


**THE ROAD TO MAMRE:
MIGRATION, MEMORY, AND THE MEANING OF COMMUNITY C1900-1992.**

KERRY RUTH WARD

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Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis breaks new ground in oral history methodology in South African historiography. It applies an approach to research which evolved from participation in the Masters Students Programme of Community Education Resources at the University of Cape Town. The thesis investigates the process of historical research in Mamre, a mission village fifty kilometres north-west from Cape Town. CER's research methodology provided the basis of interaction between myself as an academic historian and members of the Mamre community interested in researching their own history. Through my participation as facilitator, sharing skills of oral history methodology and resource production, members of the Mamre History Project were able to research and present a new vision of Mamre's history to the community.

This thesis documents the process of this interaction and interrogates the meaning of history in the Mamre community. It focuses on the experience of migration in the first half of the twentieth century based on oral testimony from life history interviews of Mamriers born in this era. It also probes how community identity in Mamre is forged over time, and transcends spatial boundaries. Mamriers' community identity incorporates both city and countryside because the common experience of migration to Cape Town began last century and the networks between the two milieux still persist. The study also raises issues of memory and nostalgia in the creation of both individual and collective identity.

The aim of this thesis is to discover new ways of making history in the academy and in the community; and to break down barriers between the two audiences.

CONTENTS

PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

i

A chronicle of a place and its people.

CHAPTER ONE

1

Journeying to Mamre: oral history, community history and the creation of identity.

CHAPTER TWO

38

The Mamre Story. An oral history of Mamre, c1900-1950.

CHAPTER THREE

89

Migration, family and community during the first half of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

129

Memory and nostalgia in the creation of individual and collective identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

155

Making history in Mamre: community participation and response.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

186

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I owe my greatest debt to the people of Mamre whom I interviewed and to those who were involved in the Mamre History Society and the Moravian Youth Group. Mercia Arendse was unstintingly generous in her support of the project. Gavin Collins and Desi Arends were enthusiastic interpreters.

The staff and students of Community Education Resources kindled the intellectual spark for this research. Nick Curwell of Teaching Methods Unit, UCT, cheerfully gave his time and skills to help produce the Mamre calendar. Alicia Monis, Juanita Pastor and Carnita Ernest were meticulous transcribers.

My fellow postgraduates deserve thanks for their warm support; Hildagarde Fast, Judy Katzenellenbogen, Helen Ludlow, Nazeema Mohamed, Thembeke Orie, Tessa van Ryneveld and Tom Winslow; and especially Kirsten Tatham, for unselfishly providing the means of production for this thesis. Clifton Crais gave me plenty of food for thought, and Amy Thornton a place to call home.

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Finally, my greatest thanks to Pam Scully for her constant support and friendship, and to Alison Paulin for all that and more. I'd like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Jack and Molly Ward, who've always encouraged me to travel my own road.



The people who first lived on the land with their cattle called themselves Gouraiqua. Then from across the sea came people who called themselves Dutch. It was at time which the Dutch imagined was the 'Year of the Lord 1652'. At first the invaders clung to a fortress settlement which they named the Cape of Good Hope. They traded for cattle with the people they found on the land, whom they called Hottentots.

'The Hottentots are of a phlegmatic disposition, and sleep much in the day time. In a moonlight night they amuse themselves dancing caper-cutting and singing and at the same time watch over their flocks... They neither plant sow nor cultivate the ground, but rove from place to place, wherever they can find the greatest quantity of provender. There they set up five or six tents under the control of a captain.'

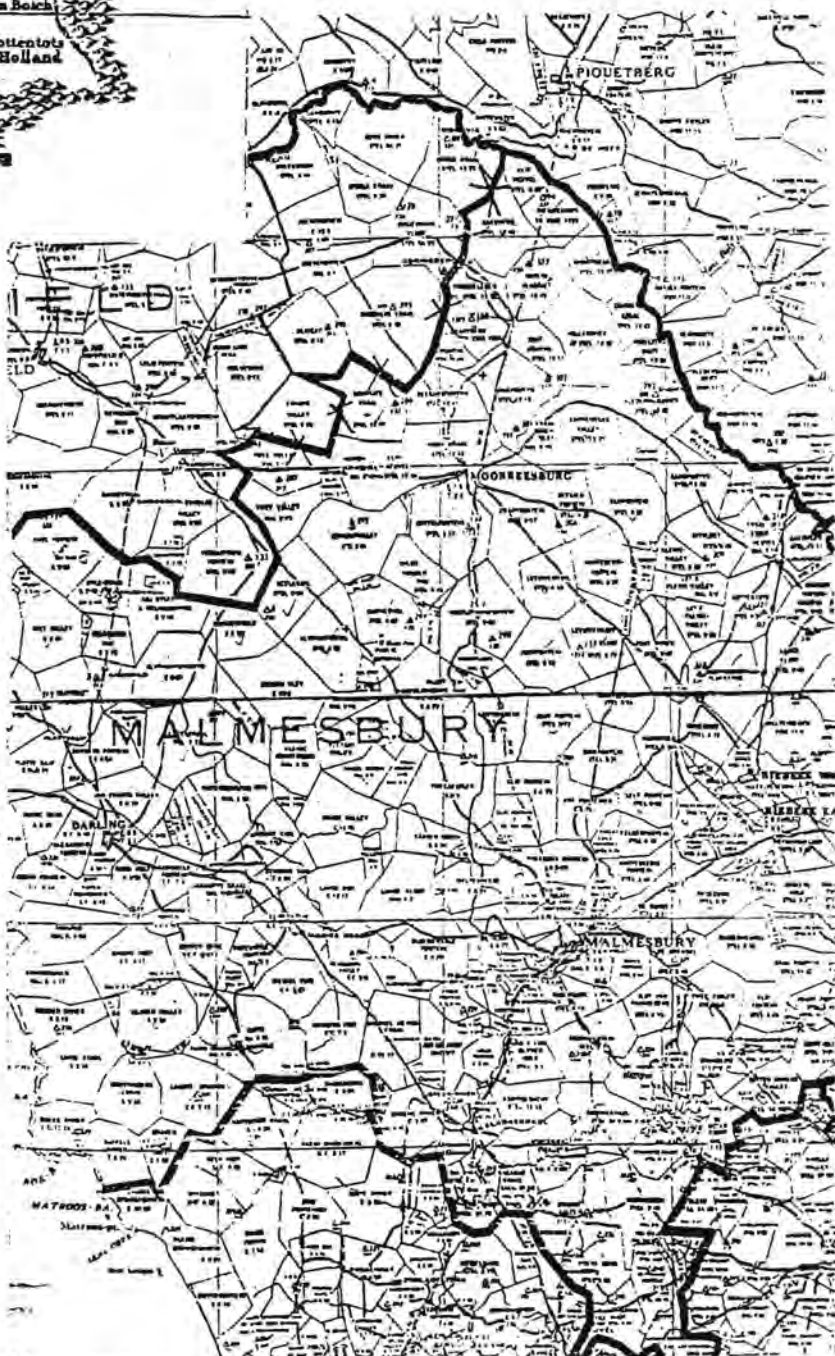
George Schmidt, Periodical Accounts, 1737.



But the Dutch claimed the right to possess the land of the Gouraiqua, and called it the Zwartland, because of the black bushes which grew there in natural abundance. The Dutch, who also called themselves European to distinguish themselves above all others in the land, particularly the Asian and African slaves and Hottentots they pressed into their service, came to the Zwartland and divided it amongst themselves. In 1700 Henning Huessing was given permission from the leader of the Dutch,

who was of his kin, to use the land now called Groene Cloof on account of its good supply of water and pasture. Then the Dutch invaders, who thought of themselves as farmers, came to plant sow and cultivate the land, and desired protection from those people who had lived there before, whom they called 'marauding Bushmen'. And so, in 1701 the Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel ordered a military settlement to be built on Groenekloof, and called it De Kleine Post.

NIEUWE KAART
 van de
KAAP DER GOEDE HOOP
 en der na by gelegen Landen
Volgens de Afmettingen
 van een *Bl. DE LA CAILLIE* in 1751
 Te AMSTERDAM by IS. THIRION 1751



De Kleine Post was a garrison until 1791, and under their protection the Zwartland and the whole of the Cape was settled by ever larger numbers of European farmers. The land was surveyed and farmed by families who handed down ownership of the land from one generation to the next, and so on to the present day.



In 1791 when the soldiers left Kleine Post it became yet another farm. The next year, other Europeans who called themselves Moravians came from Europe across the sea to bring to the Hottentots their

version of civilization, which they called Christianity. The Moravians established their first mission settlement at Genadendal, amidst the mountains on land about three days ride from Cape Town.



'In 1808, the Earl of Caledon, then Governor of the Cape, having observed the benefits arising to the Hottentot nation from Christian instruction, prevailed upon the [Moravian] Brethren's missionaries at Gnadenthal to form a settlement at this place [Groenekloof], where many facilities existed for

the maintenance of a congregation of Christian Hottentots... The Brethren were put in possession, and a number of Hottentots soon flocked to them from various places, both in and out of the colony.'

Reverend C.I. La Trobe,
31/12/1815.

Governor Caledon's successor, Lord Charles Somerset, was covetous of Groenekloof and refused the Moravians permission to build a church on the land, and thus to sanctify the mission. In 1815, the English leader of the Moravians, Christian

Ignatius La Trobe, visited the country to press the cause of the missionaries. He journeyed from Cape Town to Groenekloof on the 30th of December 1815 and was met along the road by the people from the mission, who now called themselves Christians.



'The whole procession now moved forward, some of the Hottentot women in an open bullock waggon, which they had brought with them, the rest, with the men, partly on horseback and partly on foot. The settlement is seen like a fruitful field in the midst of a desert, and the road to the missionaries houses lies through a small poplar wood.'

Reverend C.I. La Trobe,
30/12/1815.



The next year, the foundation stone of the Church was laid and La Trobe saw his journey end in success. 'September 2nd was the day, when I expected to close my abode at Groenekloof... Jacob Conrad, a Hottentot, of his own accord,

offered his span of eight horses, to convey me and my travelling companions to Capetown...'

Reverend C.I. La Trobe
2/9/1816.

Amongst those who came was the Khoian woman Rosetta Klappmuts, who was the sister of captain Hans Klappmuts. He was the leader of the Gouraiqua at Louwskloof, which was one of the three farms that was now known by the Europeans as the grant-station Groenekloof. Rosetta was baptized in 1813 along with her children, and she took a new name, Benigna, and became known as the "mother of Mamre".

BENIGNA

GROENEKLOOF OF MAMRE.

Een Verhaal door de Christen Zielelingen

ZUID-AFRIKA.

DOOR EEN HENNER FLEGAARS

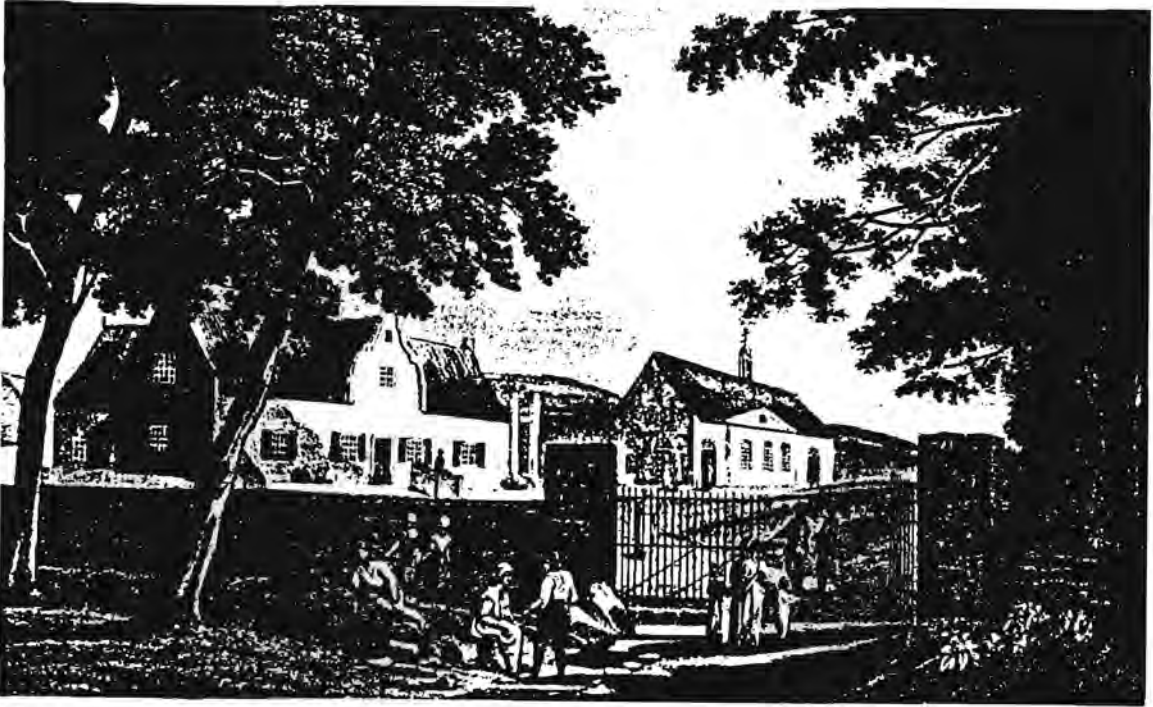
On December 2nd 1838, the emancipation of those people who had been called slaves at the Cape was celebrated in Groenekloof. '...being Sunday, we had a special meeting in the morning in which we brought our thanksgivings to God, for the admission to unrestricted freedom of more than 40,000 of our fellowmen, which took place the preceding day...there were many tears of joy and gratitude.'
Groenekloof Diary for 1838.

DE VERKRIJGEN IS DOOR W. F. J. DE VRIES BESADENAL.
 EN OP ALLE MOEYENDE DEELT EN VERKRIJGEN.



'The emancipation of the slaves in this colony, December 1st, 1838, has been followed by important results for our congregations also, some hundreds of these freedmen having sought

admission in them, and promising to be attentive learners of the Gospel and valuable inhabitants.'
Survey of the missions at the close of Year 1839.



It [Mamre] is of much interest, as one of the oldest missionary stations for the education and civilization of Natives established in this part of Africa more than seventy years ago by the Moravian Brethren, and ... it has steadily flourished and advanced in prosperity up to the present time. It has always been more or less a labour supply for the whole of the neighbouring country. As far as I am aware the Moravian Brethren are among the first to recognize the duty of teaching all converts to work for their living, and this principle appears to have been steadily kept in view throughout their subsequent proceedings.

Bartle Frere, Governor of the Cape Colony, letter dated 22.11.1879 written after a visit to Mamre



There was not enough land for all the people who came to settle at Groenekloof, or the other missions like Genadendal, to become independent farmers in their own right. Consequently, the mission inhabitants sought their livelihood labouring for European farmers and many increasingly began to journey

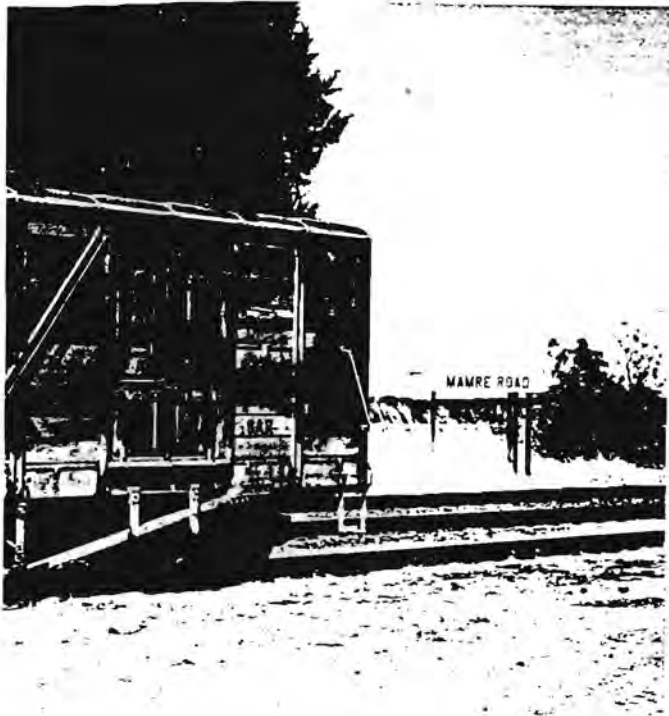
to Cape Town in search of work. And so, the mission communities, including Groenekloof which became known as Mamre in 1854 and its people Mamriers, spread their families from the countryside into the town. And the ride to Cape Town became a familiar journey in the lives of the Moravians.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">R e i s</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">V A N</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Genadendal naar de Kaapstad.</h2>						
19. 	18.	17. Langhuigte 	16.	15. 	14. Boortjekraal. Paard niet / 1 voorbij laat gaan.	13. 
20. Eentloof	37.	36. Tol. Oms Oek! Op Afsnang wachten.	35.	34. Sir Lowry's Prae. 	33.	12.
21.	38.  DORREKRY.	 KAAPSTAD.			32.	11. Wolvekraal terug na Sijdenkraal.
22. Rivierbrug.	39.	 KAAPSTAD.			31. Steenbraarivier.	10. Matjoudrift.
23.	40.  Eerste Rivier.	41.	42. Kullarivier. Dried 2 lig. Voorst 4.	43.  In Genadendal terug.	30. 	9. Pit' Marre's Boesch.
24. 	25. Houw-Hoek. 1 voorst.	26.	27. Kaafloekkraal. 1 terug.	28.	29. Palmietrivier. 1 voorst.	8. Bokkraal.
1.  GENADENDAL.	2.	3. Stog. Tale verpand 7. In Genadendal terug.	4.	5. Sijdenkraal. 1 voorst.	6.	7. 

By 1886 there were so many Moravians from the rural mission stations, especially Mamriers, living and working in Cape Town, that the missionaries established a Church in District Six to gather together their scattered flock.

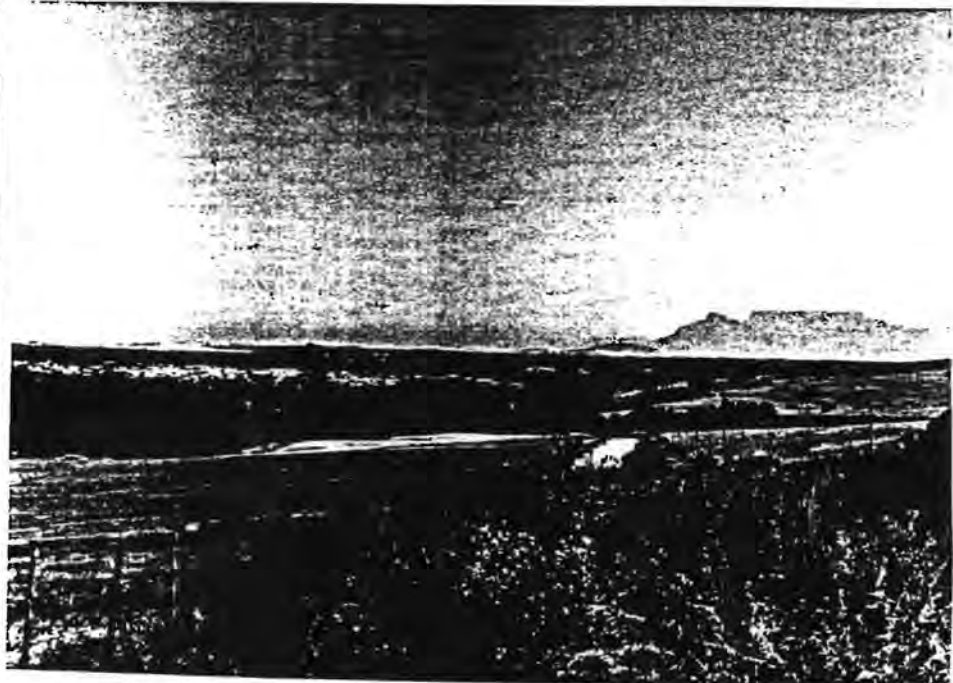
MORAVIAN HILL





At Easter time, the Mamriers who were working in Cape Town would journey home to Mamre to celebrate their Christian festival and to see their family and friends. In the early twentieth century, the journey became a train-ride to Mamreweg Station, and then from Mamreweg station a wagon ride along one of the roads to Mamre.

This journey has become part of the popular memory of Mamriers. The tradition of the Easter journey from Cape Town to Mamre is a symbol of unity and renewal for the Mamre community. It is one of the images from the lived experience of Mamriers. And is part of the new history of Mamre being created in the present.





It is from the well-spring of memory that a people's history of Mamre will grow. For this journey to Mamre spans generations from the beginning of the twentieth century, and belongs to all Mamriers today.







NOTES TO PREFACE

Unless otherwise specified, text between pages i-vii is based on the following sources:

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Page i

Pictures from Balie, I, *Die Geskiedenis van Genadendal 1738-1988 (Perskor, Cape Town, 1988)* Reproduced from originals in the Genadendal Museum, Genadendal.

George Schmidt, *Periodical Accounts, 1737*, Moravian Archives, Heideveld.

Page ii

'Nieuwe Kaart van de Kaap der Goede Hoop, 1752'

Cape Archives, M1/316.

District Map of Malmesbury, Cape Archives, M4/1465.

Page iii

Picture of arrival of George Schmidt amongst the Hottentots from Isaac Balie, *Geskiedenis van Genadendal*.

La Trobe, C I, *Journal of a Visit to South Africa in 1815 and 1816. With Some Account of the Missionary Settlements of the United Brethren Near the Cape of Good Hope* (L B Seeley, London, 1818), pp43-44.

Page iv

La Trobe, C I, *Journal*, p41.

'Groenkloof Mission House. The Governor [Lord Charles Somerset] Passing 31st July 1816' by R Cocking. R Levitt, Private Collection, Reproduced by the Arthritis Association, 1991.

La Trobe, C I, *Journal*, p335.

Drawing 'Die Moraviese Kerk te Mamre' by J Adams, 12 years old, Standard 5, Mamre Moravian Primer, 1990.

Page v

Groenekloof Diary for 1838, *Periodical Accounts*, 1839, p162. Moravian Archives, Heideveld.

Survey of missions at the close of Year 1839, *Ibid*, p246.

Reproduction of cover, Bechler, W F, *Benigna van Groenekloof of Mamre. Een Verhaal voor de Christen Kleurlingen van Zuid-Afrika* (Genadendal, 1873).

'View of Groenekloof' by James Backhouse, 1840. Cape Archives M250.

Page vi

'The Centre of Groenekloof' from La Trobe, C I, *Journal*.

Letter by Frere, Governor of Cape, dated 22/11/1879, after visit to Mamre, 1879. Cape Archives, GH23/36, pp359-363.

'The Village of Groenekloof in 1816' from La Trobe, C I, *Journal*.

Page vii

'Reis van Genadendal naar de Kaapstad', artist unknown. First published as a "snakes and ladders" game in 1860 by the Genadendal Printers, Genadendal. Reproduced from Balie, I, *Geskiedenis van Genadendal*. Original in the Genadendal Museum.

Part of cover of booklet, August, K T, *Moravian Hill: Ons Katedraal in die Moederstad, 1886-1980*, (Kaapstad, 1980).

Page viii

Photograph of Mamre Road Station, 1990, taken by Kerry Ward.

Photograph of woman by ox wagon c1940 owned by Miss Maggie Johannes.

Map of Road and Rail Routes to Mamre, 1938, from Hawkrigde, D G, 'A Geographical Study of Mamre (Groenekloof)' unpub. MA, UCT, 1953.

Photograph taken from the road from Mamreweg Station to Mamre, 1990. In the foreground is Mamre, in the immediate background is Atlantis, and in the distance, Table Mountain and Cape Town.

Page ix

Photographs taken from the Mamre 1992 Calendar by the Mamre Moravian Youth Group and Kerry Ward, Community Education Resources, UCT, 1991.

Page x

Photographs of Mr Simon Magerman, Miss Maggie Johannes, Mr Tim Liederman, Mr Willie and Mrs Hannie Johannes: taken in their homes by Kerry Ward, during life history interviews, 1990-1991.

Page xi

Photographs of Mrs Anna Liederman, Miss Susan Philander, Mr Hennie Adams, and Mrs Amalia Collins with her youngest son (standing) and her grandson Gavin Collins: taken in their homes by Kerry Ward, during life history interviews, 1990-1991.

CHAPTER ONE**JOURNEYING TO MAMRE: ORAL HISTORY, COMMUNITY HISTORY
AND THE CREATION OF IDENTITY**

The road to Mamre is not simply the fifty kilometres of bitumen along the west coast shoreline which separates the village from Cape Town. It is also the temporal path by which Mamriers explore and construct their own individual and collective histories. This thesis follows the different routes by which Mamre's history is brought to life by Mamriers. It also shows how Mamre's history has been enlivened through the process of dialogue between myself as an "outside" researcher and both individual interviewees and community groups. In essence, this is the study of a journey through the newly charted territory of historical research mapped by oral history methodology and practice. It analyses the creation of, and interaction between, academic and community-based history, and argues that it is the very process of dialogue between them which deepens our understanding of the social purpose of making history.

This study explores these issues in a qualitative rather than quantitative way, situating the analysis of Mamre historically within the first half of the twentieth century to answer questions about migration, community structure and identity. But it also asks fundamental methodological questions about historical research and the practice of oral history within a community. The only way to do this is to interrogate the present, to consider how people in the community construct their own identity and history. The final two chapters scrutinise these issues in detail through an exploration of nostalgia and memory, and of the construction of identity through the creation of a 'usable past'.¹

¹ Ronald Grele, 'Listen to their Voices: Two case studies in the interpretation of oral history interviews', *Oral History Journal*, vol.7, no.1, 1979 pp33-42.

This thesis is unconventional in both its evolution and presentation. It is part of an ongoing process in the creation of Mamre's history; an interim report of my own involvement with the Mamre community, and with Community Education Resources (CER) at the University of Cape Town, between February 1990 and May 1992.

This is not to suggest that the thesis is incomplete, it is presented as a coherent piece of historical research in its own right, situated within current debates in South African historiography on migration, urban history, community history and education, and oral history methodology. It is important to stress that the process of dialogue which has been initiated over the past two and a half years is not at an end. The thesis, and the interviews and transcripts upon which it is largely based, as well as the methodology of historical research which I have developed with people in Mamre, have their own life in the community beyond my personal presence. Equally, I sincerely hope that this thesis does not gather dust on the university's library shelf without engaging the interest of people in the academy. My main aim in the conceptualisation of this project has been to generate new ways of making history in the community and in the academy, to show how this need not mean the historian takes the high road and the community the low.

By way of introduction I shall first contextualise the thesis as being shaped by my involvement as a history student in the Masters Student Programme of Community Education Resources (CER). I will then trace how my initial research proposal on migration changed direction through interaction with people in Mamre, both those I interviewed and those who interviewed me. This process led to a reassessment of the fundamental questions I sought to address in my research towards an exploration of community identity. I asked myself and people in the village: 'What does it mean to be a Mamrier?' The path

I travelled to answer this question was through interpreting life history interviews to see what they revealed about the construction of memory and identity. In the formation of a local history project, two groups of Mamriers, the members of the Mamre History Society and the Moravian Youth Group, sought a similar path to explore the same question and forged new ways of looking at Mamre's history and presenting their vision to the community.

The CER Masters Student Programme (MSP) drew on theories of non-formal education developed originally by Paulo Freire, which base learning as taking place within critical dialogue between educator and learners. Freire argues that the development of a critical consciousness emerges through an exploration of 'generative themes', issues in the lived experience, of the learners.² As CER masters students we explored the relationship between our academic research and its relevance for a particular audience, our "user group". This implied that my research on Mamre's history should take place within an "accountable" relationship with people in the village, and be shaped by that interaction.

I began interviewing in Mamre with a formulated research topic on migration between Mamre and Cape Town in the early twentieth century. This topic emerged from within the paradigm of academic research, and within the debates on migrant labour and urban studies in South African historiography. There were a number of gaps in our knowledge of migration and urban history in the Western Cape that a focus on Mamre could help fill. As Christopher Saunders points out:

² See for an example of Freire's theoretical work on education: Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (The Seabury Press, New York, 1973) and *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* translated by Carman St. John Hunter (Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, London, 1978).

'Historically we need to know not just why migrants came to the city at particular times, and in what numbers, but also what happened to them in the city, and what links they retained with their rural places of origin.'³

There are very few studies in South African history which explore the relationship between cities and their hinterland. A focus on Mamre in the twentieth century reveals that the pattern of migration that develops between communities in the rural hinterland of major urban centres is different from that of more distant communities. An understanding of this short-distance migration is essential to exploring the transformation of the rural areas around the major cities, and to the way that people were incorporated into urban space.

People in Mamre were able to keep their options open and choose between work in the city and in the countryside at short notice. The relationship between a village like Mamre and Cape Town was more intimate than that of related communities further away from the city, like Genadendal in the Caledon district. The flexibility of distance had a profound influence on the way people in Mamre perceived their community boundaries, and this is closely linked to their perception of community identity.

Mamriers' perception of boundaries compares with that of communities elsewhere. David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo's *Siaya* explores the relationship between space in the city and countryside and its articulation in community identity for the Luo of Siaya in modern day Kenya.⁴ *Siaya* provides insights into the way in which Mamriers relate to space in the village and in Cape Town. Both communities have fluid notions of space

³ Christopher Saunders, 'Methodological Issues in South African Urban History' unpublished paper, HSRC, 1991. p.26.

⁴ David Cohen and E S Atieno Odiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (James Currey, London; Heinemann, Nairobi; Ohio University Press, Ohio, 1989).

and community identity, and create within their urban milieu their own interpretations of neighbourhood and belonging which keeps them in touch with their identities at "home".⁵

One of the main arguments I address is how this pattern of migration changed in the early twentieth century towards the creation of a "commuter" community in Mamre by the 1950s. It was the way that Mamriers manipulated the space and distance between Mamre and Cape Town which allowed them to explore options in both milieux. My analysis is rooted in the way in which individuals interacted with their families and their community in Mamre and in Cape Town. I make some suggestions about how space and distance in city and countryside were perceived and how these perceptions changed over time. The strategies concerning matters like work and education adopted by Mamre families changed as transport technologies lessened travelling time.

Gender identity for both men and women greatly influenced the way in which they entered into migrant labour.⁶ But equally

⁵ Fred Cooper provides a marxist analytical framework to interpret the struggle over urban space. 'The urban environment is the outcome of state and capital planning for the mobilisation of labour power and workers seeking to shape their own lives in the city.' See, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labour in Africa' in Fred Cooper ed., *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labour, Capital and the State in Africa* (Sage Publications Inc., Beverly Hills, 1983) p7. Phil Bonner and Tom Lodge pursue a similar theme in South Africa between the state and black communities over the legal occupation of space in the cities. See their 'Introduction' in P Bonner et al eds., *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa* (Wits University Press and Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1989) pp1-17.

⁶ Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration', *Oral History Journal* vol.7, no.1, Spring 1979, informs my approach to gender and migration. She shows how women and men were integrated differently into the city via their rural networks. She also offers a fascinating linguistic analysis of interviewees' life stories to show how gender consciousness is expressed in the structure of their language (French).

important was an individual's age position and marital status within their family in shaping the options available to them. Mamriers were intimately tied to their family and community networks, so their age position, marital status and gender set some of the boundaries of their life choices. This makes an interesting comparison with Belinda Bozzoli's *Women of Phokeng*.⁷ Bozzoli analyses the life strategies of a group of women from Phokeng in the rural Transvaal, through stages of their life cycles from the early twentieth century to the present. The women are part of the same age "cohort" as the people I interviewed in Mamre, essentially the oldest generation in their respective communities.

By drawing extensively on the use of the women's own perceptions of their lives, Bozzoli constructs an analysis of their changing consciousness which accompanied their proletarianisation and involvement in migrant labour. These women were the first generation of their community to engage in migrant labour to Johannesburg, and their christian education in most cases created a "generation gap" between their own emerging identities and the experience of their elders. To some extent, their entrance into migrant labour was an act of defiance, a break with the patriarchal control of women which they considered part of their community's "tradition". Because migration between Mamre and Cape Town was already a well-trodden path in the lives of Mamriers by the beginning of the twentieth century, people I interviewed did not experience a similar transition. In this sense, gender does not appear to

⁷ Belinda Bozzoli, with Mmantho Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983*, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1991). See also Belinda Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies', *Journal of South African Studies*, vol.9, no.2, 1983. pp139-171 for her conceptualisation of gender based within domestic struggle between men and women. Bozzoli uses this concept to analyse the opportunities and constraints of women in developing their life strategies.

be a decisive factor for Mamriers in the general community trend of migration, although there were gender-specific experiences of migration to Cape Town. Their life stories tell more of a consolidation and acceleration of existing trends, than of discontinuity between their lives in the countryside and city, and the lives of their elders.

Discontinuity has been a major theme in South African migrant labour studies, although we have come a long way since the "men of two worlds" and the mechanistic "push-pull" analyses of migrancy.⁸ Many migration studies in South Africa have explored long-distance migration of men from rural African societies to the mines of the Witwatersrand, or of men and women to the main cities.⁹ Migrant studies on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have essentially looked at the proletarianisation of labour and the penetration of capitalism in the countryside and the decline of peasant agriculture.¹⁰

The Western Cape has a pattern of migrancy between the rural areas and Cape Town, which is different from that of other parts of southern Africa. The transition from slavery to wage labour involved the creation of a rural proletariat rather than the dislocation of communities who had access to land. Even

⁸ David Welsh, 'The Growth of Towns' in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson eds., *Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. II, 1870-1966* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971) pp172-244, Francis Wilson, 'Farming, 1866-1966', *Ibid*, pp104-171.

⁹ For a survey of urban history studies dealing with migration in South Africa see Christopher Saunders, 'Urban History'. See also, G H Pirie 'South African Urban History' in D Reeder ed., *Urban History Yearbook 1985* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1985) pp18-29, see also the chapters by Harries, Kinsman, Kimble in Marks, S. and Rathbone, R, eds., *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa* (Longman, New York, 1982).

¹⁰ See for example: Colin Murray, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981).

mission stations like Mamre did not have enough land to sustain many of their members as independent peasant farmers. Most men from the missions entered wage labour on white-owned farms, or in the villages and Cape Town, or on the construction of roads and railways. Women on the mission stations tended either to remain there, working in the house and garden, or entered domestic work in Cape Town. The removal of women from labour on white-owned farms was one of the early struggles in the post-emancipation Western Cape, which affected the choices women made in migrating into town.¹¹ In a subtle way, it also contributed to the shaping of community identity.

Christianisation through Moravian mission education and regulations set standards of "respectable" conduct for their members, especially women, who were encouraged to enter "appropriate" employment. Echoes of this process reverberate in how Mamriers describe their life histories and talk about their concepts of community identity.

One of the main themes I examine is how Mamriers perceive their community identity. This was not one of the original focal points in the formulation of my research proposal. It came about through the initial phase of dialogue between myself and the people I met in Mamre. When I began life history

¹¹ See Helen Ludlow, 'Missions and Emancipation in the South Western Cape: A Case Study of Groenekloof (Mamre), 1838-1852, unpub. MA thesis, UCT, 1992; John Marincowitz, 'Rural Production and Labour in the Western cape 1838-1888, With Special Reference to the Wheat Growing Districts' unpub. PhD thesis, University of London, 1985; A.J. Purkis, 'The Politics, Capital and Labour of Railway-Building in the Cape Colony, 1870-1885', unpub. PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1978; Pamela Scully, *The Bouquet of Freedom: Social and Economic Relations in the Stellenbosch District, c1870-1900* (CAS, UCT, 1990); Nigel Worden, 'Adjusting to emancipation: Freed slaves and farmers in mid-nineteenth century South-Western Cape' in Wilmot James and Mary Simons eds., *The Angry Divide: Social and economic history of the Western Cape* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1989) pp31-39; Kerry Ward, 'Employers' perceptions of the labour market in the late nineteenth century Western Cape: with reference to the 1894 Labour Commission' unpub. paper *Cape Slavery and After Conference*, UCT, 1989.

interviews in the village it was with the cooperation of Mercia Arendse, the Community Liaison Officer of the Medical Research Council's Mamre Community Health Project. Mercia was excited about the potential of life history interviews with older Mamriers to preserve the history of her community before it was "lost forever" as the people of the oldest generation died. She agreed not only to introduce me to people to interview, but to assist with translation, and to put me in contact with other Mamriers who were interested in the history of the community and would potentially form a local history group. In other words, Mercia Arendse was the catalyst for my introduction to Mamre and we spent many hours talking about the community.

Together we compiled a list of people living in Mamre who were mostly born before 1930. Although I had discussed with Mercia that my research interest was in migration to Cape Town, many of the people she suggested I interview had not experienced life as migrant workers. However, Mercia insisted that each person's life had made a special contribution to the Mamre community and its history. I agreed to interview anyone she suggested because I perceived this as a modest form of accountability through respecting a community representative's request for a general life history project.

