dirty clothes in the said river shall take place, between 1st September and 1st May, sooner than 8 o'clock in the morning of any day
Ordinances of the Legislative Council of the Cape of Good Hope 1848-52

F. *Sir Charles D'Oyly: The Bridge over the Liesbeek (1834)*



G. *LT-Col E.H. Evrington: Washing in the Liesbeek River (1853)*



H. *Sir Charles D'Oyly: View of the Devilberg from the River Liesbeek (1832)*



I. "At the streamlets there are the inevitable groups of Malay women washing clothes, and brown babies sprawling about."

Lady Duff Gordon's Letters from the Cape, 19/10/1861

J. A report from the Rondebosch police mentions that three women had recently been prosecuted by the Rondebosch Municipality for washing clothes in the Liesbeek River.

Letter from Mowbray Police to the Rondebosch Municipal Clerk, 11/3/1902

K. "Down at the Liesbeek River, the brown water tumbled over the boulders on its way to the sea. Near the stone arch of the bridge on Paradise Road, where the pools were deepest, groups of washerwomen would gather, chattering loudly as they dipped the washing in the river and slapped it on the stones to beat out the dirt. From the bridge above, it was fascinating for small children to watch the soap bubbles float away, large ones catching the light in rainbow colours, tiny ones winking in a quick burst against a stone. Soapsuds joined the foam of the river to be carried on towards the next group of women working some hundred yards downstream."

Norah Henshilwood: A Cape Childhood, p 77

(An account of growing up in Claremont between 1902 and 1914)

L. "There are few signs of pollution in the Liesbeek River, save where water from the washing of clothes finds its way into the river."

Report from the Plague Administration Department to the Medical Officer of Health for the Cape Colony, 18/5/1902

M. "Washerwomen are washing clothes in the Liesbeek River in what may be described as very slightly diluted sewage."

Report from the Chief Inspector of Public Works, 10/4/1905

N. "Our big laundry was not done at home but went off weekly in a bundle to Motjie, our Malay washerwoman in the Palmboom Road area of Newlands. Motjie's little son would fetch the washing on Mondays in a two-wheeled push-cart and return it on Fridays, smelling gloriously of spring-fresh water, of sun and grass, an occasional spider ironed in for good measure. These little laundry boys were a common sight in Rondebosch.

Adele Naude: Rondebosch and Round about p 62

(An account of growing up in Rondebosch in the early decades of this century)

O. *Washing Day in the 1890s*



UNIT 4: Examining ECONOMIC CHANGES

In this unit students focus on some of the economic changes that have occurred in the valley, examining examples of both commercial and industrial change. By means of interviews, students should try to establish how these changes were perceived and how they affected people.

Specific objectives:

1. To help students to realise that the built environment is going through a constant process of change.
2. To encourage students to examine museum exhibits critically.
3. To teach students how to plan, conduct and use oral evidence.

Skills to be developed:

Interpreting data, such as street directories

Analytical skills

Interviewing skills

Key concepts and ideas to be conveyed:

1. Visible changes in the built environment often reflect fundamental changes that are taking place, such as changing forms of land-use, modes of transport, and the influx of more people into the area.
2. Industry once played a key role in the history of the Liesbeek valley. But as industries moved out of the area, the importance of the river has diminished.
3. Older residents are often a valuable and unique source of information.

Student activities:

1. As an example of commercial change, students trace the developments along a section of the Main Road in Rondebosch during the 20th century. Working in groups, they start off by studying an account of shopping patterns in the 1920s, and analysing differences between what is described then and their own experiences. The account of Shopping in the 1920s is adapted from *Rondebosch and Round About* by Adele Naude, who grew up on the Groote Schuur Estate where her father was the estate manager during the premierships of Botha, Smuts and Hertzog. She vividly describes the shopping expeditions which she and her mother made to the "Village".

Students then then focus on a period 50 years later, and see what shops were in existence in 1957, using advertisements and a street directory. They analyse the advertisements, which appeared in a 1957 publication to mark the tercentenary of Rondebosch. They use the street directory of the same year to draw a sketch map of the main road in 1957, noting the position of the shops.

