

PERSISTENT PATERNALISM:

An ethnography of social change in a post-apartheid village

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**SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MASTER OF
ARTS DEGREE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

1997

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

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Abstract

This ethnographic study of Nieu Bethesda, a village in the Eastern Cape district of South Africa, is the product of a total of five months of fieldwork. The research was conducted between 1993 and 1995, a period that spanned the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. The ethnography explores the effects of apartheid on life in Nieu Bethesda. It traces the dynamic interactions between social life and worldviews as these were manifested in the village.

Geographically isolated, and to a large extent cut off from mainstream politics, the processes and effects of apartheid in this village have taken an idiosyncratic form. The research suggests that racial stratification has been remarkably resilient throughout the history of the village. Such stratification must be understood in terms of ideas shaped both during and before the apartheid era, rather than solely in terms of state action or the violence of apartheid. Ideologies of segregation have found their expression in paternalistic practices on the part of Whites, and the relations of dependence thus generated may account for the apparent lack of overt opposition to apartheid. However, the thesis acknowledges the multiplicity of voices in the village, and negates the notion of a shared set of ideas and values sanctioned by the population of Nieu Bethesda.

Subtle change has taken place in the 1990s, only some of which is attributable to the demise of apartheid. In addition, factors such as the provision of electricity and a dramatic increase in tourism have reduced the isolation of the village, and networks of mutual support link the people of Nieu Bethesda with other parts of South Africa. It is suggested that change in the foreseeable future is more likely to originate from the increased communication that such networks make possible, than from changes in legislation, or improvements in material conditions, resulting from development projects.

To the people of Nieu Bethesda

Notes concerning terminology and use of names

1. In Nieu Bethesda, a small number of residents were classified as 'Bantu' in terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950. (In Nieu Bethesda, all of those deemed to be 'Bantu' were of Xhosa origin). It is believed that many of these people came to the Sneeuberg district after the great cattle-killing of 1856-57. In the first half of the twentieth century there were a significant number of Xhosa people living in the village (as will be seen from *Figure 1* in Chapter Two). Many of the original Xhosa people have married Coloured people in Nieu Bethesda, and the distinctions between Coloured and Xhosa are now extremely blurred.

For this reason, the term 'Black' will be used throughout this thesis when referring to all those members of the population who are not White. The term 'Coloured' is only used where I deemed it relevant or necessary to differentiate this category of people from Africans. The use of the terms 'Coloured' and 'White' does not imply any acceptance of their legitimacy as categories, but merely refers to classification in terms of the now defunct Population Registration Act.

2. I have chosen to use the real names of informants quoted in this dissertation for the following reasons. Firstly, I feel that the information about them and the quotations attributed to them (which they freely gave to me) does not prejudice them in any way, and in discussions with them they intimated that this information was not given in confidence. In isolated incidents which could place informants in an unfavourable light, names have been omitted. Secondly, as much of the work is about individuals, it is important that the reader develops a familiarity with particular informants whose views are represented in the dissertation.

At the moment, this thesis is an academic work and is not intended for publication. Should this position change, I will review the question of identifying informants by name.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have contributed to this dissertation in a number of ways, to whom I would like to express my appreciation and grateful thanks.

Firstly, I would like to thank the people of Nieu Bethesda, who made me feel so welcome, and without whose co-operation and enthusiasm this work would not have been possible. The warmth with which I was received ensured that my informants became my life-long friends. Thank you all so much for your assistance and your hospitality. *Hartlik dankie. Enkosi kakhulu.*

To John and Bruce, who so generously lent me their home in the village for the entire research period, I am also greatly indebted.

To my supervisor, Emile Boonzaier, whose assistance, encouragement and expert advice was the driving force behind turning my fieldnotes into a dissertation, I can never express my gratitude. The hours spent on painstakingly making me believe in myself were far beyond the call of duty of a supervisor.

Finally, I would like to thank the many friends who helped me in a variety of ways. In particular I am most grateful to Ian in Nieu Bethesda and Eve in Cape Town, whose combined efforts resulted in the map of the village, and to Fiona, who was a constant source of advice.

The research for this dissertation was funded by the Centre for Science Development of the Human Sciences Research Council, and by a grant from an Oppenheimer Research Grant from the University of Cape Town's African Studies Centre. I am grateful for all the financial assistance I received. The views and opinions expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsors.

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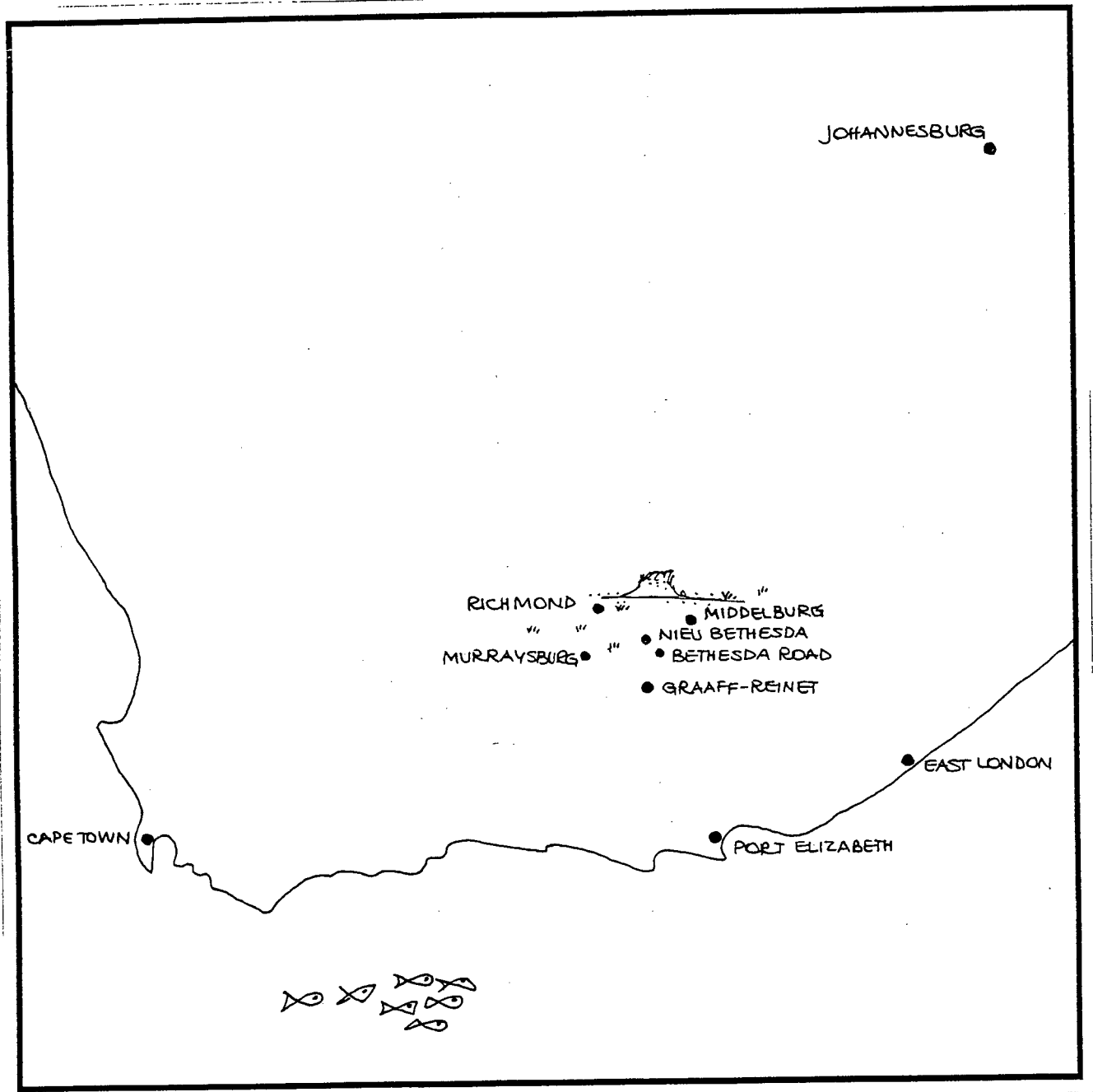
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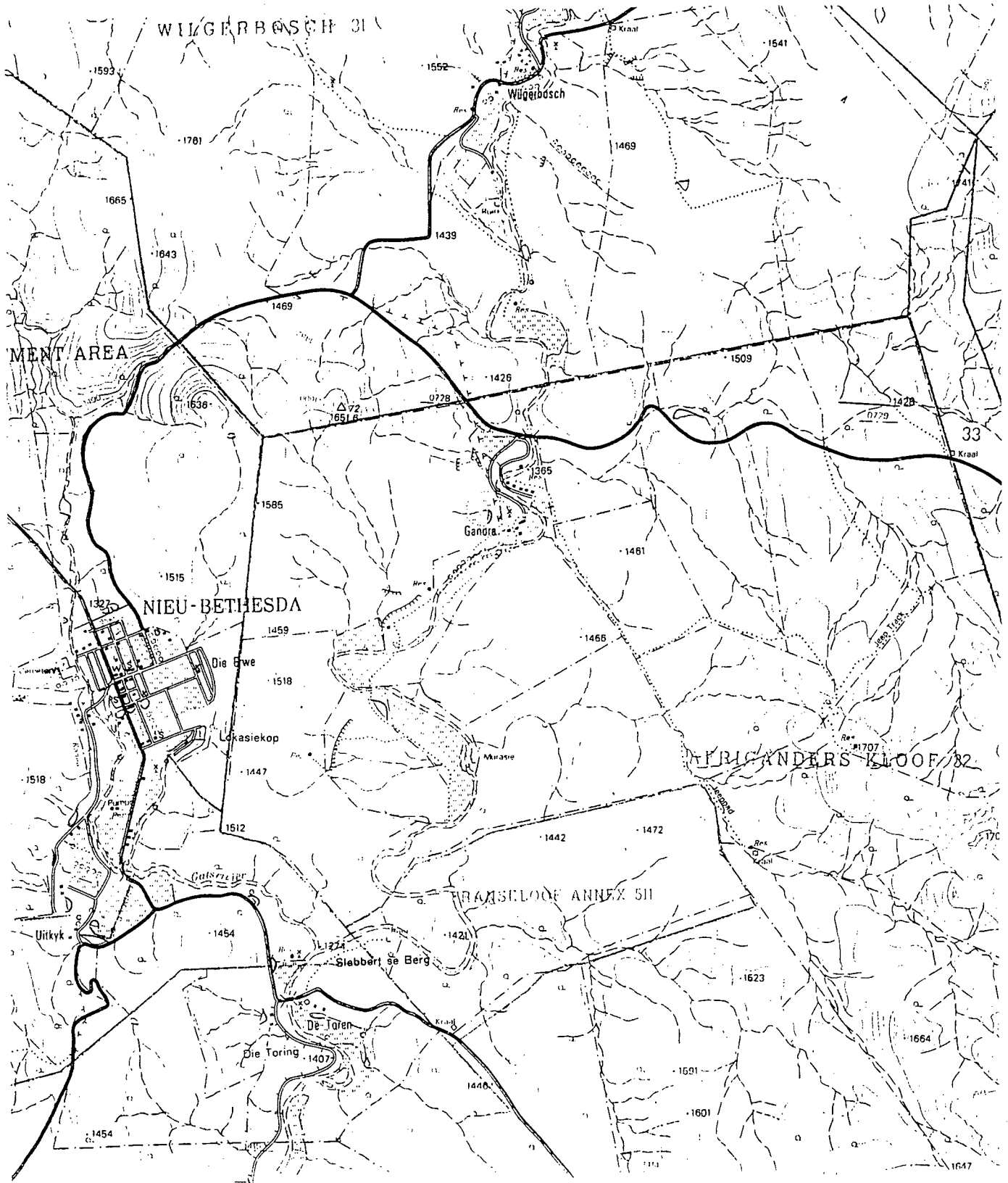
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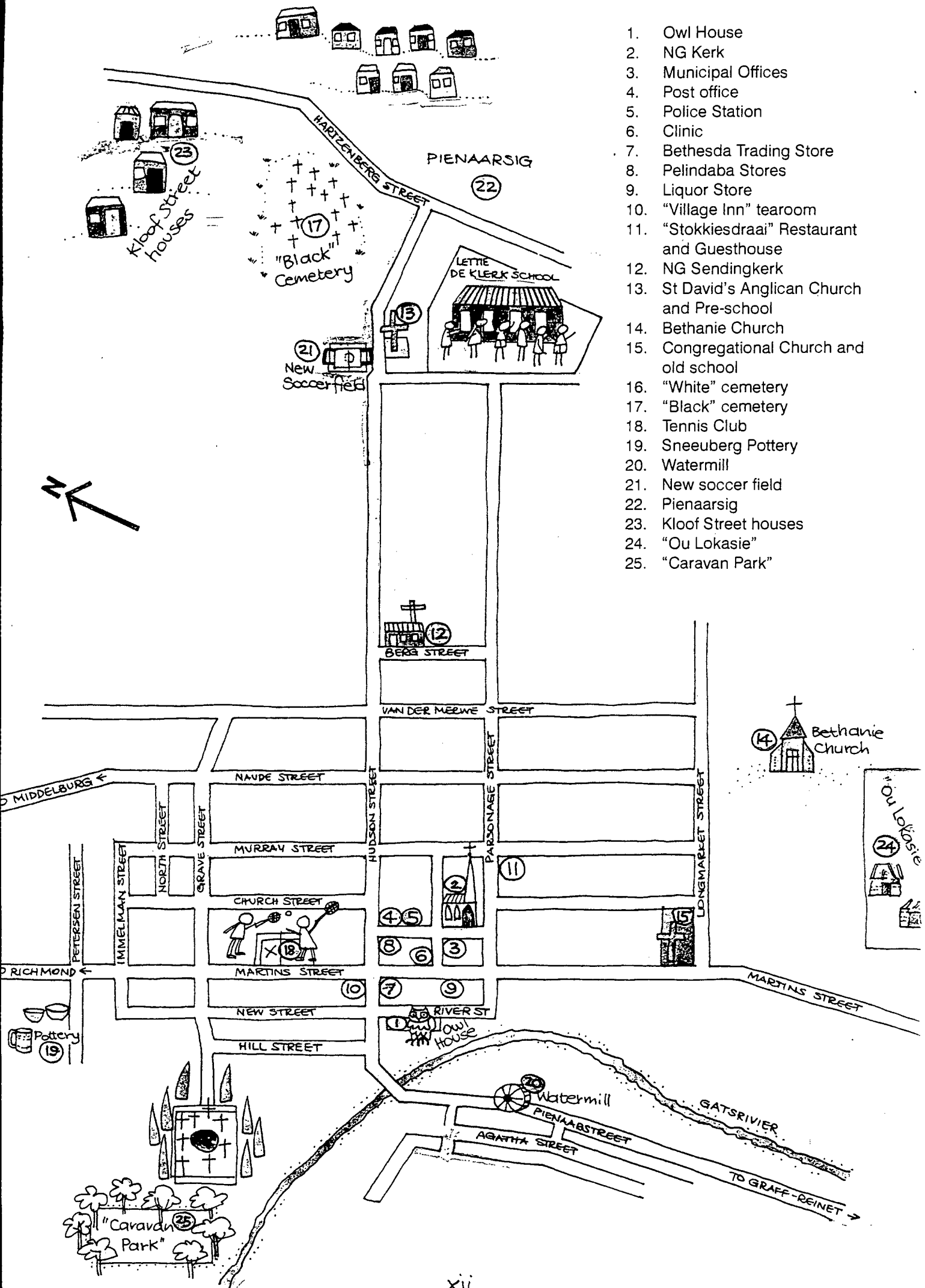
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**Nieu Bethesda and surrounding farms in the Sneeberg district
(The Sneeberge lie directly north of Nieu Bethesda)**

From Map 3124DC NIEU-BETHESDA. (Survey map of Government Printers)



1. Owl House
2. NG Kerk
3. Municipal Offices
4. Post office
5. Police Station
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7. Bethesda Trading Store
8. Pelindaba Stores
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15. Congregational Church and old school
16. "White" cemetery
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18. Tennis Club
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22. Piensaarsig
23. Kloof Street houses
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and aim of thesis

Nieu Bethesda is a small, isolated village in the Sneeuberg district of the eastern Cape. Although it has a population of almost one thousand, there is no obvious economic logic to its continued existence: more than fifty percent of the potential workforce are unemployed, and there are limited prospects for economic development. Despite the high level of unemployment, Nieu Bethesda has an exceptionally low crime rate. From observation of the overt lack of social change, and the relatively stable population (with little apparent migration in or out of the village) it appears that the description of Nieu Bethesda as a 'sleepy Karoo village' is entirely apt.

Closely linked to this is the way in which the disparities in material living conditions between White and Black¹ sections of the population do not appear to translate into overt racial antagonisms or tensions. Nieu Bethesda remained unaffected by the political upheavals that characterised the latter part of the apartheid era, and there is certainly no obvious indication that the demise of apartheid has had a significant impact on village life.

This dissertation interrogates these superficial observations of life in Nieu Bethesda. It argues that insofar as racial stratification has been remarkably resilient, it has to be understood in terms of ideas shaped both during and before the apartheid era. But it also acknowledges that the 1990s have been characterised by relatively subtle changes, not all of which are directly associated with the demise of apartheid.

In order to illustrate both conservative and dynamic social processes, the thesis documents some of the details of everyday life in Nieu Bethesda. It argues that the ideology of segregation finds its most obvious expression in the idea of paternalism, which has been promoted by Whites for centuries and has, to a large extent, been internalised by Blacks in the village. However, the thesis acknowledges the diversity of worldviews of the people of the village, and negates the notion of a shared set of ideas and values sanctioned by the population of Nieu Bethesda. Secondly, it demonstrates

¹ See note on terminology and use of names on page iv.

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that, despite its geographic isolation, the residents of Nieu Bethesda are linked to the outside world through relationships of kin and non-kin. Apart from the economic and psychological support which such links provide, they serve as a channel through which new ideas and insights are brought to Nieu Bethesda.

Importance of small villages as focus of anthropological research

In the first half of the twentieth century, the domain of social anthropologists was generally considered to be the study of 'tribal' societies deliberately selected for their 'difference' and remoteness. During this period, the social processes taking place in industrial and post-colonial villages received little attention - village life was generally seen as not sufficiently 'exotic' and of little relevance to on-going theoretical debates. In the 1950s, however, the work of several anthropologists who had conducted ethnographic research in small villages gave rise to an important debate, about the broader value of such studies (cf. Frankenberg, 1957; Wylie, 1974; Pitt-Rivers, 1972; Boissevain, 1980). Gluckman (1957) was one of the first to support the view that a study of village life can make a significant contribution to general theories about social life. He argued that by providing new lines of analysis in the traditional field of anthropology, such studies could provide fresh insights to social anthropologists.