As I began interviewing, recurrent themes that emerged within people's life histories and the way they expressed their memories through nostalgic images of Mamre in the early twentieth century alerted me to issues of community identity. The way that I planned the interviews also began to change from interrogating the experience of work and migration to drawing out what interviewees were telling me about their own identity and how that related to Mamre. This was a crucial shift within my research methodology, because an exploration of community identity was accessible only through oral interviews, there were no archival sources available which revealed what Mamriers thought of themselves. I had previously planned to integrate oral evidence to provide details and "humanize" archival

sources on labour migration like mission records and government commissions on labour and industry. Instead, I chose to concentrate solely on a study using life history interviews to elaborate themes of individual and community identity in Mamre.¹²

The "community" has become a catch-all term in South Africa to which everyone attaches their own meaning. Benedict Anderson suggests that the confusion around the term exists precisely because communities exist only in people's imaginations, and have meaning only to the extent that the image of community identity is shared by a recognised group. 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.'¹³ Community studies have been a feature of social history both in South Africa and abroad, and the term has been applied with a similarly wide variety of definitions. Belinda Bozzoli's discussion on the concept of community tries to unpack the various connotations the term conjures up in South Africa, and to construct an

¹² At the same time I had been led to these insights by the development of my reading on oral history. I had participated in a reading group on oral history with Shamiel Jeppie and Nazeema Mohamed of the Western Cape Oral History Project and Tessa van Ryneveld, another masters history student. Some of the work we discussed included: Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988) Ronald Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2nd Edition, (Precedent Publications, Chicago, 1985), Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, Bloomfield, J. and Lumley, R. (trans.) (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977), Alessandro Portelli, '"The Time of My Life": Functions of Time in Oral History' *International Journal of Oral History*, vol.2, no.3, 1981; Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration', *Oral History Journal* vol.7, no.1, Spring 1979.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London, 1989) p15.

analytical concept out of a romanticised and mythologised sense of group identity.¹⁴

Inherent to the concept of community identity in Mamre is the creation of a myth of the past. Myth is used in this sense to indicate a set of images which are shared by a group of people to bind them in a sense of common origins and values. This is partly what is meant by the creation of a 'usable past', a history which has direct relevance for the present. In Mamre, community identity is bound up with having common origins within the Moravian church. The Moravian missionaries constructed the missions through the concept of a "closed community" which was self-regulating and resisted outside interference.¹⁵ Mamriers were initially provided with housing and a garden plot to cultivate, this was one of the distinctive features of the mission community from its inception in 1808. The garden plots embody a sense of communalism, sharing and self-sufficiency through which older Mamriers articulate their perception of Mamre values. Being "Moravian" also provided bonds with other Moravian congregations, in particular, with Moravian Hill in District Six, which became Mamriers' "home" in town. It became "part" of Mamre, as members of families spanned the two environments. Mamriers have a strong sense of family ties and obligations, which are reinforced by the

¹⁴ Belinda Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology in the Evolution of South African Society' in Belinda Bozzoli ed., *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987) pp1-43.

¹⁵ Helen Ludlow, 'Missions and Emancipation' especially Chapter Six, pp182-204; B. Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit: The History of the Moravian Church in South Africa, 1731-1869* (Moravian Book Depot, Genadendal, 1984) pp45-46, J. De Boer and E.M. Temmers, *The Unitas Fratrum, The Moravian Church in South Africa* (Landsdowne, 1987) pp5-10, Johannes Raum, 'The Development of the Coloured Community at Genadendal Under the Influence of the Missionaries of the United Fratrum 1792-1892' unpub. MA thesis, UCT, 1953, pp7-11.

Moravian church and mission education. Religious festivals, especially Easter, encourage active participation of all members of the community. People travel back to Mamre from town and over long distances to take part in these rituals. The church festivals are one of the tableaux that simultaneously reinforce family and community bonding.

Mamre is also rooted in a sense of space, the physical boundaries of the land which constituted the mission. But this is a flexible notion which I would argue changed over time. Part of defining boundaries is identifying the "outside", or the "other". Richard Rive captures this aspect of defensiveness in community identity in his novel *Buckingham Palace: District Six*. One of his characters, Zoot, a local poet-philosopher-cum-gang-leader, says:

'You know, it's a funny thing, but it's only in the District that I feel safe. District Six is like an island, if you follow me, an island in a sea of apartheid.'¹⁶

This sense of community as haven from a hostile outside world has resonance for Mamriers today. Yet the expression of community identity in Mamre is ambiguous and at times contradictory. On the one hand, their sense of community has always transcended spatial barriers; on the other, they express an increasing sense of invasion from after World War Two. In telling their life histories, Mamriers born in the early twentieth century talk about how the "outside" has steadily encroached on Mamre during their lifetime. The increasing pace

¹⁶ Richard Rive, *Buckingham Palace: District Six* (Heinemann, London, 1986) pp.95-96. For a discussion on the value of popular literature in research see Bodil Frederiksen, 'City Life and City Texts: Popular Knowledge and Articulation in the Slums of Nairobi' in Preben Kaarsholm ed., *Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa* (Baobab Books, Harare; James Currey, London, 1991) pp227-237. He argues that the themes used in novels are "codes", in the Freirian sense, for analysing the concerns and identity of communities in developing countries.

of urban sprawl has lessened the physical boundaries between Mamre and Cape Town. Moreover, after the 1950s Mamre itself began to look more like town as people gave up cultivating the garden plots and the village became more "suburban" as it expanded. The contrasting image of pre-World War Two rural idyll and post 1950s urban corruption is one of the main themes through which the older generation of Mamriers talk about their history.¹⁷

It was the building of Atlantis in the mid-1970s, a dormitory town constructed to house people who were themselves forcibly removed from places like District Six, that gave most Mamriers a tangible sense of apartheid and the ills of the city arriving on their doorstep. The way Mamriers talk about their history and identity today has much to do with their feeling under threat of engulfment by neighbouring Atlantis as the embodiment of the city. This perception of Atlantis as a menace, is shared ambivalently across generations. The youth can identify more closely with Atlantis. It is familiar to them, as the place where some go to high school, or work, and where they have access to facilities not available in Mamre. Older Mamriers tend to perceive Atlantis as a hot-bed of crime and vice which is invading Mamre and corrupting the younger generation. Neither view is entirely without justification. Familiarity with Atlantis does dispel its menacing visage, despite its reputation for having one of the highest violent crime rates in the country. However, a sense of the individuality and uniqueness of Mamre is assimilated by all Mamriers regardless of generation, and is part of the way they perceive their history.

¹⁷ See John and Jean Comaroff, 'the (sic) madman and the migrant: work and labour in the historical consciousness of a South African people', *American Ethnologist* vol.14, no.2, May 1987, pp191-211, who discuss 'the Tshidi fondness for viewing history in terms of a set of contrasts' p194.

The above discussion on community identity in Mamre has been informed by two approaches to research. One was the life history interviews I conducted in Mamre, and the other, the informal visits and talks with people in the village which preceded the beginning of a local history project. This process eventually led to the formation of a Mamre History Society and a distinct history project with the Mamre Moravian Youth Group. Together, these groups were the start of a Mamre History Project. Once the Project was established, we embarked on a series of workshops exploring ways of researching and presenting Mamre's history to the rest of the community. Both sets of relationships, my life history interviews and the Mamre History Project, remained fairly separate. I shall discuss them in detail in Chapters Four and Five, which evaluate both within the context of CER and oral history methodology.¹⁸

For the purposes of this introduction, I will set the scene through a discussion of oral history methodology and its use in South African history. As Bill Nasson says, the

'theory and practice of oral history is tentative; as an instrument of historical investigation it is buzzing with new ideas and fresh angles. For experimentation seems to me to be of the essence in oral history.'¹⁹

The way my research in Mamre was conducted represents a new perspective on the practice of oral history in this country. The process of dialogue I initiated with Mamriers interested in their community's history, helped to formulate their own view of Mamre, and its impact worked both ways. Their ideas and

¹⁸ The Mamre History Project refers to both the Mamre History Society and the history project undertaken by the Mamre Moravian Youth Group.

¹⁹ Bill Nasson, 'The Oral Historian and historical Formation in Cape Town' in Christopher Saunders et al eds., *Studies in the History of Cape Town 6*, (Centre for African Studies, UCT, 1988) pp14-15.

perspectives, which we discussed in workshops on oral history methodology and popularisation, shaped mine as much as did the life-history interviews.

One could begin an outline of the development of oral history by stating the obvious, that all history was originally told orally.²⁰ Oral evidence lost its prominence last century with the professionalisation of history, but people have continued to tell stories about their past in everyday conversation.²¹ It was the challenge of social historians to the elitism of academic history, to 'give voice to the voiceless' and to preserve them from the 'enormous condescension of posterity', to use E.P. Thompson's oft-quoted phrase, which brought oral evidence back on to the centre-stage.²² Their aim to democratise the historical record to include those who had been denied an honest hearing, or any hearing at all, opened up to reinterpretation whole fields of historical enquiry, for example, the history of communities, classes, women, families and ethnic and social minorities.²³

²⁰ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988) See especially Chapter Two for one of the most extended pedigrees of oral historiography. See also, David Henige *Oral Historiography* (Longman Group Ltd, Essex, 1982) Chapter One, and Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* (Hutchinson, London, 1987) especially Part One. My discussion here deals specifically with the methodology of oral history as it relates to Mamre. It does not include an analysis of oral tradition, for a discussion of this debate see Jan Vansina's classic revised as *Oral Tradition as History* (London, James Currey, 1985).

²¹ Allesandro Portelli, '"The Time of My Life"' Portelli discusses the relationship between time past and present in story telling during daily conversation and during life history interviews.

²² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971), and P. Thompson, *Voice*, op cit. p2.

²³ Raphael Samuel, '"Myth and History": A first reading', *Oral History Journal*, vol.16, no.1, Spring 1988 pp15-18.

Oral history in South Africa was incorporated into the methodology of the new Africanist historians of the late seventies, who drew on oral tradition to supplement archival sources in constructing analyses of precolonial states and their transformation under colonialism.²⁴ These studies were part of a distinctive historiographical tradition using oral evidence to study societies whose institutional and official histories were recorded orally. My research in Mamre follows from the next major development in the use of oral interviews as historical evidence in the emerging social history of the 1980s. The new social history essentially explored the "hidden histories" of communities in rural areas, especially those undergoing rapid change and proletarianisation.

Central to these studies was the examination of migrant experience, using life history interviews.²⁵ Tim Keegan's book *Facing the Storm*, which explored the life histories of four black men to examine issues of rural transformation in the twentieth century, used a narrative structure which drew heavily on the transcripts of interviews.²⁶ Yet Keegan's 'portraits', created by his artistry as a historian. He was highly interventionist in the way that the oral evidence was synthesised to create the biographical narratives. This style of oral history was the precursor to Bozzoli's *Women of Phokeng*, which takes oral history a step further. She inserts the role of the interviewer's questions directly into the text to show the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee in

²⁴ For example of the Africanist tradition Jeff Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981).

²⁵ See for example, Tim Keegan, *Rural Transformation in Industrialising South Africa* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986).

²⁶ Tim Keegan, *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1988).

the interview.²⁷ Bozzoli makes the interview relationship explicit in her text, unlike Theodore Rosengarten's classic "autobiography" of a black southern American sharecropper *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*. Nate Shaw's life story, is told in the first person as if it is dictated verbatim, although it is in fact heavily edited by Rosengarten.²⁸

Bozzoli's work follows the shift in oral history methodology internationally. The positivist approach to oral evidence as being pristine pearls of wisdom from informants who told the past "as it was" was challenged almost immediately as it emerged.²⁹ As historians acknowledged that oral history interviews were not neutral events, they began scrutinizing the way that oral evidence was manufactured. From the observation that interviews are "historical conversations", historians began to consider the dynamics inherent in the relationship between interviewers and interviewees. In the seventies it was suggested that spontaneous discourse in interviewing would reveal more hidden truths about a person's life than a structured questionnaire would.³⁰ I think historians have generally gravitated towards the middle ground in interviewing techniques. This involves critical engagement between

²⁷ Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, Introduction pp1-15.

²⁸ Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (Random House Inc., New York, 1974) Charles van Onselen is presently working on a similar biography of a black South African share-cropper, Kas Maine, which has evolved through a series of life history interviews over a number of years. Charles van Onselen, personal communication, 20/9/91.

²⁹ Paul Thompson, *Voice*, is still considered the basic "hands on" manual of oral history. In its first edition, *Voice of the Past* outlined an approach to oral history which advocated interviewing procedures, constructing questionnaires and verification of evidence which sought out "the facts". This was the methodology of his classic *The Edwardians: the Remaking of British Society* (London, Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1975).

³⁰ Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History*, pp42-44.

interviewer and interviewee in the formation of a historical conversational narrative constructed on the basis of what Grele calls the balance of 'contrariety and rapport'. Essentially, what this means is the ability to establish a relationship in an interview where the interviewer can ask probing questions of the interviewee's testimony without being aggressively confrontational or antagonistic.³¹

Oral historians also began analysing the implications of their own identities for what they were told in an interview. Of course, this is, or should be, common practice for any historian. The immediacy of oral history interviewing demands that oral historians confront head-on the influence of their own perspectives and identities in their research, which many historians underplay. Oral historians also consider how the personal characteristics of an interviewer, like class, age, gender and race, influence what the interviewee says. Debate about the relative value of insider/outsider interviewers has not been resolved.³² It remains conjecture whether the insider's familiarity with the social world of an interviewee is of greater advantage than the outsider's more immediate ability to make life 'anthropologically strange' for an interviewee and elicit explanations of what would remain obvious and unspoken between familiars.³³

Bozzoli makes a case for the role of her "insider" interviewer, Mmantho Nkotsae, as developing a rapport of intimacy and interactiveness which allowed her to explore issues of

³¹ Ronald Grele, 'Private Memories and Public Presentation: The Art of Oral History' in Ronald Grele ed., *Envelopes of Sound* pp243-273.

³² See Paul Thompson, *Voice*, pp117-125, for an extended discussion of this issue.

³³ Alice Kepler Harris, 'Introduction' in Ronald Grele ed., *Envelopes of Sound*, pp1-9, and Ronald Grele, 'Private Memories', *ibid.*, and Paul Thompson, *Voice*, p.120.

consciousness which would otherwise not have been revealed.³⁴ In Mamre, people who I interviewed, to whom I introduced myself as an Australian student studying South African history, were often at pains to explain to me details of their lives, and the effects of apartheid, which they would probably not have needed or wanted to explain to other South Africans. Issues of the ambiguities of racial classification for Mamriers, the impact of forced removals, and the way that people told me what "coloured" identity meant to them, were told with a frankness that matched the candour of my questions as an "outsider". The pros and cons of insider versus outsider interviewing are endlessly debatable, but for all oral historians it is essential to explicitly state how interviews were conducted and thus evidence manufactured. I shall outline in detail my own interviewing methodology at the end of this introduction, and interpret how I think this shaped the testimony.

Accompanying the refinement of techniques of oral history, has been a reconsideration of what people were saying in interviews. A qualitative shift has occurred from extracting "facts" to listening for what silences, "lies", and the structure of language could reveal about consciousness.³⁵ As oral history methodology developed in sophistication, it has become more interdisciplinary. Raphael Samuel concurs this is

'...one of the secret unofficial ambitions of oral history...to break down the division between history and

³⁴ Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, pp7-12.

³⁵ See for example: Luisa Passerini's study of 'collective amnesia' of a fascist past in an Italian town, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, Allesandro Portelli, "The Time of My Life", and 'Uchronic Dreams; Working Class Memory and Possible Worlds', *Oral History Journal*, vol.16, no.2, Autumn 1988, pp46-56, which explores the issue of delusion about one's role in the events of the past as part of constructing a meaningful life story.

and anthropology, and psychoanalysis, to break down the division between past and present, between outward history and inner thought.'³⁶

The deconstruction of memory has thus become a central component in the methodology of oral history.

At the heart of exploring the relationship between past and present is the issue of creating myths of the past. Most oral historians have had to confront interviewees who recall the past through a golden glow of nostalgia. But nostalgia is more than just 'memory with the pain removed'.³⁷ On the one hand, nostalgia within a life story is the perspective from which many, but not all, old people view their youth. On the other, nostalgia is central to the forging of individual and community identity.

Nostalgia is part of an 'invented tradition' for a community's identity, which is expressed as contrasts between the "good old days" and the often uncomfortable, troublesome present.³⁸ It highlights specific images and values within a community to stress the importance of continuity in a rapidly changing world. Nostalgia, as part of both individual and collective memory, is bound up with the construction of a usable past.³⁹

In South Africa, historians using oral interviews to research urban history have particular cause to take note of nostalgia.

³⁶ Raphael Samuel, "Myth and History", p.16.

³⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985) p8.

³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Tradition' in E Hobsbawm and T Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Past and Present Publications, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983) pp1-14.

³⁹ Ronald Grele, 'Listen to their Voices', pp33-42.

Oral historians have concentrated on documenting the oral history of work, popular culture, leisure, language and life in communities often broken up under forced removals, like District Six in Cape Town. Their very destruction has influenced the way in which they are remembered, and oral historians need to take account of their own role in the creation of nostalgic myths.⁴⁰

It is only very recently that the issues of text and language, and nostalgia and memory, which have increasingly been informing debates on oral history internationally, have been raised in South Africa. Issues of memory and identity are being analysed through post-modernist literary theory:

'...everyday oral stories demonstrate the same complexities in manipulating points of view, identity of reference and multiplicity of meaning which have hitherto been treated as special qualities of literary language.'⁴¹

While Bill Nasson has made some suggestive comments about nostalgia and the creation of myth in the history of District Six, nobody in South Africa has yet included an analysis of nostalgia in a case study of oral history.⁴²

⁴⁰ See for example, Bill Nasson, 'The Oral Historian and Historical Formation in Cape Town' in C Saunders et al eds., *Studies in the History of Cape Town 6* 'She preferred living in a cave with Harry the Snake Catcher': Towards an Oral History of Popular Leisure and Class Expression in District Six, Cape Town c1920s-1950s' in P Bonner et al eds., *Holding Their Ground* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 1989), 'Oral History and the Reconstruction of District Six' in S Jeppie and C Soudien eds., *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present* (Buchu Books, Cape Town, 1990) pp44-66.

⁴¹ Isabel Hofmeyer, 'Introduction: Exploring Experiential Testimony - A Selection of History Workshop Papers', *Social Dynamics*, vol.14, no.2, 1988 pp1-6.

⁴² Bill Nasson, 'Oral History and the Reconstruction of District Six', pp3-6.

I analyse nostalgia in Mamre on two levels which reflect the divisions in my research methodology between the life history interviews and the Mamre History Project. What alerted me to the importance of the issue was the very fact that nostalgia was such a strong component of the way older Mamriers talked about the community's history. Nostalgia within the life history interviews is part of the formation of both individual and collective memory in Mamre.

Issues of memory and nostalgia have drawn oral historians into the realms of psychoanalysis, but very little is actually known about how memory works. Moreover, memory itself is shrouded in myths. These range from beliefs in reincarnation to claims by neurologists that they can find the "key to unlock memory" in the brain.⁴³ The link between memory and forgetting in the development of personality is very strong. While personality depends on self-continuity or memory, to be unable to forget anything is actually a severe personality disorder.⁴⁴

Throughout our lives we continually revise our self-image through reconstructing and reordering our memories or life histories, a process which Agnes Hankiss calls the 'ontology of the self'. This ontological process, the continuous re-working of our own life history, can be contrasted with the unselfconscious ontogenetical process of constructing a self-image which takes place during childhood. The difference is that the post-childhood ontological process involves a constant rewriting of one's own life "script".

'The adult person's life-model is probably the result of numerous "mutations"; key events, either personal or historic in nature, which constantly lead or force

⁴³ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* gives a fascinating survey of memory and nostalgia, covering the history of both concepts.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp17,197 and 205.

that person to select new models, a new strategy of life.⁴⁵

What are the implications of the speculative science of memory for oral historians? Firstly, there have been some comforting tests showing that, in all probability, memory does not fade dramatically with time. Psychologists have labelled what oral historians have experienced, that old people go through a process of "life review" where their memory of life becomes more fixed and ordered, with recall of long-term memory sometimes improving.⁴⁶ Oral historians need to be aware of the processes of memory and forgetting in their interviews, and the detailed examination of both have become a major preoccupation in the field.⁴⁷ I will examine the relationship between memory, life history and nostalgia in the formation of identity in Chapter Four, through an examination of my "walk down memory lane" with my interviewees. Some older Mamriers talk about how their lives were hard because of poverty, yet they speak nostalgically about the virtues of sharing and co-operation in Mamre which they feel have disappeared with material "progress" in the community. Others are less nostalgic, their judgement of progress is more ambivalent in relation to their own memories of past hardships.

While oral historians consider the complexities of memory and nostalgia, and the way they relate in the creation of life history, there has been a beneficial spin-off from the process

⁴⁵ Agnes Hankiss, 'Ontologies of the Self: On the Mythological Rearranging of One's Life-History' in D Berteaux ed., *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences* (Sage Pubs. Inc., Beverly Hills, 1981) pp203-210.

⁴⁶ Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History*, pp120-122.

⁴⁷ See Luisa Passerini's report on the final session of the International Conference on Oral History, Aix-en-Provence, 26 September 1982, which focused on memory in oral history as a major theme of the conference. *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 15, Spring 1983 pp195-196.

of life history interviewing for old people themselves. Oral historians in co-operation with health workers have been in the forefront of reinterpreting the psychological effect of remembering on old people. There has been a major reversal in gerontology over the last twenty years from a belief that to "live in the past" was pathological, to a recognition that reminiscing is therapeutic for the elderly. Reminiscence therapy has been devised by psychologists and historians to help the elderly come to terms with their lives and old age.⁴⁸

I had experienced how much some of my interviewees in Mamre enjoyed talking about their lives as a form of emotional release, and made a proposal to the Mamre Community Health Project psychologists about the possibility of setting up a reminiscence group for some of the more isolated old people in the community.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, my proposal was rejected on

⁴⁸ See Paul Thompson, *Voice*, pp160-165; A.D. Norris and M Abu El Eileh, 'Reminiscence Groups: A therapy for both elderly patients and their staff', *Oral History Journal* vol.11, no.1, Spring 1983 pp27-30, John Adams, 'Reminiscence in the geriatric ward: an undervalued resource' in *Oral History Journal* vol.12, no.2, Autumn 1984, pp54-59, Peter Coleman, 'The past in the present - a study of elderly people's attitudes to reminiscence' *Oral History Journal* vol.14, no.1, Spring 1986 pp50-59, Mel Wright, 'Priming the Past' *Oral History Journal*, vol.14. no.1, Spring 1986, pp60-65, Cahal Dallat and Faith Gibson, 'The Playback Project: "A Walk in History"', *Oral History Journal*, vol.15, no.2, Autumn 1987, pp46-57, Patricia Duffin, 'Reminiscence: At the sharp end', *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.1, Spring 1989 pp15-21, Joanna Bornat, 'Oral History as a Social Movement: Reminiscence and Older People', *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.2, Autumn 1989 pp16-24, Andrew Norris, 'Clinic or Client? A Psychologists case for reminiscence', *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.2, Autumn 1989, pp26-30, Helen Clark et al, 'Oral History and reminiscence in Lothian' *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.2, Autumn 1989, pp35-42, Tim Smith and Rob Wilkinson 'Producing a Local Recall Pack', *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.2, Autumn 1989, pp43-47.

⁴⁹ I also gave them the Reminiscence Therapy literature listed in footnote 48 to read, and volunteered to assist in the project. After a lengthy meeting with me, the health workers met together and decided against the idea. I will not examine reminiscence therapy further in the thesis because it did not happen in Mamre, although I believe it could be a valuable contribution for oral

the basis that a request for reminiscence therapy had not been initiated by the community itself. To some extent, I think the stalemate was a result of conflict between my own sense of accountability to the Mamre community, and that of the medical professionals. I believe that a reminiscence group could be one of the most tangible ways for me to give something back to the oldest generation of Mamriers. However, I am not a psychologist, and reminiscence therapy needs the facilitation and monitoring of health workers. I have discussed these ideas with the Mamre History Society and hope that in the future, they may follow their initial enthusiasm and take up the idea.

The above discussion on a proposal for a reminiscence group in Mamre brings me back to the issue of the Mamre History Project and my relationship with the community as a CER student. The formation of a Mamre History Society and a history project with the Mamre Moravian Youth Group was the outcome of months of informal meetings in the community. It was part of the challenge of my research in Mamre, which up until then focused on the life history interviews, to encourage others to come together to research their own history. My agenda was informed by the tradition of people's history in Britain, North America and Australia. In South Africa, people's history has been the particular focus of the Wits History Workshop, and my interest was especially in the "Write Your Own History Project".⁵⁰ The

historians and health workers to make within a community.

⁵⁰ Susan Porter Benson et al., 'Editor's Introduction' to *Radical History Review: Presenting the Past: The Public and History*, Issue 25, Winter 1981, pp1-8. Luli Callinicos, 'Popular History in the Eighties', Belinda Bozzoli 'Intellectuals, Audiences and Histories: South African Experiences, 1978-1988' and Leslie Witz 'The Write Your Own History Project', *Radical History Review*, Issue 46/47, 1990; Luli Callinicos, 'The "People's Past": Towards Transforming the Present' in Belinda Bozzoli ed., *Class Community and Conflict* pp44-64, Leslie Witz, *Write Your Own History* (SACHED/Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1988). See for the Western Cape, Andre Odendaal, 'Developments in Popular History in the Western Cape in the 1980s' *Radical History Review*, no.46/47, 1990 pp369-375, and Shamiel Jeppie, 'Local

aim according to the co-ordinator of the project, Leslie Witz, was to empower ordinary people through the process of skills training in historical research to engage critically with the past, and 'to become the producers of their own history.'⁵¹ My aim was similar, except that in addition I was simultaneously undergoing skills training in education methodology with CER and conducting my own academic research.

Like many historians who attempt to popularise their research, there were tensions and contradictions in the process of encouraging Mamriers to research their own history. One of these was the problem shared by the Baltimore Neighbourhood Heritage Project of moving 'beyond trivia and nostalgia'. Learning from her mistakes, Linda Shopes advocates a problem-centred approach to local history which explores an issue 'of contemporary significance but with historical routes - and future ramifications'.⁵² Ironically, perhaps, a focus on labour migration may well have been an appropriate issue in Mamre, but my interpretation of my role did not include encouraging a primary focus on my own initial research agenda. I had also shifted my interest towards an exploration of community identity, so encouraging people in the projects to follow their own interests was partly an evolution of my more inclusive conception of Mamre's history. Instead, I became part of the History Project as a facilitator and a participant.

History and Oral History in Cape Town: Some Reflections', unpublished paper presented at the *Wits History Workshop: Popular History Workshop*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 8-9 February 1990.

⁵¹ Leslie Witz, 'The Write Your Own History Project' p378.

⁵² Linda Shopes, 'The Baltimore Neighbourhood Heritage Project: Oral History and Community Involvement', *Radical History Review* Issue 25, 1981, pp27-44, and 'Beyond Trivia and Nostalgia: Collaborating in the Construction of a Local History', *International Journal of Oral History*, vol.5, no.3, November 1984 pp151-158.

The Mamre History Society and the Moravian Youth Group decided that along with the process of research it was equally important to show other Mamriers what they had achieved. They felt that tangible results would generate more interest in the overall project, and they could then pursue more ambitious long-term projects in the future. The History Society decided to work on an exhibition, and the Moravian Youth on a calendar. We considered that these were the most appropriate formats because we wanted to reach as many Mamriers as possible. An exhibition could attract a wide audience and we planned to have a calendar in every home. A booklet was considered inappropriate because of the low literacy levels in the community and the probability that it would have limited appeal. Both projects were to be based on oral history interviews and picture research in the community.⁵³ We embarked on a series of workshops on concepts of people's history, choosing themes in Mamre's history, oral history interviewing techniques, drawing up funding proposals, and resource production. At each step, people were encouraged to report back on the progress of their interviews and research as the themes such as work, music, sport, youth and women, were divided up between the members of the two groups.

The process was by no means smooth and trouble-free, an honest evaluation needs to assess the difficulties in sustaining community projects with limited time and resources. Often, I travelled the road to Mamre in vain. Cancelled meetings, uneven attendance, waning commitment amongst some of the Youth Group, problems of over commitment to work and other community groups by the members of the History Society, and lack of funding, all played their part in shaping the way that the history project progressed. While the project was considered valuable and exciting by the people involved, there was a

⁵³ Raphael Samuel, 'Local History and Oral History', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 1, Spring 1986, pp191-208.

tendency for the enthusiasm of creating a "people's history of Mamre" to become nostalgic in its presentation. This is an important issue in the methodology of oral history. As a method of research, oral history is never neutral; it can be used to construct a more democratic but critical approach to history, or it can be overwhelmingly conservative in a presentation of a nostalgic past which does not encourage critical thought.⁵⁴

Where the Mamre History Project had its greatest success was in presenting the fruits of its labour to the community, who responded with overwhelming support and enthusiasm. The exhibition was launched at the Church Bazaar and attracted an estimated 700 people over five hours. The Youth Group worked on making a calendar on Mamre's history, and sold over 900 copies in the village. Since then, the History Society has been approached by other community groups who want to research their own history. The long-term aim of opening a museum-tea room in Mamre which was raised at the first meeting, seems now to have generated the support of the Moravian Church and the Village Management Board.

I will evaluate the process and content of these projects in detail in Chapter Five, but for the purposes of this introduction, I wanted to raise some of the more problematic issues linked to a local history project in Mamre. The project challenged the usual written presentation of Mamre's history, but it also tended to reinforce some of the nostalgic themes in the community's identity and history. I believe this can be partly explained by the previous discussion about community identity and the creation of a usable past in Mamre. Both the exhibition and the calendar presented images of the uniqueness

⁵⁴ Raphael Samuel, 'People's History' in Raphael Samuel ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981) ppxiv-xxxix, and Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History*, p20.

and individuality of Mamre expressed through the lives of ordinary Mamriers.

Whereas Chapter Five concentrates on an evaluation of the Mamre History Project, the other chapters are based largely upon the life history interviews.⁵⁵ The variety of circumstances under which the interviews occurred have implications for the way they are analysed. The core group of formal interviews include 48 interviewees in 42 interviews. Five interviews were with couples who both told their life histories, one was an interview with two sisters. The rest were individual interviews with 20 women and 16 men. I was the main interviewer in all interviews, although there was often a translator present, mostly either Mercia Arendse, or one of her assistants, Desi Arends and Gavin Collins. On occasion, someone else came along. One of my colleagues, Helen Ludlow, who was also researching Mamre's history around the period of emancipation, participated in two interviews. In another two interviews, Charles Titus, a Mamrier studying at the Moravian Seminary, came along to help translate. In seven interviews I was alone with the people being interviewed - except for the grandchildren or neighbours popping in and out, or barking dogs and cackling chickens, or the odd car rumbling past - all of which seem to interrupt more incessantly on the tapes than they did at the time of the interview! One fact I can state with absolute certainty is that the idea of a quiet peaceful rural village is a fantasy; constant noise is nearer reality.

⁵⁵ Throughout this thesis I have used peoples' real names because I believe this is an important issue of accountability in research. Colin Murray raises the point that 'protecting' interviewees through anonymity means denying accountability to either the people or community one is studying, or to the academic community. Colin Murray 'Anthropology and Social History: Reflections on Fieldwork in Lesotho and the Orange Free State in the 1970s and 1980s' unpub. paper *Africa Seminar*, CAS, UCT, September 1991, p2. Yet using pseudonyms is a common practice amongst oral historians. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity should be decided in consultation with interviewees, rather than autonomously by historians.

The only constant factor in the interviews was my presence; I attended all the interviews, and it is upon this basis that I can claim a certain intimacy with them. This is important because the interviews are themselves "events", what is captured on tape or in notes is not the full story of the interaction. Often what is told in passing, the facial expressions and other gestures have meanings which cannot be recorded. Moreover, the interviews mostly take place in people's own homes, which give context to their life stories. In almost every instance, the interviewee would illustrate their life story with reference to photographs and memorabilia, and even the furniture or the very structure of their houses. Although no one has specifically analysed the significance between them, I intuitively believe that there must be a difference between the way old people formulate their life histories when they are living in their own homes, compared to when they live in an institution like an old age home. As Jean-Paul Sartre declares:

'...people in houses...lived in the middle of their legacies and presents, and each piece of furniture is a memento ... they have kept everything. The past is a luxury of ownership. Where then should I keep mine? One cannot put one's past in one's pocket; one must have a house in which to keep it.'⁵⁶

The other constant factor in the interviews was that they all took place in Mamre, everyone lived there and to differing degrees told their life histories self-consciously as members of the oldest generation in the community, who therefore wanted

⁵⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (Penguin, London, 1982). See also interview with Ernestina Joshua, who speaks about her furniture as all she has left from her life in Salt River where she was forced leave and return to Mamre because of the Group Areas Act. 'I bought it there. Daarom wil ek mos nie part daarmee nie...[they have] absolutely a sentimental value to me this old things.' pp21-22. Other interviewees also refer constantly to mementos and photos which decorate their homes.

to command the respect they believed due to them.⁵⁷ This is one of the issues already raised, that in constructing the ontology of the self, individuals constantly redefine their past to co-exist with their present.

To some extent a "life history interview" is a misnomer, because people tell their life stories as members of a family and within the web of social relationships of community and work.⁵⁸ Thus life history interviews reveal the social networks that shape identity and community.⁵⁹ In Mamre, during the first half of the twentieth century these networks extended beyond the village, to the surrounding farms and into Cape Town.

One of the questions I have been asked repeatedly by other historians is how I am establishing "representivity" in my oral history interviews. I have adopted a method of 'saturation' in interviewing used by other historians to verify their evidence.⁶⁰ The life histories of the Mamriers I interviewed share common themes that alerted me to issues of community identity in the first place. Over and over again I heard the same stories about life in Mamre, childhood chores and

⁵⁷ See Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, p11. for a similar motivation amongst the old women being interviewed.

⁵⁸ Franco Ferratorri, 'On the Autonomy of the Biographical Method' in Daniel Bertaux ed., *Biography and Society*, p24. Ferratorri deals specifically with this as a methodological issue, however the range of oral history studies which verify this without making it explicit is immense.

⁵⁹ Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration', pp26-32.

⁶⁰ Pat Straw and Stephen Kendrick, 'The Subtlety of Strategies: towards an understanding of the meaning of family life stories', *Life Stories*, no.4, 1988, p37. For an extended discussion of this method see Daniel Bertaux and Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'Life Stories in the Bakers' Trade' in Daniel Bertaux ed., *Biography and Society*, pp186-188.

schooling, work and travelling between Mamre and town, coming home for Easter, and working in the garden plots.

In Chapters Two and Three, I have focused the historical narrative of Mamre on the first half of the twentieth century because that is the period when the oldest generation of Mamriers, the people I interviewed, were born and entered the workforce. Together these people form a 'cohort' which provided a coherent body of evidence to analyse.⁶¹

Alternatively I could have done cross-generational interviews, but that would have provided a smaller sample in each age group. Besides, there was a sense of priority in interviewing the oldest people, borne out by the fact that some of them have died since the interviews.

The role of translators is linked to an analysis of language in the Mamre interviews. Not only were there a variety of translators present, but there were various combinations of Afrikaans and English spoken. Some people were fully bilingual and were quite pleased to practice their English with me. Others felt more comfortable speaking entirely in Afrikaans. Most interviewees spoke a mixture of both languages which I could mostly understand. I was not confident enough of my command of Afrikaans to conduct interviews by myself where I knew that interviewees preferred to converse in Afrikaans. The interviewees were generally relaxed about the issue, and forgave me for not speaking "die taal" fluently because I was a foreigner. This indicated they would have been less tolerant of a South African who spoke to them in English. One interviewee, David Conrad, suggested I drill a hole in my head so my brain could absorb Afrikaans more quickly!

⁶¹ Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History*, pp125-126, Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, p6, also uses the 'cohort' approach to her interviews to substantiate verification.

I have made sure that the interviews have been transcribed verbatim and have used them throughout the thesis in their original form in italics, instead of translating directly into English.⁶² This both preserves the expression of language by the interviewee and allows other researchers using the transcripts of the interviews to approach them as undiluted text. One of the fascinating aspects of the way that many Mamriers expressed themselves was in their use of bilingualism and code switching, which I have reproduced in the text of this thesis. It is often through this versatile use of language that one is able to interpret what meaning and emphasis interviewees are giving to what they say. However, this thesis does not explore oral testimony in Mamre through a linguistic analysis. Kay McCormick's research on language in District Six is one of the first contributions to an analysis of language in a South African community. Her socio-linguistic study offers insights into the use of language and code switching which can be used by historians to explore class and identity.⁶³

Obviously my use of a translator in some of the interviews was not ideal, and it is difficult for me to assess the impact of the language variable in the transcripts. In all cases except two, I believe there was a sincere and concerted effort at open communication in the interview relationship. Communication included the presence of the translator, whether it was Mercia, Desi or Gavin. As the interviews took place fairly informally,

⁶² This is not always the case in oral history projects in South African universities. In some cases, interviews are transcribed directly into English from the vernacular, which means that the transcripts reflect the interpretation of the transcriber. Having spoken to some professional translators, this appears to be less than satisfactory because of the difficulty of accurate translating. The ideal solution would be to have the original and translation together in columns within a transcript.

⁶³ Kay McCormick, 'The Vernacular of District Six' in S Jeppie and C Soudien eds., *The Struggle for District Six*, pp88-109.

I did not structure the event through a questionnaire but through a guided series of questions. In each case, I allowed the interviewee to prioritise aspects of their life histories because I believed this would give a strong indication about the formation of their identity.

Sometimes this would result in a change of focus by the interviewer from addressing me to directing their attention to Desi or Gavin. This happened most often when men were talking about their work and about working in the gardens in Mamre. But it would be too simplistic to divide the interviews by gender in this fashion. Both Desi and Gavin were fairly passive translators, sometimes they wouldn't contribute at all if I was managing to communicate sufficiently with the interviewee. On the other hand, Mercia was far more interventionist in the interviews, often drawing people out in discussion, but sometimes being too leading in her enthusiasm. However, being closer in age to the interviewees, Mercia was able to relate directly to their lived experience and prompt their memories. I can merely point to the issue of variety across the body of interviews and reiterate my belief that as an outside interviewer I was able to ask detailed questions that would have been too obvious for a Mamrier.

The other methodological issue I need to address here is that the life history interviews took place within one session rather than a series of interviews with each individual. I had intended to do follow-up interviews with my interviewees, but as the emphasis of my involvement in the community shifted to the Mamre History Project I had less time to devote to the life history interviews. I also decided to continue interviewing different people to verify the general trends rather than focusing on a smaller range of life experience. The initial interviews were of sufficient depth and breadth to have raised issues of memory, identity and consciousness which I analyse in the thesis.

As I became more involved in the History Project, I also began to motivate people to start their own interviewing. This was part of the process of accountability to the community, to empower Mamriers to do their own oral history research. I was actually taking up the issues of community identity within a different context, which itself was a verification of my life history interviews. To some extent it would have defeated the purpose of my involvement in CER to continue the life history interviews as an autonomous sphere of research; my priority became to make sure Mamriers could engage in the process of making history themselves.