Then, as a fieldwork exercise, they visit the main road and note the position of shops and businesses today. They do an analysis of the changes that have taken place.

Worksheet 4A: Shops and Shopping (Pages 151-2)

* *The resources for Worksheet 4A are included after page 152.*

2. As an example of industrial change, students visit at least one of the two industrial museums near the river, at the Josephine Mill and the Newlands Brewery, as an introduction to the industrial activity which used to be an important feature of the valley. They answer a worksheet which directs their attention to the links between industry and the environment.

Worksheet 4B: Industry on the Banks of the Liesbeek (Pages 153-4)

3. Finally they conduct interviews to try to establish how commercial, industrial and environmental changes are remembered by some older residents. As a preparation for interviews which they will conduct with older residents of the area, students brainstorm questions relating to four topics:

Shops and shopping patterns

Industries

The river

The environment

Each group then selects and arranges the questions which they want to use. Practice interviews will be done in class first. If possible, students will try to arrange their own interviews with family members or friends, otherwise it may be necessary to arrange interviews for them. The large number of retirement homes in the area may well prove to be a fruitful source of information. After the interviews have been conducted, students will be required to do a comparative analysis of the oral evidence.

Worksheet 4C: Do you remember? (Pages 155-6)

Sources:**Worksheet 4A: Shops and Shopping**

Cape Peninsula Directory 1957-8 Cape Times Ltd, Cape Town, 1957 pp 192-193

Deary, H. (Ed): *Rondebosch Down the Years: Tercentenary Festival Catalogue and Programme* Rondebosch, 1957

Naude, A.: *Rondebosch and Round About* David Philip, Cape Town, 1973 pp 59-67

Photograph of Rondebosch Main Road: T.D. Ravenscroft (c 1905) C.A. J6083

Worksheet 4B: Industry on the Banks of the Liesbeek

Walton, J. (Ed): *The Josephine Mill and its Owners: The Story of Milling and Brewing at the Cape of Good Hope* Historical Society of Cape Town 1978

WORKSHEET 4A

SHOPS AND SHOPPING

1. Working in groups of 3 or 4, read through the extract entitled **SHOPPING IN RONDEBOSCH IN THE 1920s**. It is written by Adele Naude who grew up in Rondebosch on the Groote Schuur estate in the early decades of this century. Make a list of all the differences you notice between shopping then and now. Consider aspects such as the types of shops, the items bought, the descriptions of what the shops looked like, shopping customs, transport, and anything else you can think of.
2. Study the two pages of advertisements entitled **SHOPPING IN RONDEBOSCH IN 1957**. They appeared in a brochure as part of a tercentenary festival in 1957.
 - 2.1 What is a tercentenary festival? Why would one be held in Rondebosch in 1957?
 - 2.2 Why might it be argued that this represents a very one-sided interpretation of South African history?
 - 2.3 How have some of the shops and companies tried to incorporate a sense of history in the wording of their advertisements?
 - 2.4 Which of the shops included here were in business in the 1920s?
 - 2.5 In what ways do the advertisements differ from those which appear today?
3. Study the **STREET DIRECTORY OF RONDEBOSCH IN 1957**. Do a sketch map of Rondebosch Main Road, marking on it the location of the shops mentioned in the advertisements in Question 2, as well as other shops mentioned in the directory.
4. **FIELDWORK EXERCISE:**

The class will visit the Main Road to do a fieldwork exercise. You need to have a clipboard, paper and pencil with you.

- 4.1 Study this photograph of Rondebosch Main Road in 1905. What differences do you notice between then and now (for example, look at buildings, roads, trees)? What features have not changed?



- 4.2 Do another sketch map (of the same area covered in Question 3), noting the position and names of the shops and businesses there today.

5. ANALYSIS OF SHOPPING PATTERNS:

Compare the two sketch maps.

- 5.1 Which of the shops which were there in the 1950s are still there today?
- 5.2 Which of them have disappeared?
- 5.3 Explain why you think these changes have occurred.
- 5.4 Make a list of the questions about shops and shopping patterns which you would like to ask someone who knew the Main Road long ago.