Frankenberg (1957), in his ethnography of a Welsh village struggling to survive against the pressure of the outside world, applied theories developed by anthropologists working in tribal societies (Amongst others, Malinowski's work in the Trobriand Islands and Evans-Pritchard's work amongst the Nuer) to his analysis of village life. In presenting a theory of how the existence of a village community is possible, Frankenberg argued that villages are bound by an acceptance of their unity. Yet within this unity, animosities and divisions between individuals and groups exist, some of which are more fundamental than others. People divided by such divisions are seldom linked across them by any uniting ties (Frankenberg, 1957:11). Frankenberg compares the mechanisms used to avoid and resolve conflict in a small village to those of the tribal societies studied by earlier anthropologists. Gluckman (1957) saw this application of ideas developed in the study of tribal societies to small villages as being of immense interest and value to the future of social anthropology.

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Julian Pitt-Rivers (1971), who conducted research in an Andalusian village, showed that the social structure was to a large extent determined by its past. In describing the system of social relations within the community which he studied, Pitt-Rivers explored the question of how this system was affected by being part of the larger structure of the country, or of the continent (1971:208).

Wylie's (1974) study of the French village of Peyrane was carried out in the hope that an accurate description of village life would provide an insight into life in France beyond the confines of the village itself. The work, which attempted to depict living personalities in the framework of a systematic description of the French culture, highlighted the acceptance by individuals of their responsibilities within the family, while at the same time maintaining their independence. Wylie argued that this combination of family unity and individual independence was the most basic and enduring element of French culture (1974:383).

More recently, anthropologists have moved away from general ethnographic descriptions of village life and have tended to select particular themes or issues deemed significant in each village. Thus Boissevain (1981) in his study of a small village in Malta selects the themes of individual choice and the important role of the church. He highlights the important role that the choices and actions of individuals - as opposed to groups - play in generating social forms and patterns of behaviour, and explores the role played by religion and the Church in the village. He shows how closely the structure of the village parish resembles the structure of the secular institutions of the village, rendering it impossible to separate religious and secular groups and institutions (1981:1).

Several writers have shown the links which villages, despite their apparent isolation, have with the rest of the world. Frankenburg (1957) argued that as factors from the wider social systems of a region (and, indeed, a nation) intrude into the social life of a village, villages can in many respects be seen as microcosms of the social life of that country or region. Ellen (1984:67) posits that villages rarely exist as isolated, self-contained entities, but rather as part of a wider society. This view is echoed by Berger

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(1988:9) who argues that the life of a village (as distinct from its physical and geographical attributes) is the sum of all the social and personal relationships existing within it, plus the social and economic relations which link the village to the rest of the world.

South African examples of village studies where particular themes of village life have been highlighted include Southern's (1962) description of the way in which the White population in the Highveld village of Wyksdorp are linked through social interaction; Martin West's (1971) study of Port Nolloth in which he highlights racial attitudes in the town; Crapanzano's description of the effects of racial domination on Whites in Franschoek (1985); Robinson's (1986) thesis on the effect of the Group Areas Act on the Western Cape village of Greyton; Segar's (1986) study of the responses to independence of a Transkeian village; and more recently, Johnson's work on the structures of racial dominance in Umtata (1994).

Until the 1992 production in of the film of Athol Fugard's *The Road to Mecca*, a play which focused on the life of Helen Martin (an elderly and eccentric resident of Nieu Bethesda), few people in South Africa had ever heard of Nieu Bethesda. *The Road to Mecca* highlights the disapproval of the White residents of the village when, after her husband's death, 'Miss Helen' reversed her lifetime's habit of attending church, and instead became obsessed with making statues and transforming her home in an eccentric manner. In a village where the church was the focus of activity, this was considered totally unacceptable behaviour which set Helen Martin apart from the rest of the community. Fugard (1984) describes the village of Nieu Bethesda as a strange little community which was:

....in a sense hostile to her [Helen Martin's] life and her work because it was a deviation from what they considered to be the way a life should be lived....²

The work of Helen Martin, which during her lifetime was viewed by the villagers as 'rather silly statues and sculpture' (Fugard, 1984) has succeeded in injecting life and finance to an economically ailing community. The anomaly of this remote and in many

² From 'A Note on Miss Helen' in *The Road to Mecca* (from an interview with Gitta Honegger, 1984). (See References at end of dissertation).

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ways backward little village producing such a unique and artistic creation as the Owl House (Helen Martin's home) continues to fascinate all who visit the village. As Derek Luyt, a resident of Nieu Bethesda, since the early '90s puts it: 'The Owl House itself is undeniably extraordinary, a unique creation which leaves many wondering as to its purpose and meaning'³.



Koos Malgas, the labourer responsible for making the statues in the 'Camel Yard' of the Owl House.

³. The source of information on the Owl House is a pamphlet prepared by Derek Luyt for distribution to visitors of the Owl House.

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As a result of the world-wide acclaim with which the film was received, the Owl House became a tourist attraction, thereby placing Nieu Bethesda firmly on the map for visitors to the Karoo. Thus the inevitable response to any mention of the isolated village of Nieu Bethesda is 'Oh, yes, that is where the Owl House is, isn't it?' Yet in spite of the dramatic increase in the number of visitors to Nieu Bethesda in the past decade, little is known of the dynamics of social life and interaction between different sections of the population in this small farming village. Considering the lack of knowledge of its history and understanding of the way in which people interacted and reacted to change in the village, a study of Nieu Bethesda which would show how the villagers 'considered... a life should be lived' (Fugard, 1984) therefore appeared to me to be an interesting project.

Before commencing research in Nieu Bethesda, consideration was given to the value that the proposed research would have for South African anthropology. On the one hand, the question arose of whether there were sufficient significant features of the village which would render a study of this nature a useful contribution to South African anthropology. On the other hand, could it be said that the village was representative of South African society in general? Although it soon became clear that Nieu Bethesda was, indeed, unique in many respects, on the question of the application of the research findings to other parts of South Africa, it was evident that different levels of analysis would produce different responses.

Like most small villages, Nieu Bethesda has its own individual and somewhat unusual identity. In several respects it is therefore not typical of most rural villages in contemporary South Africa. Due to its geographic isolation, its strong sense of community and its comparative lack of communication with the rest of South Africa⁴, the dynamics and effects of the apartheid era were somewhat unique in this village. During the apartheid era influx control legislation⁵, which caused so much misery to African families through the forced removals and pass law swoops which characterised many other parts of South Africa at that time, was not directly manifested in this village. There

⁴ . As Nieu Bethesda was only supplied with electricity in 1993, television was unknown in the village during the apartheid era, and there is no local printed media in the district.

⁵ . The policy of migrant labour and its accompanying network of influx control legislation was arguably the aspect of apartheid that had the most disruptive effect on family life.

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were two obvious reasons for this. Firstly, as Nieu Bethesda did not fall within the designated Coloured Labour Preference Area, the handful of Africans who had always lived there were not forced to leave the village, as was the case in many parts of the Cape Province. Secondly, there is no industry in the village, and the relatively large Coloured population provides a more than adequate supply of labour for agricultural needs. But in addition, although the effects of decades of discrimination and deprivation have left an indelible stamp on the population, (as will be shown in this thesis), in Nieu Bethesda apartheid did not become synonymous with brutality and violence, as it did in many other villages in South Africa. The absence of protests and political meetings and of pass raids meant that the role of the police was less intrusive and violent than in many other parts of the country.

When visiting Nieu Bethesda for the first time in 1992 while on holiday, I was immediately struck by the anomaly of a landless, largely illiterate or semi-literate Black population, and a small White farming community who owned and farmed all the available arable land and possessed all the assets in the village. Indeed, a striking feature of social relations in Nieu Bethesda is the seeming acquiescence of the Black majority of their own marginalised position and of the privileged situation of the White population. This was a central issue that concerned me throughout my period of research in the field.

As Frankenburg (1957) has argued, the fundamental divisions in any society - even a small village - are seldom linked by any uniting factor. In Nieu Bethesda, despite the apparent acquiescence with the implementation of apartheid, the fundamental divisions of South African society are clearly evident. The first impression which visitors to Nieu Bethesda gain is that the village is a closely knit community. Yet despite being united by their acceptance of belonging to this unique little village, and the common ties which unite the population such as kinship, the Church, and agriculture, this unity does not transcend the divisions of apartheid.

Since the implementation of the Group Areas Act, White and Black people have been forced to live in separate residential areas. In Nieu Bethesda however, unlike many other towns or villages in South Africa, both sections of the population live in close proximity to each other, with less than a kilometre separating them. The Coloured

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township of Pienaarsig is clearly visible (and audible) from the White section of the village, and both White and Coloured residents are mutually aware of each other's existence and daily activities. Yet apart from the limited contact which occurs in the workplace, there is virtually no interaction between the two groups. The question of the invisible boundaries which separated the Black and White populations of Nieu Bethesda appeared intriguing and worth investigating. On a practical note, the fact that the diverse population is so small and confined to a compact geographical area makes Nieu Bethesda a most manageable area for research into social processes.

While this dissertation will focus on the dynamics of social relations involving individuals in Nieu Bethesda, social relations in any community should, as Abrams has said, be understood within the context of the history of that society:

Process is the link between action and structure....What we choose to do and what we have to do are shaped by the historically given possibilities among which we find ourselves (1982:3).Society must be understood as a process constructed historically by individuals who are constructed historically by society (ibid:227).

Indeed, as Carr (1961:52) says, the facts of history are facts about the actions of individuals and their interaction in a given society, and about the social forces which produce results often at variance with the results which they themselves intended. History is thus a social process in which individuals are engaged as social beings, within the context and under the impulse of a past society.

Doing justice to the reality of history is not a matter of merely noting the way in which the past provides a background to the present. Rather:

...it is a matter of treating what people do in the present as a struggle to create a future *out of* the past, of seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present, but only the raw material out of which the present can be constructed (Abrams, 1982:8).

Although obviously unique and in many ways atypical, Nieu Bethesda is a fascinating microcosm of many aspects of South African society, reflecting the divisions and inequalities which are common to all areas of the country. The story of its people and their experiences have never been told, and as Bozzoli (1983) remarked, the lack of history of any community is a compelling reason for its story to be told. I therefore felt

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that a study of this nature could make an informed contribution to both anthropology and to social science in this crucial period of transition in South Africa's history. For, as Hannerz has stated:

The relevance of anthropology lies [also] in its potential, not always realized, of making people reflect on the variability of the human condition, and on their own particular situation (1980:7).

This dissertation will demonstrate how the understanding which people in Nieu Bethesda have of their history and of their situation in South African society has been shaped by their experiences in this small and isolated village. As a corollary to this, it will be demonstrated that the attitudes which the various sections of the population have towards each other have developed through their personal understanding of their history and have been instrumental in determining the degree to which social interaction currently occurs between all sections of the population.

Taking into account the individual history of any society, the concept of structure is one which Giddens (1989) argues is helpful in understanding the fine and subtle connections between intentional and unintentional aspects of the social world. The pattern of social structures is derived from the repetition across periods of time and distances of space of human actions and relationships, which are the building blocks of such structures. Thus the actions of every human being are influenced by the structural characteristics of the societies in which they are brought up and live. Simultaneously, the structural characteristics of society are created and, to a certain degree changed, by members of that society (Giddens, 1989:19).

The structure of contemporary South African society has to a large extent been shaped by the events of more than four decades of apartheid and the responses of individuals and groups to the power of the apartheid regime. Power, which is an intrinsic quality of the social and cultural aspects of the structure of society, is defined by Comaroff and Comaroff as the determining capacity of human beings to shape the lives of others by exerting control over the 'production, circulation, and consumption of signs and objects, over the making of both subjectivities and realities' (1992:28). The way in which apartheid has shaped the lives of individuals and altered the social structure of Nieu Bethesda will be a focus of this dissertation.

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The thesis will combine ethnography with historical analysis, both of which, as several writers have shown, are integral components of social anthropology:

Perhaps the most characteristic product of anthropological work is ethnography: predominantly qualitative, richly contextualized accounts of human thought and action (Hannerz, 1980:8).

and

Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought (Foucault, 1991:12).

Legacies of Apartheid

The policy of apartheid, universally condemned as an evil and inhuman system, is generally accepted as having been introduced by the National Party in 1948. However, although it was only in that year that apartheid⁶ became legally entrenched, long before that time divisions in society, (the boundaries of which coincided with 'ethno-racial' differences [Hollinger, 1995]) were clearly drawn in South Africa.

In examining the social processes which have taken place in Nieu Bethesda during the past fifty years, it will be shown that apartheid cannot be divorced from the earlier history of divisions and separation of people on racial lines. Rather, apartheid should be seen as the consolidation and extension of the segregation which regulated social interaction in the days preceding the apartheid era.

Segar, discussing the low self-image which Black people have of themselves, posits that this image is best understood:

....in the context of colonial Africa, where the dominant groups have been White and the dominated, Black, [where] the relationship has the added dimension of always being articulated in terms of race (1986:143).

The recent political developments in South Africa have highlighted questions regarding the 'legacy of apartheid' - the continuing effect of 45 years of White minority rule on the

⁶ The legal separation of 'population groups' at all levels, which was the official policy of the National Party from 1948-1990.

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future shape of South African society. Apartheid is now officially dead, but as David Welsh has said, its legacy will remain for many decades:

....the legacy of apartheid can be divided into two sections: the material legacy of inequality, which can to some extent be quantified; and the attitudinal legacy, which deals with the question of how South Africa's diverse people will relate to one another after the alienating, indeed brutalising experience of apartheid. It must be stressed, though, that the material and attitudinal dimensions of apartheid's legacy are anything but discrete, for in many respects they both cause and reinforce each other in a reciprocal relationship (1994:40).

The material legacy of inequality can, as Welsh says, easily be quantified. The gross inequalities which exist in access to land, housing, education, healthcare, and, indeed, in every facet of life, are living testimony of this legacy. Thus in spite of all the discriminatory legislation of the apartheid era now having been scrapped from the statute books, and the White minority regime replaced with a democratically elected government, it will be a long and arduous task to eradicate the effects of almost half a century of apartheid.

This applies particularly to small rural villages such as Nieu Bethesda where there is little infrastructure and no industry apart from agriculture. Secondly, as Pieter Grove argues:

Rural people are dangerously under-represented amongst both the political elite and the development fraternity. As a result, their exclusion from the benefits of development in whatever format is almost a *fait accompli* (1996:11).

Despite being far from the mainstream of politics, many disadvantaged rural people have heard the inflated promises and expectations of the 1994 elections and are eagerly awaiting the promised transformation. Yet, although South Africa has entered a new era of its history, from the perspective of a severely disadvantaged rural community, it would appear:

....that the old insights still apply: the language and perspectives of social strata are deeply conditioned by their places and interests in society (Grove:1996,10).

As Albie Sachs commented, the real transformation needed:

....ties in with the constitution, the vote, with dignity, land, jobs and education (1994:24).

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In Nieu Bethesda, where the majority of the population had never even heard of a constitution and many did not see voting rights as a major issue, land, jobs and education were what they longed for. For them, nothing much has altered.

Although the material aspect of apartheid's legacy has been a focus of many South African scholars (cf. Schrire, 1990; Bundy, 1992; De Klerk, 1992), very little attention has been paid to the question of how apartheid has manifested itself on the ideological level, and become internalised by South Africans. One obvious exception to this tenet is Chidester (1992). Using the notion of 'worldview', he argues that under apartheid, ethnicity represented the basic condition for determining a human identity (1992:11). Chidester shows how important a factor religion became in establishing the philosophy of individual South Africans regarding race relations during the apartheid era. Using the example of Barend Strydom⁷, he shows how violent actions were able to be justified in terms of a religious worldview fundamental to the justification of apartheid.

Conversely, it was the feeling of inferiority and the denigrating role of being second-class citizens in the land of their birth, which gave rise to the Black Consciousness Movement, led by Steven Biko in the years following the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Black Consciousness, which exhorted Africans to throw off their shackles of fear and their feelings of inferiority, was a new way of looking at the world and thus engendered a new sense of pride in Black South Africans; '....blackness became something to be proud of, to be defiant about and worth fighting for' (*Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa*, 1994:445). However, not all Blacks in South Africa were equally exposed to, or moved, by these ideas. And in isolated villages, such as Nieu Bethesda, the Black Consciousness Movement had little impact.

⁷ Barend Strydom is a fanatical Afrikaner nationalist, who in 1988 (at the age of 23) was charged with eight counts of murder and sixteen counts of attempted murder of Black people.

Survey of literature and theoretical introduction

Much of the work of early travellers describe life in the Sneeuberg district in the 19th century (cf. Barrow, 1801; Lichtenstein, 1812), and several contemporary writers describe aspects of rural life in the Karoo (cf. Kooy, 1977; De Jongh and Steyn, 1994), and more specifically, in Graaff Reinet (Dubow, 1982). However, very little has been published about Nieu Bethesda itself, apart from works relating to the Owl House (cf. Athol Fugard's *The Road to Mecca* 1985, Anne Emslie's *The Owl House* 1991, and articles by Sue Ross and Chris Milton in the (1992) Jungian journal *Mantis* which discuss the psychological aspects of Helen Martin's creation of the Owl House). In addition, a history of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in Nieu Bethesda was the subject of an MA thesis (De Graaff Schutte, 1978) and the impact of the Buddhists on Nieu Bethesda was discussed in an Honours dissertation (Auf der Heyde, 1986). The tourist pamphlets extolling the virtues of Nieu Bethesda all focus mainly on the attraction of the Owl House.

In the apartheid era research in the field of social anthropology produced many studies of small rural communities (cf. West, 1971; Southern, 1962; Crapanzano, 1986; B M Du Toit, 1974; Robinson, 1986), and although none focuses on the issues which this dissertation addresses, several have relevance to Nieu Bethesda and therefore serve as useful reference points.

The works of Robinson and Southern are directly relevant to this dissertation as they focus on small villages which are in many ways similar to Nieu Bethesda. Robinson's study of the Western Cape village of Greyton focuses on the effects of the implementation of the Group Areas Act in the village in 1969, showing the change from an apparently integrated agricultural settlement to a highly differentiated holiday and retirement resort. As in Nieu Bethesda, the changes which came about in Greyton as the result of the implementation of the Group Areas Act involved the separation of members of the community from the land, and in the process, the separation of people from each other (Robinson, 1986:3).

Southern's study of Wyksdorp (1962), a small Highveld village, describes the social life of the White community. Although Wyksdorp differs vastly in most respects from Nieu

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Bethesda, there are many similarities in the daily activities and attitudes of the White population of these two villages, and Southern's study provides a useful comparison. Southern explains that the lack of social cohesion in the village is linked to the mobility of its population. Exactly the opposite applies to the village of Nieu Bethesda. Extremely isolated as it is, and thus to a large extent cut off from the mainstream of South African politics, there is nevertheless a strong feeling of community in this little Karoo village. However, the relationship between Whites and people of colour is very similar to that described by Wilson in the preface to Southern's study of the village of Wyksdorp, where:

...brown people are not treated as part of the community or really differentiated as individuals. They are treated as a discrete group with whose members relationships are limited and formal; only in the economic sphere is there daily interaction, and any closer relationship is both unconventional, and generally regarded as immoral (1962:i).

The notion of modern theorists in the field of social science (cf. Gramsci in Simon, 1982; Bourdieu, 1986) that social relations frequently become internalised and unconsciously accepted as part of local culture at the personal level is central to this dissertation. Gramsci describes hegemony⁸ as a relation of consent by means of political and ideological leadership as opposed to a relation of domination by means of force (Simon, 1982:21). His notion of 'common sense' (by which he means the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world - often confused and contradictory and compounded of folklore, myths and popular experience) (Simon, 1992:25) is clearly relevant to this study.