This also helps to explain the focus of this thesis. The life history interviews could be used in many ways, such as an examination of the development of "coloured ethnicity". I have chosen a focus which reflects the main concerns of the interviewees and the Mamre History Project, not because I want to avoid the taboo issue of race. This is a methodological point in the use of oral history, a contrast between extracting information from interviews, and focussing on the way that interviewees prioritised issues around identity and community. There were a few interviewees who consciously discussed their identity in terms of being "coloured", but for most, this was not their major defining category. This was verified in my experience of the History Project; people were concerned about their identity as Mamriers, not as "coloureds".

This thesis "makes history" in a number of different ways. Following on from this introduction, which has contextualised the issues to be examined in the thesis, I have used the life history interviews in a dialogue between narrative and analysis in the progression of chapters.

Chapter Two breaks away from the conventional use of oral history transcripts and weaves a story about the lives of fourteen Mamriers in the first half of the twentieth century. The themes of migration and community identity, change and

continuity, are explored through these Mamriers' own words and memories about their families and their own life experiences, with very little analytical intervention on my part. I am, of course, the silent authorial voice in the way that these biographies are interwoven together to form a coherent story, but the voices of Mamriers dominate the narrative. I have chosen these 14 people out of the 48 I interviewed because specific instances in their life stories clearly raise the theoretical issues explored in this thesis. The choice of these individuals was somewhat arbitrary. Although each character has a certain 'feeling tone', I could have used almost any combination of interviewees to make similar points.⁶⁴ To have included more than fourteen would have made the narrative incoherent, and the aim was to introduce characters who will appear throughout the thesis, where I also integrate the other interviewees where possible.

The creation of a "Mamre Story" is not just an innovation in terms of oral history writing. Part of the whole CER theoretical approach to education methodology is to transcend the separation between the construction of academia and knowledge generated in the community. Popularisation should not involve a simplification of complex ideas and historical processes. I have written the Mamre story to break down the barriers between these two audiences, to introduce both academic and community historians (and any interested reader) to the issues addressed throughout this thesis. Moreover, at the first meeting of the History Society in Mamre, people wanted me to write about the life histories of the Mamriers I had interviewed, and this chapter forms part of that process.

⁶⁴ Studs Terkel uses the concept 'feeling tone' to describe how he selects people to interview, insofar as they are individuals yet representative of life experiences shared by others. This was partly the spirit in which I chose the interviewees for the Mamre Story. See "Riffs and Improvisations: An Interview with Studs Terkel (by Ronald Grele)" in Ronald Grele ed., *Envelopes of Sound* pp23-25.

In the same way, the preface constructs "the setting and the action" using an interplay of illustrations and text to situate the reader within the broad structure of the thesis and to introduce Mamre within that context.⁶⁵

Chapter Three links into the Mamre Story by drawing out the analytical threads in a more conventionally academic style. It reiterates the issue of the impact of space and distance on Mamriers' identity by exploring community and occupational structures in both Mamre and Cape Town.

This thesis creates within each chapter different meanings of the history of Mamre. Each history implicitly intersects with a particular methodological or historiographical issue. It involves the progressive peeling away of layers in Mamriers' identity; because identity, like memory, like history, is not fixed. It is a process under continual construction and deconstruction. I argue in this thesis that it is the interplay between collective memory and present experience of life in Mamre that constructs community identity. Part of the process of creating a usable past in Mamre today involves the reassertion of the collective memory of Mamriers' lived experience in the early twentieth century. Nostalgic memories of a bygone era providing moral lessons for the younger Mamriers can be used to produce a dialogue across generations. Mamriers' concept of preserving their community's heritage thus refers not only to material culture, but to the memory of all Mamriers.

⁶⁵ My preface draws self-consciously on the innovative approach to introducing 'The Setting and The Action' by Rhys Isaac in his brilliant book, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1982).

CHAPTER TWO
THE MAMRE STORY
AN ORAL HISTORY c1900 - 1950

On a clear day one can see Table Mountain from the cemetery in Mamre. The mountain rises on the horizon; during the hazy heat of summer it seems further than fifty kilometres away, but in the crisp clear air of autumn it draws nearer, and seems more a part of the village. The mountain doesn't dominate the landscape of Mamre the way it looms above Cape Town, a giant weather-vane for the locals who constantly glance in its direction to check on the elements. For Mamriers, Table Mountain forms more of a backdrop to their own central point of reference.

The koppie, inhabited by the cemetery, has the best view of the village. It spreads out below and merges with the surrounding fields to Louwskloof in the east and the snow-white dunes to the west which lead to the sea at Bok Bay, and the well-travelled road to town. The koppie is also a favourite picnic spot for the young folk. They can socialise away from the gaze of their families, while still keeping an eye on home below. Often, one encounters a stranger there, painting the scene with its compact white-washed thatched roofed cottages, and the well-tended abundant garden plots in front dissected by the Mooimaakrivier. Mamriers agreed with the artists' view that their home was peaceful and picturesque, and more than a few homes were decorated with watercolours from visiting artists who had partaken of Mamriers' hospitality.

This particular autumn Sunday in 1902, a crowd had gathered in front of the Moravian Church, and even from a distance one could tell that their mood was far from tranquil. In fact, there had been considerable tension within the community during the war. Rumours had swept through the village like veld-fires that Reverend Kunick and the other missionaries were Boer

sympathisers, and maybe even members of the Afrikaner Bond! Quite a few Mamriers were making their living spanning their oxen and carts for the British cause, and tensions had come to a head when Matthew Heathly and his friends raised the Union Jack in the church yard at the end of the Siege of Mafikeng.¹ Kunick refused to allow it. Heathly responded by petitioning the Government, accusing the missionaries of treason. He and his followers had even gone so far as to organise the "Coloured Political Association of Mamre" and had suggested that Mamriers expel the Moravians and replace them with an Anglican Church.²

Heathly didn't win many Mamriers' hearts to that cause, but tension was still thick amongst the people and in the Church. This was the beginning of Mamriers' break from secular control by the Moravian Church, and nine years later, Heathly was elected onto the first independent Management Board.³ The worry on everyone's mind on this Sunday morning though, was the news of Plague in town.⁴ It had been announced in Church last week that the Government had decreed that all coloureds who wanted to leave Cape Town had to carry passes saying they were clean. That meant no-one could come home, or go to town for that matter, without going to get a pass. It was plain to see

¹ Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991) pp 68 and pp163-164.

² B. Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit: The History of the Moravian Church in South Africa, Western Cape Province, 1869-1980* (Genadendal, Moravian Book Depot, 1984) pp69-71.

³ Austen Joemat, *De Groenecloof-Mamre: Van Toeke tot Vandag* (Cape Town, 1988) pp10-16.

⁴ Elizabeth van Heyningen, 'Public Health and Society in Cape Town, 1890 to 1910', unpub. PhD thesis, UCT, 1989.

that the regulations only applied to coloureds, which raised everyone's blood.⁵

Reverend Schreve announced that he had been commanded to arrest anyone without a pass and take them to the Magistrate in Malmesbury. Everyone was talking about how Heathly and the others had escaped from town in defiance. They were hiding in the veld. Now the Church was closed after Pentecost service and the subject on everyone's lips was whether or not their families in town would make it home for Easter. News had come from town that several prominent Genadendalers had already tried to get home. They'd been arrested and sentenced to eight days hard labour on the roads, dressed in convict garb with shaven heads.⁶ People were shocked and outraged at the invasion of their liberty. Easter was the one time of year that everyone came together in Mamre. It was the most important community festival of the year, and often the only time Mamriers working in Cape Town had a chance to come home.

Simon Petrus Magerman, Petrus August Pick and Andreas Johannes were three Mamriers stuck in town. Petrus worked at a shop in Hanover Street, and during the week stayed with the Johannes family in Waterkant Street. Simon Magerman worked down the road '*daar met die planke stroop ... soos daar, en groot meule*'. Mr and Mrs Johannes worked at the E K Green distillery in Somerset Road. His brother worked there too, but he stayed in Upper Ashley Street with Pauline Facolyn and her husband, because there wasn't enough space in the house in Waterkant Street, with Simon and Petrus staying there already.⁷

⁵ B. Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, pp73-74.

⁶ Ibid, pp74-75.

⁷ Adam Pick, p1-4, Magdalena Johannes, p4, Simon Magerman, pp3-4.

*'They also on the weekends they come home, and then Sunday afternoon, they pack up again. They walk to town. And they'd all walk together, and they were talking and walking, and then, you see, you're not so lonely.'*⁸ Or at least they'd walk about ten miles, laden with their weekly food supplies in bags on their backs, to Kalabaskraal to catch the train to town.⁹

But this weekend, no-one was walking home, and the men had come together at the house in Waterkant Street to talk about what to do. There were Mamriers scattered all over the town. Most of the women were working in service, and would only see each other on a Wednesday evening and Sunday afternoon in the Chapel at Moravian Hill, District Six. The men were working all over the place, on the docks, in shops, on the roads, anywhere they could find work. And they would board during the week, or by the month, mostly with relatives or friends from Mamre or one of the other Moravian mission stations who had settled in town. Sometimes a group of men would get together and rent a room to share. One could always find a place to stay with Moravians, and news travelled freely in town about jobs and rooms, as well as travelling home with friends whenever they could make the journey.

It had been like that for some time now, Moravians were long established in town. Moravian Hill Chapel had been built in 1886 to accommodate the scattered sheep of the mission stations working in town. There had been problems of people going astray in town, and getting drunk. Worse still, there had been quite a number of Moravian women boarding with Malays and then getting married as Moslems. So the missionaries had sent Reverend Hickel from Mamre to gather the flock together,

⁸ Adam Pick, p3.

⁹ Magdalena Johannes, p4.

especially as it was the Mamriers who first went into town in such numbers.¹⁰

Families and friends were spread everywhere between town and Mamre. Families would send their daughters as young as ten years old into town to nurse-girl jobs arranged by their mothers, aunties or sisters. An individual wasn't so much a free agent as part of an extended family. It sometimes happened that in a family the oldest children were sent out to work at around twelve years old, because the family was struggling and they needed the money. By the time the youngest ones were at school, the family could afford to support them all the way through to teacher's college. It went like that sometimes. Where you were in the family was important in deciding your future. Unless, of course, you came from a family like the Aprils, who had their own business and could afford to support their children's education for as long as they wished. But few people had that opportunity before the Second World War.

So family fortunes waxed and waned over time. And even the idea of who was in one's family was flexible. When there were too many mouths to feed, or if a family had all girl-children and needed a boy, or if there was an aunty with no children of her own, it wasn't unusual for a child to be sent to live with them.¹¹

There were lots of children adopted too. Dora Petersen, who was married to a St Helena man and living in Cape Town, didn't have any children. She was a midwife in town. *'So, you see, [in] those days, girls didn't have illegitimate children, and she adopted...[Anna Catherine] and brought her up.'* Anna was a

¹⁰ B. Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, pp16-22.

¹¹ Simon Magerman, p8.

European, and so was another girl, Rachel, Dora adopted.¹² Those children were most likely to have been the illegitimate children of domestic workers from Mamre who came to Dora to deliver their babies.¹³ But it's difficult to tell, because Dora wouldn't give details about who the babies' mothers were.

The most important thing for Mamriers was that the links between the people in the village and in town were strong, and could be relied upon. Like all migrant communities, Mamriers depended on the established networks to make the most of opportunities within all their social spheres. That might mean looking out for a good char job in town for a sister or a friend. It could also mean having access to child-minding in Mamre for married couples in which both parents worked full-time in town. More often than not, it was grandparents retired in Mamre who looked after the children. This is a feature common to many migrating communities who sent their economically active people into town, while the rest of the family remained in the countryside.¹⁴

People living in Mamre were not just the very old and young. The town workers would come home either weekly, monthly or yearly, depending on their jobs. Only the men would walk every week though, because their wives and children, or parents, were staying in Mamre and would prepare their weekly provisions for them, which made walking home economical because time was free

¹² Susan Philander, p5, Magdalena Johannes, p6-7.

¹³ Sandra Burman and Margaret Naude, 'Bearing a Bastard: The Social Consequences of Illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1896-1939' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.17, no.3, September 1991, pp373-413. They also discuss how white women would abandon or "baby farm" their unwanted children. It doesn't appear that children adopted in Mamre were baby farmed, although they may have been the abandoned babies of women not from Mamre.

¹⁴ See, for example, Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, pp220-239.

on the weekends and food was expensive in town. Generally, people would come home as often as possible, particularly for special events and festivals.

Such a special event was the marriage between Wilhelm Johannes and Rebecca de Bruyn in 1910. Rebecca had been adopted by her aunt and uncle, the Liedermans, in Mamre when her own father had remarried. Her other aunt, Miss Liederman, was a prominent Mamrier, running her own house-front store, and Rebecca had worked for her. Miss Liederman, whom Rebecca called Nanna, was a formidable character, and a highly respected and influential person in the Church and around the village. The Johannes' were one of the few families who were large-farmers in Mamre, which made them one of the wealthiest families as well. The Liedermans were also farmers, so the marriage was a union between two of the leading families. Wilhelm Johannes came back from his job at E K Green in town to marry Rebecca. He'd saved enough cash money to build a house while working in town and was coming back to farm. As was the custom in Mamre the bridal party walked together with their guests down the main road of Mamre to the church. *'Dit was 'n baie groot wedding. Klomp strooimeises...Die hele skool, daai tyd was getuie gewees. Maar hulle't op 'n Dinsdag getrou...Dit was mos...die vooraanstaande mense, wat hier die geld gehad het...'*¹⁵

Afterwards, the newly wedded Mr and Mrs Johannes remained in Mamre to farm, later building their house at 1 Adam Street, with its ample loft running the length of the house, the kitchen and living rooms at the back and bedrooms at the front. It was a modest well-built house not out of place amongst the smaller cottages in the village.

¹⁵ Magdalena Johannes, pp4-10.

'Destyds was dit mos nou alles perde gewees, wat, nie trekkers nie.'¹⁶ 'Hulle't geploeg, hulle't vee, hulle ploeg [met] esels en perde. En die wa, en die karre, en alles wat ons gehad het. En [Rebecca] was maar die een wat die kos gemaak het, om dit na die lande te neem.'¹⁷ They hired local people to work in the fields, at the same rate of pay as the surrounding farmers. 'Sny hulle met die sekel en dan word dit uitgetrap by die vloer. Se byvoorbeeld, sewe man sny nou voor met die sekel, en dan's daar nou twee kinders, nou, die jong boys, wat elk 'n handvol optel en maak hulle sukkel gewees. En agter daai is weer 'n ander man wat hom bind. Nou ja, as die oes nou almal afgesny is, daar word dit opgepak. Dan kom die waens, ...en hulle laai dit op en dan het ons so vloere gehad,... Nie net een vloer gewees nie, verskillende vloere. Dan word dit, dan is die bos fyn getrap'.¹⁸

It was the farmer's wife who controlled the working rhythms of the farms in Mamre, because she provided the sustenance for the toiling labourers. Gustaf April, the son of another prominent Mamre farmer, remembers that 'my mother was the one who took hold of the farming, and the gardens, and all that kind of things... Say, for instance, there's a garden up there which we was working, and then we ask, we've arranged for that day to be done, six or seven men, coming to work there.

And then the morning we go up to that piece of garden up there, it's about three or four kilometres out of Mamre, and they went up early with the donkey-cart, right? And then, when we come there, we'd start a fire, make some coffee, and that is now eight o'clock, for the breakfast... With breakfast you must have something to eat... It was hard work, that you had to do,

¹⁶ Willem Johannes, pl.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp8-9.

¹⁸ Ibid, p3.

with the spade, splitting for the whole day. It's hard work, you must fill your stomach otherwise you go to fell over, and then you're out! Now that was only your bread, and a piece of nice fish, and your coffee, and the older men, they took a puff of smoke. And then when that is finished, for the half or three-quarter hour, then everyone take his tool, and start working.

Now you work up till eleven o'clock. Then, there's again a break for some smoking, and a cup of tea. But it's not a cup, it's a mug. Now that is only for quarter-of-an-hour, or twenty minutes. Now you work for lunch.

Now in that mean time, my mother is now busy cooking. There's made fire, burning there. It was a big pot on the fire. That time there was, nothing was scarce, hey. Vegetables, meat, everything was in abundance.

Now the lunch was made. And now we eat, half-past-twelve, one o'clock, then she call. Everyone just lay his tool down. There was a big acorn tree. Now under that acorn tree, there she did all her cooking. Now we come and sit around there, and everybody eat. She dished up already. Now everyone gets his plate stacked highly hey! Because it's that there's nothing that is scarce. If you wanted a cabbage, you don't take it from here [home], because everything is waiting for you there [the fields]. It's only the meat, or salt, and that's the kind of thing they take from home.

Now you have a rest of two hours. Everything went slowly that time... That time you take your time. Nobody's in a hurry. Then she call us, and then you start again with your work up till four o'clock.

Now there's again a mug of coffee, two slices of bread and fish. Then you work up till another two hours.

And then you get the donkeys and the cart ready, and everyone goes on the taxi from there! And then you come down, come down, come down, come home now.

Now here, you get now again a cup of coffee, and piece of bread. This, we called it that time a rantsoen of bread. The five fingers. And then that rantsoen of bread, and your fish, you're taking home. You don't eat that, you take it home.

Then tomorrow again. But now, for that day's hard, very hard work, your salary was a one-and-six. You sweat that day!¹⁹

The Johannes's main crop was wheat which was sold partly in Malmesbury, where the Westelike Graan co-operative had begun operation around the time of their wedding.²⁰ They also grew peas to sell in Cape Town, and would sell produce, including rye, in the village. Mr Johannes was an enterprising man, always on the look-out for an opportunity. 'Dan het hy met die strooi, wat hulle slaan mos die korrels uit, op die planke. Dan word dit, die strooi so bosse gemaak, dan't hulle dit verkoop...en het dit ingekoop vir iemand in Paarl... En dan word daar draad in...en dan's daar sulke groot bale. Dan't dit hier klomp ge(?) dan word dit weggery met die perde-wa na die Mamre Road Stasie. Dan gaan dit Paarl toe, en daarvan word die sakkies gemaak wat hulle oor die brandewyn bottels eers gesit het.'²¹

Mamre farmers had a wide range of customers for their goods. Anna Loock, who married the farmer Theodore Liederman, remembers: 'Ons het baie mielies gehad en pampoens en al daai

¹⁹ Gustaf April, pp16-18.

²⁰ J.P. Blaauw, *Malmesbury - Grepe uit die Geskiedenis van die dorp en distrik* (Malmesbury, 1960) p109.

²¹ Magdalena Johannes, pp11-12.

dinge het ons gehad. Oe hene! En dan kom die natives, dan kom hulle so die mielies koop... Hulle gaan seker vir die anders ook gee... Stanley. Nou hy't weer 'n tyd by ons. Swartkop Stanley... Baie ordentlike African man... He's a prominent businessman now, with taxis in Langa and, he used to come here every year when it's the season... he was like the contact person.²²

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a lot of Mamriers still worked for the surrounding farmers, '*...there was poor people, so they have to work on the farms... they usually work on the farms until they get sick.*'²³ David Conrad's parents were working on Martin Versfeld's farm near Darling. '*You see, in the first place, I started working during the school holidays...[as a] handboy... looking after the mules and so on... My mother was a cook on the farm...[and my father] he's just a farmboy working... You see, that time, when you work on the farm, then if the baas see you get sick...and you go to the doctor... Then you've got to work it off.*' [David's father] '*hy't mos 'n sweer in die maag gehad.*' He was too sick to work, and was accumulating debt, so the farmer sent him off to Mamre where the family moved into their own house which they'd been renting out to another family in their absence. Soon after coming back to Mamre, David's father died, and his mother went into town to work as a domestic worker for many years, until she became sick too, and with failing health and eyesight, came back to Mamre.²⁴

Mamre wasn't just a retirement village for the old and sick, or a creche for the young, it supported many of those who were not earning regular cash wages, through subsistence agriculture in

²² Anna Liederman, pp39-40.

²³ David Conrad, pp1-4.

²⁴ Ibid, pp1-5, p11.

the gardens, and casual labour for Mamre farmers. The Mamre farmers also hired a few men as full-time labourers.²⁵ The gardens had a dual role in sustaining people in Mamre, who mostly had family members working in town to remit cash wages. They provided food for mothers and children whose men-folk were in town, and when the men came home on the weekends they could take back food for the week. The town and Mamre household economies were intricately linked, not only on a seasonal basis as most migrant labour economies are that do not have such close proximity to their places of work. Mamriers could plan their household economies taking into consideration that space and distance between Mamre and town, and the surrounding countryside, was flexible.²⁶

'Dit was mos daardie neentien veertien se oorlog, toe was dit maar baie moeilik gegaan. Hoekom, mense het maar swaar gekry om hulle kinders groot te maak ... die mielies en boontjies word geplant...word ook gebere vir die winter tyd. Jy weet, die koring deur die tyd, kyk julle, vir ons was daar mos meel, dant dat julle altyd die koring daar he, maar hulle het met dieselfde brood gemaak... Want daar was nie geld om te gaan meel koop nie, so dit het maar baie moeilik gegaan. Daarom, ons as kinders het maar baie meer sonder kos geword. Daar was

²⁵ Gustaf April, p5, Magdalena Johannes, p3.

²⁶ Other examples of communities in South Africa with a large proportion of migrant labour don't exhibit the flexibility of the relationship between Mamre and Cape Town. In most cases households were split over longer periods of time and wages were used to invest in production at home. See for example; Fred Cooper 'Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labour in Africa' in Fred Cooper ed., *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labour, Capital and the State in Africa* (Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1983) p9; William Beinart 'Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930-1960' in S Marks and S Trapido eds., *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Longmans, London, 1987); and Patrick Harries, 'Migrant Labour and Changing Standards of Living: South Africa in the Nineteenth Century' *CAS Africa Seminar*, UCT, August 1986.

nie van, jy gee hulle "vet", se jy wil nie... So iets van die aart op die brood, en verder kry jy niks anders nie, behalwe nou met jou brekvis, en middag en so aan. Jy kry nie iets anders by nie. Dan kry jy koffie soggens as die groot mense eers klaar gedrink het ne, dan gooi jy weer 'n bietjie water op die koffie en dit was nou alles.²⁷

It was tough times for Mamriers during World War One, and many men joined the army for want of other employment. Others stayed on the farms, particularly those families who, although with links to Mamre and the neighbouring mission Pella, were born on the farms. Samuel Loock had been born on the farm Witzand in the late nineteenth century, and so had his son Mathewis, and his son, Thys. They were fairly comfortable on this farm, more like caretakers than labourers. When Samuel got too old to work, he retired to the nearby Mamre out-station, Pella, leaving his sons and grandchildren to take over his job. Although there were some sheep to tend, the farmer allowed the Loocks to carry on an independent charcoal business from his land. They were paid eighteen pounds a year for looking after the farm, plus a sheep every month, and the farmer would deliver provisions monthly, flour, fish, sugar, coffee, tobacco and everything they needed.²⁸

But their main income came from the charcoal trade. Thys recalls 'with charcoal that time, ...they build a rondawel. They native, the Africans used to build it of the grass, and the roof, you know. They build it like that, up. And then they put the wood like this, and then they kom op, kom op, kom op, en kom op, and then they close it up with sand. They first put the bushes, cut off the bush, and then they put it over, and they put the sand over and then they light it up. And then

²⁷ Willem Johannes, p1.

²⁸ Thys Loock, pp13-15.

there's light, and then it burns, burns...Burns about, even, a week. Here when they start to light it, and then it gets the smoke, because then that hole is sand, you know then all the sand. And then when its big, it burns about two days, and one night. It's finish then. You must all the times light it, you know, you must, when it burns, because you set it there, you see the fire comes down, then you must go that side, you must open, in case it's off, you know, and get that light to work. '29

'You get about dertig sjielings 'n sakkie.' [which they'd take by ox-wagon into town] Then they must go from shop to shop. The owners, they use it for...ironing, you know, and then...most of the people was Indians, used to buy it, you know, Adderley Street, Wale Street, Chiappini Street, and all over... 'cause Cape Town...there was no electric there... It takes from here, say about a whole week. Three, four, say about five days [with sixteen to eighteen oxen and fifty to fifty-five sacks of charcoal on a big wagon]. There's lots of places [to stop along the way]... Killarney is the last place. And then from Killarney, they go from there to the place they call Ysterplaat... tot hulle verder ry, in die oggend... Then they stop there in the night, they sleep there. And some of the ox, they leave at Killarney. Say now they got sixteen, they leave eight there, and the other eight they must take into town. To deliver. When they come back, because he still find them around there, because he know where to find them, you know. They're used to the field there... they know where's the water, and they know where to eat, and everything, you know... That's Crown ground, you know. '30

²⁹ Ibid, pp4-6.

³⁰ Ibid, pp8-9.

'When he goes delivering, he leaves Killarney, say so about this afternoon, and leaving he sleep in Ysterplaat, and the next day he go to, in, early the morning to Cape Town, to deliver into town, you know. And then, sometimes they only got a wagon...then they finish early, about twelve o'clock, or eleven o'clock they finished, sell everything. And then they come back by Killarney, say about five o'clock in the afternoon...And then from Killarney the next stop, the night, is here by the old road, van Melkbos crossing, you know. Then they sleep over there. For the night. And then the next day we come in, we leave there the next morning, and then the next night we're here, at home, at home.'³¹

It was the constant to-ing and fro-ing of family members between Mamre and Cape Town which spread the flu epidemic to the countryside in 1918.³² Forty-nine Mamriers died during the flu, and many more were sick with bouts of the disease. Reverend Winckler was aware of how the epidemic was spreading through contact between town and countryside, and recorded in a Church Register the deaths of people born in Mamre who died in town and were buried in Mamre, or were born and died in Mamre, or were Mamriers who died and were buried elsewhere, or had been living on farms but were buried in Mamre.³³ There was a story that there weren't enough graves in the cemetery to bury all the people, so they dug a common grave in the field, but no-one liked to talk about those things.³⁴

³¹ Ibid, pp8-9.

³² Howard Phillips 'Black October': The Impact of the Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa', unpub. PhD thesis, UCT, 1984.

³³ Judy Katzenellenbogen, 'The 1918 Influenza Epidemic in Mamre' *South African Medical Journal*, vol.74, October 1988, pp362-363.

³⁴ Gustaf April, p3.

It was apparent to Winckler that the sickness had reached every part of the community, but no-one made any attempt to isolate themselves from the sickness. The memories of the regulations following the Plague were still too raw. In fact, with the poverty in Mamre after the First World War some families were actually sending their children into town during the Flu epidemic to look for work, as the large numbers of deaths created vacant jobs. David Conrad's family had been struggling since his father had died from a stomach ulcer, and so in 1918, at fourteen years of age, he and his twelve year old brother went into town to look for work. *'There were lots of jobs but, the sickness was bad, so today you, say you get a new job, tomorrow you die... I get sick, but it's not so bad, you see... I worked for Prices Candle Company... In town, I stay in Upper Adderley Street,...with friends,...my mother's sister's three sons who work in town, and I stayed with them.'*³⁵

Hendrick Adam's parents were concerned enough about the health of their son to send him to his grandmother in Mamre. *'And when I was six years I come from from Cape Town, to Mamre... Now that, it was the time, when the epidemic begins. And I were in, I were in...a slight touch, I did get a slight touch in that... I had been in bed for that, for a couple of weeks. But I didn't had too much.'*³⁶

While Hennie was recovering from flu and starting school in Mamre, Anna Loock was just finishing her standard six education, as far as one could go at school in Mamre. She was fourteen years old, but her parents had found her a job in the village working in the Mission Store as a general assistant for Mr Rapalie, instead of sending her into town as a domestic like most girls of her age. Anna was a lovely looking girl, and Mr

³⁵ David Conrad, pp5-6.

³⁶ Hendrick Adams, p1.

Rapalie's son, Hans Hugo, a student at the University of Stellenbosch, had developed a close romantic friendship with her, which remained constant for their whole lives.³⁷

The Mission Store had been transferred from one end of 'die Langhuis' into the old guest house in 1912, so when Anna worked behind the solid wooden counter, the shelves for the goods, and the open bins for grain and flour, were still quite new.³⁸ She worked there for two years before starting to work full-time in the house of the missionary in 1920.³⁹

That year, Andreas April had made the decision to open up a butchery in Mamre. He had expanded his initial idea into three shops, a butchery, supply store and fish store, built on the Main Road just near the common, and named "April Supply Store". The business was extremely successful, and Andreas would have his children work for him, including Charlotte, who was born in 1915 of his first marriage to Katrina Prins of Mamre, and Gustaf, born in 1926 of his second marriage to Christina Oppelt of Mamre.⁴⁰ Charlotte remembers when she worked behind the counter as a girl, *'the shop was really the coming together of old friends, and they would sit and talk about matters relating to Mamre, and he was a very kind-hearted man, with an open hand for the poor and under-privileged...and people could buy meat from there very, very cheap, even fish,...[and he sold] the things that you sell in a cafe..cooldrinks and sweets and cake*

³⁷ Anna Liederman, p2.

³⁸ J. de Boer and E.M. Temmers, *The Unitas Fratrum: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Missionary and Pastoral Service in Southern Africa (Western Region)* (Genadendal, 1987) p43.

³⁹ Anna Liederman, p2.

⁴⁰ Gustaf April, p2.

and fruit and snyf, for the women, and soft tobacco, I can still smell it!'⁴¹

Gustaf helped out in the butchery. 'We have slaughtered the sheep, the pigs, and the oxen at the back of the house in Langlaan. We had make there a kind of...iron structure which you put the sheep on, and cut the throat. It was very primitive that time... My father had gone in the middle of the week, to Bellville, Stikland. where the auctions was that time. And then he bought a whole kraal of sheep, of a kraal of goats. Sometimes twenty-five, or thirty goats in this kraal, right. Now this is there in the city, in Bellville, hey. Right? Now, they must come to Mamre. But how did they come here? There wasn't lorries; there wasn't trucks. Nou ja, he put them on the railway truck, in Bellville. Now they must follow this railway from Bellville to Mamre Road station. Okay? Now that is now two or three days after he has bought it in Bellville.

And then this chap Willem Duckitt [who works for Andreas] he goes from here with the postvan and Mr Kupper... Now the post comes with the van. And then Willem goes with the van to Mamre Road. Then, now they make it open. And now the sheep, all the twenty five sheep comes out. The whole situation is foreign for them! There goes one! there goes two!, two!! It's just, it was very difficult to get them from it. Now, he walked with them from there back to Mamre... it's more or less half a day.

You had to walk from there. All along the gravel road. And here at the back of this house [in Langlaan] there was a kraal. Now you must struggle! struggle to get them in the kraal. And now, it's now everyday we slaughter one. Fridays we slaughter five, or six. It's now the weekend, you see. And then at this

⁴¹ Charlotte April, pp2-3.

this Twin Oaks here, in front (of the house), then we hanged it there, the carcass. There was pens, there was penne in the tree. It's hanging there. Then in the small dinges, er, butchery shop there, hang them there. That was now Friday mornings. And then Friday evenings, late Friday evenings, then the transport available for him to get the carcasses up to the butchery, there was a wheelbarrow.

Now we put two, or three sheep on this wheelbarrow, right? And then in front of the wheelbarrow there's a piece of rope. And there was two youngsters with a piece of rope they were pulling it! And pushing! Daai's met die, daai wa. And, and we was the two horses in front!!

That time, there was fish lorries passing through Mamre from Saldanha... Whenever he pass through here, their boss said they can stop at Mr April's shop, then we can have a basket of fish. And they'll give us a fixed price. We give them the money, and they returned it to the boss. It was all, misbankies, the haarders, and the hotnots, sometimes snoek...and salted fish too, bokkoms.

If you come, Saturday mornings early you must be there, eight o'clock,...if he know you was struggling at home to make ends meet, if you buy two pounds of meat, then he always give you half a pound extra... Because he knows you... Then there's a basket full like this of afval, and the price was fifteen cents. Afval is the head of the sheep, the four pootjies, the pens, the hele harslag, and its the lungs, its the liver, and everything... Then it is meat more or less for you for the whole week.⁴²

The shops in Mamre operated a credit and barter system as well. Families who had wages paid periodically into the household

⁴² Gustaf April, pp2-8, pp22-23.

purse could establish accounts at the April and Mission stores in order to buy goods. People would also barter with goods from their gardens. Or farm labourers who lived on neighbouring farms and were paid partly in livestock would swop fowls and eggs, or the occasional sheep, for groceries.⁴³

An interesting clue reveals that there was a strong community censure against ostentatious shows of wealth, or hoarding in Mamre. People relied on one another to share what they had, goods and labour, even if it was very little. Those who had more than enough, like the Aprils, exercised generosity to their fellow Mamriers.

Mr April's butchery assistant who drove the sheep and goats from Mamreweg and helped with slaughtering, was named Willem "Duckitt". *'His name was Willem Martinus, but he have a nickname in the name of Duckitt, so we used to call him thus, all of them call him Mr Duckitt...we given him that name because the Duckitts was very rich people here.'*⁴⁴ Now he hadn't any school. So he wants to be someone important. You get it? So he was always saying that he is Mr Duckitt. And the whole village called him Mr Duckitt. And he had gone into the grave with that nickname.⁴⁵

The use of naming served several purposes, to reveal ambiguities towards wealth in the community, and to define membership of the community. Willem Martinus boasted he wished to be wealthy and important, and called himself Mr Duckitt.

⁴³ Charlotte April, pp4-5.

⁴⁴ See Elizabeth Host, '"And You with a Sickle in Your Hand!": The Relationship between the Farmer and the Workers on Klaver Valley 1820s-1890s' unpub. paper, History Department UCT, May 1992, for a discussion on the Duckitt farming family, who were prominent white farmers in the district.

⁴⁵ Gustaf April, p5.

Not only was it a reference to the prominent farming family in the area, the Duckitts, for whom many Mamriers worked. It also hinted at his relationship with his employer, who was one of the wealthiest and most prominent members of the Mamre community, a businessman and land owner. By calling himself Mr Duckitt, and having everyone adopt the nickname, it helped diffuse the obvious divisions of wealth in Mamre by making fun of status based on the face value of what one had, rather than who one was in the community.⁴⁶ On the other hand, people who were comparatively wealthy underplayed their material possessions and stressed their role in the community. Andreas and his wife sang solo parts in the church choir and it is this role that gave them status in the community, where musical prowess was highly prized.⁴⁷

The significance of naming in Mamre changed according to the spheres in which one was moving. There were several unofficially named places in and around the village which Mamriers were familiar with. There were the special areas of Mamre like "die blok" a neighbourhood where the families formed a particularly intimate network, whose doors were always open to each other. There was the "Ou Werf", upon which the mission buildings stood, with the Moravian Church at the centre of the Werf, forming the spiritual centre of the community. Mamriers grew up knowing about all the special places in the village.

⁴⁶ See David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya*, pp111-115, for a discussion on meaning of naming in the community. They tell the story of one of Lord Delamere's cattleherds who comes back to Siaya and becomes a successful businessman. He is given the nickname Okoth Ouro Dalmia (Delamere). It was not just the adoption of the name "Delamere" but the meaning attached of the introduction of business innovation in the community, as embodied in settler farmers like Delamere, that lends a subtlety to the naming.

⁴⁷ Gustaf April, p23.

The crucial social distinction for Mamriers in Mamre was between "ingebores" and "inkomers".⁴⁸ An ingebore was a Mamrier in the essential sense, having been born there, and therefore claiming rights to membership of the community. One did not have to live in Mamre to be an ingebore, and the definition even shades into membership of the community at Pella. The important thing was to have one's roots in Mamre.

The "other" in this sphere of community, was the inkomer. They were people who had married into Mamre, particularly those who had come to stay, and who were from somewhere else. Indeed it was questionable whether one could ever rid oneself of inkomer status by length of residence. One category of inkomers with a special role in the community were the missionaries, who were at once part of, yet not a part of, Mamre. It had become increasingly obvious in the twentieth century that the missionaries were not at heart part of Mamre. Yet they still exercised power of inclusion and exclusion from the key institutions of the community, the Church and school.

Simon Magerman's father had been born in Mamre, and Simon Petrus had worked in town at the time of the Plague. His mother, Maria May, was born in Pella and had met Simon Petrus in town. Both Simon and his elder sister Amalia had been born in Mamre in 1910 and 1908 respectively. Simon had been sent to live with his grandparents on his mother's side in Pella, because they only had girl children and needed a boy to help with the chores and the garden. But then, after a few years, Simon's father wanted him back in Mamre.

'Toe wil die ou mos nie he ek moet weer verder hier skool gaan nie. Een van die Duitsers wat hier...nou wil hy nie toe se hy ek behoort nie hier nie. En toe wat...die's wat my pa hom

⁴⁸ See David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya*, pp22-44, for a similar discussion on defining insiders and outsiders of Siaya by birthright.

sommer gese "Wie's jy! jy behoort nie hier nie. Hy, hy (Simon) is hier gebore." ... Ja, my father said somer vir hom, hy se toe "...nou verder hier skool kan gaan nie ... Toe se ek, en hy kan ook g'n Afrikaans praat, reg nie. Hy't tog Nederlands, of Hollands geken, wat hulle daarem altyd hier gespreek het. Daarom die Afrikaans het mos maar nou laat uitgekome. En so het, en daai't ons mos geleer hier."⁴⁹

The argument between 'one of the Germans' and Simon Petrus Magerman over who exactly belonged in Mamre strikes at the heart of what it meant to be a Mamrier. By exercising their power against Mamriers' definitions of their own identity and of who belonged in Mamre, the missionaries were by the early twentieth century challenging a definition of "community" they no longer controlled.

The origins of Moravian missions had been based on the concept of "closed communities" in which Christian principles were infused partly through the regulations of behaviour that were policed by the missionaries. One of the conditions under which the Moravian missionaries agreed to establish Mamre, named Groenekloof between 1808 and 1854, was that it would be a closed community, without outside - especially government - interference. They controlled who belonged and who should be expelled. In the case of Mamre, expulsions in the nineteenth century were of such a number that a semi-independent "out-station" had been established in 1869 on Gottlieb Johannes' farm, Katzenberg. Johannes was the grandson of Benigna, the "mother of Mamre", and it appears that he had inherited Katzenberg, which became known as Pella.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Simon Magerman, pp9-10.