RESOURCES FOR WORKSHEET 4A

SHOPPING IN RONDEBOSCH IN THE 1920s

My mother and I would walk down to settle the family debts in the Village in the first week of each month. We would walk first past St Paul's graveyard, much as it is today. Rondebosch village began at the corner of Main and Roslin Road where there was a small cafe and the Premier Bioscope, a number of low-lying cottages and then Hurwitz, the local barber, complete with red-and-white striped pole. We would make our first call at Keown, the baker, next door to Hurwitz, if we happened to have ordered anything from him during that month. This did not happen often as we were treated to "baker's bread" only occasionally. The aroma of fresh bread from his ovens at the back of the shop pervaded the air and mingled with the smell of the breweries at Newlands if the south-easter blew, or with Mossop's Tannery on the other side of the Liesbeek River on Belmont Road if the north-west was blowing. There was an archway next to Keown's through which his delivery carts would pass to and from the bakery and the stables at the back.

I would usually be carrying a parcel, often a stiff-fronted shirt of Dad's, if he had worn his dinner jacket, to be delivered to Mr Lee, the Chinese laundryman next door to Keown. His round face was always smiling above his spotlessly white gown with its Chinese collar. Eaton's at the corner near the Fountain was an important haberdashery with millinery and dressmaking departments. Here there was always an account to be paid, buttons to be bought, or a button-hook perhaps for strap shoes. We seldom stopped at Van Rhyn, the liquor merchant next door, as Dad got his brandy and hock from Paarl, but we would pass the shop and Burmeister, the blacksmith next door, to cross over Belmont Road to the "Returned Soldiers' Boot Hospital" near the bridge. I would always lag behind to look into the forge, for what child could pass that fascinating place without a peep inside at a horse being shod or a wagon wheel being repaired. I would also linger on the narrow bridge to look at the Liesbeek River with its muddy banks, rushing water and broken branches in winter.

Turning towards the Fountain again, I might be allowed to go into Stavris, the Greek, to spend my weekly tickey there on the sweets we all loved - the packets of sherbet with protruding sticks of liquorice for the sucking-up process, the cannon-balls which changed colour, shoelaces of liquorice, acid drops or bulls-eyes. At Sowdens, the chemist on the corner, Mum would pay the account for the castor oil in long thin, royal-blue bottles, lint, bandages, Vaseline, cough mixture, camphor oil, cod liver oil and sweet oil, for when we had ear-ache. We might call in at Maspero, the butcher, a call I did not relish because I hated the smell of the carcasses on their hooks, and the sight of the blood-stained blue-and-white striped aprons, the sawdust-covered floor. The "Fish" Williamses next door would be Mum's next call for the sundries not bought from the carts of fresh out of the sea at Hout Bay.

Adjacent to the fish shop was Hessens, with its tantalizing mixture of smells, which one entered through a mesh swing door. On the left was the grocery counter, complete with marble slab and wire cheese-cutter. Only cheddar and sweet-milk were available. On the floor were barrels of herrings and small casks of anchovies. The right-hand side of the shop was for hardware, with rolls of wire, coils of rope and drums of paraffin, from which bottles, cans and tins were filled. From Hessens we would proceed to Matz next door to look at the clothes. Mum's "best" dresses were bought at Cleghorns in Cape Town, but occasionally she would find good garments for both of us at Matz. On the left Mr Matz would be busy with the men's outfitting department, on the right his wife pulling out large drawers of women's goods, a smell of naphtha pervading the shop.

Adele Naude: *Rondebosch and Round About* pp 59 - 67 (adapted)

SHOPPING IN RONDEBOSCH IN 1957

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"... that vanity
in years" *wrote Shakespeare*

YEARS ALONE do not make a community great. It is the striving of its inhabitants to make their locality a better place to live in and an asset to its neighbours, that entitles Rondebosch to pride itself on its three hundred years of existence.

And in the fifty years since its beginning the Rondebosch Branch of the C.N.A. has also proved itself to be of considerable value in supplying books, stationery, periodicals and newspapers to the people of Rondebosch.