Bourdieu (1986) in his discussion of the concept of *habitus*, also shows how systems of unequal social relations can be perpetuated and become accepted as being without any imaginable alternatives. Bourdieu says the term *habitus* intimates a propensity towards acting in a particular manner:

.... which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them, and being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (1986:72).

⁸ Gramsci does not use the term *hegemony* in the more general sense of the predominance of one nation over another.

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The work of both writers supports the contention of this thesis that asymmetrical relations can unconsciously become part of the culture and worldview of a group or community, rendering them resistant to change. As Kuper (1992:30) has argued, the individual and diverse ways in which people interpret the same events are reflected in the variety of social actions of individuals, which enables them to live together in differently constructed worlds.

In seeking an explanation for the fact that there appeared to be less overt friction and tension in relations between the Black and White populations of Nieu Bethesda during the apartheid era than in most other parts of South Africa, the notion of 'paternalism' - the ethos of a caring father making decisions for those unable to determine their own destiny - could be a useful one. The question of paternalism is one which several writers in South Africa have addressed in the past decade. In his seminal work on the social history of slave society in the Cape, the notion of paternalism was explored by Shell (1994), who argued that the proportionally large slave population in the Cape was kept in submission not through violence (or threats of violence), but rather, by the associated values of a familial ethos. Indeed, the many slaves who were given access to the household became tied to their masters not only by the bondage of slavery, but also by bonds of allegiance and trust (Giliomee, 1995:166). These bonds of fidelity provided slave-owners with a bulwark of protection by the very slaves whom they kept in oppressive bondage, and served as an effective defence against uprisings.

It appears, even from the limited literature, that from the time that the earliest settlers arrived in the Sneeuwberg area, in Nieu Bethesda relations between races were defined and shaped by an ideology of paternalism. An essential element of paternalism is a feeling of superiority on the part of those in control, and the idea that the objects of such a notion are not endowed with sufficient intelligence or capacity to control their own lives. This will be explored in more detail below, and it will be shown that when the National Party took over the reins of government in 1948, the paternalistic attitude which Whites had for several centuries adopted towards Black people in Nieu Bethesda, had paved the way for the introduction of apartheid. Indeed, the notion that Black people were inherently immature and inefficient had been firmly implanted in the

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minds of most White people in South Africa. Conversely, many Black people had become so accustomed to being treated like children that they appeared acquiescent to the introduction of the discriminatory policies of apartheid.

Embedded in the very concept of paternalism is the notion of dependence upon the moral judgements of others, and the effect which such judgements have in defining the prevailing social situation (Newby, 1978). Further, and most importantly, as will be shown in the case of Nieu Bethesda, paternalism enables unequal power relationships to be regarded as moral ones (Newby, 1978:28). It is in this respect that paternalism can be described as a most insidious form of control (De Klerk, 1985).

It can be argued that in the apartheid era paternalism gave some Black people a sense of security and belonging which to some extent enabled them to overlook the greater inequalities and injustices which characterised that period of South Africa's history. Although Black Consciousness did indeed have the effect of making millions of Black South Africans defiant and willing to mobilise against the apartheid regime, in many isolated communities precisely the opposite occurred. The historical experiences of colonised people inculcated into both colonised and colonisers the sense of White superiority and the desirability of the European lifestyle (Segar, 1986:143); and '....to be treated as an inferior is often to become an inferior' (Davidson, 1961:25).

Paternalism, says Frederickson (1988:19) can be defined in various ways, but always involves some sense of quasi-kinship which transcends barriers of caste or race. A second element of paternalism relates to gender. As Van Onselen (1991) argues, the concept of paternalism is predicated on the notion of a male of legal standing who enjoys the right - without having to seek recourse to the law - of exercising traditionally sanctioned authority over minors within his 'family' - that is over the 'women and children' on his property.

Lerner adds that in this relationship of 'paternalistic dominance', the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights. Those who are dominated exchange submission for protection, and unpaid labour for maintenance (1986:217). Indeed, as Connell (1987:97) remarked, many (but not all) of the institutional and

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psychological issues about gender can be understood in terms of the structures of labour and power.

Morgan (1987), an historian of the American South, stresses that although the distinction between patriarchy and paternalism is a fine one, there are nevertheless several major differences between the two concepts. Patriarchy is a more severe code than paternalism, less tolerant of insubordination and quicker to resort to violence, more chauvinistic, and more starkly based on sexual difference.

Although it is the notion of paternalism which is considered to be more applicable to this thesis, the concept of patriarchy does have some relevance. In Nieu Bethesda, where farming is the backbone of the economy, the position of authority which farmers in the Western Cape occupy, is in many respects patriarchal. As Andries du Toit (1993:320) posits, many farmers describe their position as one of *'om pa te staan vir die werkers'*: quite literally 'occupying the place of the father'.

Recently several writers have addressed the question of paternalism on South African farms. Nasson, who discusses farm schooling in the context of the disciplinary social order which farm life reproduces, sees farms as 'total institutions' (1984:2) in which the farmer exercises total control over the lives of workers. In his paper on farm schooling, Nasson argues that gift-giving and paternalism further entrenches the absolute authority of farmers over the lives of farmworkers and their families.

Paternalism plays an important role in shaping relations between farmers and their workers, as Waldman (1993) points out. She examines the daily lives of adolescents on Western Cape farms, showing how farmworkers in the Western Cape are trapped in a paternalistic relationship with their employers, with freedom to move only between farms in the region. and in creating the 'spiderweb' which she claims ensnares them (1993:94).

In most parts of South Africa the implementation of apartheid legislation led to protests, militancy, and in many cases, revolutionary action. In Nieu Bethesda, however, as will be shown, the implementation of the Group Areas Act met with very little opposition. In

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exploring the idea that paternalism might have been responsible for this phenomenon, the attitudes of both the 'paternalisers' and the 'paternalised' will be examined.

In examining the long-term effects of paternalism on the village of Nieu Bethesda, this dissertation will demonstrate, by means of case studies and interviews, the way in which the lives of many individuals in the village have been forged by the notion of paternalism. Paternalism enables domination over a subordinate group to be exerted and maintained, rendering the group subservient and dependent on the dominant group, while simultaneously grateful for every handout and concession made to them. Like the slaves in America, who were as Giliomee (1994:166) claims,

....kept in a state where they were perpetual minors, always in need of the care and guidance of the masters or the mistress....

for centuries the lives of the majority of Black people in Nieu Bethesda have to a large degree been regulated by the small number of Whites.

Despite the fact that there was little visible evidence of resistance to apartheid in Nieu Bethesda, it should be borne in mind that resistance can manifest itself in various forms, not of all of which are overt. The apparent acquiescence of the Black community should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that they were completely compliant or accepting of apartheid.

A second useful theme is the idea of network analysis, in which the complexities of social life are explored in terms of social links between individuals. Network theory, a form of analysis initiated in the 1950s, originally aimed to break away from the inflexibility of structural-functionalism and to explore the nature of individual social relationships (Ross, 1993:47). This form of analysis, which acknowledges that people do not interact solely in terms of structures generally recognised by social anthropologists of that time (such as kinship, religion and neighbourhood), has been developed by several social anthropologists and has been the subject of much critical debate since the 1950s, (cf. Barnes, 1954; Mitchell, 1968; Boussevain, 1968 and 1974; Barth, 1969). As Boissevain (1974:5) argued, the static, structural-functional model of society was not able to explain how the behaviour of individuals resulted in the formation of particular patterns of social relations.

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Network theory has recently experienced some revival (cf. Boissevain, 1990; A D Smith, 1990; Appadurai, 1991; Hannerz, 1991 and 1992; Featherstone, 1991; Rogers and Vertovec, 1995). Hannerz has argued that social life consists, perhaps most specifically, of situations in which people (using parts of their consciousness and material resources) involve themselves through relatively standardised modes of purposeful behaviour, known as roles. People are recruited into particular roles on the basis of culturally defined characteristics of individuals (such as sex, age, ethnicity or race) which exist apart from particular situations (1980:317). Such an approach, builds on Mitchell's (1956) thesis of situational identity in which he showed how people adopt various identities, according to the situations in which they find themselves.

While Mitchell's analysis was extremely useful in moving away from the rigidity of the era of structural functionalism, the strict division which he made between rural and urban populations did not take into consideration the movement which takes place between town and country people. In contrast, Hannerz supports the contention that the world has become one network of social relationships, with a flow of meanings (as well as of people and goods) between its different regions. He posits that even though geographically separated, social networks link rural and urban populations, and indeed, nations (1990:237). He argues that insofar as all the variously distributed structures of meaning and expression are becoming inter-related, there is now increasing evidence of the emergence of one 'world culture' (Hannerz, 1990:249). Thus several decades after the mainstream debate on the validity of network approaches to micro-level social interaction, Hannerz is of the view that network analysis remains useful:

....as a root metaphor when we try to think in a reasonably orderly way
.... about some of the heterogeneous sets of often long-distance
relationships which organise culture in the world now - in terms of
cumulative change or enduring diversity (1992:51).

The increasing mobility of populations, which provides links between isolated societies and the rest of the world, has certainly caused many contemporary anthropologists to rethink the way in which they study small-scale societies. As Appadurai puts it:

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic 'projects', the ethno in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalised quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond (1991:191).

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This is particularly relevant to village studies, where modern communications are minimising the effects of geographic isolation and people are becoming more aware that they are in fact part of the wider world.

A question which is continually asked by visitors to the village of Nieu Bethesda concerns the relatively large Black population who continue to live there, given the lack of employment and the depressed conditions under which they exist. It appeared that an answer to this question could be found in an exploration of network analysis in which the complexities of social life are explored in terms of social links between individuals. Nieu Bethesda is characterised by extremely strong kinship networks by means of which sustenance and support is provided, in the face of the deprivation and the lack of employment opportunities in the village. This kinship network extends beyond the boundaries of the village to adjacent farms in the Sneeuberg district. In addition, despite the apparent isolation of the village, the majority of families in Nieu Bethesda are linked with people in many other parts of South Africa, including urban areas such as Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg. Such links should be viewed not only in terms of the economic and psychological support which they provide, but also as a channel through which new ideas and insights are brought to isolated communities. Thus, while not denying that the village of Nieu Bethesda is indeed isolated and to a certain extent cut off from the rest of the world, this study will show that its isolation is increasingly being minimised through links which members of the community have with many other parts of South Africa (and with the rest of the world).

Network theory examines the way in which individuals maximise every available choice, in order to derive the greatest benefit for themselves and their families or friends, which is precisely what Black people in Nieu Bethesda do. In return for the material support which they provide for their parents, children in urban areas send their offspring back to Nieu Bethesda to be reared by their grandparents in a safe environment. This constitutes a mutually beneficial network of support: while the older generation could not survive without the material support which their children provide, they in turn give valuable support to the breadwinners living in urban areas. It therefore appeared that network analysis could be relevant to this study and could prove to be a valuable way of regarding the mutual support which the people of Nieu Bethesda give to each other.

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The dissertation will attempt to utilise both the notions of paternalism and of networks to provide an understanding of the ethnographic details of the study.

Research: methods and problems

The research for this dissertation was carried out in several phases. Initially, ten days were spent in Nieu Bethesda in April 1992, during which time contact was made with various residents of the village, informing them that I would be living in Nieu Bethesda for an extended period of time and explaining the nature of my research. This short visit later proved to be of immense value. When I returned to the area nine months later, the contacts I had made, and the correspondence I had kept up with several of the residents, paved the way for a relatively unproblematic reception when I returned.

Intensive fieldwork took place over a four-month period between April and July, 1993, during which time I never left Nieu Bethesda, apart from shopping trips to Graaff Reinet. In June 1994, I spent another month living in the village, followed by two weeks in October of that year.

My visits to Nieu Bethesda in 1994 were used primarily to revisit selected people from whom I had obtained life histories the previous year, in order gain greater detail on various aspects of their lives. This proved very worthwhile, as I was able to ask questions which had cropped up after I returned to Cape Town, and had been able to review my research findings in the context of the available literature. An additional benefit of this latter period of fieldwork was that the visit took place two months after the first democratic election of 1994 and I was thus able to record the reactions of my original informants to the changes which had already taken place and of the expectations which they had of the new government.

I was fortunate in being provided with excellent accommodation by relatives who own a house in Nieu Bethesda. It is a spacious and elegant home, and comfortable, apart from the fact that there is no running water in the house. Drinking water is stored in a tank outside the house, but as the major part of my fieldwork was carried out during one of the worst droughts in living memory in the Karoo, I had to rely on spring water

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which was diverted to flow past the house on Sunday mornings at 6.30 a.m. Transporting water from the furrow to the tank while the ground was still white with frost proved quite an arduous task. However, my labours had rewards greater than the mere provision of water: my being seen engaging in labour of this kind differentiated me from most other Whites in the eyes of the local Black population, and became quite a talking point.

During my first visit to Nieu Bethesda, it became clear that a great advantage of working in such a small community is precisely its manageable size in terms of research. As it was possible to reach every section of the village on foot, I soon became acquainted with a large number of residents through daily contact. It was thus easy to make valuable informal contacts which could be followed up at a later stage. The (comparative) absence of violence and crime in the village and the friendliness of all its residents, made Nieu Bethesda a very comfortable place in which to conduct research.

I seldom used my car, but preferred to walk everywhere, which proved an excellent decision. In a village as small as Nieu Bethesda, where outsiders are highly visible and every action commented upon, the fact that I took the trouble to walk to the township every day, often accompanied by township residents, created a bond between me and my informants and was the subject of much comment.

While planning my fieldwork, I gave much thought to several factors which I regarded as being potentially problematic. When I arrived in the village, I knew very little about Nieu Bethesda and its residents, and of the relationship which existed between Black and White people in the village. Nevertheless, having gained some idea of the boundaries which separated outsiders from residents of the village, there were a number of issues which concerned me.

Firstly, the relatives who lent me the house in which I was to stay informed me that a local woman, Sanna Botlani, had been engaged by them several years ago to keep the house in order throughout the year. Obviously, I was told, this arrangement should not be affected by my visit to Nieu Bethesda. Originally I was averse to the idea of having any

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kind of domestic help, as I felt it would prejudice my position as a researcher, in the eyes of both the Black and White populations of Nieu Bethesda. I felt that by having a Black woman at the beck and call of a perfectly able White woman, and remunerating her at the same rate as that paid by the other Whites in the village I would fit the stereotype of White South African women, and that this would create a barrier between the Black population and me.

However, my concerns in this regard proved to be unfounded, and Sanna's service proved to be of great benefit. On reflection, I realised that, as an outsider trying to gain the confidence of a conservative community, I could not avoid fitting the stereotype of a White South African woman to some degree. Departing too far from the conventions of local people would further alienate me from both the Black and White communities in Nieu Bethesda. Apart from making my life more comfortable, Sanna who is in her sixties and was born and brought up in Nieu Bethesda, was able to provide me with a wealth of facts about Nieu Bethesda, and introduce me to many Black people.

Anyone's field research is bound up to a certain degree, with the identity of the chief informants one obtains. They affect not only what one does, but how one interprets, to whom one has access, etc. It is also clear that for both conscious and unconscious reasons one seeks out certain people and avoids others (Crick, 1992:186).

As Fetterman commented, 'ethnographers do not work in a vacuum, they work with people' (1989:120). Sanna, who became my chief informant, was immensely helpful in assisting me to gain access to Black people who were able to give me vital information, and her wisdom was invaluable in helping me to interpret much of the data I collected. As an additional bonus, she turned out to be one of my closest friends and confidantes in what could have been a fairly lonely period, and I looked forward eagerly to her arrival on each of her visits.

A second issue which I viewed as a potential problem was the house in which I was staying. This house was one of many homes in Nieu Bethesda which had been owned and occupied by Coloured people for several generations, and which was proclaimed to be in a 'White' residential area during the apartheid era. I was well aware of the fact that this could alienate me from the Black population, but in fact I experienced no obvious problems on this account. This could be attributed both to the fact that it was

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known in the village that I was not the owner or purchaser of the house, but rather a temporary sojourner, and because the entire Meyer family (who had previously owned and lived in the house) had either died or left Nieu Bethesda. I went to visit Mr Pieter Meyer, a son of the original owner of the house, who is now a retired schoolmaster living in Graaff Reinet. When I told him that I was living in their old family house and explained the nature of my project to him, he and his wife were gracious and friendly towards me.

Before the commencement of my fieldwork I had expected to find the Black population of Nieu Bethesda somewhat antagonistic to White people, as had been the case with most marginalised Black communities in South Africa during the apartheid era. In the words of Steve Biko 'no White person can escape being part of the oppressor camp' (1978:23). I was also very conscious of my position as an outsider in a very small and closely-knit population. I had been warned by a friend who owns a holiday house in Nieu Bethesda that focusing my research on the Black population could antagonise the Whites of the village and render it difficult to obtain information freely from them. Conversely, I was cautioned that spending too much time visiting and chatting to the Whites of the village, would result in reluctance on the part of Black residents to talk to me. My fears in this regard were in fact unfounded and I had no problem gaining access to either the Black or White sections of the population (apart from one shop owner in the village, who was averse to my having access to any knowledge concerning his business). I was, nevertheless, cautious about being too hasty in my approach to fieldwork and for the first two weeks, spent most of my time either in the municipal office examining old records, and generally becoming familiar with the history and demography of the village. The Town Clerk was most helpful, and went to great lengths to provide me with all the data I needed. The municipal office, where all rent and services charges are paid, is open four mornings a week, and is a hub of activity on 'pension day'. Old municipal records (which were made available to me) provided the names and addresses of all the Black people who had been declared 'illegal occupants'⁹ in terms of the Group Areas Act. Although several of the people listed had

⁹ Any Black person whose home was situated in the 'White' residential area, designated by the Group Areas Act, was declared an illegal occupant, and permitted to remain in the area until his/her death or until a suitable house could be provided in the 'Coloured' or 'Bantu' residential area. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

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either died or left Nieu Bethesda, those people who were still living in Nieu Bethesda were visited at a later stage.

I also spent some time walking around the village, familiarising myself with every aspect of its physical structure. In this way I met and chatted to a large number of people, and established many contacts before I started formal interviews. I also went into the police station and introduced myself to members of the police force, explaining the nature of my work to them, so that there would be no misinterpretation of my intentions.

As Scott has pointed out, language is one of the most important factors which ethnographers should consider when trying to understand the way in which people interpret their situation in society:

....language reveals entire systems of meaning or value - not only how people think about particular issues, but also how they understand the organisation of their lives and the world....(1987:6).

Although a lack of knowledge of the vernacular on the part of a researcher is a problem frequently encountered while conducting fieldwork (cf. Ross, 1993), this was fortunately not a problem in my research. Nieu Bethesda is predominantly Afrikaans-speaking, and as I am fluent in Afrikaans, most of my interviews were conducted in this language. Although all the African people in the village speak more Afrikaans than Xhosa, my knowledge of Xhosa was useful in breaking down the barriers of being a White outsider.