⁵⁰ J. de Boer and E.M. Temmers, *The Unitas Fratrum* pp68-71.

Most of these expulsions were for breaches of codes of conduct, often to do with alcohol. There was strict censure against drunkenness in the mission.⁵¹ This was partly an attempt to off-set the influence of the dop system which formed part of the relations of control that surrounding farmers exercised on their labourers. Once tied into a state of alcoholic dependence, workers were often more compliant, and less likely to leave to find alternative work. And if it was necessary to punish, the farmers could invoke the regulations against drunkenness under the Masters and Servants Act against their own labourers. The law did not define culpability in terms of who supplied the alcohol in the first place.⁵²

Although Pella had a reputation of being the community where people who were expelled from Mamre took refuge, the two places had strong kin and cultural links. Someone from Pella belonged more naturally to Mamre than a German missionary, and by failing to recognise that, Reverend Winckler had fundamentally misunderstood one of Mamriers' definitions of themselves and their community. He was, in fact, the outsider.

Definitions of who belonged in Mamre were entwined with concepts of rights and privileges of occupation and residency. In Cape Town, these definitions of belonging changed, and the spheres of inclusion widened not only to incorporate the city space, but also who could belong to Moravian Hill. Moravian Hill brought people together living their daily existence outside the mission stations, and the concept of community had that sense of merging identities. It was the place where Moravians came together in Cape Town, and where amongst fellow Moravians, people could assume their local identities, which meant very little to outsiders. It also helped reaffirm the

⁵¹ Ibid, p70. Elizabeth Ludlow, 'Missions and Emancipation'.

⁵² Pamela Scully, *The Bouquet of Freedom*; Elizabeth Host, "And You with a Sickle in Your Hand!"

local values of Mamre, and Genadendal, and the other rural Moravian missions, so that one had a sense of morality in an alien environment. Belonging and keeping one's ties with Moravian Hill while in town meant that a Mamrier was more likely to remain "respectable" in the eyes of the community in Mamre.⁵³

Moravian Hill had also formed the spiritual home for other rural migrants to Cape Town. The Rhenish people, especially the women working as domestic servants, socially isolated in town, were incorporated into the Moravian community. David Conrad, who had been working at Prices Candle Factory since he came into town to look for work during the Flu epidemic, met such a young Rhenish woman from Stellenbosch, Christina Conradie, and married her on the twentieth of October 1930, in the Moravian Church. They had been introduced by David's mother, who was working as a domestic in Sea Point, next door to Christina.⁵⁴

'I started work after I finish with school, my parents sent me, there comes a lady, once in Stellenbosch, then she wants a girl, but she said she wants a good girl who can look after the children, and then I went. And I stayed there all those years, before I married. And then, it comes, my father gets ill, and I went to Stellenbosch, and look after him, and then he gets up again. I go to work in town again, until I met this man! I never went out in the evenings, or to dances and things like

⁵³ For a similar discussion on the role of the migrant Welsh community in England being held together by the non-conformist chapels, see Merfyn Jones, 'Welsh Immigrants in the cities of north-western England, 1890-1930: Some oral testimony' *Oral History Journal*, vol.9, no.2, Autumn 1981 pp33-41.

⁵⁴ David Conrad, p7.

that. No I didn't like it. And I think that's why the Good Lord keeps us, because he tells you to do good...'⁵⁵

Women working as domestic servants in Cape Town were given very little free time, usually Wednesday evenings and Sundays. Moravian Hill Church arranged its weekly services to correspond with this domestic routine, enabling women to congregate at the Church during their free time, and this was the central focus of their social life in town.

Charlotte April was at Zinzendorf Moravian Primary School, then Trafalgar High School, and Zonnebloem College in District Six during the 1920s and 1930s. She was living in Moravian Hill with her father's sister and her husband, whom she called her 'adopted parents'. Her adopted mother was on the Moravian Hill Kerkraad, and her house in Ashley Street was directly in front of the Church.

'All the Moravians who lived around there...the Church had all those houses. It was Ashley Street, and it was Croft Street, then Randolph Street, and Freda Street... And even Canterbury Flats. It was...new flats that they'd erected there. A lot of our people came from there to stay there too. Because the Moravian Church didn't have enough houses for the congregation... Let me tell you, it's all single storeys... the first house we lived in when we two [Charlotte and her sister] went to town, it was just the front room at that was used as a front room and a bedroom, and your kitchen. And then we lived just a short time there, then the people next door, they moved out. then we moved next door. Then that house had now a big front room and a sitting room as you say, and three bedrooms

⁵⁵ Christina Conrad, p20-21.

and a kitchen. But even then, there was no, should I say, luxuries like a toilet inside the house and a bathroom.⁵⁶

That whole block in front of the church and lower down were all Moravians living there, and you know the Malays were living divided from us, but they were also living there in the vicinity... Because they had different views of the upbringing of their children and Fridays or so they had to go to Masjied, all day, and they had to go to the Malay schools in the afternoon... Mind you, the Malays came to the Moravian school, but they went in the afternoons to their own school to learn their cultures and so on.⁵⁷

Charlotte and her sister had Malay girlfriends when they were children, 'there was no distinction', and they would play on the stoep under the watchful eye of their mother.⁵⁸ But the social distinctions were more rigid in other spheres. When Mamriers came to town, they would look for accommodation with 'relatives or Moravians. They wouldn't dream of staying with Moslems... I believe at one time then there was a sort of a shelter where they could sleep, and so stay in Canterbury Street. But most of the women who came to town, they were youngsters. They came to work in service - domestic service. And then they would sleep in. Those places would have a room for them to sleep in. And they'd get paid monthly.'⁵⁹

Arrangements for men were often more casual, if they could not find a place to stay with relatives and friends. 'Sometimes, I

⁵⁶ Charlotte April, p19.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p6. Amelia Lewis, 'Reflections on Education in District Six, 1930s to 1950s' in S. Jeppie and C. Soudien eds., *The Struggle for District Six*, pp185-191.

⁵⁸ Charlotte April, p7.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p14, p12.

believe in the olden days, they had this "Room to let. Apply within". Yes, they had this sign if they had a room to let, and then some of these men who worked on the Council, they'd all rent that room and quite a few of them would sleep in that room. That is how they got accommodation, you see?'⁶⁰

Men and women Mamriers had different patterns of work and accommodation, unless they were married and living in town together. They also tended to have different leisure activities, especially when young and single. Women's social lives circulated around the Church. 'But let me tell you, those servants they came very regularly to church. We had services on Wednesday evenings, and Saturday evenings they couldn't get away. But Wednesdays and Sundays, and whenever we had a Church festival, the Church was, as they say chock-and-block... We had very many of those girls coming to our place. They'd come there, maybe before the service, they would be very early. They'd just come and sit for a cup of tea and a chat. They'd wait till the service start then they'd go there and after Church they'd leave again... Now my mother used to tell me, Wednesdays then the domestic servants got off, the afternoon, then they had to be in at a certain time in the evening again and Wednesday nights it was sort of just hymn, prayer meeting, choral singing and then she said some of these girls had letters from their boyfriends, they put it in the hymn book but as they were singing they were nudging these others also to read that letter!... While my mother lived, [our house] was sort of a meeting place for everybody who was a Moravian and who came from Mamre. All the Mamriers would come there. Not only they, but people from Genadendal and they'd bring their friends there...'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid, p14.

⁶¹ Ibid, p13, p14, p26.

Christina Conradie and Amalia Magerman had attended Moravian Hill as young women domestic workers in town, although Christina would be loathe to admit reading love-letters from David Conrad in Church. Men tended to have more varied social lives, as their time was freer, and the censure of respectability wasn't as strict for men as it was for women. There was also considerable social pressure on young men from their Cape Town friends to join in the fun of youth in town, and to tell friends back in Mamre of one's city-slicker escapades. Hendrick Adams, who went back into town to work after having been sent to Mamre as a child during the Flu epidemic remembers:

'Now you've got to please your friends. Verstaan nou? Now I come to Mamre. Now I want to show what I am. I am a Kaapse bootjie!... Sunday morning, I used to play for a Kaapse rugby team... Now, at the docks, it's now there... A lot of our jongspan from here, Mamre, now we all belongs to the team... There I did try, once, I think, of dagga, smoking dagga. I did. But I don't see anything funny... Now when they are in rugby, I take the wine as well... Now we had to go to Waterkant Street. That is the patron of the club... And but he's White, he is a Jew. Now we had to go there, now, to celebrate... Man, I was so drunk. I come down, from Waterkant Street, to Hanover Street, where it comes up, there was a big building. There was a terrace behind. I went in there. I did go sit on there on the pavement. I never could get up there. I did crawl from there, I had to crawl... I go wait there, now my nephew, he tried to fight with the people. I want to go help him. I can't pick up my hat from the ground. He also can't help me pick up the hat from the ground! Only in the morning, about three o'clock I decide to fetch it... Well, I was very fond of bioscope. I also go in for dancing, just to please somebody. But for the

*bioscope I was lief, because there was the Palace bioscope in Hanoverstraat.*⁶²

Moravian Hill was then part of the network that linked Mamriers in town together, creating a social sphere that reinforced their identity as Mamriers, and Moravians, in the wider environment of the city. The Moravian ministers also provided tangible links between town and Mamre by assisting people to remit their wages home. *'I don't know how they did it - but the men would come and give their wages to him, every Sunday night when they came to Church, and he posted it to the families. And the domestic servants, they'd also bring their money to Church and it would be posted from there to the families here [in Mamre].'*⁶³

Remittances of wages and goods were circulated within the household economies of Mamriers. Men and women would send money home to support family in Mamre. Men would also carry food back from Mamre to town when they came home on the weekends. Charlotte's father, Andreas April, would also bring food into town to help support his daughters. He made frequent trips into town to buy stock for his shop, and Stemmet's snuff shop was just down the road from Moravian Hill. *'He didn't have a car, but let me tell you now this. The funniest part was, he was so well known in Darling and Malmesbury... They [the farmers] had to pass Mamre to get to town. My father would just stand outside the shop. He always had this little case with him, his money and things in there, and here a car would come up, and they'd say: "April, klim in!", and off my father went. The next you saw him in town. Or in town he'd*

⁶² Hendrick Adams, pp5-7. See also, M. Shamiel Jeppie, 'Aspects of Popular Culture and Class Expression in Inner Cape Town, circa 1939-1959' unpub. M.A. thesis, UCT, 1990, esp. chapter 5 pp104-128, for reference to the Palace Bioscope see p113.

⁶³ Charlotte April, p12.

meet again somebody who came to Mamre. He'd get a lift back to Mamre again.'⁶⁴

In later years as car ownership became more common amongst Mamriers, cars would come from Mamre every week and meet the men from Mamre in District Six. Inside the cars, there were parcels of food, each with someone's name on it, sent from families in Mamre to sustain the men during the week, and economise on the household budget by saving the money which would be spent on food in town. For Mamriers, space and distance became more flexible as transport arrangements improved.⁶⁵

One of the most memorable journeys for Mamriers living in Cape Town was the trip home at Easter time. In late 1930s, most people still came home by train. Easter was the main religious festival in Mamre which brought everyone together. Often it was the only time when domestic servants in Cape Town would come home to visit family. It was the one time of the year that every Mamrier tried their utmost to come home. David Conrad remembers, '*Easter is the best time. And you get all, and they all take part in Easter. It was the only long weekend that's from Good Friday until Tuesday, the day after easter Monday you have to go back to work.*'⁶⁶ Charlotte April agreed '*Oh, everybody would go home at Easter-time. Nobody - no mistress - or nobody could keep them in town at Easter time... We always said "Easter everybody goes to...Hy gaan na sy Mecca...like the Malays go to Mecca, now the Moravians go to Everyplace!" That's their Mecca!*'⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp10-11.

⁶⁵ Christlief Adams, pp16-17.

⁶⁶ David Conrad, p11.

⁶⁷ Charlotte April, p13.

The Easter festivities didn't begin in Mamre, they started at Cape Town railway station, where Mamriers would get together for the festive train trip to take them home. By about eight o'clock on the morning of Good Friday, all the Mamriers would be jostling and laughing for their seats on the train, which pulled out of the station by eight-thirty, and arrived at Mamreweg station at one o'clock in the afternoon. Along the way, the train went so slowly that the young women could jump off the train to pick flowers in the veld and would not have to raise a flush to their cheeks to catch the train up again and jump on. People would sing and chat and laugh, it was already like being home, amongst friends and family.

As the train pulled up at Mamreweg, people strained to see who was there to greet them. A cavalcade of ox and horse wagons pulled up alongside the railway platform to transport everyone home. The wagons raced each other along the dusty road between Mamreweg and Mamre to see who would be first to arrive at the common, where everyone was eagerly awaiting family. Maggie Johannes remembers as a child, *'en hulle het hier onder waar die post, waar die polisie-stasie is, daar't hulle afgeklim. Dit was 'n aardigheid om altyd te wag, Good Friday, dan kom al die mense wat in die Kaap werk.'*⁶⁸

The whole weekend was festive, but at the same time deeply religious, with services and meetings occurring throughout the lead up to Easter Sunday. Many people would keep a vigil all night, singing and praying in groups in each others' houses. Before sunrise, everyone gathered together outside the church, and walked in procession behind the brass band over the small bridge that linked the Werf to the cemetery, and then past the graves to the highest point on the hill, with its panoramic view, where the service was conducted with utmost solemnity.

⁶⁸ Magdalena Johannes, p3. See also, for example, Charlotte April, p13; David Conrad, p12; Adam Pick, p5, Amalia Collins, p5.

'En al die name wat in die jaar nou afgesterwe he, word afgelees, al die [Mamriers] se name. Ja, al dag, die grafter word, op al die grafter dan sit hulle blomme.' The service at Mamre's cemetery hill linked Christ's Resurrection to the immortal souls of Mamriers everywhere.⁶⁹

Easter weekend, 1937, Charlotte April had come home to Mamre from her teaching post in Maitland. She was spending a few extra days at home. Charlotte had brought her ten year old step-brother Gustaf with her. He'd been staying with the family in Ashley Street but had been getting a bit of a handful for his aunt, and was coming home to his parents' house for good. *'I was always [in] some kind of mischief... Know what we do? Well that time you are, all, most of the time, you are barefeet, right? Now you, you take a speld, you put it under your toe. Now you sit in front of me [in Church], and I sit at the back. Now I just put my foot underneath the bench. And I put this needle into your foot! Now the Church is quiet, now, anyway, when you've got such a stinging in your feet you start to make a noise! And then they find out I was the naughty one! And then my Aunt said "No" ...I must sit with her!'*⁷⁰

Charlotte helped her stepmother with the daily chores while she was there, and caught up on Mamre news. The women who stayed in Mamre had their way of organising their space and time. Their lives centred around the tasks of cooking and cleaning, and working in the gardens. Every year they would paint the walls of their cottages with clay of various colours (which they knew where to find on the land) and regularly polished their floors and stoeps with mis (ox dung) until they gleamed. Thatching was more men's work, as was building, but the women were in charge of general maintenance.

⁶⁹ Augusta van Haarte, p7.

⁷⁰ Gustaf April, p12.

The daily routine started before sunrise, at five o'clock, when the women would take their washing down to soak at die wasplek. The old wasplek had been built by Anna Liederman's husband's grandfather. It was made of cement and looked like a chain of cement basins. The women would go home after setting their washing to soak and carry on with the morning chores, and then return to die pomp to do the washing. They used scrubbing brushes made from dried mielie cobs, and these "stronkies" were highly efficient for removing stains. Besides which, they were disposable - and free. Everyone would talk at die pomp. They would have one bakkie each and would bleach the clothes on the grass. Everyone had their special place to rinse, and it was a grave breach of conduct to stand at someone else's place. In fact, it just wasn't done, the women appreciated the chance to be together in an amiable atmosphere. The older women would talk to the older women at the top end of the wasplek (where the water was clearest), and further down, the young women talked together. They stood opposite each other and talked about their problems, it gave women a chance during their busy day to come together to share their thoughts.⁷¹

Not everyone went down to the wasplek. Gustaf April's mother paid old Maria Conrad to do her family's washing. *'And her wages for that big bundle of washing was two shillings, and that was a lot of money, that time... She was highly satisfied, I mean for somebody who's going to get some meat, with the pay also.'*⁷² Wealthier women in Mamre hired poorer ones to take some of the burden of their chores. But no-one was idle, Gustaf's mother was busy preparing food for the men in the fields.

⁷¹ Anna Liederman, p5.

⁷² Gustaf April, p23.

There were other women who didn't go to the wasplek either. They were the very poor who only had one set of clothes to their names. *'Ja, die wasplek was daar bo, en dan het hulle die bondel wasgoed gevat, en daar loop was. En hier agter was 'n gat, daar agter was mos 'n gat. Nou my ma was maar arm, onse goedjies was maar stukkend, dan het sy daar gaan was. As dit 'n mooi dag is... daar gaan sy daar by die gat was, en daar word ons uitgetrek, kaal, en onse klere uitgewas, en dan word dit weer opgehang, en as ons huis toe kom, dan is alles skoon... There was always two, three, four [women] together... And they'd take their food there, and they'd eat, when they finished, in the afternoon, late in the afternoon, then they come home, everything is clean, every child is clean... It was really enjoyable... [There was] no men around, die manne is almal op die plaas, en op die lande, en hulle werk almal.'*⁷³ Washing at "die gat" was also a chance to talk, for a different group of women, who obviously couldn't use the wasplek as their place to come together.

Some women used their knowledge of the local landscape to make goods for sale, and the medicinal use of plants was common knowledge in the community. For generations Mamre women went into the veld to gather wax-berries which grew wild in the area. The berries were boiled with water in a pot while the women were in the veld, and as the wax rose to the surface it would be skimmed off and pressed into loaves. This wax was then made into candles, and some of it was sold to the Mission store as candles and floor polish for the farmers.⁷⁴

The other main chore that took women out of the village was chopping fire wood, which they would do twice a week. The women carried their own axes and did all the chopping, while

⁷³ Ernestina Joshua, pp6-7.

⁷⁴ J. de Boer and E.M. Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, p43.

the children helped to carry the bundles back to their homes. Anna Liederman said she would cut one bundle for herself, and one for a friend, tie it up with string, and carry them on her back to Mamre. It was also a welcome chance for friends to talk out of ear-shot of others.⁷⁵

Children were an essential part of family labour in Mamre, they were raised with a strong sense of contributing to the household efforts. Gustaf was being introduced to his daily chores at home in Mamre, and no doubt thinking of new pranks to play on his friend Adam Pick. Christina Conrad was staying home in Mamre at this time, looking after David's aged mother, and their children were immersed in the household routine.⁷⁶ Other youngsters like the Johannes' daughter, Maggie, knew by heart the duties of children in the family. *'Elkeen het hulle eie werkie gehad. Soggens, nog voor skool, moet die seuns gegaan het. Hulle moet, hulle't self karretjie gemaak met die wiele voor, en wiele agter... Nou ja, en dan gaan, hulle moet gaan gras haal vir die varke, gras. Dis nou voor skool. En hulle moet, as hulle van die skool afkom, dan moet hulle weer na die vee gaan kyk, daar in die lande. Gaan haal die perde en so aan. Hulle't baie gewerk. Baie gewerk.'*⁷⁷

Dora Petersen's granddaughter, Susan Philander, had gone every day, like all the other children, to fetch water at die pomp for the household, until she'd left for town a few years ago. Dora was still working as a mid-wife in Mamre and on the surrounding farms, while her daughter Anna, Susan's mother, was working in service in town. Anna's husband, Simon, was working in town for the Council. Susan had been a tomboy and was fed-up with school, so in 1934, at twelve years of age, her

⁷⁵ Anna Liederman, p5.

⁷⁶ David Conrad, p18.

⁷⁷ Magdelena Johannes, p22.

Aunty Rachel had organised her a job as a nurse-girl in Sea Point at the same place where she was working. But everyone was home for Easter, and once again, Susan had been sent to die pomp to fetch the water.⁷⁸

Although they had their daily chores, and sometimes worked in the fields and gardens during their school holidays, Mamre children were not taken out of school to work on the farms. A tradition had even grown up that if parents wanted to delay their children leaving school in Mamre, or if they couldn't find work, they could do standard six twice, even if they passed the first time.⁷⁹

Charlotte told her stepmother that in her first teaching post in Hopefield a couple of years ago, she had found out children were still being taken out of school to work on the farms. *'Some of the pupils when it was harvesting time, they'd come and take some of the [standard] fives and sixes boys to help with the harvesting, and they'd come back again. So... some of the children, the boys especially were twenty, twenty-one years old! But the first thing my principal told me "Don't ever tell anybody your age", and I couldn't understand it at the time. But then when I saw their ages! And the girls... some of them only got to school when they were nine or so... So, Goodness me! If I now think that I taught sewing to girls who were twenty years of age, and here I was quite bewildered!'*⁸⁰

A tragedy had befallen Thys Loock's family in the previous year. His father Matthewis had been delivering charcoal to Malmesbury by ox-wagon with his wife. As they left the town, Matthewis was walking in front of the wagon, and didn't notice

⁷⁸ Susan Philander, p5.

⁷⁹ Magdelena Johannes, p22.

⁸⁰ Charlotte April, p15.

how close he was to the horns of one of the oxen. Sophia called out to him, but it was too late. The beast threw him into the air and when he fell to the ground, his neck was broken. The grief-stricken Sophia had to drag her husband's body onto the wagon to get home. His was one of the names that had been read out at dawn service.

The charcoal business to Cape Town had died out by the mid-twenties. Since then, the Loocks had redirected their trade to Malmesbury and Darling where it was still in demand for the steam mill, but it was in decline with the spread of electricity and fuel-driven engines. Thys's eldest brother took over the business after their father's death, while Thys, at eighteen, had gone into town for a spell.⁸¹

*'Januarie, I went to visit my sister, so for two days, and I go out to Adderley Street, and I come up in Buitengracht Street. And I see that firm has a lot of railway wagons, you know, they loading off the cartage there, and I stand and watch that, looking. So Mr Radkin comes out, he ask me if I'm looking for a job. I say no, not actually. But I ask him if he's got a job for me. He said yes, he needs a boy. And so I get a job there. So my sister was wondering where I was the whole day, and ja, in the afternoon, the night, six o'clock I knock off. Toe se ek, "ek het 'n job by Mr Radkin". Very little money, one pound four a week. In a week one pound four!' That first year in town while working for Mr Radkin, he met his wife-to-be, Maria September.*⁸²

While Thys's brother was still plying charcoal by ox-wagon in the district, Willie Johannes, Maggie's brother, was preparing to get his driver's licence. The forms of transport were

⁸¹ Thys Loock, pp10-11.

⁸² Ibid, pp10-11.

changing the way people travelled and thought about space and distance in Mamre. By the late 1930s, there were even people who owned cars in the village, revolutionising the potential links between the different spatial spheres of Mamriers' lives.⁸³

*'I get my driver's licence at the first of January, 1938. And since that time I was carting the mail... So did I pick up a lot of people on the road, going to the train. Some people want to go to Philadelphia, others... want to go by train to Cape Town, or so on, and so on... We charged people for that, that's why we used to carry people.'*⁸⁴

Willie Johannes' job delivering the post earned him the name "Willie Poswen", which he kept for life.⁸⁵ In the early nineteen-forties, Simon Magerman had been dubbed "Mr Marks", a nickname he was keen to be rid of. He had been working for a long time as a gardener and handyman for a Jewish couple, Mr and Mrs Marks, in Sea Point. *'Ek het lank daar gewerk want hulle my toe nie laat loop nie... Daarom he, hulle't sommer vir my ook gese Mr Marks... Maar ek het, ek is toe nie meer lus vir daai soort job nie, en hulle wil my nie eers toe laat loop nie, toe't ek sommer daaraf weggegaan.'*⁸⁶

Simon had been hitherto "unable" to leave his very poorly paid job as a gardener. Even in the eyes of Mamriers, Simon's job

⁸³ Andrew Walker, 'Out on a Limb: The Economy of Capetown, 1934-1941', unpub. paper, *Cape Town History Project*, UCT, September 1990, p10. He points out that car ownership was a luxury in the 1930s. The price of a car was 6-8 times the annual wage of an unskilled worker.

⁸⁴ Willem Johannes, p7.

⁸⁵ See Chapter Four for an extended discussion of naming, identity and life history through the example of Willem Johannes.

⁸⁶ Simon Magerman, pp17-18.

was unattractive, and he had not yet moved onto better things. Leaving undesirable employers or work conditions was one of the strategies frequently used by domestic servants. Susan Philander used her power of prerogative to leave employers whenever she felt like a move, and so did many Mamre women. Mamre men also shifted jobs until they found something secure, preferably with a pension scheme. So when Simon got stuck with the Marks', their name stuck to him too, partly to tease him for his reticence. When he left the job, he left the nickname behind as well.

Simon Petrus Magerman had been trying to arrange a job for his son at the wood mill in Waterkant Street. It was around the early years of World War Two. *'Daar waar die ou ook, en daar sulke deure ook gedra, jy weet? Ek sal ook nog daarna 'n job gekry he. Toe se ek vir ou, alright ek gaan die Dinsdag, toe't ek ook die job gekry he. En toe gaan ek soontoe... Want toe staan daar 'n hele queue, staan daar by... daai is, is net hier voor die oorlog gewees het. En daar, daar't vriende, en twee ouens hier, hulle't toe saam met my geloop. En dan vat hulle 'n ou like aan, dan sign jy. Daar by die City Hall, daar.'*⁸⁷

Thys Loock also signed on for the war because there was very little good work around. *'I was working, after I left Radkin, I was working for Mr Hopkins, for the Phoenix Foundry, you know, English people, Marine Drive, Paarden Eiland. So I started there for one pound ten a week. But no leave, no sick leave, that time.'* His decision to become a soldier was purely economic, it ensured a stable income of eight pounds a month for his family in Mamre.⁸⁸ To some extent, soldiering operated as an extended form of migrant labour, only the risks of not ever seeing Mamre again were that much higher. Men made

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp3-4.

⁸⁸ Thys Loock, p16, pp25-26, See also for example Adam Pick, p10.

their decision not because they had been caught up in the propaganda of fighting for a just cause, or for King and Country, but because it was 'sommer' a job, and maybe a chance to see some adventure.

Mamre men have a long tradition of fighting other people's wars. The mission station had been established in 1808 partly to settle ex-Hottentot-soldiers and their families. The government then petitioned the Moravian missions for volunteers for the war against the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape in 1850. Over eight hundred men from Genadendal, Elim and Groenekloof (Mamre) went off to battle.⁸⁹ Mamriers had been prominent transport riders for the English during the Boer War, and many men had fought patriotically alongside the British in the First World War. Almost every family home in Mamre has a photograph of a soldier proudly displayed on their walls. But by World War Two, with the increasing racial discrimination in the South African armed forces undermining any sense of camaraderie, Mamriers' soldiering was essentially mercenary.⁹⁰

The war's impact on the domestic economy of Mamre was felt by everyone. Rationing was quite severe, and there was a perception amongst some people in the community that the wives of soldiers were better off, and receiving more rations. They became known as "war mummies".⁹¹ Maria Looek was living in Mamre with their young children while Thys was soldiering in

⁸⁹ B. Kruger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms: The History of the Moravian Church in South Africa, 1731-1869* (Moravian Book Depot, Genadendal, 1966) pp100-103, p238.

⁹⁰ Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War*, p68 and pp163-164; Peter Warwick, *Black People in the South African War 1899-1902* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983) pp122-137; Kenneth Grundy, *Soldiers without Politics: Black Soldiers in the South African Armed Forces* (UCLA Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983).

⁹¹ Anna Liederman, p5.

the Middle East. 'You got to run to get to the army lorry to buy things cheap there, you had to go and queue in the early morning. The last one was in Melkbos, there was a lorry. So this people always used to get on another who's going there, to buy things.'⁹² Mamriers were better off than the poor folk based solely in town during the rationing period, because they still had their gardens to live out of, and the community shared their resources with those who were in dire straits.

Life carried on between town and countryside for many Mamriers during the war. Although the war stopped many leisure activities in Mamre, like sports teams and choirs, while so many men were away. Adam Pick was fifteen years old in 1942 and he moved off the farm where his family was living 'to have something better'. Adam had a standard six education, and was determined to get ahead. 'I worked by people and do some gardening for a couple of years... That was in Milnerton. And then, I know he worked in the printing works. My boss, he give me a job in the printing works. I want to work myself up. I got my pension!'⁹³

Susan Philander was still working as a domestic for various people in Sea Point during the war, when she decided she'd had enough of service. She found a job as a tea-lady for the furniture and upholstery department of one of the largest stores in Cape Town, Fletcher and Cartwright, in Adderley Street.⁹⁴ Charlotte April moved from Maitland School to teach at her old primary school, Zinzendorf, in Moravian Hill, District Six. It was far preferable to teach at the school

⁹² Maria Loock, p26.

⁹³ Adam Pick, p16.

⁹⁴ Susan Philander, p7.

next door than to have to travel out of the city centre every day.⁹⁵

Maggie Johannes, having just finished teachers training, made the decision to go straight from college back to Mamre. She had been staying with the Alexanders from Mamre, who were living in a house at 56 Sackville Street, District Six. The Alexanders had a big house near Trafalgar High and quite a few Mamre girls who were at high school in town stayed there. *'My sister got married and so I had to stay at home with my father. Ek wil graag weggegaan het eenkeer, maar ek kan nie... 'n Mens is maar so. Jy moet mos maar in die plek waar jy groot geword het.'*⁹⁶ She applied to the Church and was appointed as a teacher to the Mamre Primary School she had left as a child. Maggie renounced adventure to look after her father.

Women are often assumed to be the main nurturers within families, and it therefore seems almost natural that Maggie decided to take care of her ailing father. David Conrad's wife Christina spent most of her life looking after her sick parents, and then David's mother in Mamre, all the while raising her own children. Amalia Magerman, now Mrs Collins, also came home to Mamre after her marriage to raise her children and look after her mother. But it wasn't always the case that women fulfilled that role. Hennie Adams returned home to Mamre not long after the war to look after his parents, and nursed both his father and his mother. Adam Pick, who stayed with his mother and never married, eventually had to nurse her himself when she became incapacitated.⁹⁷ Gender wasn't the main factor in the family life cycle of Mamriers

⁹⁵ Charlotte April, p18.

⁹⁶ Magdelena Johannes, p16.

⁹⁷ Christina Conrad, p21, Amalia Collins, p7, Hendrick Adams, p11, Adam Pick, pp47-48.

determining who nurtured aging parents.⁹⁸ Often it was a question of individual family circumstances, sons who never married and established their own households could be relied upon to fulfill the same role as unmarried daughters, and all Mamriers were raised with a strong sense of filial duty.

The period between the end of the war and the end of the 1940s wrought the biggest changes in the lives of Mamriers during the first half of the twentieth century. The general ferment in the economy and labour relations, and changing transport and technology, following the war had an impact on the choices Mamriers made in their life strategies.

Thys Loock returned to his job at the Phoenix Foundry to find conditions had changed during his absence. *'During the war-time they start with two pounds eighteen. Two pounds eighteen per week. But no leave for the labour. It's only when its usual holidays like Christmas and New Year and Easter days you get the leave. But no other times. So they start the working-unions, you know? And that time... the workers get mos now, they get sick leave, and they get this usual leave, they get every year... It was very good, very good for the workers, when the unions came in. Things was very much changed a lot after the war-time. There was a lot of things that was changing, you know, for the people.'*⁹⁹

Although conditions were improving in the factories, and Thys had been trained as semi-skilled labour driving a crane which

⁹⁸ Anthea Duquenin, 'Who Doesn't Marry and Why?' *Oral History Journal*, vol.12, no.1, Spring 1984 pp40-47, In her study of Edmunton, Devon, at the turn of the century, she claims that sibling position was the most important factor in determining which daughter was pressured into remaining single and looking after her parents. Duquenin assumes, however, that this was only the case with women, and doesn't consider that men might also have been in a similar position.

⁹⁹ Thys Loock, p17.

fed the furnace, his choice of employment was not governed by considerations of skill and training. 'It wasn't worth it. You work too hard. And they didn't at that time they didn't give you a overall or something. You must use your own clothes that time. Overalls, you buy out of your own pocket. Your own shoes... And so I get a job with the City Council for three pounds eight per week, you know. I was a ordinary labour. Sweeping and do all sorts of labour work... the Council, they give shoes, now boots, you know, to work with. And you get a overall and everything. They give you a cap and everything!'¹⁰⁰

'I was sweeping District Six, you know, you had a big cart, big hooter cart, and I must push everyday that cart, you know. Big, big one! And with that car I sweep the streets on my, like the beat! And then Wednesdays, all the farmers come into market, the old market... And so I must work up to Hanover Street, right op! op Hanover Street. Then I must bring the car, when the car is full, I must come and empty it there by the market.'¹⁰¹

'I work night-shift, you know... say about from one o'clock till nine o'clock in the night, and then again from two o'clock in the day till eleven o'clock in the night. So there was no time for me, the money wasn't enough to buy every day, greens or meat and so on. So every night I make my sandwich, and I take a sandwich with cheese and bread, and a cup of tea. And the morning, because during the day I eat only a sandwich, you know. It was very seldom that I can afford to make that tradition meal in the night time, you know? 'Cause the money wasn't enough. I must still have to pay my accounts, and everything. Then I send every pay night, I must send home

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp18-19.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp20-21.

about two pounds per week. And so, I get earning three pounds eight. Then I must pay my pension, every week, and I must have for me also to eat, during the week there... I must only pay about five shillings a week [rent]. I was sharing the room with my brother-in-law. So he was also, that time, a bachelor, 'cause he must do the same thing that I do. 'Cause he must maar eat sandwich, or so. Because it's very seldom that they can make a pot of food in the night. 'Cause he was also, that time, his two children was here by my wife, his sons. Because after his wife was passing away, he didn't have a wife that time, you know. So the two boys was here. They were here with my wife. They were in school.'¹⁰²

Adam Pick was also in Cape Town, but he didn't really enjoy it at all. 'Ja, town life, you get used to it. And my point was to get a better, better, better opportunity. And that wasn't my point to stay at the printing. I was still looking for something better in life. Somewhere I get a pension scheme and so on... Now I was still on the lookout for something better in life. I always felt I won't depend on either my parents, I want to depend on myself. And then the firm [Unifors Pers, printing works] went insolvent. And they used to pay us out... I found myself a job, at the electricity department in Cape Town, Cape Town City Council... I got the job by my niece... she used to work [in service] in Sea Point. And this gentleman, he was a clerk in the electricity department in Cape Town. And I asked my niece if there's a job, and then he told her I must come and see him. I see him and then the Friday before the firm closed down, I had my job already. I went to pass Doctor, and Monday I started. The firm closes on the Wednesday, and I told them I can't bly, the Monday I start already.'¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid, pp21-22.

¹⁰³ Adam Pick, pp19-20.

Simon Magerman also found work with the City Corporation when he returned from the war, returning to stay with his mother and sister in Mamre every weekend. Mamre men actively sought out jobs in the state organisations, because of the short and long term benefits. Their jobs were secure, it was unlikely that they would be retrenched. There was some chance of bettering oneself by promotion through the hierarchy. But most importantly, there was a secure pension scheme available to state employees. This was an absolutely central consideration in choosing employment, revealing life strategy attitudes of Mamriers who envisaged themselves as future pensioners in Mamre.¹⁰⁴

There were other changes starting to occur in the way Mamriers organised their lives. Susan Philander, always stridently independent and resourceful, was the first woman in Mamre to get a job in a factory. Mamre women had tended to remain in service because it was the best way to maximise income for their Mamre-based families. Despite the low wages, they did not have to pay for their own subsistence in town, and could therefore pay all their wages into the household income. Being in service had also been a way for families to exercise control over their daughters, who were strictly monitored by the network of Mamre women working in the suburbs, especially Sea Point, and socialising in Moravian Hill.

Susan had been retrenched from Fletcher and Cartwright as their furniture department declined, and they didn't need a tea-lady. *'Then I went to the Labour Bureau. Then I got a job in the sweet factory... I worked at Humphries Sweet Factory... Humphries had a factory at Salt River... It's like, jelly sweets, Jelly Babies, I worked in that department.'* Susan had decided to try her luck through the Labour Bureau rather than go back into domestic work, and she quite enjoyed working in

¹⁰⁴ Simon Magerman, pp20-21.

the sweet factory. She became the most popular woman in Mamre, in the opinion of the children, because she would bring home with her bags of sweets for sale at rock-bottom prices!¹⁰⁵

People were looking for ways to get between town and Mamre more frequently. After the war there were more people with cars in Mamre, and they would transport people to and fro whenever they travelled. Sam Johannes, Tienie Johannes, Peter Arends got together to make a plan for a daily bus service between Mamre and town. *'They come around to have our signatures, and we signed, the community signed to have the bus service... That was the Mamre Triple Bus Service. The three people that came together, and they started the service... And they bought one bus. They start their own weekly, it was, I think then two pounds... Yes, 'cause there was a lot of people, they were boarding in town with people. Then first we had the first bus. And later on lots of people decided to travel.'*¹⁰⁶

Gustaf April became one of the drivers as the company expanded. *'I think they only started with one bus... that was a Ford. And then later on, they bought another bus. An International. And then they bought another two, two White buses they bought. I think they had bought another one, or two. Anyway, it was so, and then they start the company, and go on with the transport.'*¹⁰⁷

The turning point for people in Mamre, was the beginning of the Mamre Triple Bus Company in 1948. The start of a daily bus service between Mamre and town was the consolidation of working and transport patterns that had been accelerating since the twenties. From about that time, there was a definite shift of

¹⁰⁵ Susan Philander, p9-10.

¹⁰⁶ Adam Pick, pp26-27.

¹⁰⁷ Gustaf April, pp34-35.

people off the farms into town. Mamriers had been choosing work in town over the farms since the late nineteenth century, juggling their lives between city and countryside. By the mid-twentieth century, the process was more or less complete. Mamriers who had access to housing in Mamre, and were able to find employment, worked in town, and lived in Mamre, travelling daily. The exception was women working as domestic servants in town. They still tended to live-in, but women increasingly sought jobs in factories and other day work, because they could now travel home daily.