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In congratulating Rondebosch on this Centenary occasion, the Society looks forward to an ever broadening measure of service to the community in the years ahead.

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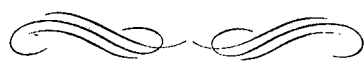
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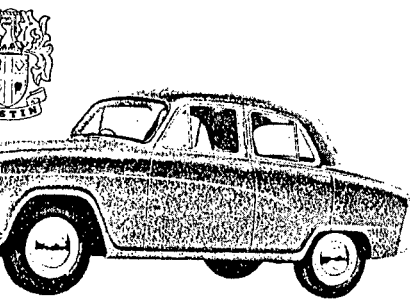
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DOWN THE YEARS

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THEN the great steam engine—romantic enough to delight any schoolboy's heart—with its polished brass eccentrics, like perfectly trotting horses.

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PERFECTION FLOUR

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SASKO
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 BELMONT ROAD, RONDEBOSCH, PHONE 6-2880
 GEORGE, WORCESTER, SOMERSET WEST,
 MUIZENBERG, SEA POINT

RONDEBOSCH STREET DIRECTORY FOR 1957

Main Road

CAPE TOWN AND SUBURBAN STREETS

Main Road

MAIN ROAD

(Rondebosch)
(Ward 11) Map 14

LEFT SIDE

-Nursery Road

1 Griffiths, Dr H.M.
Orpheus Court Flats
5 Green, E.K. & Co (Pty) Ltd
Store Room

-Burg Road

9 De Groot, Mrs A.
11 Hastie, C.

-Chester Road

13 Rose Court Buildings
15 "Maison Carlo"
17 Neptune Cleaners
19 Rose Court Flats
Finck, A.J.
23 South African Handy House
24 Rustenburg Tea Lounge
27 Lawson & Kirk (Pty) Ltd
29 Browsers, M.
31 British & American Products
31a Blays Refrigeration Services
33 Annexe to Groot Schuur
Residential Hotel
Groote Schuur Centre
Estata Estate Agency
Katz, R. Construction Co
Groote Schuur Pharmacy
Groote Schuur Mansions
Groote Schuur Residential
Hotel

Rustenburg Shoe Store
Frederic Hair Stylist
Rebuilding
Matz's Building

45 Nosegay's Flower Shop
47 Suburban Stores
49 Mon Boudoir
51 Lincow, L. (Pty) Ltd
53 Truworthis
55 Matz's Court Flats
57 Rondebosch Supply Store
59 Rustenburg Pharmacy
61 Fountain Butchery
63 Cecil Tea Lounge
- Court Lane
69 Post Office
71 Fountain Confectioner
Pastry Cook
73 Williams, H. & Co
75 Eaton's Stores
77 Hessen House Furnishers

79 Hessen Bros
81 Premier Butchery
83 Colonnade Buildings (Flats)
85 Central News Agency Ltd
Sunshine Bakeries & Cafe

89 Rebuilding
91 Lady Anne Dress Salon
93 Sawkins, E.E.

-Belmont Road

95 Barclays Bank D.C.O.
Davison (Hugh) (Pty) Ltd
97 Winston Court Flats
99 Keown's Building
101-103 Newman & Sons
105 De Villiers, W.A.
Keown, G.
107 Keown Bros
109 Lawson & Kirk (Pty) Ltd
111 Carlton Flats
Carlton Buildings
113 Carlton Hairdressers
115 Cape Soles (Pty) Ltd
117 Carlton Flats
119 Hawkins, Mrs M.E.
Normandie Court
123 Hawkins, cafe
125 Hocking, L.
127 Salvan Manufacturers
129 Neptune Cleaners (Depot)
131-133 Hazendal Bazaar Ltd
135 Rondebosch Galleries

RIGHT SIDE

-Burg Road

Rustenburg Girls' Junior
Frank Joubert Children's Art
Centre, Rustenburg House

-Rustenburg Avenue

Rebuilding
Rustenburg Service Station
Swedish Hairdressing Saloon
James, A.R.
Butt, J.E.
Pritchard, Mrs M.A.E.
Maske, Dr A.T.F.