A considerable amount of time was spent at the clinic. The district nurse, who runs the clinic, and who is married to a local farmer, could not have been more helpful, and the clinic, which is the only health care service available in the Sneeu-berg district, also proved to be an excellent meeting point.

During my fieldwork I attended services of all the various churches in the village, as well as funerals, prayer meetings and school concerts. I was invited to the monthly meetings of the Agricultural Society, where I met all the local farmers and their wives, and also to the weekly function at the Tennis Club, which is the main social event of the week in Nieu Bethesda. Wherever I went, I was equipped with my small automatic camera, and

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took a large number of photographs of people, their homes, and events. Apart from providing a visual record of much of my fieldwork, photography proved to be a useful means of breaking down barriers between me and my informants. I always returned to show the photographs to informants, and very often gave them copies, with which they were delighted.

Most of my research was done through informal interaction with residents of Nieu Bethesda, and the compilation of their life histories. For the life histories I tended to concentrate on people who were old enough to have experienced the pre-apartheid era, but who were still lucid. I was, however, amazed to find many octogenarians and several women in their nineties who gave me excellent accounts of their young days, and of the demography and character of the village in the first half of this century. Each evening I typed my field notes on a laptop computer, which was useful as I was then able to return to informants the following day and read the story to them to ensure that I had understood them correctly, and that they were satisfied with the way in which I had documented their stories. Altogether I compiled about forty life histories, and conducted informal interviews with over fifty other individuals. Although I did have a tape recorder, I seldom used this, as the knowledge that every word spoken was being recorded seemed to have an inhibiting effect on informants.

In addition to these life histories, I conducted interviews with people in positions of authority in the village. These included members of the Town Council, the Management Committee, shopkeepers, church leaders, policemen, schoolteachers, people involved in the tourist industry, and people involved in the proposed development scheme in Nieu Bethesda.

Farm schools form an integral part of the educational structure in the *platteland* and provide thousands of Coloured children with basic primary school education. Many farms in the Sneeuberg district have farm schools and I visited several of these schools and interacted with teachers and farmers.

I attended several of the craft courses funded by the Department of Manpower and taught by the wives of local farmers. This gave me the opportunity to volunteer to visit

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every home in Pienaarsig to invite members of the community to register for subsequent courses, which was extremely useful, providing me with many useful contacts. The information I obtained from these visits was a valuable supplement to the survey of every house in Pienaarsig which had been conducted by a group of visiting students in 1993. I was fortunate to be able to make use of this survey, which provided me with vital details of household composition, income, etc. Through my contact with the women who taught the Manpower courses, I received several invitations to visit farms in the district, which apart from being enjoyable social outings, yielded valuable information regarding the White farming community.

A further result of my involvement in the Manpower courses was that I was invited to attend a number of meetings of the (Black) Women's Committee which was formed during 1993 to decide on how best to utilise the funds allocated by the Independent Development Trust (IDT). Thus although my research had been fairly unstructured at the commencement of fieldwork, I found that each component of my exploration of the village led to another source of information.

One aspect of my research which I found challenging was the fact that I was given so many different accounts of the same incident by various people. From the early stages of my fieldwork I realised that the question of the different ways in which people interpret and internalise their experiences would be a key issue to be explored and developed. Even though accounts often differed widely, there was usually a common thread to each story, which provided a base around which to explore and expand the details of an incident.

Transport between Graaff Reinet (where shopping is done), and Nieu Bethesda presents a great problem to the Black population, as there is no bus service, and most people cannot readily afford taxis. On my weekly shopping trips to Graaff Reinet, I always gave several people lifts, which was a constructive way of repaying them for their assistance, without making paternalistic handouts. These trips always proved to be both informative and entertaining as people chatted in a relaxed way and often told me interesting and useful facts about their lives..

Organisation of dissertation

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter Two will describe the setting in which the daily interaction of the people of Nieu Bethesda takes place, and provide the historical background to the study. The history will be covered in two sections: firstly the history of the Sneeu Berg district will be outlined in order to show how this early period of history played a vital role in shaping race relations in the region. Secondly the history of the Church in Nieu Bethesda will be summarized.

In order to locate the research within twentieth century South African history, three specific periods will be examined, namely the period before apartheid, the apartheid era, and the years following the announcement by President F W de Klerk that apartheid was to be abolished. The dynamics of these three periods of Nieu Bethesda's history will be examined, showing the way in which certain aspects of the historical divisions in society have become culturally constructed and form part of the enduring legacy of apartheid. The three periods will be covered in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

By means of interviews and life histories, Chapter Three reconstructs life in Nieu-Bethesda as it was fifty years ago. It will be shown that in this period the life in the village was very different to what it is today, from the perspective of both the White and Black population.

Chapter Four focuses on the apartheid era in Nieu Bethesda. It shows that although apartheid did not have the same impact in this village as it did in most parts of South Africa, the Group Areas Act irrevocably changed the appearance and social character of Nieu Bethesda. With the implementation of this act, Black people were moved from their houses in the 'location' to sub-economic houses which were constructed in an adjacent area of the village. The effects of the Group Areas Act, and the reaction of both Black and White people in the village to its implementation will be explored.

Chapter Five discusses the post-apartheid era (which will be taken to have commenced in 1990). It shows that the claim that minimal material change has taken place in Nieu

Introduction

Bethesda as a result of the repeal of apartheid is in many ways valid. Further, this chapter examines the changes which have taken place as a direct result of the demise apartheid, in the areas of attitudes, interaction between Whites and Blacks and improvement in material conditions. The effects of events of that period which are not directly attributable to political developments, but rather to external influences, (such as the provision of electricity and the increase of tourism) will be discussed.

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter, summarises the findings of the research, and discusses the legacy of apartheid in Nieu Bethesda. Some ideas as to the likelihood of change taking place in the village are presented, within the context of the effects which centuries of division and discrimination have had on both Black and White populations are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

In order to contextualise the research, this chapter introduces the reader to Nieu Bethesda, describing the physical aspects of the village, and outlining its interesting and somewhat turbulent history. The demography and infrastructure of Nieu Bethesda are examined in some detail with the aim of providing an understanding of the lifestyle of the residents of the village on which the study focuses.

Nieu Bethesda has all the qualities sought by city-dwellers desiring to 'get away from it all' to enjoy the tranquillity and rustic peace of a rural setting. In tourist pamphlets Nieu Bethesda is described in the following words:

The charming village of Nieu Bethesda lies tucked among the foothills of the Sneeuberg mountain range in a scenic valley...¹

In the heart of the Karoo..... Nieu Bethesda nestles amongst the hills of the Sneeuberg.There is a special quality about the Karoo and its people, which is to be found nowhere else. The only way to experience it fully is to spend a few days of untrammelled freedom in the homely and unspoilt atmosphere of its farms²

Surrounded by majestic mountain ranges, and far from the roar of traffic and throngs of people, it is indeed, as the tourist guides suggest, an idyllic spot for privileged holiday-makers. In stark contrast, however, the Coloured and African residents who comprise the majority of the population of this village, see life in Nieu Bethesda as a perpetual struggle. Indeed, as Nairn wrote in his description of Nieu Bethesda:

....its white population has dwindled, the economic structure has crumbled, and the growing Coloured and Black population has sunk further and further into poverty and despair. Unemployment, poverty, starvation and drunkenness characterise this depressed community where children wander bare-footed and scantily dressed in the sub-zero temperatures of winter, while old people have been known to die of cold. Wood for heating and cooking is practically unobtainable, and the steadily increasing cost of living makes bought fuels an irregular luxury. Nourishing food is a problem for many (Nairn, 1984:3).

¹ Nieu Bethesda Tourist Guide

² Sneeuberg Farm Holidays leaflet

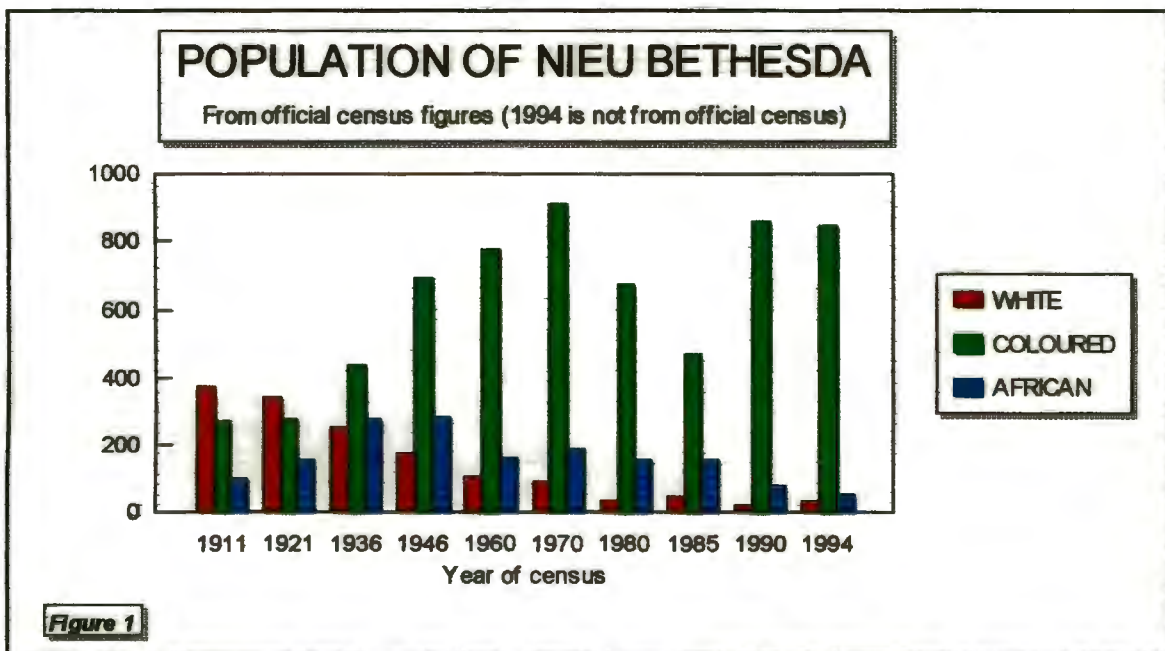
Setting the scene

Although Nieu Bethesda is considered by many of its residents to be a 'closely-knit' community, in any society with vast differences between rich and poor, human community is impossible. This is particularly true in South Africa where the consequences of this divide are exacerbated by the fact that it tends to follow the colour line (Wilson, 1990:235).

Like many small rural villages, Nieu Bethesda has undergone considerable social change in the past fifty years, as a result of the generalised process of migration to urban areas which took place both in South Africa and in other parts of the world.

The push/pull factors of growing agricultural mechanisation and the lure of urban job opportunities throughout the twentieth century has sparked off an exodus of younger workers from the rural areas. This has produced a change in focus in the employment sector for many of the people domiciled in the country districts. The relationship of people to the land has altered and with this has come a change in the nature of the rural community (Robinson, 1986:8).

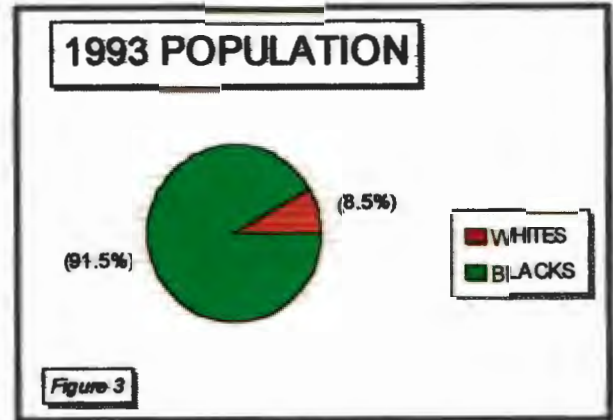
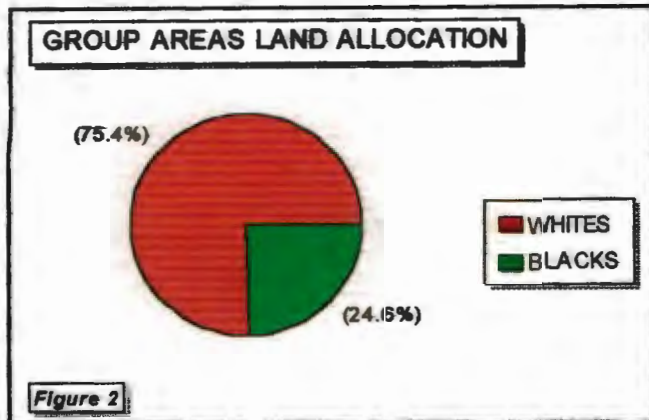
The permanent population of Nieu Bethesda currently consists of about 40 Whites³, 775 Coloured people and 50 Africans (people who were formerly classified as 'Bantu'). The demographic changes in Nieu Bethesda this century, particularly the decline in the White population, are clearly demonstrated in *Figure 1* below:



³. This does not include people who own property in Nieu Bethesda and spend short periods in the village every year.

Setting the scene

As will be seen from Figures 2 and 3, although in 1993 the Black population of Nieu Bethesda outnumbered the White population by more than 25:1, they owned or occupied less than thirty percent of the available land in the village.



Profile of the village of Nieu Bethesda

Situated in the heart of the Karoo, the little village of Nieu Bethesda lies in a fertile valley, 55km south of Graaff Reinet and 1425 metres above sea level. To the north-east, approximately 60km away, lies the small town of Middelburg, and 70km to the north-west is Richmond.

After turning off the national road from Graaff Reinet, the last 14km of the road to Nieu Bethesda are travelled on a steep and winding gravel road which can become impassable after heavy rain or snowfalls. Approaching the village, the towering Compassberg⁴, which is 2502 metres above sea level and the highest peak in the Sneeuberg range, dominates the northern skyline.

Descending from the plateau to the valley of the Gats River (a tributary of the Sundays River) in which Nieu Bethesda lies, a beautiful view of the farm *De Toren* is obtained.

⁴ Formerly known as Spitskop, Compassberg was so named in 1778 when visited by Colonel Jacob Gordon and Governor Van Plettenberg, because it provided an ideal point from which to survey the neighbouring countryside (Tourist Guide to Nieu Bethesda published by the Graaff-Reinet Publicity Association).

Setting the scene

This farm derives its name from the striking rock formation which overlooks the farm and resembles a tower. Approaching from Graaff Reinet, the first glimpse of the village, which is surrounded by mountains, is obtained from this vantage point. Martin Street, the main entrance to Nieu Bethesda, is lined on both sides with pear trees, presenting a spectacular sight when the trees are in full bloom in spring. In autumn the many poplar trees in the village turn to glorious shades, which is equally spectacular. Another attractive feature of the village is the quince hedges which form the boundaries of many plots.



A view of the central area of Nieu Bethesda, with Pienaarsig in the background (at the foot of the hill).

Nieu Bethesda has a harsh climate, with great variations in temperature: in summer it can be stiflingly hot with temperatures in the upper 30s, while the winters are bitterly cold with severe frost, temperatures well below zero at night and heavy snow falls not an infrequent occurrence. Although the average annual rainfall is 330mm, prolonged droughts with rainfall well below the average are often experienced in this district. The Gats River, which bisects the village from north to south, varies from being completely

Setting the scene

dried up in periods of drought to becoming a raging and impassable torrent after heavy rainfalls. A pedestrian footbridge over the river, in addition to providing a shortcut to the village, provides access to the eastern section of the village when the river is in flood. Several fossils of Karoo reptiles that inhabited the region some two hundred million years have been found in this river bed.

Approaching the village from the western side of the Gats River, one passes the old water mill which was built in the early nineteenth century and was used by all the local farmers until about 30-40 years ago. Several of the original homes with their 'Graaff-Reinet green' woodwork and *voorstoepe* (veranda) are in this road, Pienaar Street. There are many Pienaar families in Nieu Bethesda, all of whom are descendants of B J Pienaar, said to be the 'father' of Nieu Bethesda.

The municipality of Nieu Bethesda is located on agricultural land, and it is impossible to separate the village from the farming area. The Karoo is excellent sheep-farming country and from any point in the village sheep can be seen grazing in lucerne lands or on the mountainside, where the Karoo scrub provides excellent grazing. In Nieu Bethesda the bleating of sheep and angora goats, together with the harsh call of the hadeda ibis⁵, are more common sounds than the noise of traffic. Many houses stand on large properties and their disused stables and outhouses are a relic of an era now past when Nieu Bethesda was a bustling farming village.

The first impression gained by visitors to Nieu Bethesda is that one has entered a time-warp, as the village has the feeling of belonging to a bygone age. Athol Fugard describes the village as '...the almost feudal world of New Bethesda - a South Africa which disappeared from the rest of the country a hundred years ago'⁶. There are no street lights or tared roads, signposts still have the distances from other towns indicated in miles, and donkey-carts frequent the dusty roads. The two general stores, reminiscent of the '*algemene handelaar*' (general dealer) which is fast disappearing from rural towns, sell a variety of goods, with sweets in large jars displayed prominently

⁵. A common South African bird, which has a raucous call of ha-de-da (from which its name derives)

⁶. Note by Athol Fugard in foreword to *The Road to Mecca*.

Setting the scene

on the counter. The Bethesda Trading Store, established in 1893, is the oldest store in the village and has apparently not changed much since its early days. This store, and a second store known as Pelindaba, serve as a meeting place for residents of Pienaarsig (the township which was established for the 'Coloured' people of Nieu Bethesda), and during the day there is always a hive of activity outside the stores. After closing time, and during weekends, the streets of Nieu Bethesda are deserted, with few signs indicating that there are in fact people living in the village.



'Bethesda Trading Store' - one of the two General Dealers in Nieu Bethesda

The most prominent building and focal point of the village, is the beautiful Dutch Reformed Church which was completed in 1905. Features of this church, which was designed to accommodate a congregation of 800, are the fine wood carving on the church pews and the exquisite chandeliers. Opposite the church is the *pastorie* which was built for the resident *dominee* (minister) and his family. At the back of the *pastorie* is the *waenhuis* (wagonshed) where the horse-cart used to transport deceased

Setting the scene

members of the (White) community to the church and to the cemetery were housed. The original horse-cart is still housed in the *waenhuis* although it is no longer used.

The changing face of Nieu Bethesda

With the dramatic decline in the number of White residents which took place from the late 1940s onwards, the village changed from a bustling agricultural centre to something of a ghost town, and several public facilities have therefore been discontinued. Both the school for White children and the Anglican school for Xhosa-speaking children closed in the mid-'80s, there is no longer a resident minister, and the *pastorie* (rectory) has remained unused for many years. The railway siding at Bethesda Road, a few kilometres from Nieu Bethesda on the Middelburg Road, was formerly used to transport supplies to the district. This was closed in 1974, and there is now no railway line in the vicinity. After the Goods Motel (a hotel near Bethesda Road which was a popular place for motorists to spend the night) closed down, a bottle store was opened in the village in 1974⁷. Despite the decline in population, and the consequent closing down of certain facilities, Nieu Bethesda has undergone something of a revival in recent years due to the international acclaim of the filming of *The Road to Mecca* which took place in the village in 1992. This event resulted in large numbers of tourists coming to the village every year.