Adam Pick describes how Mamriers were linked with town, and the process of change with the coming of the bus:

*The people stayed in town. Went to town, and stayed in town for a time... Worked in town. I can't tell you exactly where, all over they worked. You pop up, you see a Mamrier works here, you know...*¹⁰⁸ *They worked in service, the ladies. And the men, er people, that came to stay in town, and worked in town, then Moravian Hill was the church they go to... The Church had a lot of houses in front of the church. That's why there was a strong community... You came from Mamre, you go to Moravian [Hill] Church, you stay in town.*¹⁰⁹

So, they sometimes they build their house [in Mamre] and then when they get old in years, and then they come out. And when they retire, they come out home, and stay at home. And then people will do their little gardening, and on the land, some people were still busy with their lands, you know. This was in the old days... Now when, you know, after the war, they started Mamre Triple Bus Service... 'cause there was a lot of people... they were boarding in town with people. And then first we had the first bus. And, later on lots of people decided to travel.

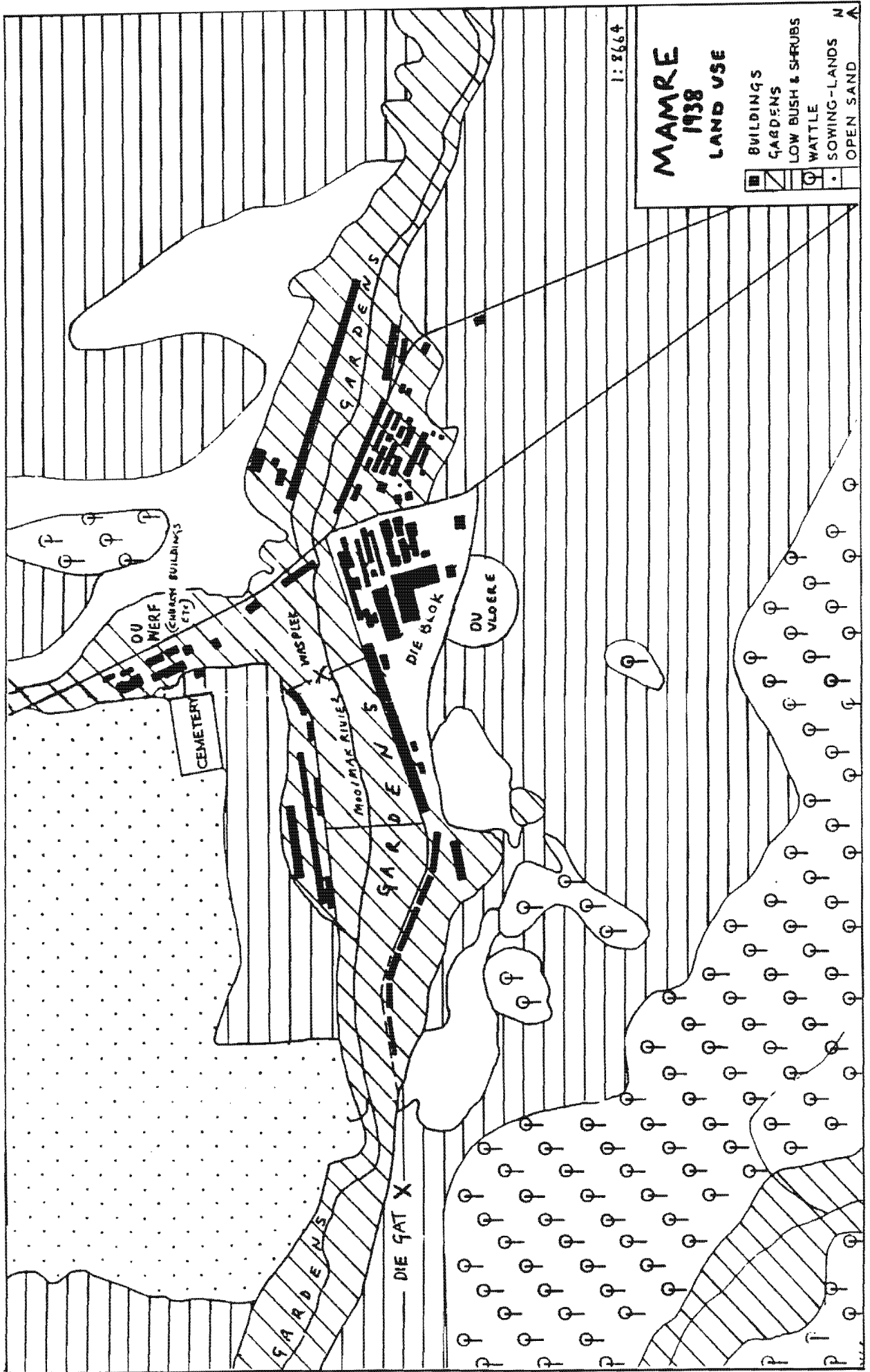
¹⁰⁸ Adam Pick, pp24-27.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp54-55.

*And they had to get a second bus, they had to get a third bus.*¹¹⁰

The time, space and distance between Mamre and town had finally been overcome in Mamriers' daily lives.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, pp24-27.



MAMRE LAND USE 1938 based on a map from Hawkrigge, D 'A Geographical Study of Mamre'

CHAPTER THREE
MIGRATION, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DURING THE
FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The preceding chapter created a history of Mamre in the first half of the twentieth century, based upon the life stories of fourteen Mamriers born before 1930. An image of the common experience of Mamriers took shape through the filter of their individual memories. Underlying the unique life experiences of every individual introduced in the story are recognisable features and patterns shared and understood by all Mamriers. This chapter will explore the commonalities of experience in this period within an analytical framework. In one sense, it constructs another layer of meaning of the story of Mamre within a more conventional academic tradition of oral history. It also introduces comparative examples from elsewhere to illuminate the meaning of community, family, gender and migration in Mamre.

What emerges most strikingly from the way Mamriers construct their lives and identities is that their concept of community is not entirely fixed within the spatial context of Mamre. The Mamre community is not fixed to geographical boundaries, it encompasses different milieux within Mamre, the surrounding countryside, and Cape Town. Within these contexts, Mamriers differentiate between specific areas. Inside Mamre, the village is divided between distinct places and spaces, each with its own significance. Mamre's rural setting is divided between Mamre land, neighbouring Pella, and the surrounding white-owned farms. The city landscape is also mapped in a particular way. Moravian Hill in District Six emerges as the epicentre for Mamriers in Cape Town. Certain suburbs take on a special prominence, like Sea Point, which is a focal point of the strong network of women from Mamre employed as domestic workers in town.

This communal definition of space represents the creation of 'multiple and overlapping settings of cultural activities' which resonates with the concept of community in *Siaya*.¹

In general, Mamriers share these concepts of space with Moravians from town and from other ex-mission villages, because these communities have all been involved in a similar process of change and migration to Cape Town.² As Charlotte April remembers '*But the people who stayed in town, most of them came from Mamre, or from Genadendal or from Elim. they'd also come to their places, and go back to town again.*'³ Just as Luo from outside Siaya can comprehend the notion of community identity which transcends spatial boundaries, Moravians in the Cape shared a discourse of belonging that was in part unique to each community but shared in their wider identity as Moravians in town or in their home-base.

Community identity for Mamriers was obviously not inherent to perceptions of race in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In a pre-apartheid era, many Mamriers had so-called mixed parentage. Sarah Adams' father was African-American, and others have family links with immigrants from Holland, Scotland, St. Helena to name but a few.⁴ Ethnicity for

¹ David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo's analysis of the Luo community of Siaya in Western Kenya 'takes up the multiple characteristics of the unit of study and its many territories' by presenting several Siaya landscapes; the suburb of Kaloleni in Nairobi, Boro as part of Siaya district, southern Uganda, and the sugar-belt in Western Kenya. Each of these different spatial contexts is intrinsic to notions of Siaya community identity, in a way similar to how Mamriers perceive the different contexts within which they circulate. *Siaya*, pp2-5.

² cf *Reis van Genadendal naar de Kaapstad*, Preface, pvii.

³ Charlotte April, p13.

⁴ For example, Sarah Adams, Thys Loock, Ernestina Joshua, Susan Philander, Freddie Carlse.

Mamriers has always been a matter of extreme complexity and ambiguity, because although they have been defined as "coloured", any gathering of Mamriers en masse shows how arbitrary such a classification is. Many Mamriers who were born around the 1940s and reached adulthood in the 1960s talk about problems and ambiguities of racial definitions. Freddie Carlse remember *'met die Apartheid het poliesie altyd vir hulle uitgestroop, jy weet, want hulle vriende was nou Kleurling. Hulle's ook nou Kleurling, maar hulle's wit. Hulle't moeilikheid gehad... Jy's tussen die boom en die bas.'*⁵ Freddie chose to be "coloured" in order to stay in Mamre and was disadvantaged in his working life and sporting career because of his choice to remain in the community. Such are the iniquities of apartheid, and in one sense community identity for Mamriers became the very ability to escape ethnic categories within one's own community despite having the community classified "coloured" from the outside. Many Mamriers say that part of the attraction of staying in Mamre was not having to "worry" about apartheid. Some returned to Mamre after being forcibly removed from District Six because they didn't want to remain in town and move to the new "coloured" townships. As Charlotte April said *'I'm not going to "kill me quick".'*⁶ Mamre was also part of the "defensive community" which had existed in District Six, where the sense of community was defined from within and sustained those who were members from being injured emotionally by the harsh realities of apartheid.⁷

⁵ Freddie relates a story where he was arrested and beaten by five policemen because he wanted to have a beer with his friends and the owner would not allow him in the "non-European" with his "coloured" friends. pp20-21.

⁶ Charlotte April, p31.

⁷ Ibid, p31., Bill Nasson 'Reconstruction'.

Adam Pick articulates the sense of community in Mamre: '*Here we stay as a community...and the people all knows each other. They all know their problems. They all know they have, you know, their friends, and all, they like to stay as a community, we like to stay together.*' For Adam, this is symbolised by the ringing of the church bell to call people together at the church whenever there is a crisis, like a fire, or if someone is lost.⁸

Extended family ties are the warp and weft that weave the social fabric of Mamre. Individuals make decisions, or have decisions made for them, as members of a family, not as autonomous beings. The interaction between individual and family life cycles creates a dynamic force for change over generations, which is itself influenced by the broader patterns of socio-economic change in the community and society.

At any point in a person's life, s/he is engaged with at least three generations of his or her family. Each successive generation forms part of the family life-cycle and an individual's role within the family changes according to his/her age. Individual and family life cycles intertwine to shape people's decisions about their lives. It is only at certain times within people's lives that they can assert a degree of independence and still stay within their family networks. Adolescence and early adulthood are the prime times to exert independence. It is at this point that one decides to accept or reject familial obligations and pressures to remain within the social networks of their communities.

Filial ties in Mamre were generally so strong that they acted as a censure against breaking community ties and values, even when in town. Hennie Adams, who described himself as a 'Kaapse Booitjie' during his adolescence, rejected deviant behaviour

⁸ Adam Pick, pp24-25.

because: *'When I was still young, I had that thing, not to hurt them [his parents]... I don't want to hurt them, and that pulls me away from that [dagga]'*⁹

Mamriers are never completely independent unless they choose to cease being Mamriers in an active sense. My interviewees in Mamre did not perceive this ostracism as a realistic option. Karel Sambaba, Chair-person of the Village Management Board, articulated in detail this perception of belonging which I found common to most Mamriers:

*Kerry, through history, I would lie if I tell you that nobody moved out! You know there were people who moved out and then you know they've established their homes and their families and they've grown in there, but I would like to show you one day, the lines from outside... they always maintain ties and links, they used to visit Mamre Easter weekends, Christmas times, and every festival...*¹⁰

In the most extreme example, these links stretched half-way around the world. Remember Susan Philander, the feisty and independent woman who during the 1940s pioneered the entry of Mamre women into factory employment? She remained single and moved to London where she spent most of her working life, but still maintained close links with her family in Mamre. *'I came here for two months holiday. I used to come every other year home.'* Eventually, Susan returned to Mamre when her mother's health worsened, and has remained ever since to fend for her unmarried brothers.¹¹

Identity and belonging are tied up with membership of family and community. Family ties and obligations are part and parcel

⁹ Hennie Adams, p6.

¹⁰ Karl Sambaba, p20.

¹¹ Susan Philander, p18.

of the concept of belonging to Mamre, and they help to explain how identity is shaped by the continual reaffirmation of these ties.

Bozzoli's *Women of Phokeng* explores the terrain of consciousness and life strategy within the context of migrancy from rural Phokeng to the city of Johannesburg. By stressing the individual women as virtually independent decision makers, the role of the extended family in the lives of the women of Phokeng is understated partly because this reflects how the women asserted their independence from their community in choosing to migrate. Compared to the life stories of Mamriers, one loses touch with the Phokeng women's place in the generational framework of their families, particularly their obligations to their own parents and the way that family members provide essential links and support in the city. The familial ties between Phokeng and Johannesburg fade in significance as the women begin to create their own nuclear family units in the urban townships.¹²

This contrasts with the experience of Mamriers who migrated into Cape Town, where the separation between spatial contexts is rarely achieved. Mamre families spanned the distance between town and countryside throughout their generational cycles. People from Mamre constantly refer to a web of relationships in all the contexts of their community.

Certain common gender experiences emerge from my study of Mamre. One gains a more subtle perspective on community and migration by considering the influence of gender on individual life strategies within the context of the family life cycle.

¹² Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, see also Phil Bonner ' "Desirable or undesirable Basotho Women?" Liquor, prostitution and the migration of Basotho women to the Rand, 1920-1945' in Cheryl Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1991).

Gender strongly influences decisions made in occupational choices through family and community expectations and pressures. Most women enter domestic service because their families and community encourage them to do so, and actively pressure them to remain within this occupation in the city. Men, on the other hand, have far more individual freedom of choice when entering the urban job market.¹³

In Mamre, gender roles are not fixed in terms of one's role within the family. Sibling position often determines access to education and career choices. Younger children within a family, which already pools the income of working parents and older children, were often the ones who were allowed to continue their education from school to college, regardless of gender. People who became teachers or nurses often had older sisters who were domestic workers, and brothers who were ordinary labourers.

Thus Maggie Johannes, younger sister of Willie "Poswen", was sent into town along with the youngest sibling Henrietta to complete their education. Maggie qualified as a teacher and Henrietta as a nurse, while their four older brothers were sent out to work after school. *'Ooh, dit was swaar. Die ouers het swaar gekry om vir jou skool te gaan. Jy kry twee en 'n sixpence, half kroon, kry jy sakgeld, dan moet dit hou vir die maand. Dit was baie geld gewees.'* Maggie and Henrietta's parents had to pay school fees and board and lodging, as well as provide pocket-money. When I asked Maggie about what she

¹³ See Belinda Bozzoli, 'Marxism Feminism and Southern African Studies' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.9, no.2, 1983 pp139-171. Bozzoli criticises the equation of gender with women which characterises much of the scholarship of "Women's Studies". *Women of Phokeng* is clearly a gender-specific study that analyses domestic struggles from the perspective of the women, but it would have been interesting to have compared the experience of men. Her development of individual life strategy as a means to discuss the evolving consciousness of women from Phokeng does not present a complete portrait of the community.

did for entertainment in town, she replied, '*Nothing. Can't afford to go anywhere else. Except go to church.*'¹⁴ The investment in higher education was a strain on family resources which could usually only be borne on behalf of younger children.

This raises an interesting comparison with bourgeois and working-class Victorian families in England, where investment in education was concentrated in the eldest son, to the detriment of younger siblings. Education was perceived in terms of reproducing patriarchal structures of the Victorian family. In Mamre, these strict gender and age hierarchies did not exist, the reason being that most Mamre families actually had to wait for additional income from older children before they could afford to send any children onto higher education. It therefore tended to be the younger children in the family who benefitted. Families also expected both sons and daughters to work, so the censure against women being educated and working, such a strong element of Victorian values, did not exist in Mamre, even amongst the elite in the community.

Divisions of skill and education created in the early twentieth century were often consolidated in the next generation; the children of teachers tended to maintain levels of education and status occupations. I asked Martha Pick, a retired teacher, how typical her children's education was compared to other Mamriers.

Kerry: *Do you consider your family as one of the more educated ones in Mamre?*

Martha: *I wouldn't know. More families - children go out to work.*

Mercia intervenes to comment about privilege and education across generations in Mamre: *I would say they were the*

¹⁴ Magdalena Johannes, p14.

first...there were no drop-outs.... I would say that I'm actually the only one in my family to have the privilege to go high school. Remember in those days we had to pay for our books, hey?... Because it's a real effort to go to high school, for the family, money-wise. They [Martha's children] all had matric.¹⁵

A common cultural assumption in Western society in the early twentieth century was that the youngest daughter within a nuclear family would be pressured to remain single and care for her aging parents.¹⁶ By looking at the life cycles of Mamriers born in the early twentieth century, this pattern does not emerge. Where there were unmarried sons within families, these men were often subject to the same demands as unmarried daughters. Adam Pick was one of the men who assumed the role of nurturer for his aged mother.

'My brothers and the sisters, they got all married then, and I stayed with my mother.... I didn't marry. No, I decided I must either look after my mother. She was old. My mother... she was what you call [bedridden] for five years.... I worked in Town. I worked, doing my church work, and I had er, my sister's daughter [who was a young child], she's staying with me. My sister died, and I, I had to look after mother. And I didn't go, took her to a home, to go and stay there. No, I just looked after her. I had to wash her off, at night and

¹⁵ Martha Pick, p14.

¹⁶ Anthea Duquenin, 'Who Doesn't Marry and Why?', pp40-47, Diana Gittins, 'Marital Status, Work and Kinship 1850-1930' in Jane Lewis ed., *Labour of Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1940* (New York, Basil Blackwell, 1986) p264, Patricia Julland 'Victorian Spinsters: Dutiful Daughters, Desperate Rebels and the Transition to the New Woman' in Patricia Crawford, *Exploring Women's Past: Essays in Social History* (Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1983) pp137-148.

*dress her again. She wetted herself. It was a hard time. Five years!*¹⁷

Where there were no unmarried children within a family, married women, although daughter-in-laws as often as daughters, normally looked after the remaining members of the older generation. Christina Conrad spent most of her life looking after elderly relations.

*'And I think that's why the Good Lord keeps us, because He tells you to do good, look after your parents, and we look after my parents, and when his [David's] mother gets old, we were married and then I come here, and look after his mother. And his mother was married a second time, her [first] husband died, and then I had to look after the old lady... but she ask me I must look after him [her second husband], and then after he died. And then I go and help my sister until the dear Lord comes and take [my parents] away. And then I come back home.'*¹⁸

Nurturing the elderly could have its material benefits. Unlike Victorian England, inheritance patterns were not patriarchal, the material wealth of the family did not accrue to the eldest son to the disadvantage of others.¹⁹ In Mamre, patterns of inheritance were much more equitable, and there was an element of choice about who would benefit most from the family estate. Those who remained single and lived with their parents did, however, tend to inherit the family home.²⁰ This does not necessarily imply that there were mercenary motives behind the

¹⁷ Adam Pick, pp47-48.

¹⁸ Christina Conrad, p21.

¹⁹ Diana Gittins, 'Marital Status, Work and Kinship', p250.

²⁰ For example, Maggie Johannes, Simon Magerman, Adam Pick.

decision to look after one's parents in old age, Christina Conrad articulates how filial piety was a strong element of community identity. Elizabeth Roberts, examining the function and attitudes of working-class extended families in the early twentieth century England, agrees:

'To presume that working class people only helped their relatives because of motives of self-interest is to portray them as materialistic, lacking in human dignity and incapable of finer feelings such as affection, pride and a sense of duty.'²¹

Devotion like that of Adam Pick for his mother cannot be bought at any price.

Old age for Mamriers constitutes a life-cycle phase where major decision making is over. Old people reasonably expect to be supported within their family without obligations of contributing to the family income through cash wages, although often grandparents assume the role of child-minders. It is an extremely common aspect of Mamrier's household structures to have members of three generations under one roof. During the first half of the twentieth century it was often the case that grandparents would look after their grandchildren while both parents worked away from Mamre and visited regularly.²² Or, within a family the wife and children would live in Mamre and share their household with the older generation, while the husband worked outside the village.²³

²¹ Elizabeth Roberts 'The Working Class Extended Family: Functions and Attitudes', *Oral History Journal*, vol.12, no.1, September 1984, p48.

²² For example, Charlotte Barry, Renatha van der Merwe, and Susan Philander were all looked after by grandparents when they were children.

²³ For example, Amalia Collins, Thys and Maria Look, Ernst Julies.

Childhood, on the other hand, was experienced by Mamriers born in the early twentieth century as a phase of life during which their energies were harnessed for their contribution to the household income. Children were pooled resources in Mamre, and shifted from one nuclear household unit to another within an extended family. They were an essential additional labour resource, expected to contribute through chores like gardening and gathering firewood. In some cases childless couples or grandparents requested the additional help. Simon Magerman was sent as a child to his grandparents in Pella because they needed someone to help with the chores. So was Ernestina Adonis.

*'Ek het in Pella skool gegaan. Toe ek begin skool gaan het. Maar hier [Mamre] kom klaar maak, na my ouma gesterf het.... Hulle het nie kinders gehad nie, toe het ek vir hulle gegaan as 'n kind. Daar was toe nou mos nie meer kinders in die huis nie, hulle toe al oud geraak.'*²⁴

In other families, "extra" children were farmed out to relatives in order to relieve pressure on their parents' household resources. These arrangements could be temporary or permanent, with children sometimes accepting their new nuclear family arrangements as "adoptions". Maggie September spent her early childhood with the Conrad family in Mamre because her parents were working in town, while her brothers and sisters stayed *'daar by my ma se suster, my Aunty'*. Maggie was part of the Conrad family, *'ek het daar gebly soos 'n huiskind'*; she was not a servant, they brought her up and gave her schooling.²⁵

²⁴ Ernestina Joshua, p2.

²⁵ Magrieta September, pp1-2.

Mamriers often adopted children from outside the community, and these children were in all senses considered to be Mamriers. A number of children were brought into families, often through the agencies of mid-wives. My interviewees did not know the origins of their parents who were adopted as children.²⁶ It is possible to speculate that somewhere the illegitimate children of women from Mamre who used the services of Mamre mid-wives, who were then asked to find homes for the babies.²⁷ As the mid-wives were working in town, it is equally possible that other women came to them to deliver unwanted children who were then incorporated into Mamre families. Susan Philander was the only person I interviewed that was willing to discuss her mother's background.

'Yes, actually she was adopted. She was a European. You know in the nineteen something year, I can't actually say, so my granny, the lady who adopted her, was a midwife. So, you see, in those days girls didn't have, er, illegitimate children. And my granny adopted her, and brought her up'.²⁸

Children were valued members of families and of the community. Even if they were boarded out, they remained a part of their families and of the community.

Adults were drawn into family networks in town to gain access to accommodation and job opportunities. Robert's study of turn-of-the-century Lancashire can also speak for Mamre on one

²⁶ Adopted babies included, Susan Philander's mother and aunt, Daisy Liederman, Rebecca Johannes, Magdalena van Schoor's husband's mother.

²⁷ See also, Sandra Berman and Margaret Naude 'Bearing a Bastard', cf Chapter Two fn.13.

²⁸ Susan Philander, p5. Susan's grandmother was herself a childless mid-wife who adopted two baby girls. It does not always seem to be the case that only childless families adopted children.

level. She argues that the process of industrialisation strengthened the extended family, regardless of whether it was a fundamental structure of pre-industrial society.

'The overwhelming evidence from oral testimony is that the extended family was providing a vital network of economic and social support. Kin cared for orphans and the aged, the sick and dying, gave food and clothing to each other, and sometimes money; they shared social occasions, they "spoke" for each other at work; and thus helped kin to obtain employment.'²⁹

In Mamre, even at the level of the nuclear unit, the family could at any one time be split across several spatial contexts. Family members could be living in Mamre, on the farms, in Pella, in Cape Town working as live-in domestic workers or boarding in other households; they could even span the distance between the two environments by living and working on the roads in camps. This was the common experience of Mamriers. Without exception, an individual's conception of family incorporated a flexible notion of space.

The experience of migration was part and parcel of being a Mamrier in the twentieth century. This contrasts with the experience of migration for the women of Phokeng, or the people of Clarksdale on the Mississippi Delta, for whom migration meant a transition from a community based on the land, to one focused towards accumulation in the distant city. These communities experienced migration as a generational transition in the twentieth century. Bozzoli's interviewees form a cohort of first-generation migrants, as do Lemann's ex-sharecroppers who went to Chicago as part of the Great Migration.

For southern African-Americans migrating to the northern cities, it was the start of a new life, they did not perceive their move as a temporary sojourn. Like some of the women from

²⁹ Elizabeth Roberts, 'Working Class Extended Family', p48.

Phokeng, many Mamriers evolved a life strategy which included planning retirement in the countryside.³⁰ Mamriers did not perceive their involvement in city and countryside as a dichotomy, as distinct spheres between which one could oscillate. Their sense of space and community is more like that of the people of Siaya, incorporating several milieux at once.³¹

Migration from Mamre to Cape Town had started almost at the same time as the beginning of the mission community at Groenekloof in 1808. Benigna, known to Mamriers as the "mother of Mamre", had a daughter Christina who worked in town as a servant, and in 1817 came back to Groenekloof to stay with her mother.³² By the 1870s there was a large enough number of Moravians from the rural mission stations living in Cape Town to prompt the formation of a Moravian community in District Six.³³ Moravian Hill, as the area became known, thus entered the consciousness of rural Moravians as being part of their community within the context of the city. It was the familiar place in town both in the sense of being known and being part of the extended family. For Mamriers, of all the Moravian mission communities, this was particularly true because of the close proximity of the city to the rural-based community.

³⁰ The women of Phokeng differed in their decisions to stay in Johannesburg. It is obvious from the interviews that they all retired to Phokeng, but for some the decision to go back was taken earlier and more voluntarily. For others, it was the impact of forced removals from the inner city townships which shattered their perceptions of a permanent home in Johannesburg and induced them to return to their original community. Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, esp. Chapters 9 and 10.

³¹ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land*, Chapters 1 and 2, David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya*, Chapter 3.

³² W.F. Bechler, *Benigna*, p.42.

³³ J de Boer and E.M. Temmers, *Unitas Fratrum*, pp83-84; B. Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, pp16-39.

People from Genadendal in the first half of the twentieth century did not have the same fluidity of movement because of the extra distance between the village and the city. Genadendalers' relationship with town was possibly as familiar, but certainly not as intimate, as that of Mamriers.

This flexibility of space and distance meant that in real terms households were not split between different environments in the way that migrant workers usually relate to their places of work and home. Lemann describes the choices made by African-American southerners from Clarksdale between staying in their harsh but familiar environment in the south, and entering an alien world of the urban north. Transport intervened even in this choice, as most southerners chose the cheapest route north.³⁴ For Clarksdalians that lead straight to Illinois Central Station in Chicago.³⁵ Chicago was another world for Clarksdalians in a way that Cape Town never was for Mamriers. Mamriers did not have to cope with the culture shock of entering a totally foreign social world, the links between Cape Town and Mamre were too strong and long-standing.

Even the way that remittances operated in Mamre were more flexible than that of most migrating communities. The food parcel service is only one example of this. Gustaf April's father would initially hitch a ride into town by car to buy supplies for his shop, but at the same time he would give his sister food every week to subsidise Gustaf's upkeep.³⁶ Resources in other migrant communities were usually carried in the opposite direction, from city to countryside. Or, the distance between the urban and rural environments for most

³⁴ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land*, pp43-67.

³⁵ Ibid, p43. Lemann describes Illinois Central Station as the Ellis Island of black migration to Chicago.

³⁶ Charlotte April, p9.

other migrants is too great to enable them to transport produce.

Some of the Mamre women who worked as live-in domestics would get a visit every month from one or both of their parents who would travel into town to collect their wages.³⁷ *'And now, at Moravian Hill, the minister, there was a sort of a - I don't know how they did it - but the men would come and give their wages to him, every Sunday night when they came to church, and he posted it to the families. And the domestic servants, they'd also bring their money to the church and it would be posted from there to the families here.'*³⁸ Remittances and resources flowed freely back and forth between Mamre and Cape Town. Links were strengthened with the changing availability of transport, and improvements in the technology of transport continually narrowed the distance between city and countryside.

Changing modes of transportation are the link between Mamre and Cape Town on a number of levels. Numbers of Mamre men were working on the very creation of the infrastructure of transport by building the roads which literally bridged the gap between the different environments, bringing families closer together despite their separation in space.³⁹ The culmination of this process was the creation of a commuter community with the start of the daily bus service.

When interviewees talk about their life stories, and about their perceptions of community, among their favourite stories are those about travelling and how they got from place to

³⁷ For example Justina Arends, p3.

³⁸ Charlotte April, p31.

³⁹ For example Christlief Adams, Adam Titus and Isak Witbooi all worked on the roads.

place. At the beginning of the previous chapter, we made the journey from Mamre to Cape Town by foot, with the men who walked in groups into town to resume their jobs after a visit home. Men from Mamre not only walked into town. If they could afford it, they bought bicycles to shorten travelling time. The walk into town was an overnight journey, but as Christlief Adams claims, one could push off by bike from Mamre at 2.00 am and reach town by around 7.30 am in time to start work. *'Wat ek toe gewerk het, het ek ook altyd bicycle gery het, tot ander kant die Kaap.... Neem jy ook jou... jou week se kos moet almal saam agterop, almal saam.... Bread, fish, meat, butter, sugar, eggs, potatoes en vrug.'*⁴⁰

Ox-wagons and donkey-carts took people and goods to and from Cape Town, and linked Mamre to the surrounding countryside and towns. The wagon has become a symbol of this period of Mamre's history, as both a living and a link for Mamriers. It was the backbone of the transport system in the pre-industrial period, and transport riding was one of the most lucrative forms of self-employment at the turn of the century. One of the strongest images that people retain about this form of transport is the length of time of the wagon journey between Mamre and Cape Town.⁴¹ The other is of the wagon races between Mamreweg and Mamre on Good Friday, as the wagons came to meet the train bringing people home for Easter. The ride wasn't always free either, people were charged for the "taxi-ride" home if they weren't fetched by family.

Modes of transport bringing home migrant workers from their urban work-place often became an important image for people in the community. It was the means by which the community gained mastery over distance, because Mamriers controlled certain

⁴⁰ Christlief Adams, p12.

⁴¹ See for example Thys Loock, pp8-10.

means of transport they could manipulate the relationship between time and space. The story of the train and wagon ride home to Mamre is repeated again and again in interviews with Mamriers of this generation. It symbolises a part of their lives when Mamre was different, when the pace of life was slower and more personal. The bus bringing women home from Johannesburg to Phokeng was similarly a powerful symbol of migrancy and its meaning for the Phokeng community, it was aptly called "Diamond Hill".⁴²

To some extent, transport was genderised. Women didn't walk into town, or ride bikes, or span oxen by themselves. Their access to transport alternatives was more limited, which is partly why the journey by train from town to home at Easter is so powerful an image for them. The introduction of cars brought Mamre closer to women working in town. It appears that women didn't drive themselves, but access to cars made it possible for women to journey home more often. The early days of automobile transport are linked to the image of the ox-wagon. Martha Pick's father owned a Dodge and would take passengers at Easter back and forth in several trips between Cape Town and Mamre.

*'The strangest thing of all was we always had to wait for the last trip.... It took quite a few hours. Not like now. Now it just takes half an hour or three quarters of an hour. In those days it took hours and hours. They also had an outspan at "Koggelsvlei" ... You know, everybody took a break and they rest.'*⁴³

⁴² Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, p104. See also C. Bundy and D. Healy 'Aspects of Urban Poverty', *Oral History Journal*, vol.6, no.1, Spring 1978 'The Sunday morning train from...Manchester to North Wales (a fertile ground for servants) was nicknamed the "dripping train".' p90.

⁴³ Martha Pick, p7.

Women also related to transport technology differently from men. For them, it was really with the coming of the daily bus service that their employment horizons expanded, because they didn't need to look for work which provided accommodation. It is only around the time when daily commuting becomes possible that Mamre women start to move out of domestic service into factory employment. The generation of Mamriers born in the early twentieth century experienced this as a profound impact on their lives and on their perception of Mamre's history, whereas the next generation took the closing distance between Mamre and Cape Town for granted.

New technology brought new job opportunities for many people in Mamre. For Wilhelm Johannes - Oom Willie Poswen - the automobile became his life in more than one sense. His life epitomises the impact of the automobile and transport on Mamre, particularly before the beginning of the bus service. His role as postman doubled with that of a taxi-driver, and he opened up the range of distance around Mamre where one could get a lift. But on another level, for Wilhelm Johannes, driving between the many contexts of Mamre was his life, the part of his life about which he is most eloquent and articulate. The road to Mamre is his definition of self, the very way he describes his work reads like a road map and a travel-log. His life-story is a fascinating testament to the importance of transport and distance in the perception of Mamriers' community identity and history. ⁴⁴

Transport drivers with oxen were displaced by young men who sought to secure their driver's licences. As postman, Willie Johannes was based in Mamre and used his driving skill to stay in the countryside. Others became drivers in town, giving them access to higher paid employment than unskilled labouring jobs.

⁴⁴ Willie Poswen's life story will be analysed in detail in Chapter Four.

Thys Loock eventually gave up pushing his dirt-cart up Hanover Street. *'I was an ordinary labourer. Sweeping and do all sort of labour work. And after, later, in the later years I was a garage attendant. And after the garage attendant, the last time, I was a driver there. Driving a vehicle.'*⁴⁵

Changes in transport technology were not adopted in a lineal sequence of introducing innovation and discarding outmoded technology. The ox-wagon and bicycle existed alongside the coming of the automobile. Cars were also an important status symbol, people remember who owned the first car in Mamre.⁴⁶ Moreover, those with cars were under an unspoken obligation to share their resources with others.

*'En daai tyd was daar nog nie er, verkeerskonstabes nie. Jy kan in jou motor-kaaretjie gelaai het. Hulle't somer langes aan die side, die running-board gestaan. My pa het somer gelaai so veel as dertig man in 'n kar, soos Easter ... Nou, en toe het die mense nou er, besluit hulle gaan werk in die Kaap, en Dolfie Conraad het begin toe met die kompanjie [the bus company, not the VOC], soos ek gese. En die mense het vinnig ingeval. Een busse was te min - die Ford busse. Hy't toe twee lorries van hom laat verander in busse.'*⁴⁷

Cars made a significant contribution to the way that Mamre families could maximize the distribution of their resources between city and countryside. As Christlief Adams explains:

'Ek het later, soos ek vertel, ek het hier in die Kaap gebly. In die Kaap se rondte het ek gebly. Werk, dan bly ek sommer daar. Dan slaap ons daar. Daarom ons moet ons ons kos neem.

⁴⁵ Thys Loock, p18.

⁴⁶ Freddie Carlse's family owned the first car in Mamre.

⁴⁷ Freddie Carlse, p1.

Dan kom ons weer al oor die veertien dae huistoe weer. En ons sakkies moet hulle dra. Dan kom ons kos met die karre aan ... moet ons loop kos haal ...Daai tyd, met motorkarre gery mos. Bring my kos, daai man se kos ...'

*His wife interrupts 'Then they come and fetch it at Castle Bridge in Cape Town [on Saturday].' 'Se nou twee, drie karre.... En daai kos word nou afgelaai. En jou, jou naam is op die kos, op die sakkie.'*⁴⁸

This enabled families to minimise the expense of town life by cutting costs of food to sustain workers in town. Household resources were distributed between town and countryside. Food produced cheaply in the garden plots by family members in Mamre enabled men working in town to maximise their remittances back home. Women in domestic service received food as part of their wages so they were not involved in this weekly exchange.

Thus far I have explored the meaning of space and distance for Mamriers in terms of their families and their concept of community, and the way that changing transport technology intervened in both these aspects of people's lives. This has introduced some of the changes in occupation that occurred because of changes in transport technology, and the effect of better transport on household structure and migration patterns for Mamriers. What follows is a comprehensive picture of what people did in Mamre or town, the range of occupations in which they were engaged and how broad patterns of occupation changed during this period.

The first half of the twentieth century did, in one respect, constitute a reorientation in Mamre from its rural context in the Swartland towards the city. Occupational patterns consolidated trends that had begun in the late nineteenth century away from labouring on the land and surrounding farms

⁴⁸ Christlief Adams, pp17-18.

towards entering the urban job market.⁴⁹ Oral testimony verifies the perception that people were moving off the farms, particularly from the 1920s, but does not reveal any sudden breakdown of occupational patterns in Mamre or on the farms.⁵⁰ These changes were not as dramatic as those experienced by the erosion of independent peasant production in rural areas like Phokeng, where the early twentieth century was a period of major change towards migrant labour.⁵¹ There was an even more traumatic change in the rural economy of the American south with the sudden collapse of share-cropping that accompanied the mechanisation of cotton production in the 1940s. Almost overnight the livelihood of African-American sharecroppers was undermined. Migration to the cities became the only option as people were no longer able to sustain themselves on the land.⁵² Independent peasant farming and sharecropping were not options open to most families in Mamre. There were very few bona fide farmers, and the garden plots within the mission station were not big enough for subsistence agriculture without additional cash wages adding to the family income.

Thus Mamriers did not experience any enforced changes of occupational orientation, and their perception of life strategies and their family life cycles do not reflect any great disjuncture. People perceived that at any one time they usually had several options available to them within the spatial environments of city and countryside. Patterns of accumulation changed gradually, some of the divisions of access to resources within Mamre had been created around emancipation and remained consistent into the twentieth century. This is

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Host ' "Die Hondjie Byt": Labour Relations in the Malmesbury District, c1880-1920' unpub. Hons thesis, UCT, 1987.

⁵⁰ See for example Hendrick Adams comment on this trend, p3.

⁵¹ Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, chapters 2 and 4.