-Grotto Road

Laubscher's Hairdressing Sal
Laubscher's Sports Outfitters
Scholnick, B.(Pty) Ltd
Randall's Hotel
Devonshire Hill Hotel
Rondebosch Motor Supplies

-Church Street

St Paul's Church

-Groote Schuur Avenue

WORKSHEET 4B

INDUSTRY ON THE BANKS OF THE LIESBEEK**South African Breweries**

The first brewery in the Newlands area was the Papenboom brewery established in 1694. During the 19th century several more breweries were built in the area, such as the Newlands, Anneberg, Griffin and Mariendahl breweries. Eventually they were all bought up by a Scandinavian businessman, Anders Ohlsson, and became known as Ohlsson's Cape Breweries. In the 1950s this merged with a Transvaal company, South African Breweries.

1. Why was a brewery located here?
2. What resources from the local environment would have been used in the operation?
3. What additional resources would have been needed?
4. What impact would the brewery have had on the environment?
5. To what extent is the brewery still dependent on the local environment?

The Josephine Mill

The mill was built by a Swedish businessman, Jacob Letterstedt, in 1840 and named after the queen of Sweden. Later in the 19th century the mill was converted to steam power, but during the 20th century operations at the mill ceased and the mill buildings became a ruin. In 1975 it was donated to the Historical Society of Cape Town and restored as a working museum.

1. Why was a flour mill located here?
2. What resources from the local environment would have been used in the operation?
3. What additional resources would have been needed?
4. What impact would the industry have had on the environment?
5. Suggest a reason why the mill ceased its operations.
6. Try to find out why the people of Cape Town were supposedly so angry with the owner of the mill in 1849 that they are reported to have attacked the mill and broken the windows.

[The book entitled *The Josephine Mill and its owners* edited by James Walton refers to this incident; or you could enquire about it at the museum.]

The Albion Spring

The water from this spring was used to supply the residents of Rondebosch and surrounding suburbs with their domestic water supply when the water of the Liesbeek River became too polluted to serve as drinking water in the 1890s. The man who established this Cape Town

and Districts Waterworks Company was Anders Ohlsson, who is better known for his role in the brewing industry. Later the spring was used to augment the water supply for the Cape Town Municipality, while the Steenbras Dam was being built in the 1920s. The spring was also the site of a succession of mineral water companies, the last of which was Schweppes.

1. Why was a mineral water company located here?
2. What resources from the local environment would have been used in the operation?
3. What additional resources would have been needed?
4. What impact would the company have had on the environment?
5. Suggest a reason why the company moved from here?
6. What part of the original buildings remain?
7. What is it used for now?
8. What has happened to the water from the Albion Spring?

The Sasko Flour Mills and Mossop's Tannery

These two industries were formerly located on the east bank of the Liesbeek near the Belmont Road Bridge in Rondebosch. A flour mill was established on the Sasko site in 1810. Before it was taken over by Sasko it was known as John Forrests. The tannery was established by the Mossop family in 1846. Both of these closed down their operations in Rondebosch in the 1980s.

1. Why were these industries located here?
2. What resources from the local environment would have been used in their operations?
3. What additional resources would have been needed?
4. What impact would these industries have had on the environment?
5. Suggest reasons why they moved from here?
6. What has replaced them?
7. Is there any reminder of their past histories in the new buildings?

General questions

1. Of all the industries mentioned here, one is still in operation, one has been restored as a working museum, one has been converted into a restaurant, and two have been replaced by new buildings. Try to account for the different paths that the different industries have taken.
2. Make a list of the questions about these industries which you would like to ask someone who knew Rondebosch and Newlands long ago.

WORKSHEET 4C

DO YOU REMEMBER?

One of the best ways of finding out about the past, especially when you do not have many written or visual sources, is to interview someone who was there at the time. The information you learn this way is called oral evidence.

To find out more information about Rondebosch at an earlier period you need to find someone to interview. This might be a family member, family friend or a resident of one of the retirement homes in the area, who are often very willing to share their memories of the past. (Your teacher will organise this third option for you if necessary).