Residential areas

Of the 2945 hectares which constitute the Municipality of Nieu Bethesda, 98 hectares were proclaimed as a White residential area during the apartheid era, while 32 hectares were set aside for occupation by Coloured people⁸. The remaining area is agricultural land owned by White farmers, or grazing camps, owned by the Municipality. Although

⁷ . This caused a certain amount of controversy, as one of the conditions of the agreement in 1897, in terms of which the present Municipality of Nieu Bethesda was established, was that no intoxicating drink would be sold in the municipal area. The constitution of the municipality was later rewritten omitting this clause.

⁸ . In terms of Proclamation No. 205 of the Group Areas Act of 1966 the land east of the Gats River was proclaimed a White residential area. The Coloured township, known as *Piensaarsig*, is however on the east of the Gats River, but beyond (to the east of) the pre-existing white area and the fertile white farmlands. Apparently, Proclamation No.205 was changed after much discussion. Although the Group Areas Act was repealed in June 1991, the segregation of residential areas has, for the great majority of residents, not changed.

Setting the scene

no official 'Bantu' residential area was ever proclaimed, most of the small number of Xhosa-speaking people were moved to a separate area of Pienaarsig, in a rocky piece of land known as Kloof Street (commonly known as *Sonderwater*). There are 64 houses in the old 'White' area of the village, (of which 30 are holiday houses and are not permanently occupied) and 175 houses in Pienaarsig, (including the 22 houses in Kloof Street).

The population of Nieu Bethesda is divided into two clearly defined residential groups: those who live in Pienaarsig, and those who do not. This division is more than a mere geographic separation, as there is a marked differentiation in the status and economic position of the two groups. All the residents of Pienaarsig, the township created in 1974 in terms of the Group Areas Act, are Coloured, while the majority of the residents of the old section of the village are White. These divisions in the population are clearly reflected in way members of these groups address each other. Black people sitting outside the shops during the day, seldom speak to White members of the community, unless they are addressed, and when they do, it is in very subservient tones. (*Ja Baas, Nee Miesies*). Similarly, the manner in which White people address (or fail to address) people of colour is a clear indication of the difference in social status between the residents of Pienaarsig and the rest of the village.

There are many old and gracious homes in the area which was declared a 'White' residential area after the implementation of the Group Areas. Some of these homes have stables and outhouses, which serve as a reminder of a bygone period of Nieu Bethesda's history. As the village has an abundant supply of water, most of the homes in this area of the village have well-tended gardens which produce fruit, vegetables and flowers. A former mayor, Mr Andries Erlank, designed the system of water rights early this century, and this system is still in operation today. Water emanates from a natural spring on the western side of the village, and is brought down in an elaborate system of furrows. Wherever possible, water furrows run past houses, and these properties are known as *watererwe* (waterplots). Where it is not possible to direct the furrow past a house, the house is said to stand on a *droë erf* (dry plot). All houses standing on a *watererf* have a *leibuurt* (a half-hour period each week when water is directed past a house). During this time the owner may redirect the stream of water for irrigational

Setting the scene

purposes. Water for domestic consumption may be taken from the furrows at any time by all residents, but water for irrigation may only be used when it is the *leibuurt* of the owner (or tenant) of a *watererf*. Anybody using water for agricultural purposes when it is not his/her *leibuurt* will be fined, if apprehended.



The house in which I lived, situated in the 'White' area of the village. (This house was formerly owned by the Meyer family).

In contrast to the houses in the old section of the village, there is nothing gracious or appealing about the houses in Pienaarsig. They are all identical in design, devoid of any individuality or character, and are all built on *droë erwe* (dry plots). These sub-economic units of either two or four rooms (constructed of cement bricks) have corrugated iron roofs, no ceilings or floors and unplastered walls. Although each unit has running water inside the house, none have bathrooms or flush toilets. All the houses in Pienaarsig (and a few of the houses in the 'White' section of the village) have bucket-toilets only.

Some residents of Pienaarsig have managed to cultivate small gardens, but the general impression gained in the township is one of neglect. Unemployed residents, many of whom are in various stages of inebriation, sit on the doorsteps of their homes,

Setting the scene

with under-nourished dogs chained up in nearly every garden. In Kloof Street, where the ground is rock-hard and arid, there are no gardens of any kind.



A house in Kloof Street, showing the building style typical of both Kloof Street and Pienaarsig.

On a hill a few hundred metres south of Pienaarsig the remains of two stone and clay houses can be seen. This is all that is left of the area known as the 'old location', where the Coloured and Xhosa-speaking people of Nieu Bethesda lived before the new township of Pienaarsig was built. These crumbling ruins together with a derelict vehicle

Setting the scene

and some rusty implements are the only indication that it was here that a community lived for several generations.



One of the two remaining houses which were not demolished in the 'old location'

The Village Centre

There is a small post-office in the centre of the village, which is staffed by a local resident. On pension day and on the days when the mailbag is brought in, the post-office is a hive of activity. (Mailbags are transported to and from the post office in Graaff Reinet once or twice a week by a local resident). Next to the post office is the police station which is served by three policemen (one White Sergeant, one Coloured

Setting the scene

Sergeant and one Coloured constable). African pensioners collect their pensions at the Police Station on a separate day.



'Coloured' pensioners collecting their pensions at the Post Office.

There is no garage or petrol station in Nieu Bethesda, but petrol can be obtained from a pump outside the Bethesda Trading Store. A second store, known as Pelindaba, together with the bottle store, are the only business enterprises in the village. There is no bank or cash-supplying machine in Nieu Bethesda.

The two stores in the village, although striving to cater for the needs of the community, carry a somewhat limited range of groceries, and are obviously far more expensive than the supermarket in Graaff Reinet. There is a small butchery attached to the Bethesda Trading Store, and fresh bread is delivered regularly from Graaff Reinet, but fresh fruit and vegetables are rarely sold in the village. One obvious advantage of the local stores for residents of Nieu Bethesda is that purchases can be made on credit, and payment made at the end of the month (when pensions are paid).

Setting the scene

Most residents who can afford to do so make a monthly trip to Graaff Reinet to purchase supplies of groceries. However, as there is no public transport service between Nieu Bethesda and Graaff Reinet (or other neighbouring towns), a trip in a privately-owned kombi known as the *kwela*⁹ is a costly business. If one happens to mention that you are planning a trip to the *dorp*, you will undoubtedly end up transporting as many people as can be squeezed into the car!

Household composition and employment in Pienaarsig

No official survey of economic statistics has ever been conducted in Nieu Bethesda. However, in 1993, shortly before I arrived in the village, a fairly comprehensive survey had been carried out in Pienaarsig by a group of drama students.¹⁰ I did not consider it wise or necessary to conduct yet another survey, particularly as the students were quite happy for me to use their survey. The following statistics were extracted from the students' survey:

Table 1 POPULATION BREAKDOWN

Houses	Children	Adults	Total	Pensioners
169	405 (51,4%)	383 (48,6%)	788	171 (44,6% of adults 21,7% of total)

Table 2 DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT

	Number	% of adults	% of potential workforce
Fully employed	48	12,5	22,6
Part employed	51	13,3	24,1
Unemployed	162	42,3	53,3
Pensioners	171	44,6	

N.B. As some pensioners do part-time work, the total % of adults quoted adds up to more than 100%.

The survey further showed the average number of permanent residents in each house in Pienaarsig to be five, and the average income per household to be R326,60 per

⁹ A Xhosa verb meaning 'to ride'.

¹⁰ These students arrived in Nieu Bethesda in 1993, with the intention of bringing about the 'social upliftment' of the people of Pienaarsig. Unfortunately, their appearance and behaviour alienated them from the population of the village, and after a few months, they left Nieu Bethesda.

Setting the scene

month (excluding pensions). As there is such a high proportion of pensioners (receiving social, disability and war pensions) in Nieu Bethesda, it is evident that pensions form the major part of the income of most households.

In many households in Pienaarsig, children whose parents are working in urban areas are cared for by their grandparents. Thus the household income is frequently supplemented by regular contributions from absent parents. Apart from remittances for maintenance, which vary in amount and regularity, many grandparents receive further support from their children by being provided with furniture and clothing.

Economy

One of the first questions which visitors to Nieu Bethesda inevitably ask is 'How and why does this village continue to exist?' With a population of nearly 1000 people, and no industry of any kind in the village, apart from a small sheepskin slipper-making industry which provides employment for a mere ten people, the survival of the majority of the Black population depends on pensions and remittances from family members working in urban centres. As Tables 1 and 2 (on page 42) show, the Black population comprises an exceptionally high proportion of pensioners and children. Although farms in the district do provide a source of employment, most farmworkers and their families live on the farms where they are employed and not in the village itself.

In 1981 a small group of Buddhists led by Rob Naim, a former professor of criminology at the University of Cape Town, went to live in Nieu Bethesda where they envisaged the establishment of a Buddhist centre at which they would be able to spend much time in meditation and learn different aspects of Buddhist teaching, far away from the distractions of the outside world. Several houses and an area of agricultural land were acquired by members of the Buddhist community in their personal capacities. Appalled at what they perceived to be the desperate plight of the Black people of the village, in 1982 the group started a small pottery industry (known as the Sneeberg Pottery) with the chief aim of providing employment and training for the local Black population. By mid-1984 the Sneeberg Pottery was employing and training ten local people, making it (according to Naim) the largest single employer in the village and the only industry. They planned to expand the training programme by setting up a Craft Centre with a

Setting the scene

greatly enlarged pottery industry as its core. Karma Store was purchased by the Buddhists in 1983 and served not only as a trading store, but also as a soup kitchen and centre from which food parcels were distributed to the needy. Unfortunately however, all these ventures were doomed to failure and one by one, between 1987 and 1990, the pottery, Karma Store and the Craft Centre were forced to close down as they did not prove viable. Karma Store was subsequently purchased by a resident of Nieu Bethesda, and is now known as Pelindaba.

After the Buddhists' attempt at providing employment, the first person to initiate any enterprise was Phillida Kingwill, a local farmer's wife who started a sheepskin slipper-making industry in the old Buddhist pottery works. Although this did not generate a significant number of opportunities for permanent employment, over a period of several years it provided some form of employment for about 500 people, even if only for a short period of time.

Provision of essential services

Nieu Bethesda, which was the last town in South Africa to receive electricity, experienced the great 'switch-on' in November 1993. Almost every house in Nieu Bethesda, in both residential areas now has electricity - everybody who could pay the R35 installation fee, was entitled to receive electricity, which operates on the 'Cashpower' system. Each house has at least one power point, and electricity is 'purchased' at the local store. The recipient receives a card with an eight-digit number, and when this number is entered on the electricity board in the house, the amount purchased is immediately credited.

Many of the houses in Pienaarsig are supplied with a single power point, and most people still make use of their old wood stoves, although fuel is a very scarce commodity. Apart from its utilitarian value, the provision of electricity has meant that those who can afford to do so have been able to purchase television sets. Not only does TV provide a vital link with the world beyond the village of Nieu Bethesda, but it furnishes a community devoid of any cultural amenities with a measure of entertainment.

Setting the scene

Refuse is collected from all sections of the village by a tractor-driven trailer once a week, and dumped in the *vel'd* to the west of the village. There are no public refuse bins or places in which rubbish can be deposited in any area of the village, with the result that the densely-populated area of Pienaarsig is badly littered.

The cemetery where the founders of Nieu Bethesda lie buried is on the outskirts of the village. There are many very old graves which bear no inscription, and are marked simply by large, flat natural stones. The oldest grave which bears a date is that of Lowies Vori¹¹, who died in 1786. In this graveyard many families are buried together, and the surnames of Pienaar, Wolfaardt, Retief and Van der Merwe are frequently found. (There are more than thirty tombstones of members of the Pienaar family in the cemetery).



The cemetery for the Whites of Nieu Bethesda

¹¹. It has been speculated that 'Vori' could be an earlier spelling of Fourie (De Graaff Schutte, 1978:1).

Setting the scene

The people of Pienaarsig bury their dead on a sloping hillside directly below Kloof Street. Few graves in this cemetery have any tombstones - most are merely marked by a home-made wooden cross. Many residents of Pienaarsig are members of the *Help Mekaar* (Help Each Other) Burial Society. Formerly, people who died in Nieu Bethesda had to be buried immediately as there were no funds for them to be kept in burial parlours. Members of the burial society are now able to arrange funerals so that distant family members can attend, which is very important to the whole family and to the community.



Mourners from Pienaarsig following the coffin to the cemetery (which is situated below the Kloof Street houses on the left of the photograph).

Health Services

There is one clinic in the village, which is the sole medical facility available to residents of Nieu Bethesda and the neighbouring farms. The clinic, which was originally funded by the Provincial Administration, was established in the early 1930s, and first operated

Setting the scene

in the old school building. Until 1993, there were always two qualified nursing sisters in daily attendance, one of whom was a qualified midwife. There is now only one nursing sister, (not a qualified midwife), who lives on a farm a few kilometres away. Formerly, at least one of the sisters lived in the village, and was readily available day or night should any emergencies occur. After the senior sister retired, her post was frozen (for economic reasons) and the clinic is now staffed by only one sister, Sister Suzette Pienaar, supported by an unqualified assistant. This presents a serious problem, as when Sister Pienaar is ill or on holiday, the clinic is forced to close and patients who are on essential drug treatment (such as TB medication) are not able to receive their medication. During such periods, the medicines are given out by the Town Clerk at the Municipal offices.

A district surgeon from Graaff Reinet visits the clinic once a week, and a dentist (also from Graaff Reinet) is in attendance at the clinic once a month. Serious cases that can be moved are sent by ambulance to Graaff Reinet. As there is no midwife in Nieu Bethesda, all maternity cases are sent to Graaff Reinet prior to delivery. Formerly, when there was a qualified midwife living in the village, all babies were delivered in their homes.

The clinic handles between 400-500 cases monthly, which include family planning, pre-natal care, and immunisation of newborn babies, issuing of medication for chronic cases, routine checks-ups and treatment of injuries. While very few cases of malnutrition are seen, many cases of TB are treated at the clinic, the treatment of which presents a serious problem. As soon as patients are diagnosed as having TB, they are immediately informed that it is essential that they take their prescribed medication regularly and visit the clinic at specified intervals for examination by a doctor. However, it appears that many of Nieu Bethesda's people have become so reliant on Whites that they are unable to take responsibility for their own health without supervision. Time and again TB patients forget to take their medication, or parents fail to administer medication to children suffering from the disease, with the result that they remain chronically ill. While extremely frustrating for Sister Pienaar, this should perhaps be seen to be more the result of decades of White paternalism than of any inherent characteristic of irresponsibility on the part of Black people.

Social Life

As there are no cinemas or formal entertainment of any kind and very limited sporting and recreational facilities in Nieu Bethesda, the social life of residents of this little village is somewhat restricted. Visiting friends, watching TV, and an occasional supper at *Stokkiesdraai*, the small restaurant in the village, are the main social activities of the White residents, while in Pienaarsig for many (especially for those who do not enjoy the luxury of television) drinking appears to be the major pastime. Church activities also contribute in a large measure to the daily lives of many members of the community. Social interaction between the residents of Pienaarsig and the old section of the village is almost non-existent.

The only formally-constituted sports body in the village is the privately-owned Tennis Club. The Tennis Club, which purchased the building of the former White school, use this as a clubhouse, and tennis is played on the school courts. There is also a badminton court inside the school building, which is frequently used by female members of the Tennis Club. Strict criteria for admission to this exclusive club are observed, membership being by invitation only. Although there is no mention of race in the constitution, there are no Blacks amongst the fifty members of the Tennis Club, who emanate mainly from neighbouring farms.

In Nieu Bethesda, where tennis is a winter sport, matches take place every Saturday afternoon. The afternoon's sport is followed by a social gathering which is the main social function of the week. When it becomes too cold and dark to remain outside, a huge fire is made inside and members of the village and local farmers relax together in a congenial atmosphere.

Another important social event in the village is the monthly meeting of the Sneeuberg Farmers' Association to which all farmers in Nieu Bethesda belong. As this body is primarily an association for farmers, at present all members are White¹². I was however told that the society would welcome Black members should they wish to apply. The society meets once a month on the same day as the Women's Agricultural Association (WAA). The aim of the society is to serve the interests of local farmers by collecting and

¹². There is not a single Black farmer in the district.

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conveying information to farmers on all aspects of farming, including new legislation such as the labour laws, and also to channel farmers' grievances to higher bodies. The WAA in Nieu Bethesda celebrated its diamond jubilee in 1993. At their monthly meeting, women from the village and surrounding farms meet for an interesting talk given by one of the branch members, followed by discussion and tea (made by members of the association). At present this association also consists solely of White members, but serious thought is being given to the best way in which Black women can be drawn into the association. Women living in Pienaarsig have previously been invited to attend meetings, but have not accepted such invitations.

There is a small library, housed in the tennis club buildings, which is served by a local resident and is open three afternoons a week. The library contains English and Afrikaans books (mainly fiction) and is used regularly by many residents. However, as most of the older Black people are illiterate or semi-literate, they are not able to make use of the library.

Nieu Bethesda has a 'caravan' park, known as Van Riebeeck Park, which is situated near the cemetery. The term 'caravan park' is something of a misnomer, as few caravans would be able to descend the winding roads leading to the village. The park has a very basic ablution block and toilets, and is occasionally used by backpackers. In addition some residents of Pienaarsig use the park as a *braaivleis* area during the summer and at weekends.

Administration of village

There is a municipal office in the village, situated behind the church, where the Town Clerk is in attendance four mornings a week and where monthly service charges are paid. Initially, Nieu Bethesda was managed by a Town Council, consisting of a Mayor, Deputy-Mayor, Town Clerk and six elected Councillors. (For several years there were no elections for council members, as only six people were prepared to stand.) In 1982 the Coloured Management Council which consisted of six elected members came into being. Although this body did provide Black people with some degree of representation in civic affairs, most people in Pienaarsig felt that the Management Council did not have any real power, but merely acted on instructions from the White Town Council.

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The two bodies amalgamated in 1993. As there are no Civic Associations or Street Committees, the 1995 local elections resulted in the election of the first democratically-elected body to serve the village.¹³

The land which was formerly set aside as commonage for use by all property-owners in Nieu Bethesda now belongs to the Municipality and is leased on five-year tenure to farmers (all of whom are White) for grazing purposes. These six camps, which are situated to the west of the Gats River, are leased at a cost of between R1250 and R6250 per annum. This constitutes the main source of income of the Municipality, apart from the income derived from rates and from service charges.



Residents of Pienaarsig coming to pay their service charges at the Municipal office.

¹³ . As the local elections of 1995 took place after completion of my fieldwork, details of the new Town Council are not included in this dissertation.

Schools

The school for White scholars, which had been in existence since the establishment of Nieu Bethesda, closed in 1971 owing to lack of White children in the village. Children of local farmers now attend one of the boarding-schools in Graaff Reinet.¹⁴ There is presently only one school in the village, the primary school in Pienaarsig (the Lettie de Klerk School, named after a former teacher who served the school for many years). This school is attended by both Afrikaans- and Xhosa-speaking children in Nieu Bethesda, as the small Anglican school for Xhosa-speaking children where children were taught through the medium of Xhosa, closed during the 1980s.