⁵² Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land*, pp43-53.

particularly the case with access to large amounts of Mamre land. Only five families were bona fide farmers and those who gained access to land in the mid-nineteenth century seem to have retained it into the twentieth.⁵³

The local landscape provided a number of alternative means of livelihood on land and sea, and families through their members encompassed many different occupations. There were a number of occupations connected to the rural economy available to Mamriers. No families I interviewed remained entirely within the rural or city economies during the early twentieth century, although some, like Thys Loock's and Adam Pick's families did make a decisive move off white-owned farms in favour of working in town. Men, in particular, sought work with the various local authorities, and would move straight off the farms to a waiting job arranged by a family member or fellow Mamrier.⁵⁴

The main difference in the way people were employed on the land was between those families based on farms and those who had access to residence in Mamre. Amongst the people I interviewed born in the early twentieth century, some were born on farms and had parents who were born on farms. Links with Mamre either came from grandparents, through marriage or through membership of the community at Pella.⁵⁵ Families who were based on the farms were more vulnerable to farmers demands of access to the labour of other family members, including women and children. Isak Witbooi was working as a monthly labourer on a local farm as a child, because his father died, and he was

⁵³ Bona fide farmers included the Tim Liederman's and Freddie Carlse's, and Gustaf April's families.

⁵⁴ See for example Adam Pick, Samuel Arends, Christlief Adams, Alexander September, Adam Titus.

⁵⁵ See for example Samuel Arends, Alexander September, Joseph Roberts, Adam Titus, Ernst Julies, Ernestina Joshua, Sarah Adams, Renatha van der Merwe.

taken out of school to help his family. He wanted to return to Mamre and go back to school. '*... toe se my ma vir my, "weet jy, as jy nou wegloop van die plaas af, en jy loop verby my, hierdeur met die pad saam op" - die pad gaan mos nou daar, daar van die plaas af, verby heir, by die plasie wat ons nou bly - toe se my ma vir my, "as jy wegloop, dan kom die polies vir jou haal". Dis net daar wat ek skrik!*'⁵⁶

Isak Witbooi wasn't the only boy to be sent to work on the farms, although his family was more vulnerable because his father had died. It was a pattern that boys between the ages of 7 and 13 were sent to work on the farms as labourers until they were about 16 to 21 when they became eligible for employment with "the Council". What seems to have taken place is almost a symbiotic relationship between the farms having access to cheap child and adolescent labourers awaiting the opportunity to work on "the Council" and undergoing work-discipline training which stood them in good stead for their jobs in town.⁵⁷

Families who had access to housing in Mamre or Pella would usually shift the home-base to the villages to remove women and children from farm labour demands. Once there was a house available in Mamre or Pella, families would use their access to garden plots for subsistence, while the men in the family would work on the farms as monthly labourers, usually returning to Mamre on the weekends. During the weekends the men would do

⁵⁶ Isak Witbooi pp5-6.

⁵⁷ See for example Samuel Arends, Isak Witbooi, Christlief Adams, Alexander September, Adam Titus - However, there were always exceptions. Ernst Julies didn't like working for the Council or living in town and decided to return to farm work. Maggie September (p18) didn't like town either: '*Nee. Om in die stad te bly? Uh-uh. Ek het altyd gese ek gaan 'n plaas man vat. Ek het, ek het voor daai, die man, 'n outjie gehad maar toe sien ek hy worry met 'n other girl.*' Justina Arend's husband chose to come back to Mamre and abandon town work.

the heavy work in the garden plots to grow the food upon which the family survived, while during the week the women would maintain the gardens.⁵⁸ Alternatively, they would work seasonally on the farms and engage themselves as labourers for Mamre farmers or subsidise their income through gardening, collecting firewood or fishing.⁵⁹ Sometimes the shift from the farms to the village was not entirely voluntary, like David Conrad's father who was sent off the farm he worked on because he was old and sick and was forced to return to Mamre.⁶⁰

This raises the issue of the relationship between occupational structure and residential rights within Mamre. The crucial determinant for membership of the community in the twentieth century was access to housing. This was even more important than, and represented a shift away from, access to garden plots for subsistence agriculture.⁶¹ During the first half of the twentieth century access to garden plots was still an important component of family subsistence, but people were not involved in subsistence agriculture. One of the main themes of perception of change in the community is that around the 1960s most people abandoned working in the garden plots and became entirely dependent on cash wages earned in town.⁶² As wages rose in the post-war era, family income was sufficient to enable people to survive entirely from cash wages. Women also

⁵⁸ See , Samuel Arends, Alexander September, Adam Titus. Alexander September discusses freedom of movement of Mamre based people, p5-6.

⁵⁹ See for example Adam Titus' father, pp4-5; Joseph Roberts, p2.

⁶⁰David Conrad, p4.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the crucial role of the garden plots in the nineteenth century, see Elizabeth Ludlow, 'Missions and Emancipation'.

⁶² See for example Willie Johannes, Hennie Adams, Adam Titus.

started to move from low-paid domestic work to factory work because they could travel daily on the bus.⁶³ At the same time, the generation of Mamriers born before the 1930s are the last to have worked as children in Mamre. It appears that the generation born in the 1930s and 1940s finished their schooling around sixteen before entering the work force.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, for the first half of the twentieth century the garden plots provided for part of the subsistence of families. They produced a variety of fruits and vegetables, and some grains. People comment on the abundance of the garden plots. Pumpkins, potatoes, peas, mealies and other vegetables, and grains like rye were grown in strip gardens along the stream. Labour was often pooled between the owners of the gardens to ensure their efficient cultivation.⁶⁵ Families could survive in lean times on the produce from their gardens, but it was extremely rare (I don't know of any cases) where they depended entirely on their garden plots for subsistence. In every case I encountered, families were drawing income from a number of sources, from people working on the farms or in town and remitting cash wages to contribute to the income of households based in Mamre. Most families also kept a few stock animals such as cows, pigs, and sheep, as well as transport animals. The income from stock was usually subsidiary, or animals were kept for home consumption, with the exception of transport

⁶³ Augusta van Harte, p5; Adam Pick, p27.

⁶⁴ Even families living on farms retained access to housing in Mamre if possible by renting out the house they owned while they lived on the farm, or even leaving it empty. One interviewee commented that there were a number of houses in Mamre standing empty while the owners lived and worked on the farms. Adam Pick, p24.

⁶⁵ Hendrick Adams, p3; Gustaf April, p18.

animals like oxen, horses and mules which were often owned in larger numbers as the basis of a small business.⁶⁶

One of the main links between production and exchange of goods was the mission store and the mill. The missionaries were also among the village's main employers. They hired women as domestic workers and shop assistants. Men also worked in their employ in the mission store, and as gardeners, and mill keepers.⁶⁷ The missionaries seemed to have acted as managers and overseers in the control of church assets. They also controlled the postal contract (see Willie Poswen). The role of the mill was particularly important as Mamriers who grew rye could swap it at the mill for ready ground wheat flour. Rye flour was considered inferior for baking bread, but seems to have been grown extensively in the gardens.⁶⁸ Goods produced in gardens, and crafts like waxberry wax were bartered at the stores, which also sold goods on credit to enable people to buy when they needed to and to pay when the family cash income was available.⁶⁹

Other types of jobs available to families based in Mamre were seasonal. Fishing and highly-paid seasonal farm work were the most common for Mamre men. Ploughing and harvesting were the peak times on surrounding farms, although people were also engaged as seasonal harvesters on the wine farms, and as

⁶⁶ See for example Karel Sambaba, Christlef Adams, Hendrick Adams, Wilhelm Johannes.

⁶⁷ Anna Liederman and Adam Pick's father worked in the mission store, Ernst Julies' mother and Anna Liederman worked as domestic servants, Adam Titus, pl2, worked in the mission gardens between the age of 11-18. Magdelene van Schhor's husband and Fredrika Galant's grandfather worked in the mill.

⁶⁸ See for example Alexander September, Freddie Carlse, Justina Arends, Engeborg Liebenberg

⁶⁹ See for example Gustaf April, Charlotte April

pea-pickers. The September pea-picking season was especially popular, as the work was not physically taxing and whole families would go along, including women and children.⁷⁰ People talk very fondly of the pea harvest as almost a holiday, reminiscent of the way that Stedman Jones describes the hops-picking season as a welcome break for casual labourers based in London.⁷¹

Pea-picking and grape-picking were not gender-specific occupations, whereas some of the seasonal farm work was undertaken only by men. Waxberry gathering, on the other hand, was done by women. Firewood gathering for domestic consumption was also done by women, but when done on the scale of a small business seems to have been undertaken by men. Fishing was also men's work, and seasonal fishing was not uncommon.⁷² Only one Mamre family were full-time fisher-people, the Sambabas. They owned a boat and Johannes Sambaba would catch crawfish or fish, depending on the season, from the sea fronting on to the Duckitt's farm in Botbaai.⁷³ In exchange for being allowed to fish from his property, Farmer Duckitt expected Johannes' wife to work in his house while he was out on the boat. After a day's fishing the Sambabas would take their catch by horse and cart to Malmesbury and sell it on the

⁷⁰ See for example Amalia Collins, p10. She would leave her children in Mamre with her mother, but I have been told informally that pea-picking was often family venture.

⁷¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971) pp91-92.

⁷² See for example Ernst Julies, Fredrika Galant's father.

⁷³ Sophia Liederman; and also for a discussion about the relationship between farmers and fishing, see Lance van Sittert, 'Merchant Capital and the St Helena Bay Fisheries in the 19th Century' unpub paper, History Department UCT, 1991.

stoep of one of the shops. Later, they got a van and their son drove it to sell fish in Malmesbury and Mamre.⁷⁴

In the first half of the twentieth century, Mamre was mainly a village of women during the week. Although there were some men about, the elderly, those working in the fields and the few men who had employment based in the village, most men travelled out to work. Many women remained in the village and sustained their families through their domestic labour. Often, women stayed home only periodically, while they were bearing children. Once their children were old enough to be left with grandparents or other relatives, the women returned to work as domestic workers in town. Housekeeping in Mamre, as we have seen in Chapter Two, was a full-time occupation. Very few women hired domestic workers within Mamre, and those who did were usually employed elsewhere themselves, like Gustaf April's mother. The only other people who employed domestic workers were the missionaries. Women maintained their own houses, gardens, did the washing and cooking, and fetched fire-wood and water if they didn't have children old enough to do it for them.

The decision for women of whether or not to return to paid employment meant the choice between remaining in Mamre or returning to town. This in turn depended on whether families had access to child-minders, particularly grand-parents who were willing and able to care for the young while their parents were working in town. There was not a professional group of child-minders, as there was in Siaya, where old women, called "Pim", took on the role of child-rearers for the community, taking all the children of an extended family into a separate compound and into their exclusive care.⁷⁵ Child-minding in

⁷⁴ See Sophia Liederman, Karel Sambaba.

⁷⁵ David Cohen and A.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya*, pp85-110.

Mamre was organised in a similar way to Phokeng, where it was the responsibility of old women within a family to care for their grandchildren in return for being sustained by their children.⁷⁶

There were a few small business owners in Mamre, who depended on the local market in the village for their livelihood. The April Supply Store, owned by Gustaf April's father, was the grandest of such enterprises, besides the mission store. Caroline Liederman also owned a store, which operated from her house, where she employed her adopted daughter Daisy and her nephew Tim Liederman. Wood was in enough demand to sustain at least one self-employed wood-seller, Justina Arend's second husband David, because it was the main source of fuel in the village.⁷⁷

The transport riders of the first decade of the twentieth century were by the late thirties being replaced by young men with drivers licences. Oom Willie Poswen was based in Mamre, his van was owned by the missionaries. It was the Mamre men who started the Mamre Triple Transport Bus Company who were the most innovative entrepreneurs in the village. *'The three people that came together, and they started the service. They come around, to have our signatures, and we signed to have, the community signed to have the bus service.'*⁷⁸ In a sense, Mamriers voted to introduce the bus service which would have a profound impact on the employment and residential patterns of their community.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, pp220

⁷⁷ See for example Gustaf April p2, Tim Liederman, p6, Justina Arends, p16.

⁷⁸ Adam Pick, p26.

⁷⁹ See for example Freddie Carlse, p1; Adam Pick, pp25-26.

Lastly, there were a group of professionals whose jobs were based in Mamre. The missionaries and teachers, and the nurses worked from Mamre but serviced virtually the whole district. Their income was not dependent on an internal market, like the small business owners. They were mostly paid by the state, with the exception of the missionaries whose income was in part based on contributions from the community and from the income of the mill and shop. Without exception, these professionals received their training outside Mamre. In the case of Mamriers who returned to work in their community as teachers and nurses, their higher education and training had involved migrating to Cape Town for further vocational training.

Moving between the contexts of Mamre, the surrounding countryside, and Cape Town was a matter of choosing from amongst the available options. Mamriers made decisions which depended on both opportunities and constraints; for some the choice was wider than for others. Relatively few people had the opportunity to undertake professional training or any further education in Cape Town. Most went into town to choose from amongst the wider options for employment available in the urban economy, and for the higher wages. The point has been raised that life choices were largely determined by one's position within the extended family. But overall, the broader patterns of change in the first half of the twentieth century shaped the way in which Mamriers made their choices about migration between the different contexts in which the community circulated. The rest of this chapter will explore the multi-layered context of migration for Mamriers, before exploring how their community structures related to this environment.

Mamriers related to the urban environment through their family and community ties. Within these relationships, individuals had certain demands and expectations placed upon them. One had to contribute to the survival of one's family, and conform to some of the expectations of the Mamre community in order to

claim membership. To some extent, these social ties and obligations imposed constraints on individuals according to gender. There were definite gender divisions in occupations in town which need to be explained in terms of Mamriers' orientating their family base in Mamre.

Women entered domestic service because it fulfilled a number of expectations. On the one hand, domestic service enabled them to maximize their cash contribution to the family income. Live-in domestic workers incurred very few living expenses in town, and their wages were often collected directly by their families, or remitted through the missionary at Moravian Hill. But encouraging women to enter domestic service was also tied to issues of respectability for the rural Moravian missions. Jobs were often screened by women already in town to ensure that newcomers were protected. News about employers circulated amongst Moravian women through their contact at church in Moravian Hill. Mamriers entered into an environment where on one level their community was shared with others of similar backgrounds.

There was, however, a definite but unspoken censure against women entering other forms of employment. Susan Philander pioneered the move out of domestic service which became a common experience during the 1950s and 60s. There were expanding opportunities in factory and service sector employment open to women in Cape Town during the first half of the twentieth century, but Mamre women did not enter the open job market. Mamre women, along with those from places like Elim and Genadendal, lived in town within pre-established patterns of interaction. They moved from Mamre into the strong networks in town, which helped them to find jobs, and provided their main social life through church at Moravian Hill. Bound up in these community ties, codes of behaviour were very strong, respectability being one of the main expectations of the community. It was defined by remaining within the confines of protected home environments of domestic service. Even after

women married, they still tended to stay in domestic service, but were less likely to take live-in jobs if their husbands were in town and they had established a household there.⁸⁰

Men on the other hand entered the multitude of job opportunities on offer in town. This often meant that men shifted jobs with great regularity. Hennie Adams was such a worker;

'the first job, (when) I went there, I worked at the Docks, go carry the bags, er the mail from the mail ships. That is the first job I used to do...and then from that, there was the Opera House.... There I used to (unclear) I remember, I try , try everything, you know. Till I get the job, a harness making plek in Harrison Street, there was a Jewish place. There I worked a couple of years, yes, a couple of years I worked there. I was a boy there. So, so you make saddles and so on. And from there I get a job from my uncle, near the Docks. There I work, er, I will say, about twenty-five years (as) a labourer. My uncle was there, a foreman. But from then on I go into the joinery shop.... when the day when (they were) moving out to Ndabeni, then... we was the only two coloured men who moved saam with the Duitsman to Ndabeni. Now there I worked... still a couple of years. Then I had to move out,

⁸⁰ This contrasts with the earlier movement of Cape Town women from domestic work into factory employment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Charles Simkins and Elizabeth van Heyningen 'Fertility, Mortality and Migration in the Cape Colony, 1981-1904' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.22, no.1, 1989, p104; Vivian Bickford-Smith, 'Commerce, Class and Ethnicity in Cape Town, 1875-1902' unpub. PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1988, Chapter Eight; Erica Boddington, 'Domestic Service: Changing Patterns of Class Dominatio, 1840-1948' unpub. MSocSci, UCT, 1983. Public debate around the issue of women and respectability in regard to factory employment was intense during the late nineteenth century, see Kerry Ward, 'Employers' perceptions of Labour'.

must start with the furniture work. At the South African Furniture and Joinery Works.⁸¹

While men tended to move from job to job, they were not employed as casual or seasonal labourers as in the London labour market in the late nineteenth century, where work was seasonal and intermittent for both men and women.⁸² Mamriers tended to move from one permanent job to another. There were also those who found jobs in Cape Town and stuck fast to their employers. David Conrad's first job in town was with Prices Candle Factory and there he remained for fifty years. Sometimes swopping jobs was generational, early adulthood was the main time for testing the options. Mamre men generally settled down into one job, and in most cases this meant working for "the Council", whether it was the Cape Town Corporation, or one of the Divisional Councils. The search for respectability for Mamre men involved finding a steady pensionable job. They planned their working lives with a view to a pensioned retirement in Mamre.⁸³

This contrasts interestingly with the working patterns of women employed as domestic workers. Although they were strongly discouraged from leaving this kind of employment, loyalty to individual employers was not expected. They tended to shift jobs with sometimes almost seasonal regularity. In some cases this is articulated as leaving horrible madams, in others it

⁸¹ Hennie Adams pp7-8

⁸² Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, Chapters 3 and 4.

⁸³ Men who worked for the various local authorities include: Sam Arends from the age of 15 in 1911, until he retired; Alexander September from 16 until retirement; Adam Titus from 18 for 36 years and 7 months until retirement; Christlief Adams from his early twenties until retirement; Isak Witbooi 21 until retirement; Simon Magerman and Thys Loock after World War Two until retirement, Adam Pick worked for the Cape Town Corporation for 34 years.

was just the desire for a change of pace and scenery. The one thing that Mamre women had in terms of their employment in town was the room to manoeuvre between employers. Women born in the first decades of the twentieth century often started work as domestic servants in town from the age of twelve.⁸⁴ Their patterns of employment tended not to change, save for periods when they did not work while having children, or if they were housewives, although this was exceptional.⁸⁵

Mamre men working for "the Council" were often working in gangs on the construction of roads around the Cape Peninsula. They stayed in camps rather than staying in Cape Town itself, which is a different form of migrancy than circulating in the urban community. There was another form of migrant labour which is comparable to working on the roads, and that is soldiering. Mamre men have a long tradition of being employed as soldiers in one form or another. Indeed, Mamriers displayed such pro-British sentiment that they accused the German missionaries of treason.⁸⁶ Yet what is striking in the interviews with Mamre men who were involved in the Second World War was how soldiering was considered more like another form of employment

⁸⁴ Ernestina Adonis/Joshua b. 1907 started work 12; Justina Arends b.1897 started work 13, Elizabeth Cupido b.1902 started work 12, Frederika Galant b. 1916 started work around 14, Karolina Adams b.1921 started work 12, Susan Philander b.1922 started work 12.

⁸⁵ There is a contrast in how Mamre women stayed in domestic service, whereas in other working class communities in Australia women were moving out of domestic service into the factories, or staying home as housewives. See J McCalman, 'Class and Respectability in a Working Class Suburb: Richmond, Victoria, Before the Great War' *Historical Studies*, vol.20, no.78, April 1982, pp90-103. In Phokeng women moved into the informal sector upon marriage and setting up house in the townships. Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, chapters 5 and 6.

⁸⁶ See Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War*, pp168-176, and P. Warwick, *Black People and the South African War*, pp122-137, and J de Boer and E.M. Temmers, *Unitas Fraternum*, pp39-42, B Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, pp69-79.

rather than a patriotic duty. Many Mamre men also fought in the First World War in active service in the Middle East. A number of homes display sepia-toned photographs of proud young soldiers in their khakis and pith helmets standing with their guns against a water-colour studio back-drop of pyramids and desert dunes. The change in attitude needs to be explained in terms of the formation of the South African armed forces. Black soldiers including those in the Cape Corps were increasingly relegated to inferior support roles for white regiments in World War Two, instead of forming combative regiments as they had in World War One. Under these circumstances of overt racism and discrimination, it is hardly surprising that men do not talk about their soldiering in terms of fighting for a just cause as had inspired Matthew Heathly in Mamre during the South African War.⁸⁷

Despite this negative aspect of the work, soldiering was an option open to Mamre men in the first half of the twentieth century, and despite the racial discrimination they experienced, some did see it as a temporary job opportunity. This was more particularly the case with younger men like Simon Magerman who saw it as a chance to do something different. For Thys Loock, soldiering was a relatively lucrative form of employment which guaranteed an income for his young family. We have already seen how Mamre soldiers' wives were known as "war mummies" because of their extra ration allowance.⁸⁸ Soldiering was part of the stage of relative mobility during these men's life cycles, before age and/or family demands pressured them into more secure forms of employment. It was mainly in the period of early adulthood that individuals had room to manoeuvre even within the demands of their family life cycle.

⁸⁷ See also Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War*, for a striking example of one black man's patriotism to the British cause.

⁸⁸ Simon Magerman, pp4-6; Thys Loock, pp24-26.

Choices of marriage partner often reflected preferences of whether to stay in town or have a family based in Mamre. Maggie September is the only person I spoke to who rationalised her choice of husband by the fact that she wanted to leave town and live on a farm. Being involved in the Mamre community through Moravian Hill gave people ample opportunity to meet potential marriage partners who would reinforce their links to the rural community. There is a perception that people tended to marry other Mamriers. The women's interviews do not reflect that was necessarily the case in first marriages, but second marriages tended to be to Mamriers. *'Maar ek glo nie, hulle't boyfriends gehad van die stad nie. Meestal buite. Maar nie, ek kan onthou nou nie van die stad nie. Miskien Pella en Mamre, so iets.'*⁸⁹

Migration into town could also be generational. Families sometimes sent their children into Cape Town to further their education, or this became a motive for relocating the family into town. This reflects Davison's concept of mobility being both social and geographical. His analysis of nineteenth century Australia shows that upward and downward social mobility was often linked to horizontal mobility or migration. Mamriers sending their children into school were encouraging upward social mobility through leaving Mamre for further education.⁹⁰

Mamriers today still send their children out of the village to continue their education beyond standard six. In the first half of the twentieth century this meant sending children to town or to Genadendal for high school and further training. Today, young Mamriers are bussed to high schools in the

⁸⁹ Magrieta September, p17.

⁹⁰ Graeme Davison, 'The Dimension of Mobility in Nineteenth Century Australia' *Australia 1888 Bulletin*, no.2, August 1979. pp7-32.

surrounding areas of Atlantis, Darling, and Malmesbury. This is one of the threads of continuity in the community over the twentieth century.

The school bus in Mamre today mirrors change and continuity for Mamriers who work. At the end of the 1940s, Mamre was entering a new period in the way that they organised their family, and their relationship to distance. The bus service created the option of commuting daily between town and Mamre.

*'The old people you know, they used to work [on the farms], wherever they get a working place. But from 1930, then the old people, nou soos my oupa, hulle het toe al ingegaan Kaap toe. They started to go to town already. You see, then my grandfather used to come once a month, once every three months.'*⁹¹ Men generally boarded in town, while women worked in town as live-in servants.

The post war economic expansion provided new opportunities, while the introduction of apartheid legislation imposed new constraints. Men still favoured working for the "Council" because of job security and the opportunity for skilling and promotion. Women shifted from domestic work into factory employment because they could now travel home every day to be with their families. This had an effect on the character of the Moravian Hill community, which became a more "town-based" congregation rather than a meeting place for rural Moravians in town, although the town community maintained strong links with the countryside.

With increasing family income from better-paid jobs, and the added time constraints of daily commuting, Mamriers no longer felt it necessary to maintain their garden plots. The residential patterns and physical environment of Mamre began to

⁹¹ Maria Loock, p30.

change. Responses to these changes have been ambivalent. While older Mamriers appreciate people's increased material wealth, there is a perception that progress has been at the expense of community values.

This is the Mamre that I encountered when I started interviewing Mamriers about their life histories.

CHAPTER FOUR

MEMORY AND NOSTALGIA IN THE CREATION OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Just as there is a commonality of experience amongst Mamriers, so there is a commonality of memory. The narrative of Mamre's history that forms the basis of this thesis has been constructed by both individual and collective memory. It is "individual" in the sense that the Mamre Story is the interweaving of a number of life histories of real people in a constructed historical narrative of the first half of the twentieth century. The common themes that these life histories explore, from childhood chores to Easter festivities, form part of the "collective" memory of the Mamre community. Together, this construction of memory which has taken place in the process of interviewing, but which I would argue relates partly to the way people think and talk about themselves and their world in daily life, involves the creation of what Grele calls a 'usable past'.¹

Often this usable past is expressed by people through nostalgia. Nostalgia sentimentalises the past, creating romantic tableaux in which pain and conflict have been removed.² A "stroll down memory lane" invokes a gentle and pleasant journey, not a path fraught with the same grind of day to day living that represents the present. Most oral historians have experience of interviewees who recount their life stories through a rosy hue of nostalgia. Many reject such testimony out of hand, and warn against its 'dangers'. Niethammer laments that 'oral histories of everyday life...have a tendency to swamp the oral historian, producing no more than

¹ Ronald Grele, 'Listen to their Voices' pp33-40.

² David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, pp7-8.

a meaningless literature of nostalgia.'³ But nostalgia as the expression of a usable past is part of the coding of memory into a meaningful narrative which needs to be analysed, rather than rejected as 'trivial'.⁴ Philippe Joutard claims that analysing nostalgia is part of the French methodology of creating "ethnotexts":

'As with oral literature, one aspect of our research is more systematised. This is in looking for local historical memories, whether true or legendary and the part which they play in local consciousness. Is the community partly held together through the memory of a common history, or is the past merely seen as a series of unimportant anecdotes?'⁵

Nostalgia can become the link between memory and the present. Unravelling such myths of the past leads to a "thicker" description of identity and culture in Mamre.⁶

My awareness of the function and meaning of nostalgia in Mamre was first alerted by the 'collective memory' of Easter in the community. Many interviewees mentioned Easter as the most important time of the year in Mamre, and the way people remembered it was infused with a warm glow of nostalgia. For instance, when I asked David Conrad 'Why did you come back to Mamre at Easter time?' He simply replied, 'Because Easter is the best time. And you get all, they all take part in

³ Lutz Niethammer 'Oral History as a Channel of Communication between Workers and Historians' in Paul Thompson ed., *Our Common History: The Transformation of Europe* (Pluto Press, London, 1982), p34, and Ronald Grele, 'Private Memories', pp251-252.

⁴ Linda Shopes 'Beyond Trivia and Nostalgia', pp151-158.

⁵ Philippe Joutard, 'A Regional Project: Ethnotexts', *Oral History Journal*, vol.9, no.1, Spring 1981, pp47-51.

⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books Inc., New York, 1973) p14, and Raphael Samuel, '"Myth and History"', p.16.

Easter.'⁷ Easter was the one time of the year when all Mamriers made an effort to return to the village. It was often the only holiday for women working in domestic service in town, which added to the sense of everyone in the community participating.

Ernestina Joshua, whose life history is dominated by painful memories of her forced removal from Salt River, reminisces brightly about Easter in Mamre:

'I only use to come home Easter time. That's right. Met die perde karre. Nee, jy kan nie onthou daai nie. Ooh,...dit was te mooi....Ooh, that was really fun.

Kyk, kyk nou kom hy most uit die Kaap uit, met die trein tot op Kalabaskraal. Daar vat ons die klein treintjie, tot op Mamre Road....Oh it was beautiful to see. It's a pity I couldn't take photos of it those days. Now from there now, all the horse carts, ja soos die, die oskarre, my pa het daai tyd oose gehad, en die perde waens, nou kom jy huis toe met die perdekarre, no wil hulle mos nou [race] wees, agter mekaar, dit was te mooi gewees....'

*The train, and sometimes die klein treintjie so vol, dan moet ons in die trokke sit. En dan er gooi hulle seile oor, nou oop, ons is oop, dan gooi hulle die seile oor, dan kruip jy hier onder die seile in. En dan ry hy so stadig, dat hulle nou eers die, dany ry hy so stadig, hy nou Dassenberg verby kom, dan is die oorle Boetie E...dan se he altyd "Oh God", hy se, "nou los my gat ook af" (raucous laughter). Dan spring hy af, dat hy riete pluk, dan hardloop hy wee in. That was really fun, it's true.'*⁸

⁷ David Conrad p11, See also for example Amalia Collins p5, Adam Pick p5, Martha Pick p8, Magdalena van Schoor p11.

⁸ Ernestina Joshua pp9-10.

Easter represented a gathering of the community, and the journey brought scattered friends and relatives to Mamre to be together. In keeping alive that nostalgia, older Mamriers are encouraging the continuation of a tradition that Mamriers come back to the community for Easter.⁹ Even though the train ride no longer transports Mamriers back home, the nostalgia serves as a lesson to the younger generation of the importance of renewing community identity through participation in religious and cultural festivals. It is a lesson that is well heeded, as the dawn Easter service still draws Mamriers home.¹⁰

The nostalgic train ride to Mamre is an invented tradition because it links the experience of migration in the early twentieth century to participation in community festivals. It is the journey that invokes an aura of nostalgia, not the Easter rituals. The train ride was a transport innovation at the beginning of the twentieth century, precisely when Mamriers were consolidating their generational experience of migration between Cape Town and Mamre.

Another collective memory which is coded through nostalgia is the tableaux of an edenic Mamre. Maria Loock describes Mamre when she was a youth in the mid-1930s:

'The village was quiet, those days. Few houses, not so big, you know....So everyone had their garden. Down here, down the river. O, it was beautiful. The people used to work there. Everything, and everyone had his own peice of ground there.'

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Tradition'.

¹⁰ This can be compared to the participation of people from Siaya in funerals in the countryside. This reaffirmation of identity with home in the rural areas serves to ensure that links across generations are maintained. In Siaya it is also bound up with the pressure on financial remittances to the rural community which is now less important in Mamre. David Cohen and A.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya*, pp43-59.

*Yes. And fruit, and everything, they had plenty....They support themselves. And they didn't steal one anothers' things. They used to live very happy.'*¹¹

The nostalgic image of Mamre as an idyllic rural community is often contrasted directly with the present. When I asked Maria Loock, 'Do you mean that you think Mamre is not like that anymore?', she replied:

*'No, no, no. Because now they [Mamriers] get more money... so they don't feel like making their garden, you know. If my garden is ready for picking and all that, then somebody else comes and steal all that out from me.'*¹² Maria Loock articulates the ambivalence between prosperity and community, material progress has eroded communal values.

The themes that are expressed when people talk about Mamre as a kind of "garden of Eden" are the values of sharing and self-sufficiency. These nostalgic myths of the past involve the creation of community identity not the destruction of history. They represent a juxtaposition of opposites between the "good old days" and the "bad nowadays" that serves as a moral lesson to the younger generation of the community. They construct a perception of change over time, the past is good because the present is bad.¹³

The way that the interviewees explain change in Mamre is not described nostalgically, but their explanations do form part of a collective memory of the history of Mamre. These memories

¹¹ Maria Loock, p27.

¹² Ibid, p28.

¹³ Belinda Bozzoli describes this as the concept of 'popular motifs' being the well-spring of popular ideology. 'Class, Community and Ideology' in Belinda Bozzoli ed., *Class Community and Conflict*, pp12-14.

focus on the themes like the gardens in Mamre, the pre-bus journey to Cape Town, the community at Moravian Hill, and of returning home to Mamre at Easter. These memories are subjective to the individual interviewee, but nevertheless the older generation in Mamre share a sense of change in Mamre which focuses on the encroachment of the city. The interviewees create common images of the community as embodying a rural idyll, where nature was bountiful, and people worked in their gardens and shared the fruits of their labour with each other. Easter thus became a happy homecoming to this simple communal way of life for those Mamriers who lived and worked on the outside, in the city. Change came to Mamre with the final breaking down of these barriers between town and Mamre.

But, as we have seen, their explanation for change and decline in the Mamre community which emphasizes "invasion" contradicts the lived experience of this generation of Mamriers. The barriers were always permeable and part of the way that families manipulated city and countryside to their best advantage. Migration to town had begun in their grandparents' youth, and was already part of the structure of the Mamre community by the early twentieth century.

I asked the people I interviewed a standard question to explore this issue: *'When do you think that Mamre started to change?'* Amalia Collins' reply was typical: *'O, van die busse, Cape. Kaap toe gery het, ne. Since they did travel to town everyday and so, you know, since that time. People, they lazy to work in the gardens now, because they go to town, they work there. They did get more money there, in town.'*¹⁴

Hennie Adams spoke to me at length about his perception of change in Mamre, which he articulated through the themes of

¹⁴ Amalia Collins pp6-7. See also, for example, Augusta van Haarte p5.

space and distance. Hennie, you may recall, was born in Cape Town in 1912 and was sent to Mamre as a seven year old child during the Spanish Flu epidemic. Yet his memory creates a vivid impression of being conscious of change at the time, which he has actually created with the hindsight of maturity.

'I know when the change is coming, it's from, I think it's 1920. When the new road, the hard road from the Cape, from Mamre to Cape Town, there, its' from that time it begins to change. And the village beginning to change. Because, before that, we never used to go and work in town, it was too much, it was alright to work here. Now that was also, is the first change. And one of our priests did say "When the hard road is finished, is finished to Cape Town, I want to see what you are going to bring". And from that time, you have to see the changes of, in Mamre.

From that time, then I comes out, then...there is always a difference. Because now in town, I see all the things in town. Now I want to have something. Now everybody already they come to town, from town, they got a different system of living. They'll bring that, this is the change, what you see in the valley from that time, in my days....

*But from then we have to see the changes coming. The change in the village coming. Cape Town is coming nearer to Mamre. Now that's when the alteration is, in the village was coming. Because now, nobody here seems to work anymore garden, or sowing, because it's a easy way of living. It's a easy way of earning something, that if they do it in the early days...When I think it over, that was the best time of my life...in the early days.'*¹⁵

¹⁵ Hendrick Adams, pp2-3.

Hennie Adams is known as one of the local historians of Mamre. He was appointed as the first caretaker of the monument in Louwskloof which commemorates the founding of the mission in 1808. He uses the first person "I" when he talks about the experience of Mamriers in general in town, he is a spokesperson for the collective memory of the community. His memory of his own life is fused with his perception of Mamre's history.

'The history of the village. How did it start. I have a history about my own personal history. That was soos the monument give me more a clue when I worked there. How did the village start, and what is behind the village. I got that secret, also from an old man, who used to be a member of the Raad [Church Board].' (He ponders) *'...Only now the trouble is, it's Cape Town is too near Mamre now. That is making it so bad.'*

I asked him to explain further: *'It's interesting that you say that, er, Reverend Winkler was one of the first people to say "Cape Town was coming too close to Mamre, and you'll see what happens, because do you think that Cape Town has come even closer now, or...'*

He interrupts me: *'Yes, it's closer, it's by the border (laughs). It's by the border now.'*

Gavin Collins, the translator, intervenes and adds to the interpretation: *'He's talking about how Cape Town is close, he's he's talking about Atlantis.'*

Hennie Adams: *'The boundary is there. That was the boundary, the boundary here by the the trees end. That is the boundary from Cape Town. That is the boundary from Cape Town.'*¹⁶

The trees that Hennie Adams refers to, which once lined the road to town, are now the border between Mamre and Atlantis. The way older people interpret Mamre's history today is with a

¹⁶ Ibid, pp12-13.

sense of invasion from Atlantis as the embodiment of the city.¹⁷ In one sense, this perception of "invasion" is linked to a view of the origins of Mamre as a 'closed community'. The Moravian missionaries had created their mission communities on the principle that membership was a formal privilege. Members were under strict discipline through Church regulations, and they could be excluded from the church or expelled from the community for severe breaches of conduct.¹⁸ Although, as Helen Ludlow's recent research shows, in practice Mamre was never a closed community, this has not altered a community perception between insiders and outsiders which is often expressed through birthright. One is either a Mamrier by birth, an ingebore, or one is a "new-comer", an outsider.¹⁹

When linked to the nostalgia of edenic Mamre and the Easter exodus from town, negative perceptions of change form an ambivalent dichotomy of progress and decline. The encroachment of the city which, on one level, brought material progress has, many older Mamriers believe, led directly to the decline of the gardens and of the traditional communal values.²⁰ One need

¹⁷ See for example Maria Loock, p33.

¹⁸ B Kruger and P.W. Schaberg, *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit* pp43-46.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Helen Ludlow, 'Missions and Emancipation'

²⁰ See also: John and Jean Comaroff, 'the(sic) madman and the migrant' pp191-211. Their exploration of Tshidi historical perception is similar in some ways to that of Mamriers in creating a set of contrasts between city and countryside. They also compare this to Raymond Williams *The Country and the City* (London, Hogarth Press, 1985) which analyses English literature and 'notes that the rural/urban opposition served as a very general model for interpreting a radically changing social order... a discourse, that is, about history...' p194. and, Robert Thornton, *Space, Time and Culture Among the Iraqw of Tanzania* (Academic Press, New York, 1980) See esp. chapter 6 pp133-156 which argues that spatial perceptions of inside and outside provide the means of authority and social control amongst the Iraqw.

only look at the garden plots in Mamre today to see that they have in fact been laid waste.²¹ It is the moral judgement that this is a change for the worse that links nostalgia to a usable past. These interpretations of change lie at the heart of Mamriers' community identity. In this way stories about the past serve to moralise about the present to the younger generation.²²

However, there is also a tangible sense of town encroaching on Mamre which has had an enormous impact on the community. It highlights the complexity of the function of nostalgic myths of the past in Mamre, and explains why some older Mamriers feel their lessons and stories don't find a receptive audience amongst the youth. Karel Sambaba, the current Chair-person of the Village Management Board explains:

'Atlantis has influenced the people's life style. But the Capetonians' style, you know, I still maintain that lots of our people still commute to town. And they see the development, you know...if you look at, er, say twenty years ago coming towards Cape Town, like Milnerton now, it was nothing!