Before the interview:

First you will need to make certain preparations:

1. Working in groups of 3 or 4, brainstorm the kind of questions you would like to ask on the following topics:

Shops and shopping

Industries

The Liesbeek River

The environment

For example:

Shops and shopping:

- * Were all the things that you needed available in the shops in Rondebosch?
- * What sort of things were not available and where did you buy them?
- * Were any of the shops self-service or did they all have counters?
- * Did you get pocket-money? What did you spend it on?
- * Were there pedestrian crossings? If not, where did you cross the streets?

Industries:

- * As a child were you aware that there were industries near the river?
- * Were you ever aware of people complaining about them?

The Liesbeek River

- * Did you play or walk near the river?
- * Do you ever remember the river being in flood?
- * Can you remember what the condition of the river was like?

The environment

- * Were the roads and pavements all tarred and paved?
- * Are there any open fields which you remember which are not there anymore?
- * Did most houses have fences, walls or hedges?
- * Were there lots of trees to climb?

Try to think of as many questions as you can for each category.

2. Work out a list of questions that you are going to ask. To practise doing an interview, let someone in your group pretend to be the person being interviewed. Conduct this "interview" and then discuss what improvements can be made to your questions or interviewing technique.

The interview:

When you conduct your real interview make sure that you explain to the person why you are interviewing them. You need to make them feel that what they have to say is important and interesting. Either use a tape recorder to record the interview, or take notes in point form as you do the interview.

After the interview:

Go through all the information you have collected, and divide it into the four categories suggested above. You might like to add an additional category for miscellaneous information. Select two of the categories and write a paragraph on each one, comparing past and present.

UNIT 5: Creating an ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY TRAIL

In this unit students use the knowledge that they have gained in the previous units to create an environmental history trail of the area. They examine critically examples of what has been done in other areas to make history accessible to the public and then create their own trail.

Specific objectives:

1. To encourage students to be innovative and to generate their own creative ideas.
2. To evaluate how much they have learned about the history of the valley in the previous four units.
3. To enable their study to have a practical application.

Skills to be developed:

Selection and application of information.

Creative writing and design

Layout and presentation skills

Critical evaluation

Key concepts and ideas to be conveyed:

1. The creation of something like an historical trail for use by fellow students or the public, which is both interesting and informative, requires careful planning.
2. The historical information which is to be included requires very careful selection to ensure that the key ideas of environmental history are reflected. For example, students will need to create ways of showing how the river and environment generally have both shaped and been affected by human development.
3. One of the best ways of learning something is to have to teach it to someone else. The students own understanding of the history of the area will be consolidated by the process of selection and application.
4. The conservation of the historical elements of the urban environment is a worthwhile activity which can involve the whole community.

Student activities:

Students first study materials relating to other historic trails, heritage walks or series of storyboards. Some time is spent discussing and analysing examples of these where they

are available. For example, the Cape Town City Council, in association with the Cape Town Heritage Trust, has produced a series of brochures on historical walks in and around Cape Town. Many students will also have seen the storyboards at the Waterfront. They need to be encouraged to think critically about what is good and what does not work in these examples, both from an historical and a general interest point of view. They need to examine aspects such content, exclusions, layout, balance between text and illustrative material, visual appeal, interest value and so on. They are encouraged to analyse them critically so that they reach their own conclusions about what works successfully.

The nature of the final task is then explained: students need to produce something which reflects the history which they have been studying, and devise a means whereby they can share their knowledge of the local environment with others. This could take the form of a brochure, storyboards, an annotated map, a worksheet, or perhaps some other form may be suggested.

Working in groups, they proceed to plan what their final product will be. They need to take into account the nature of the task that has been set, their intended audience, and what they are aiming to do, before deciding what form their own product will take. They then move on to the production stage which involves the selection of historical information, visual materials, layout and presentation. This may involve working in the library, or-re-visiting places in the locality. Before they produce it, they need to discuss their design plan with their teacher.