Mr Klasie Vywers, who was born in Nieu Bethesda and has lived there all his life, is the headmaster of the Lettie de Klerk Primary school, which has classes from Sub A to Std 5 and is attended by 261 children. There are eleven teachers (five male and six female), all of whom are qualified teachers, except for two of the female teachers who have only passed Std 8. Classes, which vary in size from 24-36, are taught through the medium of Afrikaans, which is the *lingua franca* in Nieu Bethesda. The school is a prefabricated building with very basic facilities. The only sports facility is a soccer field.

As there is no secondary school in Nieu Bethesda, Black children carry on with their schooling in Graaff Reinet if their parents are able to afford the costs of secondary education. Boarding fees are R85 per term, but many children receive a subsidy which covers the cost of boarding for the whole year except for the first term. There are however, still many parents who are unable to bear this cost, in addition to the cost of clothing and transport for their children.

There are five farm schools in the Nieu Bethesda district, which are run by qualified teachers, a number of whom are local farmers' wives. The standard of education offered in these schools is said to be higher than in small-town government schools, as the numbers in each class are small and the pupils receive individual attention.

Since 1987 Nieu Bethesda has had a small pre-primary school attended by 40-50 children between the ages of 2½ and 5½. The school, which is housed in a very

¹⁴ In 1993 there was not a single White child of school-going age living in the village.

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decrepit old building owned by St David's Anglican church, was started with funds provided by the Independent Development Trust (IDT). Two women from Pienaarsig, who are not formally trained as pre-primary school teachers, run the school. Kathleen, who has been in charge of the school since it started, has completed Std 8, and received a mere two weeks training in basic pre-primary school teaching methods, at a course run by an organisation known as *Khokela*. Her assistant who has completed Std 5, has received no training whatsoever. School fees for this basic pre-primary school are R5 per month.

As most the children come from deprived homes, their progress is often hampered by their socio-economic circumstances. A great advantage of the pre-school to parents is the fact that children receive nutritious food every day, the funds for which are provided by the Independent Development Trust (IDT).

The classroom is devoid of any real equipment, and it is obvious that there is an urgent need for proper pre-school education. The teachers say that the greatest problem is the building, which is much too small, leaks badly in winter, and is merely on loan from the church. There is neither a toilet nor facilities for the children to wash their hands, other than a tap outside the schoolroom. However, the primary school teachers say that the pre-school undoubtedly benefits its children, as they can notice a marked difference in school-preparedness between children who have attended pre-school and those who have not. A new pre-school is planned for the village, and the foundations have already been laid, but owing to lack of funds building has now temporarily stopped.

Churches

As it has been shown, the history of the village of Nieu Bethesda is closely linked with that of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). It is thus hardly surprising that for those members of the population who have lived in the district all their lives, religion plays a vital role.

The impressive Dutch Reformed Church, which is situated in the centre of the village, is the only church attended by White members of the population, and has a congregation consisting of only 45 members. In addition, a small number attend services although

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they are not members of the church. A minister comes from Graaff Reinet every Sunday to conduct the service, and *nagmaal* (communion) is offered every three months. The small congregation which consists of residents of the village and local farmers and seldom numbers more than 20 people, attend services on Sunday mornings. Elize Pienaar, a local farmer living in the village is an accomplished musician and is the regular organist. Church services on Sunday are largely a family affair, with the congregation consisting largely of members of the Pienaar and Wolfaardt families. After the service, the families cross the road to Elize Pienaar's home for tea.

The *Susters' Vereniging*, which is a subsidiary of the DRC, is a prayer circle, which was formerly led by the minister's wife. As there is now no resident minister in Nieu Bethesda, a lady who plays a leading role in the church is elected annually as chairlady. All female members of the DRC are automatically members of the society.

The *Kerkraad* (Church Council) of the DRC consists of four elders and four deacons (one deacon being a woman)¹⁵, all of whom live in the village or on neighbouring farms. The fact that historically, the majority of the elders and deacons of the Dutch Reformed Church have been members of the Town Council in Nieu Bethesda, reflects the extent to which civic and ecclesiastical affairs are inextricably linked in this village.

Once a month the Methodist Church conduct services in the building of the Farmers' Association. These services are attended by a handful of mainly English-speaking residents from the village and district.

Although there are five different religious groups amongst the Black population, most of Pienaarsig's residents, while nominal members of the church, no longer attend church regularly. However, having been instilled with the canons of Christianity for several generations, the majority of people in Pienaarsig consider whatever interpretation of the Bible they have been given by the Whites of Nieu Bethesda to be the ultimate source of authority.

¹⁵ Women have been admitted as deacons in the DRC for the past five years.

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Firstly the N G Sendingkerk (Dutch Reformed Mission Church) meets in a hall which serves as the church building in Pienaarsig. Although the church has between 250 and 300 members, less than half attend church regularly. A White dominee comes from Graaff Reinet four times a year for *nagmaal*. Afternoon prayer meetings of the *Sustersbond*, usually led by a White member of the church, are held weekly, and monthly meetings are held to discuss matters of importance with the women of the church.

The oldest church in Nieu Bethesda is the United Congregational Church which was established in Nieu Bethesda by the London Missionary Society in 1853. It is situated next to the old Lettie de Klerk school buildings and holds services, which are taken by a lay preacher, once a month, with a minister coming from Aberdeen to take the services every three months. As the majority of the 80 members of the Congregational Church live away from Nieu Bethesda, only about 12 attend church regularly.



The interior of the United Congregational Church.

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Another church in Pienaarsig is the small church known as Bethanie, which is on a hillside at the southern end of Pienaarsig. Bethanie was originally part of the Congregational Church, but broke away in the 1930s after a dispute caused divisions among church members. Although attempts have been made to reunite the two churches, reconciliation has not been possible. Of the original group who left the Congregational Church, only four are still living, but hostility between the two churches still remains.

The church which is attended by Xhosa-speaking people is St David's, an Anglican church, situated just below the Lettie de Klerk school. The tiny building, which is bitterly cold in winter, is in a shocking state of repair, with broken windows, a leaking roof, and very few symbols to indicate that it is in fact a church. There are no prayer books, the preacher's surplice is in tatters, and the wooden table which serves as an altar is adorned with a single candle. Weekly services are conducted in Xhosa by a lay preacher, with the sermon and notices being translated into Afrikaans. Occasionally Sunday school is conducted in the room next to the church where the pre-primary school meets on weekdays. The church has only a handful of members (both Coloured and Xhosa-speaking) who are amongst the poorest in Nieu Bethesda.

One of the most popular churches in Pienaarsig, and perhaps the one which has had the most visible effect on its members is a church known as *Jesus is the only Answer*, which is a charismatic evangelical church. Meetings, which are attended by Coloured and Xhosa-speaking people are held several times a week in the evenings in a private home. Members of the church visit local farms at weekends, where they hold services and evangelize. I was told by several farmers that this church group have had a highly beneficial effect on farm workers, resulting in a marked decrease in the use of alcohol in many cases.

A small church group in Pienaarsig is the Old Apostolic Church in Africa which holds weekly meetings in a private home in Pienaarsig. The small Black congregation is led by a resident of Pienaarsig, who is a lay preacher.

The history of Nieu Bethesda

While anthropologists focus on the present, they realise that people are a product of their history and no society can be understood without reference to the past. The past, which depends on people's interpretation of events for its very existence, is therefore not immutable. People manipulate events to their own advantage, and all historical accounts are thus to a certain extent subjective. Indeed, much of the generally accepted reconstruction of history is the product of particular social positions. As Friedman puts it:

History and discourse about the making of history is positional, that is, it is dependent upon where one is located in social reality, within society, and within global process (1992:194).

Undoubtedly then, the situation of any community can really only be understood when seen as the outcome of the particular complexities of the history of that specific region, and as the interpretation of the people of that community of their history.

The village of Nieu Bethesda, which is frequently described as 'peaceful' is situated at the foot of the Sneeuberge, a district which has an interesting and turbulent history. From the time of their arrival in the Sneeuberg district, the White farmers and the indigenous people of that area (the Bushmen) were engaged in constant and bitter strife. More than a century later, Nieu Bethesda was deeply involved in the Boer War in which Boer and Brit engaged against each other in a bloody civil war. The effects of the divisions amongst all sections of the population, which resulted from these battles are still felt today. Secondly, as the village of Nieu Bethesda was established purely as a result of the desire of the farming community in the Sneeuberg district to form their own congregation, its history can therefore not be separated from that of the Church. As the Church has had such a profound effect on the development of the village, and on the attitudes towards each other which were instilled in Black and White people, some historical details are essential to an understanding of social relations in Nieu Bethesda.

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The earliest inhabitants of the Sneeuwberg district are believed to have been the Bushmen¹⁶ and the Khoi. Thus the pioneer stock farmers did not, as is the popular belief, move into an empty land.

Everywhere there were Bushman bands, who hunted with bows and poisoned arrow, each band moving within its own hunting territory (Massey-Pitman, 1986:7).

In addition to the Bushmen, in the south-western section of the Sneeuwberg Range (in the area known as the Camdeboo), lived the Inqua, who had the reputation of being the richest and most powerful of all the Khoi tribes, and were reputed to be settled and not nomadic (Ibid,8).

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, the cattle bartering between the early colonists resulted in the Khoi becoming increasingly impoverished and dependent on the Cape Colony. Further, as White settlement advanced northwards, the Khoi became dispossessed of their pastures and watering places, and suffered hitherto unknown losses of stock. Under these conditions, the distinction between Khoi herders and San hunter-gatherers (which had always been flexible) became even more blurred (Newton-King, 1984). In some mountainous areas, however, the Bushmen managed to maintain their hunting and foraging life in the way that they had done for many centuries, until much later. From all accounts, the Sneeuwberg mountains was one of these areas (cf Van der Merwe, 1937; Marais, 1957; Giliomee, 1975). The Bushman caves and rock-art on farms near Nieu Bethesda give weight to this theory.

The first Whites to arrive in the Sneeuwberg district were the *trekboere*, who reached the Sneeuwberge in 1770. These *trekboere* were 'semi-nomadic farmers who wandered across the veld with their wagons, flocks and herds, seeking good grazing and good water' (Palmer, 1966:19). The district was found to be an ideal place for the *trekboere* to settle for several reasons. Firstly, it was higher than other areas, and thus received better rainfalls. In addition, the mountainous country with many rivers and natural

¹⁶ There has been much debate in recent years as to whether San or Bushman is a more suitable term to use to describe the early hunter gatherers of Southern Africa. Gunther regards the latter term as "marginally less pejorative" and adds that the term San applies specifically to one group, the Soaqua, the majority of whom were impoverished Khoi who had lost their cattle (1986:29).

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springs, fertile valleys between the mountains, and excellent grazing, was outstanding sheepfarming country. As there was very little unusable ground, the area could absorb a dense population, and further, there was no horse-sickness in this area, which enabled farmers to defend themselves more effectively than in other areas (Barrow, 1901:235. Vol.I).

However, the district did have several disadvantages. Firstly, the Sneeuberg area experiences bitterly cold winters, and has virtually no firewood or natural fuel. (In mid-winter, the temperature regularly falls below zero, and heavy snowfalls can be expected at some stage before spring.) Many farmers left their homes when it became really cold, and travelled 100-150 miles to warmer low-lying areas (Van der Merwe, 1937:119)¹⁷.

Secondly, and more seriously, the early farmers lived in constant fear of attacks by the Bushmen who inhabited the Sneeuberge. It did not occur to the Boers that these people, who had no livestock and did not cultivate land were completely dependent on *veldkos* and hunting grounds for their survival. As soon as the Boers arrived and occupied the springs and fountains of the Bushmen in the Sneeuberge, thus driving away their game, their livestock became prey to the Bushmen (Wyndham-Smith, 1976:6). By 1774 farmers were beginning to leave their farms because of this. By 1803 it was reported that farmers in the Sneeuberg area suffered an annual loss of twenty per cent of their stock (Gillomee, 1975:267). Thus the idea that the Bushmen were not much better than wild animals found fertile ground in the minds of the colonists of that area. The Bushmen were described by Lichtenstein as:

.... a tribe of savage Hottentots who lurk among the shrubs and bushes, whence they sally out to plunder travellers (1812:56).

Many farmers whose livestock were constantly being plundered by Bushmen, and thus faced ruin, were provided with new stock by neighbours to try to prevent them leaving as well. The only area of the northern boundary of Graaff Reinet where the Bushmen did not gain the upper hand over the farmers was the Sneeuberge. Even if the farmers

¹⁷ Camdeboo, near Graaff Reinet, is one of the places where the *trekboere* regularly settled in the winter.

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left their farms, either they returned or their farms were taken over by newcomers to the area.

The people of Sneeuwberg, lying nearest to the common enemy, were left to sustain the whole brunt of the business; and had they not conducted themselves with great fortitude, perseverance and address, that valuable part of the colony, the nursery of cattle had now been abandoned. (Barrow, 1901:235. Vol.I).

In the early years of the eighteenth century the *burgerkommando* system came about. The declared aim of the commando was to make war against the Bushmen, against whom, towards the end of the 18th century, farmers had more or less complete freedom to act. Provided with gunpowder, lead and flint, they would assemble behind the Sneeuberge and attack the Bushmen of that area. These 'Bushman hunts' developed into a full-scale and bitter war, which as Van der Merwe (1937,36-37) says continued for more than thirty years. The Bushmen made use of every opportunity to steal and maim livestock, set fire to farms and murder farmers and their shepherds. The farmers in turn, shot every Bushman whom they encountered.

The number of Bushmen killed was far higher than those taken captive. This was justified by the argument that Bushmen were not considered to be suitable labourers as it was almost impossible to prevent them running away and it was therefore better to shoot them (Van der Merwe,1937:7). Bushmen women and children were taken captive, and where possible, used as servants, with the result that they became totally dependent on their White employers for their very existence.

Leibbrandt (1982) describes the change which contact with Whites brought about in the change of lifestyle of the Khoisan:

...from a contented people peacefully supporting themselves with their cattle, they have mostly all been changed into *bushmen* hunters and robbers, scattering everywhere and among the mountains (1982:70).

The paternalistic attitude which White people show to people of colour, and the ensuing dependence of Black people on Whites in Nieu Bethesda must surely have its origin in this early period of the history of the Sneeu-berg district.

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An event which may well have had some effect on shaping race relations between Xhosa-speaking people and white farmers in Nieu Bethesda was the Cattle Killing of 1856-57. This tragic event resulted in many starving Xhosa people streaming into the Cape Colony in search of work. Although the initial impact on the Graaff Reinet area was not great (only 27 of these refugees were indentured in the Graaff Reinet district) (Wyndham-Smith, 1976:188), the process continued for many years, and it is likely that the Xhosa-speaking people of Nieu Bethesda are descendants of these early refugees. The roots of the complete dependence on Whites of the Xhosa-speaking people in Nieu Bethesda can surely be traced to the aftermath of the Cattle Killing in the Transkei.

Although illiterate, many of Nieu Bethesda's older Black people to whom I spoke had some knowledge of these early events. Two Xhosa-speaking women in their nineties told me that their families had come from '*Kafferland*' after the cattle-killing, while many Black people, well aware that Bushmen were the original inhabitants of the Sneeu-berg, pointed out Bushmen caves and hideouts to me.

The Boer War (1899-1902) was said to have had long-lasting effects on social relations in Nieu Bethesda. During the war, when the village was placed under martial law and was cut off from the rest of the world by the British forces, it was impossible to remain neutral. In this period relations between Afrikaners and English-speaking people are said to have deteriorated dramatically (De Graaff Schutte, 1978:48-50). The Black population were also divided, declaring allegiance to their employers. Many of the older residents of Nieu Bethesda spoke of what they had learned of the war from their parents and it became obvious that the loyalties of the Boer War still had some relevance to political persuasions today amongst both White and Black people.

The early history of Nieu Bethesda is closely connected with the history of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC); it was because of the desire of White people living in the valley and the surrounding farms of the Sneeu-berg district, (which formed the Sneeu-berg ward of the Dutch Reformed Church) to establish a separate congregation, that the village came into existence. At a meeting held on the farm, *Uitkyk*, in 1874, some of the members of the farming community discussed the idea of establishing their

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own church, and a *Dorps Comité* was chosen to look after the interests of the local community. The idea of establishing "*n eie gemeent*" (own congregation) fell on fertile ground and the DRC in Graaff Reinet decided to purchase a portion of the farms, Uitkyk and Lekoog, in order to establish a church for the Sneeu-berg community. In 1875 the transaction was concluded, and the land was purchased for the sum of four thousand pounds sterling by five members of the *Dorps Comité*. Although, at that stage, there was no established congregation, it was deemed essential that the new *dorp* should be given a name. Ds Charles Murray, who was at that time the minister in Graaff Reinet, made the proposal '*Laten wij het nu Bethesda noemen*', '*nu*' being in the sense of 'from now on' rather than as part of the name. The village thus became known as Nieuw Bethesda, the name eventually being changed to Nieu Bethesda (*ibid*). When the new parish was established, the Kerkraad, as owner of the *dorp*, took over the function of the old *Dorps Comité* and full responsibility for the administration of the *dorp*.

Even at this early stage in the history of Nieu Bethesda, churches were segregated on a racial basis, and in 1879 the Kerkraad decided to set aside a piece of ground for the building of a church for Black people. This church was, however, not built for many years.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century were a time of great growth for the village. In 1881 Nieu Bethesda was declared a municipality, in terms of Ordinance No. 98. In 1896, the farm Lekoog was bought by the Kerkraad, and in the following year it was incorporated into the Municipality, on the condition that no intoxicating drink would be sold in the village. The first official census of 1898 reflected a total of 645 in the Sneeu-berg district, of whom 322 lived in the *dorp* with 85 children attending school (De Graaff Schutte, 1978:18-23). In 1951 the DRC sold its right of ownership to the Municipality, and the village of Nieu Bethesda officially became a municipality.

As this brief history indicates, from the early years of Nieu Bethesda's history, the Church has been the driving force in the development of the village. Since its inception, the Town Council, the governing body of the village, has been dominated by leading

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members of the DRC, and the Church has always exerted the most powerful influence on the entire community.

As has been shown, Nieu Bethesda, which was originally purely an agricultural centre, is now a cosmopolitan little village, in an agricultural setting. Although the village is geographically isolated, the provision of electricity and thus television, has to a large extent enabled people to become more in touch with the outside world. Thus while the physical boundaries remain, the feeling of separation from the rest of South Africa has been somewhat diminished. However, the boundaries which separate Pienaarsig from the rest of the village in all spheres of life will remain until the socio-economic situation of the majority of Nieu Bethesda's people improves.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of life in Nieu Bethesda before apartheid: firstly, through exploring recorded descriptions of the historical period of the Sneeuwberg district; and secondly, through relating accounts of people's experiences in the period of living memory. While mindful of the fact that such accounts cannot reconstruct what actually happened, it will be argued that people's subjective representation of their past shapes the way in which they view the contemporary world.

The incidents and case studies recorded in this chapter do not represent an 'accurate', 'objective' account of life in Nieu Bethesda before apartheid. Rather they are a description of the way in which people remember these early days, as told to me by informants. The case studies and accounts which follow are extracts from fifty life histories which were recorded during the course of fieldwork.