²¹ I have recently been approached for information about the use of land in the first half of the twentieth century in Mamre to assist with a study about the possible rejuvenation of the garden plots in Mamre as a job creation scheme in the community. (personal communication with Harry May, University of the Western Cape, 3/4/1992)

²² Belinda Bozzoli identifies nostalgia amongst the women of Phokeng who describe a peaceful youth of plenty in contrast to today's ills which echoes Mamre. 'Such nostalgia is common in oral histories, where childhood is almost always romanticised, and indeed where informants may regard interviews as places where nostalgic reminiscence is required. But here it attains the status of an ideology, rather than simply a form of remembering. The women talk with a sense of loss of a stable and wealthy past, which is often actively compared with the deprivations of the present....they perceive what they regarded as the decline and decay of their own culture at the hands of a variety of evil forces ranging from Boers, through money, whites, mines, diet and climate, to modernity itself.' *Women of Phokeng*, pp53-54.

*Completely nothing, it was plain bush! Look at it today! And the rural guy who's so near that sort of development likes the same sort of improvements and the same sort of style....'*²³

Not all of the interviewees express a total rejection of modernity, although they do articulate the contrast between the good old days and the bad nowadays. I asked Justina Arends, born in 1897, what she thought of modern-day Mamre. She replied: *[Dit] is 'n beter plek...Die spoke loop (laughter - Mercia translates) "She says the ghosts don't walk around any more because there is lights" (more laughter)... Een wat dood gaan, weet nie waar Mamre vandag is nie.'*

Mercia translates: *'She's saying now there's lights, because you can see where Mamre is, before you couldn't see where Mamre is, and you pass Mamre.'*²⁴

Perceptions of development have generally split Mamre along generational lines. The younger generation hanker after the newly built cluster-home suburbia, like Table View with its modern comforts and fashions, and see the old ways of Mamre as being a symbol of poverty and stagnation. Later in the interview, Karel Sambaba launches unprompted into an declaration which emphasises the ambiguities of progress for the Mamre community. He links the concept of development to Mamre's relationship with Atlantis, and reveals the crux of why the community's history is of such crucial significance to its present and its future.

'But still you know, and they thought of (long pause) leaving Mamre in in this sort of er delapidated condition so that we

²³ Karel Sambaba, p19.

²⁴ Justina Arends, p24. She also retains memories of a youthful disregard for the history of Mamre, *'Kan nie onthou nie. Ek het maar Kaap toe gewees... Wil ook Charlie Chaplin loop kyk! (laughs)'* p24.

could move out from here and fill the gaps in Atlantis! And that didn't happen. We actually surprised the whole South African government! Because our stance to, we want to stay here. This is where we were born and nobody but nobody is going to move us out! And even they think of incorporating us into Atlantis! And even that is another thing they'd had to come and think about. Because Atlantis can be incorporated into Mamre and not Mamre into there! We were here long before they were! And never mind if they've got a bigger infrastructure than we've got! (pause) We've got the pride that Mamre must never, the name Mamre must never disappear from the history books of South Africa! Because we were, we were here long before Atlantis! Why should we lose our identity!!'²⁵

There are two levels in the creation of a usable past in Mamre. One is the public and shared stories of the past which have been explored above, and which will be analysed further in the next chapter in an evaluation of the Mamre History Project. The other level is the intensely personal and individual creation of a usable past that forms self-identity through ordering memories of lived experience. Agnes Hankiss calls this the 'ontology of the self', which is a process of structuring self-image during adulthood

'according to a coherent, explanatory principle and to incorporate them [life experiences] within a historical unit.... Specific mechanisms are involved in this building process. Human memory selects, emphasizes, rearranges and gives new colour to everything that happened in reality; and, more importantly, it endows certain fundamental episodes with a symbolic meaning, often to the point of turning them almost into myths, by locating them at a focal point of the explanatory system of the self.'²⁶

²⁵ Karel Sambaba, pp23-24.

²⁶ Agnes Hankiss, 'Ontologies of the Self', p203. See also, Alessandro Portelli, 'Uchronic Dreams', for an analysis of the relationship between memory, fantasy and the imagination in the

It is an ever-changing portrait of the self, to which one is always adding and deleting throughout one's life.²⁷

For oral historians, the construction of memory is thus the core concern of life history interviewing.²⁸ Memory itself is multi-layered; David Lowenthal classifies memory as being semantic, sensory-motor or episodic.²⁹ It is the latter which forms the construction of identity by interpreting and distilling lived experience. Memory is structured into a narrative order, which people tend to articulate anecdotally.

'One of the central literary problems for any oral testimony derives from the fact that narrating past experience compels people to speak from two worlds at once; the world of the here and now and the remembered world which must be recreated in the present.'³⁰

Life history interviewing builds on the way that people talk about themselves in everyday life. Autobiography is essential to the way one communicates with others, the type of relationship often determining how much and how often one talks about oneself. The oral historian inserts another dimension on to the construction of an individual's ontology of the self by probing and recording this narrative construction and making it 'anthropologically strange' for the interviewee.

restructuring of history as revealed through life-history interviews.

²⁷ Alessandro Portelli, 'The Time of My Life': Functions of Time in Oral History' in *International Journal of Oral History*, vol.2, no.3, 1981, p163.

²⁸ This was highlighted as the methodological shift which emerged as one of the main themes in the International Conference on Oral History, Aix-en-Provence, September 1982. See Luisa Passerini, 'Memory', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 15, Spring 1988, pp195-196.

²⁹ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, pp201-206.

³⁰ Isabel Hofmeyer, 'Experiential Testimony', p2.

'The process of oral history interviewing, because it involves the structuring of memory and because meaningfulness influences the construction processes of memory - is actually a process in the construction of a usable past. In this manner, when used in this way oral history can live up to the promise of "Everyman his [sic] own historian".'³¹

I conducted my life history interviews with older Mamriers as a sympathetic "outsider", with no previous relationship with my interviewees. This required establishing an acceptable rapport with the interviewees which in each case naturally affected what they told me.³² Although generally, the rapport in the interviews was good (part of my ontology of self is that I'm a "good listener") there were a number of interviews where my response to what interviewees told me added a unique dimension by sparking off a particular set of memories. Figlio explores this unconscious undercurrent in the interview relationship in terms of transference and counter-transference in the psychoanalytical sense.³³ Although I claim no expertise in psychoanalysis, I would suggest that this was a fascinating and crucial dimension of my interview with Susan Philander. Our common life experience of having lived in London, one she doesn't share with any Mamriers, actually made me an unconscious collaborator in the construction of her life history.

There are specific themes that Susan Philander raises in her life story through which she interprets her experience and

³¹ Ronald Grele, 'Listen to their Voices: Two Case Studies in the Interpretation of Oral History Interviews' in Ronald Grele ed., *Envelopes of Sound*, p41.

³² Jocelyn Cornwell and Brian Gearing, 'Biographical Interviews with Older People', *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.1, Spring 1989, pp36-43. This article explores the issue of establishing "rapport" in interviews as an essential prerequisite of effective communication.

³³ Karl Figlio, 'Oral History and the Unconscious', *History Workshop*, Issue 21, Autumn 1988 pp120-132.

ascribes significance to particular events. The interview unfolds a narrative structure which I became aware of only upon analysing it later.

Throughout her life Susan asserts her independence and individuality. She sets herself apart from other Mamriers, and has always perceived that they laugh at her for being different. She left school at twelve, after standard four: *'Because I didn't want to go to school anymore....I was sorry, but, I mean, I survived by it anyway.'*³⁴ Immediately, Susan is involved in a life review process of tracing her assertiveness back to childhood, and seeing it as having both benefits and costs.³⁵ This adds another layer to her life history narrative, a "shuttle" mechanism between the past and present which seeks to resolve potential regret.

Susan Philander left school in Mamre and travelled to Cape Town, where she had various jobs as a domestic worker. She then took a job at Fletcher and Cartwright in Adderley Street because *'I didn't want to work as a housekeeper anymore.'*³⁶ We were discussing her job as a tea-lady there when she suddenly said, *'And I remember when the King and Queen, and the two princesses came to, they came to South Africa. And then*

³⁴ Susan Philander, p5.

³⁵ See also: Jacklyn Cock and Erica Emdon, 'Let me make history please': The story of Johanna Masitela, Childminder' in Belinda Bozzoli, ed., *Class, Community and Conflict*, pp457-477, for a case study of life story and life review. And, Maletse Nkadimeng and Georgina Relly 'Kas Maine: The Story of a Black South African Agriculturalist' in Belinda Bozzoli ed., *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*, pp89-107. The life story of Kas Maine will be the first detailed South African oral history biography based upon an extended series of interviews by Charles van Onselen. Kas Maine is set to become South Africa's "Nate Shaw". See Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers*.

³⁶ Susan Philander, p7.

*they had a raffle. And then I won the, I won the ticket to go onto the balcony, and to see them.*³⁷

The memory of being lucky enough to win such an honour has become a symbolic focal point in Susan Philander's life story. It raises two of the main defining themes of her life, an infatuation with the British royal family and an abiding interest in England. These themes are followed through the narrative structure of Susan's life story.

The anecdote of the Royal visit also sparked off a brief discussion about the Queen Mother's youthful beauty. My confession of having visited her ancestral castle in Scotland set a dynamic in the interview where Susan (mistakenly) identified me as a fellow royalist. She transferred her interest in royalty onto me, expecting me to share her fascination for the royal family. This theme was fused into the interview to the point where it sometimes dominated the conversation with memories of Susan's own life experience fading into the background.

Susan Philander was retrenched from Fletcher and Cartwright after World War Two and found herself a job at Humphries Sweet Factory in Salt River through the Government Labour Bureau.³⁸ This again sets her apart from other Mamre women, although she doesn't articulate this as explaining why she is different from the rest. Susan is the first Mamre woman to take a job in a factory in Cape Town, leading the way for what becomes the dominant trend from domestic service to factory employment in the 1950s. Moreover, Susan finds the job herself by striking out independently instead of relying on community networks. Her memory indicates this as a minor episode in her lived

³⁷ Ibid, p9.

³⁸ Ibid, p9.

experience, not a turning point in her life. This is important because it raises points about the interpretation of oral evidence. Such transitional life experiences do necessarily point to forms of evolving class consciousness that are often the focus of oral historians. Susan Philander's consciousness is linked strongly to her memories of wanting to travel and fulfilling that dream, and not to the process of entering the industrial working class.

Susan had an amicable relationship with the factory owner, Mr Humphries, who was a British immigrant, *'and he was from what the English call the working class.... It was interesting to listen to him. I was always interested in foreign countries, you know.'*³⁹ She says, *'They [other Mamriers] always used to laugh at me. I said that one dream I have, and that's to go to England, because I liked history, and I used to read. Never mind I never have an education, I used to, to try and read every book, you know. Then you get mos like the books.'*⁴⁰

Having established the narrative structure of her life, Susan launches into another key anecdote, which she recalls as a verbatim conversation, in which one of her friends tells her that there is a job as a domestic worker available in England. Again, Susan recalls it as a stroke of good fortune, and she took that "chance of a life time". The job in London was working for a Mrs Segal, who had left South Africa to follow her son, Ron Segal, into exile. *'Then I got tired, because you know, being an old woman, she wouldn't let me out. And of course, I want to see London, and I can't.'*⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid, p12.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p13.

⁴¹ Ibid, p15.

Susan stayed in London for fourteen years, taking various domestic jobs. She used to save her money and return to Mamre to visit her mother and two unmarried brothers for two months every second year. Most of her wages were saved up to travel home to South Africa rather than spending money on holidays and luxuries in England. She said *'I could have bought many things with that money I spent. Every other year, I used to come here.'*⁴²

The ties with her family in Mamre were strong enough to draw her back whenever she could afford the journey. Yet Susan Philander identifies so strongly with the British royal family that they become her English family, whom she describes in far more animated detail than her own flesh and blood. The two families become fused in the structure of Susan's life story narrative as conflicting loyalties

*'My mother died the same year that Prince Charles got married.... And my mother asked me, promised me I must come and look after the boys. It's only two in the house. So I said I must promise her. I thought that I wouldn't stay there, I'll come back here....So I told everybody no I must go back to London. I had to buy a new ticket because you know I used to come on that, what do you call it now again? (Kerry: 'Excursion fare.') Yes. I said I must go back, because I must go to the wedding. Everybody laughed at me. I said: Yes, but I must go for his wedding. (laughs)'*⁴³

Again, fortune smiled upon Susan Philander in her quest to draw near the royals. *'Now you know the people push, they push! I got myself pushed right in the front! (laughter)'* She had a ring-side view of the passing parade which she describes in

⁴² Ibid, p18.

⁴³ Ibid, pp17-18.

loving detail, with a portrait artist's appreciation of the whole extended royal family.⁴⁴

I eventually changed the subject and Susan started to talk about her impression of her life from the perspective of her old age in Mamre. Attending the royal wedding had been a way for Susan to accommodate her dual loyalties to her "family" in England so she could devote herself to her family in Mamre.

When I interviewed her, she had already resolved herself to spending the rest of her life in Mamre and had constructed a perception of her life as having been a lucky one. She felt that her '*dreams came true*' and that '*one part of my heart is here and one part is there, my heart is in two*'. I asked her whether she felt like a Mamrier, to which she replied 'When I'm in England, I'm English, when I'm in South Africa, I'm South African'. Susan's ties with Mamre centred on her family and not on membership of the community. In the context of her life in London, she defined identity in more general terms than specifically as a Mamrier. She doesn't dwell nostalgically on the same memories of homecoming that others describe, although Susan had made the Easter journey often enough in her youth.

Susan Philander perceived her defining characteristic as her independence, which set her apart from other Mamriers. At the same time, being different did not alienate her entirely from the community, she still participated in village life when she was there. Susan felt her independence, underlined by the fact that she never married, made her strong. She said that '*the boys [her brothers] stayed, they were the sissies*'. To be independent of the community was on one level a rejection of being a Mamrier, although Susan claimed that her perception of home could incorporate both places and identities. Both her

⁴⁴ Ibid, p19. Unfortunately, at this moment the tape ran out having captured at length her impression of Princess Anne-"Horse Woman". I had to resort to notes for the rest of the interview.

homes remained separate spheres in her life. I asked, 'Did you tell people about Mamre?' She replied, 'No, it's just a village.' But throughout her life it is the village to which she has always returned. For Susan, Mamre is home, because it is where her family and friends are, and in her old age she is philosophical about where she is to remain.⁴⁵

Ironically, perhaps, Susan Philander doesn't consciously make the association between her middle name 'Regina' and its regal connotations, unlike Wilhelm Johannes, who is known as "Oom Willie Poswen" in Mamre. His name was bestowed upon him by the community precisely because it defines his identity and his special role in the Mamre community. Willie Poswen actively collaborates in using his occupation to construct his identity. He describes his "career path" using a perception of the relationship between space and distance which other Mamriers share. The articulation of his life story is revealed using the structure of biblical idiom.⁴⁶ He starts with a kind of "in the beginning":

'I get my driver's licence at the first of January, 1938. And since that time I was carting the mail, first to Mamre Road, and after that Malmesbury, Pella, Saxonwold, Philadelphia, Klipheuwel. And later on, it changed from Mamre to Pella, from Pella to Atlantis, from Atlantis to Saxonwold, from Saxonwold

⁴⁵ Susan Philander, interview notes, pp2-3.

⁴⁶ See Mary Elizabeth Aube, 'Oral History and the Remembered World: Cultural Determinants from French Canada', *International Journal of Oral History*, vol.10, no.1, February 1989, pp31-49. Aube analyses the mnemonic technique of reciting the Catholic catechism as the way that her interviewee ordered her memory and linked it to space and time in her lived experience. Aube argues that in this case, the influence of culturally determined text (ie the catechism) orders memory. She does make the connection between these forms of mnemonic devices and theories of orality. Ong suggests that biblical idiom are essentially oral mnemonic devices. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy The Technologizing of the Word* (Methuen and Co., London, 1982).

to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia to Melkbos, from Melkbos to Bloubergstrand, and to Milnerton...and I get the mail that comes out also at milnerton. Because Cape Town had to deliver to Milnerton Post Office....

Ek is een dag in Klipheuwel toe, daar is nie verwoer vir die mense nie. En hulle het gery na Klipheuwel stasie om die trein te kry.... Daarvandaan, nou die mense het opgeklim. Alles deur gelaai, tot Philadelphia deur na Klipheuwel toe, waar hulle die trein gevang het. So did I pick up a lot of people on the road, going to the trein. Some people want to go to Philadelphia, others want to go to Klipheuwel station, they want to go by train to cape Town, or so on, and so on. And later, when they changed to Melkbos and Bloubergstrand, they go with me to Bloubergstrand, or to Melkbosstrand, or to Milnerton, to go to town. Get the bus through town....We charged people for that, that's why we used to carry people.

'.... Laat ek sien, how many I had? The first one was a Chev, 1948 Chev, new tings, not old things, it was new things, out of the box! And then later on again, a one-sixty model, and after that... [another] Chev.... So it was three Chevs, one Volkswagen. That was the last one. toe't hulle klaar gehad het, het hulle gedoen omtrent hier vyfhonderd-seshonderdduisend kilometer, begin hulle nou baie out raak. Toe't hy maar 'n ander gekoop. want ek was die man gewees wat die meeste myle op die Kaapse paaie afgele het. Ek was twee maal in die koerant ook gewees, without accident.... Dit vir meer as 'n miljoen myl. Miles not kilometres!'⁴⁷

Willie Poswen indicates how space and distance in relation to Mamre have meaning in his life story by describing them at length. At the same time he enumerates the order of places and routes in a biblically sonorous way, possibly a manner of

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Johannes, pp7-8.

speech internalised throughout his religious education. He uses this technique to list the places of significance in his story and places himself in the centre of the action. Willie shows how important his job was to Mamriers by using the list to show his role as a link through which many of them made contact with the outside.

He continues with his life story: *'I, ek het gesien hoe hulle die hele Atlantis opgebou het. Toe hulle, hulle met hom begin het, ek het gesien hoe hulle daardie nuwe paaie gemaak het, tussen Melkbos en Bloubergstrand. Want daar was nie pad gewees nie, tussen Melkbos en Bloubergstrand. En hoe hulle daai nuwe brug gemaak het. Daai paaie was geeneen daar nie. Ek het hulle almal gesien, hoe hulle daar wek en wat al die mense to ompaaidjie moet ry. Ek het al gesien al daai paaie, hoe hulle hom daar deur gebou het.'*⁴⁸

Again, Willie Poswen defines himself as a witness "in the beginning". This time, he is recording an event of immense significance to the Mamre community, the beginning of Atlantis. Wilhelm Johannes constructs a narrative of his own life history as a chronicler of Mamre's recent past. He also has a reputation in Mamre for knowing about the origins of the community. But the story-telling techniques he uses to narrate Mamre's distant past do not have the same idiom as his life story because they are based on a received written version of the past.

They got a book called "Benigna"... Mamre was 'n veepos...Toe was dit daai Lord Charles Somerset se jag plaas gewees... To mind them from the wild animals, they built that wall around... Die Oos-Indiese Kompanie, hulle het dit gebou. Die jaar toe die eerste sendlinge hier gekom woon. Die boere wat opgekom het met hulle ossewaens, van Saldanha af en al die plekke hier

⁴⁸ Ibid, p8.

op, dan het hulle die diere uitgespan en daar... En the next morning they carry on further to travel, with ossewae... You see, Mamre start right up beyond Louwskloof... nou daar het Mamre oorspronklik begin. En die mense wat daar gebly het [unclear - Benigna?] 'n boek gehad het waar die hele geskiedenis ingestaan het... Maar toe die evangelie nou hier kom wees, die eerste sendlinge, toe het hulle nou later die mense so afgelok.' ⁴⁹

Willie Poswen's narrative of Mamre's history shows the special significance he gives to the text *Benigna van Groenekloof of Mamre*. Written by the Moravian missionary W F Bechler and published in 1873 at Genadendal Printers, is also one of the first novels published in Afrikaans.⁵⁰ The book tells the story of the "mother of Mamre", Benigna, who was one of the first Khoi converts to Christianity and the founder of the Johannes clan. When I asked people about the history of Mamre, many of them referred me to *Benigna* as being the text of Mamre's history. Yet people, including Willie Poswen, don't actually tell the story of *Benigna* contained in the novel, they say that the book is kept 'in die Standard Bank, Darling, they keep it there. The history of the Johannes family'.⁵¹ The fact that the book is kept in a bank safe validates the importance of Mamre's history, like a jewel it does not need to be worn to be valuable.

There is a tension between the received written version of Mamre's history, symbolized by *Benigna*, and Mamre's oral history. Isabel Hofmeyer suggests that 'for some people

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp8-10.

⁵⁰ W.F. Bechler, *Benigna van Groenekloof of Mamre: Een Verhaal voor de Christen Kleurlingen van Zuid Afrika door een Hunner Leeraars* (Genadendal, 1873), J. de Boer and E.M. Temmers *The Unitas Fratrum* op cit pp12-13.

⁵¹ Ibid, p8.

writing has an authority that relieves them from the necessity of remembering'.⁵² Adam Pick told me how he came to know the history of Mamre:

*'My oupa told me... And when we go to the field, and then he always talks about the history of Mamre... Now we had that book, but it just vanishes out of the house... Just somebody took it. And is mos rare, that book... I was so upset. You could have seen the history there, about Mamre.'*⁵³

Mamriers have a perception of their history which gives greater value to the history contained in the written word than to reminiscing about their lives. Yet nobody has read *Benigna*, they recite it as a story of "the road to Mamre"; of the initiation and meaning of belonging to the community.

Wilhelm Johannes claims descent from *Benigna*, giving him the added prestige of being a member of one of the founding families of the community. It also provides the link between the genealogy of Mamre and his life history. But part of the Mamre family history is suppressed, that is the community's links with slavery. When I asked Willie to tell me more about the first members of the Mamre community, he claimed he didn't know.⁵⁴ I asked Adam Pick the same question, and he replied at length:

There was a hotnot, a Hottentot er captain. He used to stay at Louwskloof... a kraal was there... And when Mamre started, the missionary start here in Mamre, a lot of people stays in

⁵² Isabel Hofmeyer, 'Jonah and the Swallowing Monster: Orality and Literacy on a Berlin Mission Station in the Transvaal' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.14, no.4, December 1991. pp633-653.

⁵³ Adam Pick, pp40-41.

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Johannes, pp11-12.

Louwskloof... And so those days, then you've got the Hottentots, and then, the Boesmans. Die Strandlopers was hier. In the Western Province, they were here, when, when... this whites came here. These people were here. So my people, my, our Hottentot people, they were here. They're from South Africa.

And we are intermarriage... my father's mother, she was from St Helena. And my oupa was a hotnot... In those days, there was a mix children. And my oupa, hotnot, er, a farmer and a hotnot. The Johannes they were mos white, and farmers. There was a whole inter-marriage business. That's why we're coloured today!

Ja, my oupa told me. The hotnots, that was the history. They stayed all over, and then when Mamre opened, all the people come together here, and they live here... Come to see the word. They wanted the word of God, and to be under that blanket... The Moravian Church, I can say today, they were the people that teaches the people everything. The Germans show you how to work... The first thing they did they [built] the school... And later years, I heard, that hotnot captain also go, have been confirmed in the Church. Later years, he came. And everybody came down from Louwskloof, and they stay here.⁵⁵

Certain issues in the collective memory of Mamre have been forgotten. There is a level of denial amongst Mamriers that is manifest in people's reluctance to talk about the community's slave origins, although they clearly recognize descent from the Khoi clan of Benigna and her brother Captain Hans Klapmuts. An acknowledgement of Mamriers' heritage of slavery is not part of the popular memory of Mamre. The transformation of the written text of Benigna into a story of the origins of Mamre has rendered silent people's own family history of slavery. While slavery has not become part of Mamre's usable past, the moral

⁵⁵ Adam Pick, pp49-50.

and religious lessons contained in the story of Benigna have. They are vital to Mamriers concept of community. The recreation of Mamre's usable past which asserts the lived experience of ordinary Mamriers may well retrieve parts of the suppressed and marginalised memory of the community's history.

CHAPTER FIVE**MAKING HISTORY IN MAMRE: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSE**

Analysing nostalgia ought to be a crucial issue for historians and for the making of history, but many reject its validity as an interpretation of the past. Most historians perceive nostalgia as a conservative image of the past that needs to be combatted. Debates amongst historians about nostalgia revolve around the social purpose of history and its public presentation; and centre on the role of historians in the production of a usable past. At its core, this is a political issue about the role of history in the present. These are current debates within the methodology of people's history, oral history and popularisation. Often the process is seen in terms of opposites. On the one hand, history can be a powerful tool to justify the status quo, on the other, it can mobilise people to see their history as an alternative to the dominant view, and empower them to struggle for change in the present. At present in South African society, the struggle over how history is created and presented is of enormous importance in the formation of a new social order. It is within this context that my involvement in Mamre developed and these are the issues that will be addressed in this chapter through an evaluation of the history project.

The ambiguity with which Studs Terkel's book *Hard Times* was received publicly as a romanticisation of the Great Depression in the United States, illustrates the point about the interpretation of nostalgia. Terkel intended *Hard Times* to be a 'memory book' which explored the dialogue between past and present. *Hard Times* was supposed to show its readers how people's memories of the depression were invoked not only in separation from their perception of history, but also in their consciousness of poverty and unemployment in American society

in the 1970s.¹ This aspect of the book was almost entirely ignored, and it was publicly celebrated precisely because of the nostalgic vision it presented through oral history. Interpreted this way its impact was conservative, 'a fascinating and politically important example of how the past is used ideologically to freeze the present'.² In the book, people told in their own words how they survived despite all, not how they struggled to change the system. Yet it was written as a social critique, a study of how memory shapes the past and it itself shaped by the present. Radical historians have thus tended to perceive nostalgia in people's history as dangerous.³ As Samuel asserts: 'People's history, whatever its particular subject matter, is shaped in the crucible of politics, and penetrated by the influence of ideology on all sides.'⁴ Rejecting nostalgia in popular memory has been a response by some oral historians who have aimed to create a people's history within an 'inspirational' social movement.⁵

In Cape Town historiography, the creation of a popular history of District Six based on popular memory has also tended towards nostalgia. It is the abominable destruction of District Six

¹ Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*; Michael Frisch, 'The Memory of History', *Radical History Review* Issue 25, 1981, pp9-23.

² Ronald Grele, 'Private Memories', p.251.

³ Lutz Niethammer, 'Workers and Historians' p35, Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* p123, Linda Shopes, 'Beyond Trivia', are a sample of the historians who address the dangers of nostalgia.

⁴ Raphael Samuel, 'People's History' in Raphael Samuel ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981) pxx.

⁵ Raphael Samuel, 'Myth and History', made the point at the 1987 International Oral History Conference which dealt with the themes of the creation of myths and nostalgia in popular memory. He felt that the conference ratified a split 'between the critical and the inspirational' precisely because historians engaging in popular history within political struggle felt that examining 'myth and history' was too abstract and inimical to popular history as a social movement. p17.

and its role as the symbolic scar of forced removals in Cape Town which has heightened the tinge of nostalgia in the presentation of its history. The uprooting of communities also happened in other parts of Cape Town, like Mowbray or Claremont for example, but the history of these areas is not presented with the powerful nostalgic images invoked by District Six.⁶

This is partly explained by the way that historians have tapped the 'residues of popular memory'; as Bill Nasson says, 'the history of District Six has become a history of the mind'.⁷ 'We have', Nasson continues, 'if not a duty, then a need, deeply engraved within a democratic human culture, to help preserve that history and to burn it for many years to come.'⁸ As historians, we also have a duty to explain why people's memory is conceptualised nostalgically. By doing so, we demystify the romanticised images and reveal how they can be a critique of the present. Analysing nostalgia as an expression of identity, instead of rejecting it as "false consciousness" enables a closer and more critical engagement with popular memory.⁹

⁶ Christopher Saunders, 'The Struggle for District Six in the Context of Urban History in South Africa', unpublished paper, Cape Town History Project Workshop, 11-12 November 1991, p10. In fact, there has been comparatively little historical focus on these communities. For one of few examples, John Western, *Outcast Cape Town*, (Human and Rousseau, Cape Town, 1981). A booklet produced by the United Women's Organisation in the early-1980s *Claremont: A People's History* (UWO, Athlone, 1982) to mobilise around forced removals from "Harfield Village" shows how nostalgic memories about Claremont from ex-residents can motivate people politically.

⁷ Bill Nasson, 'Reconstruction', p46.

⁸ Ibid, p47.

⁹ Philip Bonner and Tom Lodge, 'Community, Space and Class' in P. Bonner et al eds., *Holding their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa* (Wits University Press/Ravan, Johannesburg, 1989) pp2-9, state that testimonies which romanticised the past repressed conflict, but they do not offer an explanation of why popular memory is expressed through nostalgia.

The public presentation of history through the media and by both academic and amateur historians often embraces nostalgia uncritically.¹⁰ The media presentation of Mamre is on the surface resplendently nostalgic. Newspaper articles carry titles like 'Mamre - A Haven of Peace and Old World Charm'¹¹ and 'The Old Ways Persist'¹². A recent House of Representatives publication which includes a section on Mamre reiterates the timelessness of nostalgic myths:

'Many places in the Republic can be called an artist's paradise and Mamre, the quaint mission station in the Swartland near Malmesbury, is one of them. In Mamre, one finds beauty in the design of the mission buildings, beauty in the old cottages and their unusual layout, beauty in the abundance of wild flowers in spring and beauty also in the trust the early missionaries had when they started to build a world in which people could practise their chosen religion, away from the fear of evil spirits and bad omens.'¹³

¹⁰ Listen, for example, to the way one oral historian describes interviewing elderly women. 'As they unearthed the time capsules of their minds, all looked back with pleasure on those early days, many professing that there was little in life they would like to change...' Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, 'Views From Forescore and More: Youth and Maturation in the Oral History of Elderly Women' *International Journal of Oral History*, vol.10, no.3, November 1989, p207.

¹¹ *Cape Times* 'Weekend Magazine' 17/6/67, in 'Mamre' *Macmillan Local History Collection*, African Studies Department, UCT.

¹² *Weekend Argus* 6/12/80, *ibid.*

¹³ Marlene van Eaden, 'Mamre' in *Prisma* vol.6, no.6. August 1991. p4. Another example which shows clearly what a conservative stereotyped vision of history nostalgia can present comes from *In the Land of the Afternoon*, a book published a year after the daily bus service from Mamre to Cape Town started: 'The "Plaas Japie" of the Malmesbury wheat belt is a character you can tell at a glance, the product of generations of labourers who have worked on the same farms and grown wise in the ways of the district.... These old volkies think nothing of starting out at four on a winter morning to reach the lands and their ploughs at daybreak. They work until sundown and still have the energy to play their guitars and sing... It is sad to think that many have left the Swartland for city factories. They must miss the... sea of wheat rustling under the sun. And the farmers must miss them....' L G Green, *In the Land of the Afternoon* (Howard B Timmins, Cape Town, 1949) pp178-179.

Within Mamre, there is a split between the oral and written history of the community. Mamre's history as told through popular memory of lived experience is often expressed through nostalgia. On the other hand, its written history is neither nostalgic nor centred on the lives of Mamriers. The public presentation of Mamre's history in booklets which have circulated within the community have tended towards a history which underlines the chronology of Dutch settlement through to the establishment of the mission at Groenekloof. The history of the community is dominated by the missionaries, the church and other community institutions, and by a survey of the historical buildings. Sketches of prominent personalities including Benigna, and a list of the first "inwoners" or inhabitants, are sometimes mingled in these booklets.¹⁴ This is the history that people tend to recite when asked about Mamre's past. The written history of Mamre presented in these accounts bears the hallmark of much local history elsewhere. In assessing local history in Britain, Raphael Samuel asks: 'Why then is so much local history, though undertaken as a labour of love, repetitive and inert?'¹⁵

¹⁴ Austin Joemat, *De Groenekloof - Mamre; Van Toeka tot Vandag* (Cape Town, November 1988), Basil Kivedo and Donald Adonis, *Mamre: Die Honderd en Tagtigste Feesjaar van die Moraviese Gemeente en Honderd en Sewentigste Herdenking van die Kerk Inwyding* (Mamre, November 1988), anon. *Mamre* (publicity pamphlet for the Mamre Mill) See also, J de Boer and E M Temmers *The Unitas Fratrum*, and B Kruger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms*, B Kruger and P Schaberg *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*. Other Moravian communities have similar history booklets eg K T August *Moravian Hill: Ons Katedraal in die Moderstad 1886-1980* (Kaapstad, 1980), The Printing Press published history booklets from the late nineteenth century (including *Benigna* in 1873) for example, *De Geshiedenis van den 17 Augustus 1727* (Genadendal, 1890), *Geshied-Verhaal van Genadendal, de eerste Zendings-Statie in Zuid-Afrika van 1737-1806*. (Genadendal, 1893). For further information about the history of the Genadendal Printing Press see Isaac Balie, *Die Geskiedenis van Genadendal, 1738-1988* (Perskor, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1988).

¹⁵ Raphael Samuel, 'Local History and Oral History' *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 1, Spring 1976, p193.

Samuel makes a plea for the inclusion of oral evidence to make a more democratic and humane local history.¹⁶ But Linda Shopes argues that this does not take community history beyond trivia and nostalgia, and I would agree. Where I would disagree with Shopes however, is that she ignores the significance that these nostalgic popular memories have for community identity. To dismiss the nostalgic images of popular memory is to ignore part of the way in which people view their community and its past. The problem Shopes identifies is the way that historians interact with people within a community when they collaborate on a local history project. Her experience in the Baltimore Neighbourhood Heritage Project led her to the conclusion that unless such projects are firmly rooted in the community and its organisations they will have little meaning to the people who are the intended audience. This was part of the research methodology I wanted to develop in my study of Mamre.¹⁷

During the initial period of my research in Mamre from May 1990, I was mostly involved with life history interviewing. At the same time, I was having regular meetings with Mercia Arendse where we discussed who I should interview next and what was coming out of the interviews. Mercia also talked to me about the major issues and concerns of the community. We discussed the Moravian Church and the Village Management Board structures, housing and education, sport and leisure activities in the village, and the various organisations in which people were involved. I also spoke to the headmaster and a few of the teachers at the Moravian Primary School about the school itself and about whether they taught Mamre's history in the school. The general impression was that there was less emphasis on Mamre's history than there had been during the 1950s although

¹⁶ Ibid, pp200-201.

¹⁷ Linda Shopes, 'Baltimore', p27.

the change was accounted for by changes in staff rather than official curriculum.

At the same time, I was also involved in an intensive training programme at Community Education Resources (CER). We were working through issues of popular education theory and methodology and designing our own research agendas. My research differed from those of other students in CER because I did not have a clear relationship with my "user-group". Other students were either working with established organisational structures and schools, or were going to be creating a popular resource from their research before it was presented to a user-group. In my case, I had established a relationship with a few people in Mamre who knew I intended to popularise my research, but there was no established organisation with which I could work or be accountable to. Part of the challenge for me was to bring together people who were interested in Mamre's history to form a local history group.¹⁸

Apart from the people I had interviewed or met informally, I was dependent on Mercia for contacts in the community. We drew up a list of about thirty people she knew were interested in Mamre's history. My initial attempts to organise meetings in December 1990 collapsed because of people's commitments to other organisations and the onset of the festive season. During informal discussions I had in Mamre around this time the idea of a museum/tea-room was raised. The old mill which had been restored in 1973 by the Rembrandt Group was almost permanently closed. The facade was being vandalised and the structure was not being maintained. Some people felt it was

¹⁸ Cathy Kell, 'Notes on User-Groups for Masters Student Session 27/6/1991' unpublished paper CER, UCT. See also: Kerry Ward, 'Methodologies of Popular Education and Historical Research: Transforming the Process of "Making History"', unpublished paper presented at CER Evaluation Seminar, UCT, 23 September 1991. The following discussion on my research draws partly on the issues raised in this paper.

going to waste and were thinking about ideas to turn it into a community resource.

I consulted with CER about whether I should reconsider my approach to working in Mamre after my unsuccessful attempts to create a user group, which had highlighted for me the fact that "history" in Mamre generates more of a passive interest than an active participation. Some people expected me to give a talk on Mamre's history rather than suggest that they should be the ones doing the research. I thought I should perhaps opt for a different interaction with the community, possibly popularising my work and writing a booklet on the life history interviews. I decided to try one more time to generate interest in a History Society and sent out a letter to every household in Mamre inviting people to a meeting. I also worked on a slide presentation which dealt with the issues of oral history, people's history and popularisation. It was an alternative way to introduce myself and my approach to historical research and to people in the community which I thought, optimistically, would be suitable for presenting to a large group. I basically translated the workshop I had initially constructed into a visual presentation.

The meeting was arranged for mid-April, and thirty people attended, many of whom were not targeted in the initial group. This in itself was an important lesson. The people who eventually formed the core of the history society were not all drawn from those who were known by Mercia to be interested in Mamre's history. In fact, many of the original "target group" did not want to pursue their interest within an organisation. This meeting was the turning point for the project because it resulted in the formation of the Mamre History Society. About a dozen people were enthusiastic about forming a history project, although eventually there were five people who worked consistently on the exhibition the Society produced.

One of the interesting things about people's response to my slide presentation was the excitement and discussion generated by the slides themselves. I had used photographs taken of the people I had interviewed and combined them with slides of old photographs that belonged to the interviewees. Before the "official" discussion began, people asked if I would show the slides again. There followed an animated discussion about the old photographs and who was in them, and people were keen to explain to me exactly what was happening in the photos and who the people were.

This was a crucial moment in the reinterpretation of Mamre's history by the people present. Their enthusiasm was aroused by the slide presentation because they saw themselves as ordinary Mamriers within the context of the community's history. The discussion which followed the reshowing of the slides involved the audience taking possession of the construction of their history I had created, and elaborating on each picture within its contemporary historical context. It was also the sense of collective remembering which enlivened people's interest. My intention was to introduce the concepts of people's history and oral history. The outcome was a heightened awareness that the history of Mamre was not just a history of the mission and missionaries.¹⁹

The discussion after the slide show centred at first around how to preserve Mamre's heritage for future generations. There was considerable debate about the idea of a museum/tea-room as a community resource. Some people felt that it was inappropriate to begin working on such an ambitious project while there was a lack of awareness of Mamre's history in the village. They were defining historical consciousness in terms of heritage issues

¹⁹ See also Belinda Bozzoli, 'Intellectuals, Audiences and Histories: South African Experiences, 1978-1988' *Radical History Review*, vol.46-47, 1990, pp237-263, for a discussion on the evolution of popular history and audiences in the Wits History Workshop movement.

rather than community history. In general it was agreed that incorporating people's history into a process of generating historical consciousness would make heritage issues more real to Mamriers. Vandalism by the youth of the historical buildings, especially the mill, was cited as evidence that the younger generation did not know or care about Mamre's history.