After completion, they need to test and evaluate it. Working on their own, out of school time, students test their product, for example on fellow students, parents or siblings, to see how successfully their trail works. After this, they need to evaluate their product critically, and suggest what revisions might be necessary.

Worksheet 5: Design Plan for Environmental History Trail (Pages 160-1)

Sources:

1. The Cape Town City Council Historical Walks Series shows examples of historical trails in other areas: Titles include:
Central City; Muizenberg/St James; The Waterfront; The Military Route; The Cape Town-Simonstown Railway

2. For examples of history worksheets based on the Waterfront storyboards, see those in Bickford-Smith, V, and Van Heyningen, E. (Ed): *The Waterfront* in the Oxford University Press Sites of History series (1994) pp 85 - 93. These worksheets are also available at the Information Centre at the V & A Waterfront.
3. The *Rondebosch-Mowbray Conservation Study* by Todeschini, F., Japha, V. and Japha, D. (1989) contains useful information, maps and photographs. Based partly on this report, the *Rondebosch-Mowbray Local Area Plan* prepared for the City of Cape Town by a group of architects, urban designers and town planners (1990) contains plans for proposed river walks and historical walks in these suburbs.
4. Useful brochures are obtainable from the Josephine Mill and the Newlands Brewery.
5. The Friends of the Liesbeek (P.O. Box 333, Rondebosch) runs river hacks, bird walks, photographic competitions and other activities, publishes a newsletter and has established an environmental centre in the grounds of Valkenberg. They support and encourage public interest in the river and its history.
6. Students may find the words used to describe the guided walks, introduced recently by the Friends of the Liesbeek and the Josephine Mill, a useful starting point, for they do attempt to link history and the environment:

The Liesbeek runs through the history of the Cape like a precious thread. Rising from the Table Mountain massif, it has nurtured the valley and its inhabitants for centuries and today much more attention is being paid to it as we recognise it for its past and its future. Your walk will introduce you to a vast canvas that stretches from the Dawn of Time to the present, taking in flowers and trees, the story of our people, the forces of nature and the will of modern society. This tour has been put together by the Josephine Mill and the Friends of the Liesbeek who care about our environment enough to share it with others. We hope that you will find out something new, enjoy the pleasure of remembering, and encourage others to.

WORKSHEET 5

DESIGN PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY TRAIL

You have now studied many aspects of the history of the Liesbeek River valley:

- * In Unit 1 you learned something about the pre-colonial environment, and then about the activities along the valley at four different periods in its history.
- * In Unit 2 you saw how these activities have been shown on maps, and how much of the history of the area is still reflected in the landscape - in place-names, graveyards, buildings and monuments.
- * In Unit 3 you investigated how perceptions which people hold can be very influential in determining their attitudes and actions. It is not only what happened, but what people think happened, that influences history.
- * In Unit 4 you studied examples of some of the economic changes that have affected people's lives and how they remember them.

You now need to work out ways of sharing your knowledge about the local environment with other people. There are a number of ways in which this can be done:

- # You could produce a brochure, or booklet.
- # You could create a series of storyboards, like the ones at the Waterfront.
- # You could draw a large annotated map which explains the sites of historical interest, like the ones around Newlands which show the location of the sporting facilities.
- # You could design a fun worksheet to be filled in while visiting sites in the area.
- # You could create an historical trail.
- # You could be innovative and think of something completely different!

The planning stage:

Working in groups of 4-5 students, plan what you would like to produce. Be sure to discuss each of the following before you finalise your decision about what to do.

1. *The nature of the task:* Remember that you are going to design some sort of activity which others will use as a source of information about the local historical environment. You need to try to incorporate ideas about the link between history and the natural environment.
2. *Audience:* Who will your product be targeted at? (For example, residents, tourists, younger children, school pupils?)

3. *Aims*: What do you hope to achieve? (For example, to be an educational exercise in local history? To encourage residents to be historically aware of their environment? As a tourist aid?)
4. *Form*: What form will you use? (For example, storyboards, map, brochure, worksheet historical trail, other?)