Despite the fact that any life history must indeed be regarded as reflecting a high degree of subjectivity - a selective interpretation of history - such accounts can nevertheless serve as valuable sociological comment on the events and conditions which have regulated the life of individuals. In documenting the story of the lives of four Black South Africans, Keegan points out that in collecting information of this kind, the historian looks for patterns, rather than reminiscences for their own sake (1988:160). In his preface to *Facing the Storm*, Keegan explains:

This book, then, is a people's history, a history of ordinary black folk, but it is also more. It is concerned as well to investigate wider themes of social and economic change by examining the lives of a handful of individuals (1988:ix)

This chapter investigates both the factors which may have given rise to paternalism in Nieu Bethesda, and the effect which this ethos has had (and continues to have) on the manner in which the present population of the village relate to each other. It is argued that the attitudes of Black and White people living in Nieu Bethesda have towards each other today began to be shaped two centuries ago, when the first meetings between

The pre-apartheid era in Nieu Bethesda

the *trekboere* and the indigenous people in the Sneeu Berg district resulted in violent clashes.

This chapter then aims to show how the worldview of individuals in Nieu Bethesda was formulated over several generations. Chidester's definition of a worldview is '...an open set of discursive, practical, and social strategies for negotiating person and place in a world' (1992:4). The understanding which people have of historical events and episodes which have affected their lives and the manner in which such experiences have become internalised and have patterned the nature of social relations between groups and individuals in Nieu Bethesda will be examined.

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) has been a powerful influence in South African politics, and thus as Kinghorn (1994:394) argues, '...the religious dimension was integral to the internal discourse on ethnicity in Afrikaner circles'. Religion is a very powerful mechanism of social construction, as it encourages formulation of, and reflection on, values. Values, as Kinghorn says:

...are more than virtues, personal morality or individual beliefs. Values are convictions concerning the life-determining totality of our being. Values are about comprehensive structures that ought to be (Kinghorn, 1994:395).

In Nieu Bethesda, where the most cohesive and influential body has for more than a hundred years been the Dutch Reformed Church, religion was a major factor in shaping the world view of the village's isolated population. It will be shown that the pastoral role which the Church played in Nieu Bethesda was a significant element in the creation of the paternalistic framework which is so typical of social relations in the village today.

It has been argued that paternalistic relationships are characterised by a feeling of superiority on the part of the more powerful party. Unequal access to education has undoubtedly been a crucial factor in sustaining this notion of superiority on the part of both Black and White people in Nieu Bethesda. The role of education (or lack thereof) in perpetuating the disadvantaged position of Black people and exacerbating the notion which Whites had of their superior attributes is examined, and case studies are used to demonstrate the way in which Black people have accepted their subordinate role.

The pre-apartheid era in Nieu Bethesda

The manner in which close family and community ties provided a network of support to both Black and White communities in the Sneeuberg area is explored, showing the extent to which kinship ties in both the Black and White populations were a unifying factor in the period under discussion. Further, the relative degree of mobility and independence which Black people had in this period is investigated, showing the extent to which such apparent mobility was dependent merely on the opportunities afforded by Whites.

In Nieu Bethesda an isolated society developed, permeated by the notion of separateness and the superiority of Whites. Thus the accounts which residents provided of the events and processes which affected their lives undoubtedly included mythical elements. Leonard Thompson in his exploration of how myths are used to perpetuate political regimes argues that myth cannot be eradicated from human culture, because it performs a necessary function (1985:7). Further, Thompson shows that history is a cumulative process:

Narratives, analyses and interpretations that were consonant with the evidence available yesterday may be discredited by evidence that has been brought to light by fresh research today or tomorrow. A historian should therefore consider the extent to which a myth is an accurate account of an actual historical event or process, in the light of all the relevant evidence that is available (1985:12).

The historical period¹

In discussing the effects of apartheid on South African society, it should be remembered that, as Giliomee has argued, the apartheid system introduced by the Nationalist Party in 1948 was not

... a unique set of ideas and practices that sprang full-blown from the head of Afrikaner nationalists. Race and class relations grew up around the forms of domination and privilege which had arisen from the time of the founding of the settlement in the Cape in 1652 (1989:1).

As Donald Woods put it, apartheid, was not a change of direction, but merely an intensification of former policies, giving statutory teeth to many things that had been considered racial 'customs' and creating new spheres and domination (1994:84).

¹ This period will be taken to mean the period before the birth of any of the present residents of Nieu Bethesda

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Indeed, from the time that Whites first arrived in this country in 1652, racism and segregation have been a feature of South African society. Until 1948, however, the unstated boundaries which separated the various ethnic groups, although very effective, were not enforced by legislation.

Johnson (1994) argues that the culture of dominance began developing in South Africa at about the period of the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, when images of White identity became intertwined with concepts of ethnicity in the eyes of the settlers. At this period of South African history, increasingly Africans were represented as:

....libidinous, uncontrolled, lazy and disrespectful of authority. The settlers in turn became what the African was not. These popular attitudes fashioned colonial policies and were used to justify white domination and control (1994:25).

Although Africans never constituted the majority of the Black population of Nieu Bethesda, this argument has a distinct resonance in the context of the relationship between White farmers and the San, the indigenous people who lived in the Sneeu-berg district in the nineteenth century. The San, who lived in bands and roamed freely across the countryside in search of game, wearing only skins, were regarded by the *trekboere* not only as a serious threat to their continued existence in the Sneeu-berg district, but also as barely human and devoid of any natural skills or instincts. It was thus easy to justify the 'Bushman hunts' which took place in the Sneeu-berg district (Marais, 1957:15).

In the previous chapter, the continuing strife between the San and the first White farmers in the Sneeu-berg district was discussed. As hunting became more problematic for the San, with the farmers encroaching on their hunting territory and chasing away their game, the bands of hunter-gatherers found it increasingly difficult to lead an independent existence and many took up service with White farmers. By the late 19th century, the relationship between Boer and San had changed dramatically - the San in the Sneeu-berg area had been decimated to such an extent² that the farmers no longer felt so threatened and were prepared to adopt a more friendly attitude towards the San. In addition, as Marais puts it:

² Between 1786 and 1806, 2 847 Bushmen had been killed and 1 186 taken captive (Van der Merwe, 1937:53).

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It seemed at length to have dawned on the frontiersmen that the Bushmen often plundered because they were starving (1957:20).

In the early nineteenth century the donation of sheep to the San to tide them over prolonged periods of drought became common practice amongst farmers (Marais, 1957:20). Thus the attitude of White colonists had progressed from regarding the San as vermin to be exterminated wherever possible, to treating them like children for whom it was necessary to make provision. It is clear that it was in this early period that the roots of paternalism - of a caring father making decisions for those unable to determine their own destiny - were laid, and began to define race relations between the Black and White communities of the Sneeuberg. Palmer (1966) described the attitude of Bleek (1875), a nineteenth century traveller who studied the San in the Sneeuberg area, towards the 'captive Bushmen'. This reflects the paternalism which had begun to characterise relations between the San and the White farmers at that period.

...all those captive Bushmen who worked for them [the White farmers] had not only *independence*, but honesty, loyalty, and a fine courtesy. Never did they steal so much as a pocket-knife or a peach off a tree while in their home (Palmer, 1966:80-81) (own emphasis).

However, as this quotation clearly shows, the 'independence' of the 'captive Bushmen' can be understood as such only in terms of the degree of independence which parents allow their children, and is symptomatic of the paternalism which pervaded the thinking of Whites of that era.

More than a century after Bleek's observations about the San, Palmer (1966:75) writing of the San in the Camdeboo area (whom she described as 'this tiny race of mysterious men'), had the following to say:

Many of the Bushmen taken prisoner died or finally escaped, for they often found captivity unbearable, even when they were employed as servants by humane and kindly men. One little Bushman boy, whose parents had been killed, was brought up in a home 'towards the sunset', and here he learned to garden in company with his master's sons. His master was kind and he followed him wherever he went (1966:78).

This reflects clearly the caring, but paternalistic manner in which San children who had been taken captive were treated by their 'masters', and the way in which the independent existence which the San had formerly enjoyed in the Sneeuberg district had been replaced by dependence on 'humane and kindly men'.

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A letter, written in May 1893, by fifteen prominent residents of Nieu Bethesda to the Colonial Secretary, is an indication of the manner in which White people of the village regarded Black people at that time. This letter, which was written to 'call the very serious attention of the Government to the continuous and ever increasing immigration to this Colony of Indian Coolies of a very low type, and of other undesirable Asiatics', stated:

....Their habits of live, social and domestic arrangements, predilections, and surroundings, and the low standard of morality usually obtaining among them are such as to entirely unfit them to become a useful, much less an acceptable and desirable addition to our population; indeed, they constitute about the most costly and objectionable accession to our already sufficiently mixed and coloured class that it could possibly receive. (Cape Archives, CO4291 No. N1). See *Appendix A*.

'Christian' values and the idea of 'us' versus 'the other' are implicit in the notion of paternalism. As Giliomee argues, the desire to spread the message of Christianity to the indigenous people of this country undoubtedly had a profound effect on the shaping of South African society:

The colonists carried with them to the frontier a set of attitudes, most important of which was the notion that as 'Christians' they were culturally superior to the 'heathens' whom they often associated with crudeness, conflict and treachery (1979:303).

In Nieu Bethesda, where the activities of the early missionaries, combined with the strong influence of the Dutch Reformed Church, were the driving force behind the establishment and development of the village, missionary work is said to have been considered extremely important from the earliest days in the history of the community. From the outset there was segregation between races in churches in Nieu Bethesda. In 1879, when according to a parish statement of 1879, the congregation of the DRC in Nieu Bethesda consisted of '*187 lidmate en slegs 442 siele*' ('187 members and only 442 souls') (De Graaff Schutte, 1978:18), the church council decided to set aside a plot of land for the building of a Coloured church. In the mid-19th century the London Missionary Society, who were extremely active in Nieu Bethesda, founded the United Congregational Church (now commonly known as 'Londen'). There was said to be good

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co-operation between the two churches, who felt it their duty to bring Christianity to the Black people of the village³.

In the first few years of the twentieth century the DRC established the 'Zendingvereeniging' (Missionary Society), and very soon the 'Vrouwen Zending Bond' (Women's Missionary Society) came into being. Bazaars were held and money was collected for missionary work. At this stage mission work in the village was controlled by the Independent Churches, which was viewed by the DRC in a negative light:

...en ongelukkig was die gevolg dat die werk erg verwaarloosd was...
(...and unfortunately the result was that this work was badly neglected.....(De Graaff Schutte, 1978:18).

Nevertheless, the young White congregation realised 'their responsibility towards those of another colour' and every Sunday evening a service was held in the wagonhouse of the rectory for adult Coloured people with Sunday school being held for Coloured children (De Graaff Schutte, 1978:44).

De Graaff Schutte (1978) speaks enthusiastically about the generosity of the DRC in providing wooden beams from a nearby poplar grove for the floor of the church building which the Independent Churches had been allowed to take over in 1883. It is not surprising he says that the congregation was commended by the church council for the zeal they were showing in missionary activities (*die '...zendingyver die aldaar te bespeuren is'*)

The paternalistic tone of the above quotations gives some indication of the feeling of superiority with which the White church leaders regarded the activities and capabilities of the Black churchgoing members of the community. Their ardent missionary zeal did not extend to enabling people of colour to act independently and make decisions concerning their own interests; instead they 'realised their responsibility towards those of another colour' in the clear understanding that 'those of another colour' were not capable of independent thought, nor were they reliable enough to be entrusted with the responsibility of organising their own affairs. Thus while, the efforts of the early church

³ The only school for African children in Nieu Bethesda was founded by the London Missionary Society.

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leaders were regarded with gratitude by the Black community of Nieu Bethesda, their activities increased their dependence on Whites for guidance.

As has already been mentioned, one of the key elements of paternalism is the maintenance of a relationship of subordination and control. For such a relationship to be effectively maintained, the feeling that those being controlled are not able to take control of their own lives, or make important decisions for themselves is essential. It is therefore evident that education or lack thereof is a vital component of any paternalistic relationship.

From the earliest days in the history of Nieu Bethesda education was segregated on racial lines. The first school in the village was a private school for White children established in the late 1870s by a Hollander (whose salary was provided by parents of the schoolchildren). In 1877 a '*Distrikskotschool*' was established in the village, with an enrolment of forty pupils (De Graaff Schutte, 1978:19). The number increased every year, until there were sufficient pupils to warrant the building of a school with a boarding house and tennis courts. Every White child in Nieu Bethesda was thus assured of receiving government education at both primary and secondary school levels.

In the late nineteenth century the London Missionary Society established a school for Coloured children, which was housed in the Congregational church building, with classes from Sub A to Standard Four. There was no boarding house or sporting facilities such as those which White school children were able to utilise. Unlike their White peers, not all Black children attended school and those who were fortunate enough to receive primary school education could not continue their schooling after Standard Four. It is thus clear that even at this early stage of the development of the village, there was a striking disparity between the educational opportunities afforded to Black and White children, which would have exacerbated the feelings of superiority on the part of Whites.

As there is very little literature relevant to this period of Nieu Bethesda's history, it is difficult to gain an accurate representation of social life in the Sneeuwberg district in the

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historical period. However, it is clear that it was in this period that the differential of opportunities between Black and White communities in the village contributed towards the creation of the paternalistic mood which is so characteristic of social interaction in Nieu Bethesda today.

At the end of the nineteenth century most Black people in Nieu Bethesda lived in an area to the east of the village known as the 'Native location'. There were strict laws relating to the erection of houses in this area, which were defined in government proclamation No. 105, dated 28 March 1892⁴ (See *Appendix B*). Some of the provisions of this proclamation were:

2. Any person wishing to erect a hut or dwelling within the Native Location must make application to the Superintendent, who shall, if the application be granted, point out the plot of ground upon which such applicant shall be at liberty to erect such hut or dwelling and who shall supply such applicant with the necessary instructions. Any person proceeding with the erection of such hut or dwelling within the Native Location without the written permission of the Superintendent, will render himself or herself liable to a fine of not exceeding £2 sterling, in addition to having such building material as he may have collected thereon removed from the Location.
3. The occupier of each hut or dwelling shall monthly pay in advance to the Commissioners, the sum of two shillings and sixpence sterling (2s.6d.) as a hut tax.
9. Every hut-holder or other resident in the location shall be obliged to satisfy the Superintendent of the manner in which he obtains his livelihood.
13. It shall not be lawful for any adult person within the location to appear outside any hut or dwelling without being clothed with such articles of dress as decency requires, under a penalty of 10s. fine, or seven days' hard labour.
19. No shop or trading station shall be allowed within the location, except with the approval and during the pleasure of the Commissioners.
20. No open air dancing or assemblies shall be allowed within the location without the consent and approval being first had and obtained from the Superintendent under a penalty for each offender of a sum not exceeding 10s., or not exceeding ten days' imprisonment, with or without hard labour.

⁴ Cape Archives, DOC 4/1/190, No. 306.

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Many of the provisions of this proclamation, which was made while the Cape Colony was under British rule, are strikingly similar to many of the ordinances made by the National Party government during the apartheid era. The strong paternalistic tone is also a feature of many of the provisions of the proclamation. Not only did the Superintendent point out the plots of ground on which applicants would be permitted to erect their 'huts', but would also issue instructions as how to build the house.

The period within living memory

At the beginning of the twentieth century the village of Nieu Bethesda was a bustling agricultural centre, with 368 permanent White residents and over 40 children attending the (White) village school. The Black and White populations were roughly equal in numbers, and Black and White children played together, fought with each other, and shared experiences which created a lasting bond between them. Both Black and White sections of the population were united by unusually strong kinship ties. These kinship ties frequently transcend the divisions between African and Coloured people but never the barrier between 'Non-White' and 'White'.

In the village itself, nearly every White family had some connection to either the Pienaar, Wolfaardt, Van Heerden or Van der Merwe families. Amongst the original White population currently living in Nieu Bethesda, this is still largely true. There are six Pienaar families in the Sneeuwberg district, all of whom are direct descendants of B J Pienaar, the 'father' of Nieu Bethesda. Of these six families, two have married members of the Wolfaardt family. Similarly, amongst the English-speaking farming community in the Sneeuwberg district, the Kingwill and Sheard families were represented in most households, and several marriages have taken place between members of the Kingwill and Sheard families. Thus the entire White community has for several generations been united by bonds of kinship, in a unifying way.

In the Black community, where endogamy is a strong feature, the surnames Olifant, Davids, Swiers and Jacobus were (and still are) among the most common, which gives outsiders the perception that every person in Pienarsig is related either by birth or by marriage to several other members of the community. Of the forty-five interviews which

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I conducted amongst the Black population, forty individuals intimated that their spouses had come from the 'district'. (Whereas in this dissertation the 'district' implies the Sneeu-berg district, in this case the district extended as far as Middelburg and Cradock.) The five whose spouses (or common-law spouses) had come from beyond the 'district', were all individuals who had spent long periods away from Nieu Bethesda. Five of those people from Pienaarsig who had married from within the district and whose spouses had died, had subsequently chosen partners from other parts of the country. This was usually after long periods of working in urban areas.

Although there were a number of Black people living in what became the 'White' area, the majority of Black people lived in the 'old location' in stone and clay houses, many of which had been constructed by previous generations and handed down to their families. Many Black families lived on farms in the Sneeu-berg district, and as families grew and younger members married, there was a great deal of movement between farms and the village. Returning to Nieu Bethesda (usually because of the desire to send children to school), was seldom problematic. If there was not a house available, it was usually possible to rent land at a nominal price and houses were constructed with family labour, using local materials.

In the pre-apartheid era most Black people lived in the 'old location' where houses were built at virtually no cost and the land on which they stood was extremely cheap to purchase or hire. If one family moved out of the location to live on a farm, the house would be occupied by relatives or friends. The exceptionally strong kinship ties were a unifying factor and ensured that housing was always available to Black people moving between the village and nearby farms. There was therefore a degree of independence and mobility within the Black population, with families moving between the village and farms in the Sneeu-berg district, in search of employment. This relative degree of mobility can not be seen as being linked to real independence as Black people were economically still dependent on White farmers for their subsistence, and were free only to move between farms in the district. In the following chapter the way in which this mobility was eroded by apartheid legislation will be examined.

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The two case studies which follow illustrate many aspects of life in the location lived in the pre-apartheid era.

Case 3.1: Elsie

Elsie was born in 1930 at the home of her maternal grandfather, Jonas on the farm *Lekoog*, about a kilometre from the village of Nieu Bethesda. (Her grandfather had two wives living in the same house - he was married in church to Elsie's grandmother, and later took a second woman to live with him.)

Elsie's first few years were spent in Middelburg with her mother and father (who were not married and who were both semi-literate, having had only one or two year's schooling). Her father was stabbed to death in 1933 and several years later, her mother 'took another man', Windvoël Malgas, as her common-law husband and the family moved to Nieu Bethesda. There they stayed in an old stone house which they built in the 'location'.

In 1946 her stepfather left the stone house and took his family to live on a nearby farm, Grootklip. Her step-father did farmwork and their mother and children worked in the house for the farmer's wife. A year after arriving on the farm, Elsie's mother became ill and died. In the same year that her mother died, Elsie met her husband, James Davids (who was born in Graaff Reinet) on the farm, where he was a farmworker. They married in 1951 and went to live on another farm in the district, where five of their children were born.