Someone suggested that the best way to generate interest would be to work through existing organisations to see if they would be interested in researching their own history. There were several people who said they would raise the issue within their organisations, including the brass band, Sunday School, and the Moravian Youth Group. Other people said they would be interested in joining a history group as unaffiliated individuals. I said that I saw my contribution to be a facilitator of such a group, and that I could assist with ideas on how to go about research and resource production.

This meeting was followed up by a workshop with the Moravian Youth Group. Their representatives at the initial meeting wanted me to discuss the idea of a history project with the Youth Group members. At the Youth Group meeting, we talked about the aims and activities of their organisation within the Moravian Church and in the community. They wanted to generate interest in the Youth Group by pursuing an interesting project which was relevant to the community, and one which would help them raise funds. The Youth Group wanted to discuss amongst themselves whether they were willing to be committed to a history project and agreed to send representatives to the next meeting of the History Society.

A week later we had the next meeting of people interested in forming a History Society, to establish the aims and form which the group would take. Ten people attended this meeting, and decided to form a History Society that would explore the history of the community and not of the Moravian Church. There

was some concern about Mamre's history being presented as the history of the Moravian Church because that would not reflect the lives of all the people in Mamre. We discussed the issue of presenting a history of Mamre to the community that was separate to church history. One of the people said emphatically, '*this is about volk history, not church history*'. Another replied that he is part of '*volk history*' and proceeded to tell his life story to the group. This was the beginning of the process of asserting popular memory as the voice of Mamre's history instead of the official memory of the missionaries. Older people felt that to develop pride in Mamre for the youth, a history of the community was needed, not another version of official history. It was decided that everyone should think about what aspects of the community's history they would like to research and that we could bring this research together to present to the community.

I then showed them a range of popular history booklets produced by communities and university-based groups who had links with the labour movement and education organisations.²⁰ These

²⁰ The booklets included, Leslie Witz, *Write Your Own History*, NECC, *What is History?* (NECC/Scotaville, Johannesburg, 1987), ILRIG, *Workers of the World Series, Number 3 Brazil* (ILRIG, UCT, 1984), and *Number 5 Mozambique* (ILRIG, UCT, 1987), ILRIG, *To the last drop of our tears* (ILRIG, UCT, 1989), Hanlie Griesel, *Sibambene: The Voices of Women at Mboza* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987), Ingrid Kupper, *Cogmanskloof* (ABEP, UCT, 1987), ABEP *Kaggelvuur van die Verlede* (ABEP, UCT, 1987), Labour History Group, *Organising at the Cape Town Docks* (Labour History Group, Salt River, 1984), UWO, *Claremont*, V.C. Malherbe comp. ed., *Paarl: The Hidden Story* (Black Sash, Mowbray, 1987), Patricia Henderson, *Waaioek* (ARA, Pietermaritzburg, 1986), Don Pinnock, *Elsies River* (Inst. Criminology, UCT, 1980), Dick Cloete and Andy Mason, *Vusi Goes Back* (Prezarian Comix/UDA, Johannesburg, 1982), SACHED, *Equiano, The Slave Who Fought To Be Free* (SACHED/Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1988), New Nation/History Workshop, *New Nation New History Volume 1* (New Nation/History Workshop, Johannesburg, 1989), History Dept. UWC, *UWC Peoples History Series Nos 1-3, Let Us Speak of Freedom* (History Dept. UWC, Bellville, no date), Luli Callinicos, *A People's History of South Africa vol. 1, Gold and Workers 1886-1924* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1990). For a discussion on popular history and issues of popularisation in South Africa, see Luli Callinicos,

generated considerable interest and we spent some time discussing how and why these booklets were written and produced. Some people wanted to take one or two home to read and think about whether they wanted to work on a booklet. There was some debate about whether a booklet would be an appropriate project because those Mamriers present thought it would not "sell". The alternative suggestion was to produce a tape-slide show or an exhibition. The impact of the visual material and the way in which it generated enthusiasm and discussion was influential in the decision of the History Society members to put together an exhibition instead of a booklet. The Youth Group representatives were keen on the idea of a video, a calendar or a year-planner, which they had raised in discussions after I had left the last meeting. We agreed to meet again to choose which resource to develop and to finalise what themes in Mamre's history they wanted to work on. The main aim was to produce a resource which would be possible to reproduce once my involvement was over, and one that would reach the widest possible audience in Mamre itself.

By the end of June, the Moravian Youth Group had committed themselves to working on a calendar, and the Mamre History Society had decided on an exhibition. I constructed a workshop "Researching the History of Mamre's Community" which explored what kinds of evidence could be used for historical research and what these forms of evidence could reveal about Mamre's history. This workshop explored how historical evidence can be rooted in the home and the community. We examined how oral evidence like people's memories and songs; possessions like photos, letters, family bibles, and old implements; and the local environment, housing and land use, can be interpreted and used to make history. We also discussed the way that I had

'Popular History in the Eighties', *Radical History Review*, 46-47, 1990, pp285-297, and 'Intellectuals, Popular History and Worker Education', *Perspectives in Education*, vol.11, no.1, 1989, pp51-64.

made the initial slide show and explored how pictures could represent themes in Mamre's history.

I started working separately with the History Society and the Youth Group. I would often present the same workshop twice, once with each group, and then ask each group to follow up on different issues in preparation for the next meeting. The people who belonged to the History Society were motivated as individuals on a particular aspect of Mamre's history. The Youth Group were more keenly interested in the production of the resource than intrinsically interested in Mamre's history. They needed to decide on themes in Mamre's history that they wanted to explore, and I would draw up worksheets with tasks for them to follow up during the interval between meetings.

The History Society members decided on an exhibition because it was more flexible than producing a booklet and they felt it would reach a wider audience. I motivated fairly strongly for this option because I felt that an exhibition would be easier to produce given the small number of people involved. It also seemed a more appropriate way to reach the maximum amount of people, which then could generate further expansion of the History Society. I also thought that an exhibition could be produced with maximum participation of the members of the History Society without my dominating the process. People also had very distinct interests in areas of Mamre's history they wanted to research. An exhibition could accommodate a range of topics more coherently than a booklet.

They suggested that we present the exhibition at the Church Bazaar in the first week of October 1991 because that was the festival that attracted the most people in the village. Even those people who were not active in the Moravian Church attended the bazaar, it was the most "community" orientated festival in Mamre. The members of the History Society could also be available to talk to people about what we were doing to generate further interest in Mamre's History. The five themes

that were decided on for the exhibition were: 1) The lives of women in Mamre, 2) Music, 3) Sport, 4) Work, 5) School. There were one or two people who were interested in working on each theme, and I took the theme "work" in which to participate as part of sharing skills of resource production. We also felt that an exhibition would be flexible in the event of others wishing to join the History Society to follow their own interests. Also if someone dropped out (as eventually happened when one member became ill for a few months) the whole project would not collapse.

The Youth Group workshopped the themes they wanted to research for the calendar. They decided on six themes: 1) Childhood, 2) Farming, 3) Employment/Unemployment, 4) The Development of Mamre, 5) Origins of the Youth Group, 6) Sport. Each theme was allocated to three or four Youth Group members. The themes they chose were almost the same as those chosen by the History Society because they reflect the main life experiences and leisure activities in the community.

I had made a subjective decision, which was debated by people in CER, that I wanted to act as a facilitator of Mamre's interests in their own history, rather than adopting a role of an activist mobilizing people around a interpretation of their past which would lead them into direct political action. Staff at CER questioned me about the purpose of my involvement in Mamre, and whether I should be more self-consciously political, given the context of people's history as a catalyst for political consciousness. I felt that an activist approach in Mamre had the potential to alienate the people I wanted to reach, and that imposing a 'problem centred' historical analysis was arrogant. I felt it was important to respect people's own subjective interests in Mamre's history.

The next meetings with the Youth Group and with the History Society were both an "Oral History Workshop on Interviewing" which I had designed and discussed with CER. This was the most

successful workshop of the series, partly because my own skills at workshop design were improving and it drew on a subject on which I had experience in Mamre. I had read a number of popularised and community-orientated books on "how to do oral history" which helped in designing the workshop.²¹ The projects had by this time taken on a sense of direction and we were working towards tangible goals which added to the commitment people were making. It was vitally important to the process of researching Mamre's history that we were working on a resource to present to the community. This was the sense of purpose which generated enthusiasm. The interviewing workshop aimed at assisting people to plan and conduct interviews to enable them to research their themes. The Youth Group in particular showed a considerable amount of initiative and insight in the types of questions they suggested for a life history interview outline. I then encouraged them to follow up the workshop by interviewing people about their themes in preparation for the next meeting.

The Youth Group workshopped how their themes should fit in within the calendar seasons, and reported back on their work in progress. Some had already started writing reports and finding photographs, others had done nothing. There seemed to be a few highly motivated people in the Youth Group, and some who were not so interested in working on the calendar. We arranged an all-day workshop to design and layout the calendar, attended by the enthusiasts, and it was this rough draft that I took to Nick Curwell, who assisted in producing the calendar.

²¹ See Leslie Witz, *Write Your Own History*, Ken Howarth, *Remember, Remember: Tape Recording Oral History* (Pennine Heritage Network, Hebden Bridge UK, 1984), Stuart Archer and Neigel Shepley, *Witnessing History: Looking at Oral Evidence* (Stanley Thorne, Cheltenham UK, 1988), Jeremy Brecher, *History From Below: How to Uncover and Tell the Story of Your Community, Association, or Union* (Commonwork Pamphlets, New Haven USA, 1987)

Part of the CER methodology of skilling was to demystify resource production, including how to apply for financial assistance from potential donors. The History Society members and representatives from the Youth Group workshopped a funding proposal for the History Project. We were ultimately unsuccessful, but people were enthusiastic about having gone through the process.



The whole point of the Mamre History Project has been for me to assist in setting up structures and sharing skills that will

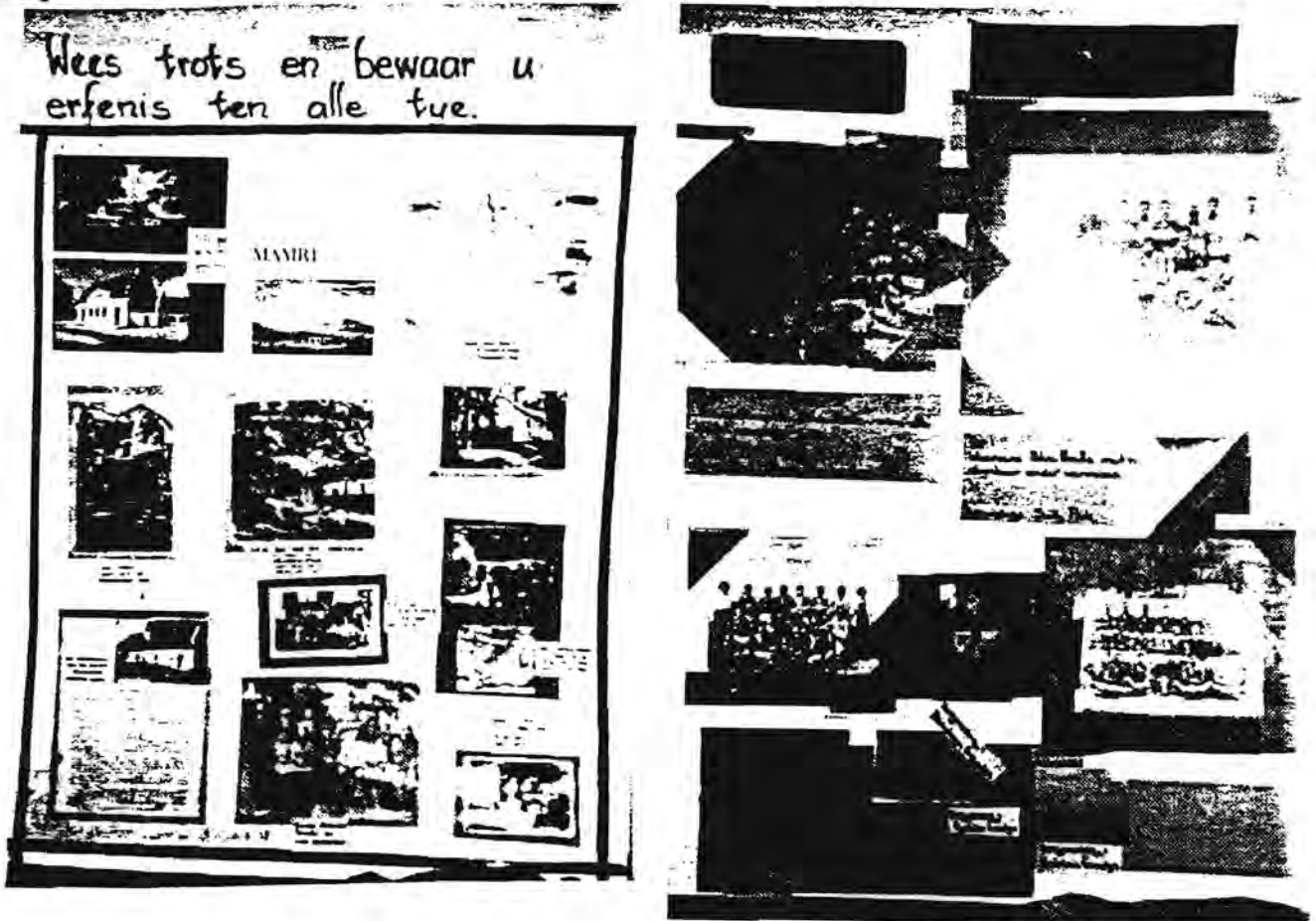
enable the groups to carry on independently once my involvement is over.²²

By early September 1991, the number of members of the History Society who wanted to work on the exhibition had settled at five. These people were conducting interviews and looking for visual material to create the exhibition. There was a mixed response from the people approached for interviews and artefacts. Some were interested in being interviewed, and others did not want to lend out their photographs and possessions for the exhibition. Apparently, people were sceptical about whether they would be returned. Mercia and I spent one afternoon in Mamre driving around from house to house gathering old implements and articles like blikkie-mugs and butter churns. We even spent a few hours in Miss Maggie Johannes's loft going through dusty old boxes and dark cobwebbed corners to see what was there. To our dismay, many people told us that they had thrown away all their old photographs and the things belonging to their grandparents because they thought it was "old junk".

The final workshop for the History Society was on design and layout for the exhibition. I provided the materials for the exhibition panels which were distributed to each person to take home and work on their exhibit. Everyone had two 800mm x 1010mm cardboard panels for their theme, and they designed the layout independently of the group. This contrasted with the

²² The Baltimore Neighbourhood Heritage Project seems to have operated with an enormous amount of funding, more than any project in South Africa could realistically generate. Although Shopes is silent on money matters, finances provide fundamental constraints on what can be produced by a local history project. Linda Shopes 'Baltimore Project'. Leslie Witz extended the section on financing and producing resources in local history projects, as well as mentioning the possibility that such projects might not be completed, in *Write Your Own History* after it was suggested by groups from the community and schools. 'History Project' p384.

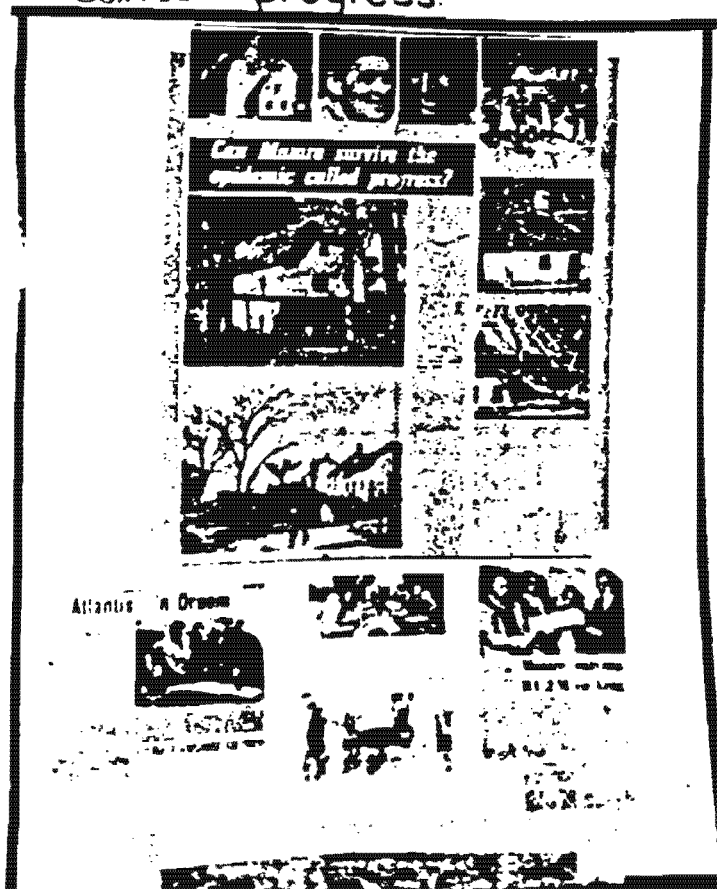
Youth Group who designed the calendar as a group with a more uniform layout, comparing ideas as they worked on their themes. The final result of the exhibition was quite remarkable, as each person brought to their theme their own historical interpretation and sense of aesthetics which added to the impact of the exhibition when the panels were displayed together.



One member of the History Society, to my surprise, decided not to create exhibition panels on women's lives in Mamre that she had planned, but instead made a display asking the audience to consider the ambiguities of "progress" in Mamre. On one of her panels she asked Mamriers "Did you survive the disease called Progress?". As the picture shows, the question posed reflects the newspaper article, but in retrospect. The question is posed in direct relationship to the development of Atlantis, the other newspaper article is entitled 'Atlantis - 'n Droom'.

Mercia Bruce was posing the question of whether Mamre had survived the encroachment of the city. In a sense, this is the essence of the value of the Mamre History Project for Mamriers, because it is part of ensuring that the community's identity is not crushed under-foot by the relentless march of "progress".

Did you survive the epidemic called progress?



While it was fascinating for me to have this aspect of Mamre's popular memory unexpectedly become part of the exhibition, I realised that perhaps this was an issue that could have been a main focus to generate debate in the whole group. I had instead wished to respect individual interests in, for example, the history of sport and the brass band, at the expense of more

general insights and historical synthesis.²³ As facilitator, to have imposed a political agenda would have been manipulative if it wasn't stated overtly, and the people involved wanted the History Society to be a catalyst for a range of interests in Mamre's history, not a political forum. A focus on nostalgia and popular memory and perceptions of Mamre's history could provide a critique to carry into more individual interests if it were linked to present-day issues of progress in the community.

The exhibition was displayed on the stage of the Lobensaal, where many of the stalls selling food and handcrafts were set up on the main floor space. This ensured that there would be a constant crowd of people in the hall, and that the exhibition had the most visual impact, being raised about 1.5 metres above the main floor space. It also meant we could keep an eye on what was happening with the exhibition because most of the display was borrowed and had to be returned afterwards.

The exhibition was introduced in the opening speech and prayer of the bazaar, and instantly there was a stream of people keen to inspect it up close. We did not count exactly how many people responded, but we estimate that over seven hundred people came up on to the stage to look at the exhibition in four hours.



²³ There were precedents to exploring the history of brass bands. See, Julie O'Neill, 'Village Band', *Oral History Journal* vol.15, no.1, Spring 1987, pp50-55.



We also had newsprint available for people to make comments on; we asked: "Wat dink u van ons uitstalling?". Here are some of the responses.

A. Botha: Ek dink dit het harde werk gekos, om al hierdie oudhede uit te krap. Waar ons as jonk mense kan sien wat was vir destyds ou mense. Handig vir werk. Maar bowenal dit beat ons meul, wat gedurig gesluit is, vir sienswaardighede.

E. Adonis: Baie, baie interessant. 'n Mens kan beslis trots wees op hierdie erfenis en op die persone wat dit nagespoor het. Baie dankie aan hulle. Daar kan 'n hele vertrek gevul word met oudhede en informasie van jare gelede as 'n mens maar net 'n groter poging aanwend om dit na te spoor. Mamre lê vol daarvan. Wat vandag hier uitgestal is, is beslis wonderlik.

N. Davids: Dit is heel interessant en roep die verlede (die goeie) in herrinering.

Fazlin Davids: Dis die eerste keer wat ek die uitstalling bywoon, maar ek is net spyt my vriende is nie hier van die Kaap nie.

Korchid London: Dit was 'n goeie idee om die uitstalling te hou. Dit het weer aan my 'n gevoel van eerbied en trots vir my dorp besorg.

Quentin Newman: Ek dink dat die uitstalling werklik 'n goeie begin is om vir die inwoners van Mamre te

motiveer om 'n bydrae te maak om hul ryke kultuurskat te bewaar, en om fisies 'n bydrae tot hierdie doel te lewer. 'n Ander belangrike aspek wat duidelik na vore kom is die feit of eerder beklemtoning van die feit dat dit die inwoners van die dorp is wat self geskiedenis is en geskiedenis maak. Die belangrikheid van ons eie geskiedenis kom ook sterk deur. Baie goeie poging. Sterkte vorentoe.

D. Loock: Dis pragtig. Behou en bewaar alles wat geskiedkundig is vir die nageslag. Wees trots op jul kultuur en geskiedenis, Mamre.

L. Mouton: Dis werklik waar iets besonders, so 'n ryk kulturele erfenis. En die beste is, dit is gemeenskaplik (unclear) vir elke Mamrier. Benydenswaardig en iets om trots te wees.

Felicia van Boven: Bewaar die ou dae.

Basil Kivedo: ... Hierdie is 'n bewys dat Mamre 'n ryke kultuurskat het wat bewaar moet word. ... My bede is dat al hierdie skatte binnekort onder een dak in 'n museum (die ou meul miskien) bewaar sal word.

E. Griffin: Veels te min vir 'n dorp soos ons s'n - Mamre.

These are a selection from over 120 signatures and comments on the newsprint. There was not one person who commented negatively or felt that the exhibition was not worthwhile, although of course perhaps they might not have bothered coming to see it let alone write a protest.

After the exhibition in October, work began in earnest on the calendar. This is where I believe there was some breakdown in the process I was trying to initiate. There was tension between producing a "professional" calendar which could be sold in large numbers, and having the Youth Group produce the calendar in Mamre. I had encouraged the Youth Group to get quotes for printing a calendar while I was also doing work on costing. The whole emphasis in the overall History Project had been towards skilling Mamriers in research and resource production. However, the level of technology necessary to

produce the calendar, my dependence on Nick Curwell, a graphic designer from Teaching Methods Unit at UCT, for technical assistance, and the fact that most of the production processes had to be done in Cape Town, meant that I "took over" the calendar project. There were financial constraints because our fund-raising had been unsuccessful and we had to rely on university funding. This resulted in the calendar being cut from seven to four pages, and from colour to monotone, which meant that some redesigning had to be done. Time and technical constraints meant that this was done by Nick and myself, although I spoke to the Youth Group about the changes that had to be made in order to get their approval.

To compensate for having taken the calendar production out of the control of the Youth Group, I continued attending their meetings on occasion and reporting back on the stages of production. I also told the Youth Group that sales, marketing and distribution would entirely be their responsibility. They would ultimately determine how much money the Youth Group would gain from the calendar. I also requested that I be kept informed about their sales strategy.

We targeted the Village Management Board 80th Anniversary Festival in mid-December as the launch of the calendar. I was working almost full-time on the calendar from October onwards. I eventually took delivery of the 1000 calendars from the UCT Printing Department, where workers stayed late on a Friday afternoon to finish them, the day before the Festival started.

Rose Arendse, Secretary of the Moravian Youth Group, wrote the following report on how they sold the calendar.

'The first were sold at the Local Management's festival on the 16th December 1991. Only a small amount were sold due to the non-support to the festival of the community. Quite a lot of calendars were sold - Rose also took some with her to the M.J.U.S.A. [national Moravian Youth] camp in the Transkei (Bazia). Quite a number of people were

interested in our project - they were very much impressed but unfortunately there was no time available to sell it. Early in the new year, the whole youth group had decided to walk with the rest of the calendars through the whole community [in Mamre] from door to door - we sold quite a lot with this effort.

...With the calendars still over [about 100], the Youth has decided to contribute this to the [Moravian] Church to sell to tourists visiting Mamre. The whole idea is that the church has decided to get involved in a project called the MAMRE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT in cooperation with the Mazzakhe project of the church. The idea of having a tea-room available, we thought that the idea would be fantastic by giving the calendars to the church - in this way, we are now reaching out the fellow brothers and sisters.

Once again, Kary (sic), thank you very much for assistance and cooperation with the group - sometimes we thought that you were wasting your time by coming out to Mamre all the way from Cape Town, but nevertheless, this project is something the Youth will never forget.²⁴

It is interesting that the Youth thought I was wasting my time driving out to Mamre on Monday evenings to attend their meetings. My intention was to ensure that the calendar production remained as accountable to the Youth as possible, so we would discuss work-in-progress during my visits. Yet they obviously did not share that expectation of being involved in every step of decision-making. They were enthusiastic about having the calendar produced, but were content to leave it in my hands during this stage, particularly after we had to change their original design. I think there was some tension between the Group's evangelical role and the time demands of the calendar project; they were concerned about falling behind in their christian education programme.

²⁴ Extracts from report written by Rose Arendse, Secretary Mamre Moravian Youth Group to Kerry Ward, CER, UCT. Dated 12 May 1992.

Was there a danger of Shopes' admonishment?

'And well intentioned but naive historians, rightfully critical of their professional truthseeker role but unsure of how they are to act as historians, adopt a weak intellectual posture in community oral history projects and let this ramble occur in the name of "letting the people speak".'²⁵

I think it would be useful to answer these charges as a way of evaluating the Mamre History Project. While I agree that the critical engagement with Mamre's history was not as focused as it could have been if we had worked on a "problem orientated" history, there are some substantial benefits from having worked in the way we did.

The strength of the History Society exhibition is that it remained a democratic process, the people involved were active in each stage. People involved were also extremely motivated to follow up their research precisely because the project was validating their interests in a particular aspect of lived experience in Mamre. It highlighted people's history and popular memory over the history of the missionaries. The way in which the learning process took place also skilled Mamriers in oral history methodology. In evaluating the project I asked whether they felt they would be able to assist another organisation or individual in researching an aspect of Mamre's history, and they felt confident about sharing their oral history interviewing skills, and some were keen to take forward their interest in the History Project into the Mamre Development Project.

'By focusing on a precise and relevant issue, community oral history projects can begin to work in a way that doesn't "capture and share" an essentially static history, but actively constructs, through the collaboration of interviewer and interviewee, historian and citizen, an understanding of the past

²⁵ Linda Shopes, 'Beyond Trivia', p154.

in a manner that respects the particular qualities of oral history.²⁶

Shopes wrote the above statement as part of the article 'Beyond Trivia and Nostalgia' a few years after her own experience in the Baltimore Project. In her earlier assessment of that project, Shopes's experience is much closer to mine in Mamre. She asked 'What do we mean when we say we want people to do their own history? By the insider's view do we mean people's views of what historians think is important or their definition of what is important in the first place?'²⁷ I had asked myself that question on embarking on a people's history project in Mamre and had decided to allow participants to define their own interests. As a result, I found, like Shopes, that 'there seems to be a reluctance or an inability to be critical of the collective neighbourhood experience.'²⁸

The resource produced by the Shopes project was a theatre production, "Baltimore Voices". The play was based on extracts from life history oral interviews and was conceptualised as a tool for political consciousness-raising. However, the audience responded to it as a celebration of nostalgia, it touched people emotionally but did not promote a critical engagement with the city's history.²⁹ But Shopes did not

²⁶ Linda Shopes, 'Beyond Trivia', p156.

²⁷ Linda Shopes, 'Baltimore Project', pp32-33.

²⁸ Ibid, p33.

²⁹ Ibid, pp38-41 "Baltimore Voices" was also partly a victim of its own lavish funding because the production of the play was professionalised to the extent where locally-based participation was minimal. The people who were supposed to be involved in the project became the audience rather than the owners of the project. Shopes identifies this problem also more broadly within her project as being a result of weak links with local neighbourhood organisations and structures. See pp40-42. I think this is one problem which I did manage to overcome in Mamre.

acknowledge the power of these nostalgic images for people's identity; this may have provided the critical engagement she sought.

CER's perspective on popular education is based on creating dialogue within the research process. There also needs to be a tension between observation, synthesis and analysis which brings people to a deeper understanding of their lives. I think that the subjective choice I made to allow Mamriers to decide their own agenda in exploring their community's history eventually provided that critical issue. What was lacking, and what perhaps may emerge from the planned Mamre Development Project, was a synthesis of the issue of progress and its implication for community identity and heritage in Mamre.

The images presented in the exhibition and the calendar also touched Mamriers who weren't actively involved in the History Project, but in another way. These resources challenged the community's notion of Mamre's history as presented in its written accounts. Focusing on "people's history" was itself an innovation in the way Mamre's history is presented.³⁰ This has been the primary aim of many community history projects, including the Transvaal Chinese Association Project³¹ and the early exhibitions of American Social History Project.³²

³⁰ E Stokes 'United We Stand: A Synthesis of Oral and Pictorial History' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No.5, 1982-83 pp51-57 discusses the process of constructing an exhibition on Broken Hill, New South Wales, using the same techniques of combining oral history interviews with old photographs that we used in Mamre.

³¹ Leslie Witz, 'The Write Your Own History Project', p382.

³² Luli Callinicos, 'The "People's Past": Towards Transforming the Present' in Belinda Bozzoli ed., *Class, Community and Conflict*, p52.

However, the exhibition and calendar as resources did not by themselves generate the critical or problem-centred engagement with the past that would generate an understanding of the present.³³ What they did achieve was a dialogue across generations as part of a new interpretation of the community's history. Not only was there an enthusiastic response by young Mamriers to the exhibition, but the Moravian Youth Group went through their own process of reinterpreting their perception of Mamre's history. The Youth Group's original calendar design had included a considerable amount of text which had to be edited out in the final version. The text was based on interviews by the Youth Group members with older Mamriers, and on their own knowledge of popular memory of Mamre's history. In some cases they reproduced the nostalgic memories of their grandparents, with an added perspective of "progress". For example, on the theme "Employment-Unemployment"³⁴, the Youth Group wrote: *'In earlier times people worked on their land. There was no-one without work. There was no transport for the people to the lands, and they had to walk. They sent their children to the city to work there. Those who worked in town only came home for Easter. There was one bus service, and people used cars to get home more quickly, because the train was too slow.'* Gone is the joyful ride to Mamre Road Station, but in its place is a consciousness that things are better because cars are available now to get to town in an hour.

An important part of evaluating this project is to assess what has been happening since my involvement in Mamre has slowed down.³⁵ Rose Arendse mentioned in her report the "Mamre

³³ See for example, Sven Linquist 'Dig Where You Stand' in Paul Thompson ed., *Our Common History*, for a description of a history project where people critically engage with their places of work.

³⁴ Interestingly, they used the terms 'unemployed' and 'non-unemployed', which strongly indicates the present levels of unemployment in the community, especially for the youth.

³⁵ Ideas for the evaluation of this project are based on a CER MSP seminar conducted by Tony Morphett, Extra-Mural Studies, UCT, on "Evaluation" 16/10/1990.

Development Project" which is an innovation in the community.³⁶ The Moravian Church is trying to bring people together to plan a community-orientated approach to heritage issues in Mamre. Part of this project is to re-open the mill as a museum/tea-room, and Church officials have called on people from the Mamre History Society to become involved in the project. It is still in the very early stages of planning, but it appears that they have in mind the incorporation of the exhibition into the new museum. The history of Mamre that would be presented in the museum will place people's history and popular memory at the centre rather than the periphery of the display.

From discussions I have had with various people in the community, it appears that the exhibition and calendar did have the planned impact of getting people talking about Mamre's history and heritage as a community resource rather than holding a passive view of maintaining the old buildings. In doing so, they will be following a trend that has developed in the new generation of museums which are integrating oral history and social history as an alternative to static display cabinets of memorabilia.³⁷ It is too early to speculate whether the History Society will continue as a distinct group or whether people will join the development project as individuals. There are questions to be answered in Mamre about the ownership and control of a heritage development project.³⁸

³⁶ See Rose Arendse's report quoted above, pp177-178.

³⁷ See for example: Gareth Griffiths, 'Museums and the Practice of Oral History' *Oral History Journal*, vol.17, no.2, Autumn 1989, pp49-52, Sian Jones and Carl Major, 'Reaching the Public: Oral History as a Survival Strategy for Museums', *Oral History Journal*, vol.14, no.2, Autumn 1986 pp31-38, and April Whincop 'Using Oral History in Museum Displays' *Oral History Journal*, vol.14, no.2, Autumn 1986 pp46-50.

³⁸ These are extremely sensitive issues in the community at the moment which have been discussed with me in confidence.

As one member of the History Society said to me 'At the moment Mamre is in a potjiekos. All of a sudden everybody wants to do everything. Everybody is speaking history now and everybody has their own ideas.'

One of the ideas that seems to be popular is following up on family history using oral history and constructing family trees from the genealogical records that have been compiled by Judy Katzenellenbogen, an epidemiologist at the Medical Research Council.³⁹ This could also provide the link between *Benigna* as a symbol of Mamre's history, and the community's collective memory. The way that oral history has been linked to people's history in Mamre could generate a reinterpretation of nostalgia and change in the community.

One intervention that has taken place as a result of generating a people's history project in Mamre which is based on oral history is the reinterpretation of Mamre's history as being a history of popular memory. Most of the people I interviewed knew nothing about their parents and grandparents' lives because they said that one didn't ask one's elders questions.

As Amalia Collins told me in response to my question about what her parents told her about themselves and about Mamre's history:

*'Mmm-mm, hulle't nie vir ons vertel nie. You know, (laughs), the parents of the olden times, they didn't tell us nothing.... Het nie met ons gepraat nie. Ons ouers het nie met ons...dinge gepraat nie.'*⁴⁰

³⁹ Judy Katzenellenbogen, 'Mamre Church Record Project: Working Paper' unpub. paper, *Africa Seminar*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, May 1987, and 'An Historical Demographic Investigation into Mortality in Three Historical Birth Cohorts Born between 1837 and 1900 in Mamre, with Special Reference to Life Expectancy', unpub. M.Sc.(Med) thesis, University of Cape Town, 1990.

⁴⁰ Amalia Collins, pp13-14. Also, Martha Pick, p3, Ernestina Joshua, p22, Alexander September, p10.

This is something that will never happen again; the popular memory of Mamre in the early twentieth century is one that will survive into the twenty-first and will continue to form part of both individual and communal identity in Mamre.

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Name of Interviewee	Date of Interview	Date of Birth
Adams, Hendrick (Hennie)	21.2.1991	2.2.1912
Adams, Christlief	20.5.1991	22.4.1923
Adams, Karolina	20.5.1991	7.11.1921
Adams, Sarah	12.7.1991	12.5.1901
Ahrends, Martha	17.5.1990	20.10.1930
Ahrends, Winifred (Winnie)	17.5.1990	20.7.1932
Apolles, Dan	21.6.1990	6.9.1940
April, Charlotte	4.6.1990	31.10.1915
April, Gustaf (Staffie)	20.5.1991	22.5.1926
Arends, Justina (Tina)	14.8.1990	13.10.1897
Arends, Samuel (Tokkie)	12.9.1990	1.8.1896
Barry, Charlotte	8.8.1990	1901
Bastian, Mathilda (Tilly)	13.6.1990	9.12.1902
Carlse, Frederick (Freddie)	14.11.1990	1.10.1931
Cloete, Gideon	27.2.1991	1942
Collins, Amalia	4.3.1991	17.9.1908
Conrad, Catherina	1.11.1990	1.2.1909
Conrad, David	1.11.1990	4.8.1903
Cupido, Elizabeth	8.11.1990	17.9.1902
Galant, Fredrika	22.11.1990	16.3.1916

Johannes, Johanna (Hannie)	6.12.1990	28.5.1936
Johannes, Wilhelm (Willie)	6.12.1990	14.1.1917
Johannes, Magdalena (Maggie)	26.2.1991	2.7.1921
Joshua, Ernestina (Stina)	14.8.1990	28.11.1907
Julies, Ernst	4.7.1991	unknown
Liebenberg, Engeborg	4.7.1991	4.9.1920
Liederman, William	13.6.1990	2.11.1921
Liederman, Anna (Enna)	14.8.1990	23.6.1906
Liederman, Sofia	14.8.1991	26.9.1946
Liederman, Paul (Tim)	12.9.1990	19.11.1908
Loock, Maria	8.11.1990	14.5.1921
Loock, Matthews (Thys)	8.11.1990	21.8.1918
Magerman, Simon	6.5.1991	18.9.1919
Philander, Susan Regina	5.11.1991	5.11.1922
Pick, Adam	10.7.1991	1.1.1927
Pick, Martha	8.8.1990	1.7.1922
Pick, Sylvia	12.2.1990	20.3.1909
Roberts, Daniel (Dainkie)	13.6.1990	12.5.1926
Roberts, Ella	14.11.1990	13.8.1913
Roberts, Joseph	14.11.1990	2.2.1909
Sambaba, Karel	21.2.1991	4.6.1942
September, Alexander (Alex)	1.11.1990	29.7.1911
September, Magrieta (Maggie)	22.11.1990	11.3.1917
Titus, Adam	6.12.1990	23.11.1914
Van der Merwe, Renatha (Netta)	14.8.1991	30.9.1929
Van Haarte, Augusta	4.3.1991	16.9.1917
Van Schoor, Magdalena (Leen)	13.6.1990	13.4.1906
Witbooi, Isak	4.7.1991	15.1.1905

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