The production stage:

This stage involves research and design. You need to take into account the following:

1. *Historical content*: What historical information will you try to convey? This will involve using the sources and worksheets used in previous units, further research in the library, or re-visiting places in the locality. Remember that you are not required to give a comprehensive account of the history of the Liesbeek valley: you need to decide what your focus will be, and select your content accordingly.
2. *Visual content*: What pictures and maps will you use?
3. *Layout and presentation*: How can you achieve the right balance between text and illustrative material? How can your product be both informative and entertaining? How can you make it interesting and eye-catching?

After deciding these issues and finding the material you want to include, you need to put it all together to produce your environmental history trail.

The evaluation stage:

1. Working on your own, out of school time, test your product, for example on fellow students, parents, or younger brothers and sisters to see how well it works.
2. After this, you need to evaluate your product critically. Ask questions such as:
 - * Did they find it interesting?
 - * Did they learn anything?
 - * Was it too long or too short?
 - * Could you answer all of their questions?
 - * Did your product convey the idea of the link between history and the environment?
3. Write an evaluation report on your product, explaining the conclusions which your group has reached. Your report should include:
 - * A brief account of how you tested your product.
 - * Any problems that were encountered.
 - * Features that worked well.
 - * The changes you would recommend if it were to be used again.
 - * What further uses could your product have?

POSTSCRIPT: REFLECTIONS AND AN INVITATION

At this stage this curriculum model remains a theoretical proposition. The units, worksheets and activities which are included have not yet been trialed and tested with school students. So what I have written up here is, in a sense, the easy part of the exercise. The real challenge will come when it is used in the classroom. What appears on paper to fit neatly into a school term, may in fact take very much longer. And the reality of 35 hyperactive teenagers preparing sketches in the busy Main Road in Rondebosch, or unearthing inscriptions in a church cemetery, may well prove to be more than even the most creative and progressive of teachers could bear!

My interest in developing hands-on activities on the history of the Liesbeek River valley was influenced by my association with a Liesbeek River Action Group, formed by Dave Carr, a colleague of mine at Westerford High School in Rondebosch. This group operates as part of the school's Lifeskills programme, and, for the past few years, groups of students have monitored the condition of the river, planted indigenous trees along its banks, conducted chemical and physical tests of the water, investigated the flora and fauna of the river and its banks, conducted litter clean-ups, participated in environmental competitions and projects, and tried to raise public consciousness of the condition of the river through the local newspapers. When I worked with the group for a brief period my intention was to incorporate an historical element to complement the geographical, biological and scientific investigations that were being carried out. However it was immediately apparent that a lesson spent in the classroom learning about the historical development of the valley, or pouring over sources describing the seriously polluted condition of the river in the 19th century, did not seem to be at all relevant in students' eyes, and certainly could not compete with the appeal of spending time in the outdoors, at or near the river, *doing* things. There was also a problem with time: the group had in total only one hour a week, for seven or eight weeks, and thus not more than one, or at the most two sessions, could be used for the historical component.

It therefore seemed appropriate instead that any such historical investigation should be done through the history department. For some time we have been talking about incorporating some local history modules into our curriculum, at Std 7 or 8 level, so it

may be that this curriculum model will serve this purpose. We plan to use at least some of the worksheets later this year with our 210 Std 7 students.

I am well aware that Westerford is ideally placed to use a model like this one, and that not many schools in the country are situated in an area so historically rich, or where such a variety of interesting places are within easy walking distance of the school. I also realise that I work in an educational environment which encourages innovation and experimentation, and where adherence to the syllabus is not enforced. It would not be as easy for all teachers to implement something like this. I am aware too that I have access to library resources and facilities, such as photocopiers, which are not as readily available elsewhere.

I hope though that my work might tempt other history teachers to try out some of these ideas, or to adapt them to suit the particular situations and circumstances of their own schools. I shall be interested and grateful if any who do will inform me of their experiences so that I will be able to modify and improve this model in the light of our joint experiences. I hope too that my work may encourage others to explore the links between history and the environment, and thereby add to the exciting new field of environmental history. Above all, I hope that other history teachers will produce and share ideas about the teaching of local history, so that history as a school subject will be enriched in the process.

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