Elsie did not think that she had moved exceptionally often in her young days, and told me that this was common practice in Nieu Bethesda before apartheid. People simply oscillated between the village and farms, depending on which afforded them the best opportunity of employment. As the cost of land and housing was minimal in the 'location' in those days, there were no financial constraints which prevented them from leaving (such as service charges), and there was always somebody ready to take over the house when one family moved out.

Case 3.2: Jannie

Jannie was born in 1909 on a farm, *Wilgerbos*, near Bethesda. (His identity document shows that he was born in 1912 but Jannie says this is a mistake). His mother was considered to be Coloured, although her father was a Mosotho. Both his paternal grandfather and his uncle (his father's brother) were White ('*spierwit mense*'). After living at *Wilgerbos* for some years, Jannie's father, Koos Koopman, who was a shepherd, together with his family of four sons and three daughters, trekked to

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another farm, *Diepkloof*, where he was employed to make fences. Koos had many animals - cows, sheep, goats - which he was allowed to keep on the farm. When the *Baas* ordered Koos to reduce his stock, which he did not want to do, he decided to move. So then they moved to a farm which was owned by a member of Koos's family (*my pa se oom* - my father's uncle - Oom Jakob).

Oom Jakob had started off working as a shearer but had 'built himself up' so well that he had bought the farm. He was a very successful farmer and had three spans of oxen and many milk cows. He obtained 30 bales of Merino wool every year from his sheep. Each winter he slaughtered two oxen, and every week he slaughtered two goats. Jannie worked for Oom Jakob and learnt much about farming. He earned 1/6 per day in addition to being provided with all his food.

After Oom Jakob died, his son, Lodewyk, stayed on the farm, and he neglected the farm very badly. One day Lodewyk went to Graaff Reinet on a Friday night and got involved with some White men who after a heavy drinking session, murdered him. After his death, Lodewyk's two brothers looked after the farm, but again neglected it badly. When they began selling off sheep to a White farmer, Jannie's father protested and the family decided to move to Bethesda. This was when Jannie was about fourteen.

The house in the old location which his father hired from the municipality for a few shillings a month was warm and quite comfy. Water was obtained from the pit. They were able to keep some stock in the old location but not as many as they had owned on the farm. Together with the vegetables which they grew, this provided most of the family's food. After a few years when Jannie was about twenty years old, the family left the location and his father went to work on another farm in the district. He did odd jobs on farms and ploughed for White farmers and was allowed to keep half the produce he grew on the farm. When Jannie's father was not allowed to keep stock anymore, the family returned to Bethesda, but Jannie stayed on the farm where he had found employment as a farmhand. When asked why they kept moving Jannie said '*soos die lewe maar is, jy kan nie bly staan in een plek jy moet 'n bestaan maak*' (that's how life is, you can't stay in one place you have to make a living). When they came back to the location they moved into another two roomed house which his father enlarged and improved with stones from the mountain.

From Jannie's story it can be seen that in the pre-apartheid years, despite their lack of education and opportunity, Black people had a greater degree of mobility than they have today, as they could vacate their houses in the 'location' at any time, should an employment opportunity arise, knowing that they could return whenever they wanted. Extensions to the stone houses in the 'location' could be done at no cost, using stone

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from the nearby mountain with the family supplying the necessary labour force. Secondly, some Black people in Nieu Bethesda were able to accumulate a relative degree of wealth in the form of livestock, which could easily be moved between farms and the 'location'.

Yet, in spite of having a relative degree of mobility and independence in this period, and despite the degree of mutual support and sustenance which existed in the 'location', the lives of Black people were nevertheless shaped and defined more by paternalistic relationships with Whites than by any other factor.

Although the Natives' Land Act of 1913, did not actually segregate ethnic groups, this Act has been described as the measure which affected the lives of Black people in South Africa more deeply than any other.

It created overnight a floating landless proletariat whose labour could be used and manipulated at will, and ensured that ownership of the land had finally and securely passed into the hands of the ruling white race. On it rest the pass laws, the migratory labour system, influx control and a thousand evils which affect the lives of black people in South Africa today. (Head, 1982:ix).

In Nieu Bethesda (whose population has always consisted of a very small number of African people), the Natives' Land Act had little or no direct impact. Nevertheless, in the Sneeuberg area the long-term effect of this pernicious piece of legislation was the creation of an awareness by African people of the relative advantage which Coloured people had over them, *viz a viz* ownership of property. This was ascertained in fieldwork, when it was found that early in the twentieth century Xhosa-speaking people translated their surnames into an Afrikaans equivalent, in order to be considered to be Coloured, rather than African, because of the disadvantages attached to being an African.

One such case is that of Ouma Mollie Olifant, who was born in Camdeboo (near Graaff Reinet) in 1900. Although she was the daughter of Fingo parents' whose surname was Mthimkulu, she told me that her maiden name was Grootboom. On enquiring how she acquired a different surname to that of her parents, Ouma Mollie replied rather crossly that she thought I understood Xhosa. After a few seconds thought, I realised that

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Mthimkulu could be an abbreviation of *umthi omkhulu*, which in Xhosa means 'a big tree'. On further enquiry I was told that as her parents felt that an Afrikaans surname would be preferable, they translated their surname, Mthimkulu into its Afrikaans equivalent, and from then on adopted the surname Grootboom. As several other Xhosa-speaking families in Nieu Bethesda had acquired Afrikaans names, I assumed that this was done in order to escape being subject to the provisions of the Natives' Land Act, which prevented Africans from owning land, although nobody explicitly told me that this was indeed the case.

In this period it was common practice for White farmers in Nieu Bethesda to distribute loads of excess produce amongst the Black population of the village. Many tales were told to me of the generosity of farmers (several of whom later played key roles in the implementation of the Group Areas Act in Nieu Bethesda), in supplying the community with produce, and of the esteem with which they were held as a result of this gift-giving. Nasson (1984:3) contends that in many rural societies 'gifts are the thread with which the webs of dependency are woven', and influence is:

...mediated through a wide range of social institutions, from religion to family life. Much personal influence is exercised in a structured way, through a web of giving and receiving. Employer provision and donation can probably be best interpreted in terms of the gift relationship. What matters is the personal structure of this relationship. The gift stabilises relations of deference, damping down tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions between farmers and the rural poor. The gift celebrates kindness and obligation in the bond between dominant and dominated (Nasson, 1984:3).

The acts of perceived 'generosity' on the part of the White farmers of Nieu Bethesda in this period could well have been successful in minimising 'ambiguities and contradictions' and increasing the sense of gratitude and obligation with which Black people regarded Whites in the village. Conversely, such gifts were taken for granted by some Black people, who regarded handouts of clothes and produce as a type of 'fringe-benefit'. Many informants told me that although they received abysmally low wages in this period, this was in some measure balanced by the goods given them by their employers. It was clearly indicated by these informants that they regarded gifts and handouts from employers as part of their remuneration for employment. This

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apparent ingratitude was often mentioned by Whites who complained that they gave their workers so much for which they did not receive so much as a 'thank-you'.

Before the implementation of the Group Areas Act there were a small number of Coloured people in professions such as nursing and teaching who lived in well-built houses with established gardens in the village. As there were many White children attending school in the village, social interaction between White and Coloured children occurred on a daily basis, although as I was repeatedly told '*Ons kinders het ons plek geken*' ('We as children, all knew our place'). Apart from the friendships which developed between children, however, interaction between Whites and Blacks was limited to the workplace, and in this respect yet again, I was frequently told by elderly residents of Pienaarsig, '*Almal het sy plek geken, en ons bruin mense het respek vir die Baas gehad*' ('Everybody knew their place, and we Coloured people had respect for the Baas').

Describing the village in this period, Ouma Gongo, a Xhosa-speaking resident who is now in her nineties, told me:

Before the '50s the *dorp* (village) was a quiet place where everybody worked together. Although there was no social contact between Whites and Blacks, everybody knew their place and if you behaved well you never ran into trouble. If Black people knew their place, they had no problems and could do well out of life. White people were very proud of Black people who worked hard and kept their houses neat and tidy. Although I did feel in my heart that life was very unfair and it was not right that the Whites should have everything while we Blacks had so little, I never really felt bitter about our lot as our family had everything we needed.

When our children were growing up, Xhosa and Coloured people lived together in the location and there were no problems between us. As the Xhosa-speaking children learnt Afrikaans at school, language differences were not a problem, and differences in culture did not come between us. Although before the apartheid years there was segregation, it was different in the old days.

Many of the older Black people in Nieu Bethesda told me of the close friendships which developed between themselves and White children in the village when they were young. Recalling these happy times, however, one informant, Stella, told me that there

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were definite parameters to such friendships, the unstated rules of which all children, both Black and White, were aware. Firstly, Black children always went to play at the White children's homes, and never *vice versa*, and secondly, White parents were always referred to as 'Baas' or 'Miesies' while the parents of Black children were known only by their first names. Stella told me how a large part of the games of Black children took the form of role play, in which they would choose an admired character from the White community to emulate. The admiration, said Stella, stemmed more from wonder at the possessions and talents of the character than from personality traits.

One exception to this unspoken law of the roles adopted by Black and White children of the village was the friendship which developed between the Meyer and the Erlank children. Andries Erlank, who was the (White) mayor of Nieu Bethesda, was physically handicapped, and as he was unable to drive, he employed Pieter Meyer (a Coloured man) as his personal chauffeur. During his association with Erlank, Pieter Meyer rose from being a labourer to holding a position of some standing in the village and owning what is still today one of the most gracious homes in Nieu Bethesda.

Pieter Meyer's children all became professional people - three qualified as teachers and one daughter, Alice, became the first Black district midwife/nurse in the village. Yet, although they were held in high esteem by the Coloured people of the village, unlike the Erlank family, the majority of White people regarded families such as the Meyers as little more than '*ordentlike Kleurling mense*' ('decent Coloured people') who knew their place and did not try to emulate their White superiors.⁵

An example of this is the following incident which occurred in the early 1940s, and which Mattie Cupido, the second of the Meyer's three daughters, related to me. This relatively minor incident made such an impression on both Mattie and the young grandson of Andries Erlank that it remained indelibly imprinted on their minds for the rest of their lives. The Erlank boy was playing at the Meyer's house one day when Pieter Meyer asked him to go to the Municipal office to collect a permit for which he was waiting. He told the boy to ask for 'Mr Meyer's permit'. The young Erlank boy, who was unused to addressing any Black man as 'Mr' was torn between his unease at having to

⁵ This was mentioned to me by several of the older Coloured people whom I interviewed.

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deliver such a request to the White Town Clerk, and his respect for (and fear of) Mr Meyer. (Mr Meyer used to punish any children, White or Black, who misbehaved at his home, with a complete disregard for their colour or status). When the request was made for 'Mr Meyer's permit' it was greeted with great indignation by the Town Clerk (Who is this *Mr Meyer*?). Despite his social standing in the village, Pieter Meyer, a Coloured man, would for ever remain 'Piet' in the eyes of the White population.

Within both Black and White communities, much of the social activity at this time was focused on church activities, which included Sunday worship, prayer meetings, bazaars and the regular functions of the church such as weddings, baptisms and funerals. The Church was thus not only a place of worship, but a medium through which social networks operated.

Many of closest relationships between Black and White children developed on farms, where the farmers' children and those of farm labourers lived in close proximity to each other and interacted at many levels every day. It was in this context that many close friendships developed which lasted even throughout the apartheid years.

Elsie, who has lived in the village for most of her life, spoke nostalgically of her early days on a farm, and of her friendship with the White farm children. Elsie went to school in Nieu Bethesda until Standard Four, but her schooling came to an abrupt end in 1946, when the family left the stone house and moved to a nearby farm where they lived in a small house provided by the farmer. Her stepfather worked as a labourer and her mother was a domestic worker in the big farmhouse. Recalling these years, Elsie said:

I helped my mother in the farmhouse, and it was a lovely life on the farm. I really enjoyed working in *die groot huis* (the big house). In those days we were real friends with the White children. We had a long walk from our house to the farmhouse, but I always looked forward to arriving at the farm, because the White children were my friends, and when I had finished my work we used to play together. We children did not think of differences between Coloured and Whites; although we knew our place with the *baas*. We were just children together and we played all the games that children think of.

A particularly close friendship which was formed between a privileged White farm child and a young Coloured boy proved to be one that has lasted long after the two parted

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company. Abraham Barendse, who all his life has been affectionately known to everyone as Booitjie, was born on a nearby farm, belonging to the Sheard family. His early years were spent on this farm, playing with the Sheard brothers. Neil Sheard, who now owns and manages the farm *The Valley*, near to the foot of the Kompasberg, was his best friend, and both Booitjie and Neil speak with affection of their relationship as young boys and of the happy times spent together. Neil told me that there was always great competition between the Sheard brothers and Booitjie in the shearing sheds, where Booitjie was particularly popular because of his sharp wit and amusing sayings.

This intimate relationship ended abruptly at the end of each school holiday, when the Sheard boys returned to school and Booitjie remained at *The Valley* where he worked. After driving the Sheard boys to school in King William's Town, (although he did not have a driving licence) Booitjie, would return to *The Valley* to work as a farm labourer. For many years Booitjie was the farm postman, cycling to Nieu Bethesda (about 13 km away) to collect the mail and deliver it to a local farm 'post office'. This he did in all weather, even when it snowed. As there were no farm schools in those days he never attended school and is therefore completely illiterate.

Thus although on one level the relationship between Neil and Booitjie was one of true friendship, with no boundaries dividing them during the school holidays, once the holidays were over, they lived in two entirely separate and disparate worlds and thus had little in common. While Neil Sheard was able to complete his schooling and was assured of a secure future, knowing that he would inherit valuable agricultural land, Booitjie's circumstances were entirely different. His future hung on the slender thread of the kindness of his employers and for him the world of education and opportunity in which the Sheard boys lived, was completely unknown.

From all accounts, life in the 'old location' was extremely hard and devoid of many of the conveniences which Black people in Nieu Bethesda have today. There was no running water, electricity or sanitation, and the houses were not built to withstand the heavy summer rains. Sister Rien Retief, who was District Nurse in Nieu Bethesda for many decades in this period told me of her experience of standing knee-deep in mud while delivering babies in the old location, with candles being the only source of light.

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Yet many of the older members of the Black community presented a somewhat romanticised account of their early days, which was very different from Sister Retief's description of their circumstances.

Ouma Gongo described her life in the location in the following way:

Using stone obtained from the nearby mountain and transported by donkey cart, our family, working together, built a big house with eight rooms where we lived for many years. As the roof was made of reeds, it leaked badly during heavy rains, but repairing the roof after the rainy season was accepted as one of our seasonal chores.

Our house had a *misvloer* (dung floor) covered with lino, and was extremely warm inside. As there was no water in the house, I used to get all our water from the well in the location. It was a well which all the people in the location used. It was hard work pulling buckets of water out of the well on chains, but it was an essential chore which the whole family was involved in. We had a beautiful garden, which we watered with well-water. We grew all our own vegetables (mealies, pumpkins, onions, potatoes, spinach) on our land in such quantities that we were able to share with less fortunate neighbours and friends.

Describing this period of her life, Stella (who is now in her 40s) also had only happy memories of her young days :

In those days (before apartheid) we Coloured people felt that we lived a privileged and protected life in Bethesda where everybody, Black and White, cared about each other. Everybody shared whatever they had - nobody ever went hungry. When we lived in the 'ou lokasie' it would have been unthinkable not to have helped a neighbour or relative who had fallen on hard times. Today everybody thinks only of themselves.

Speaking of life in the old location, Elsie (a Coloured resident born in 1930 who now lives in the 'White' section of the village), said that although the old houses were not comfortable, the advantages of living there far outweighed the discomforts:

I remember so well the building of the house - every day I had to help collect stones, although at that time I was only about seven years old. My step-father collected the stones on the mountain behind the location and rolled them down to us children who acted as a human chain passing them on to where the house was being built. The house was not really comfortable, because it leaked and there was the constant fear that the roof might collapse in periods of heavy rain. It had a *voorkamer* (front room), a kitchen and two bedrooms. As the house had a chimney, we were able to cook inside over an open fire.

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Our family kept goats for milk, and we children were responsible for looking after the animals during the day and bringing them back every evening to the kraal which my stepfather had built. We also had a donkey which provided us with transport, and poultry which gave us lots of eggs and meat. We did not grow vegetables, as the ground was unsuitable for agriculture.

Life in the location was not easy and as children we had to work hard. Our daily task of drawing water from the nearby well and carrying it back home was hard, but we accepted it as part of our life. Despite the hardships, I still think of this time as one of the happiest periods of my life.

My mother had some education (I think she did Sub A) but my father could not read (although he would not let on that he was illiterate). My father belonged to the Benaveau - a sort of Boys' Brigade which had boys and girls and had parades through Bethesda to the great delight of all the people. They had blue and green sashes (they were all Coloured boys and girls). The days when the brigade met were awaited with great excitement and it was a highlight of life in the old location.

Many of the older Black residents of the village told me that although in their young days people were in material terms, very poor⁶, they never considered themselves poor, as they were so well cared for by their employers. One informant, Sanna, told me that when she was still very young (she thinks about 12 years old) she began working on the farm as a 'nanny'. She was not paid any wages, but received ample food, clothes and shoes in return for her labour. Any money she was given was considered to be a '*pasela*'. Sanna says proudly that when she was young, children were not like today's children, and the few shillings she sometimes received was given to her mother as a matter of course, and without question.

In the 'location', the network of kinship relations provided people with a sense of security and belonging. Many informants told me of the way in which families shared whatever they had with friends and neighbours in times of misfortune, and of the security they had, knowing that they could expect the same generosity should they need help.

As Ouma Gongo told me:

⁶ Most of my informants told me that domestic workers used to work for between 7/6d. and 10/- per month in this period.

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In Nieu Bethesda in those years Whites really cared about Black people, and helped their *volk* (workers) to get on in life if they were prepared to work hard. At that time it was a common thing for the *Baas* to give their *volk* all their old clothes, and ample food. Whites did not like to have hungry people working for them, and felt it put them in a bad light as employers. Life was a bit hard for us Black people, because we had so little and wages were so low. I mean in those days we had no running water or electricity in the house, like we do today, but we always knew that there was somebody we could turn to in times of real trouble.

This question of the concern which employers showed to their workers, and of the food and clothing which they were given (while earning pitifully low wages) was one which was repeatedly mentioned by informants.

Stella, in reminiscing about her young days, told me about her father's life as a shearer:

Like all shearers, my father would go away for a month and stay at various farms shearing. Shearers were paid 6d. per sheep, but the money they accumulated in that time was considered to be plenty in those days. When the shearers returned home there was always a big celebration with braaiing of meat and '*kaiings*' (roasted fat from lambs tails), and dried meat and hares and dassies which they had caught and brought home for the pot. The farmers they had worked for always gave the shearers meat before they left

The shearers in those days were a real team, with the professional shearers like my father, the daily workers who sorted the wool, and the sweepers who cleaned up. There was a wonderful relationship between farmers and shearers, and each farmer had his own team and became very fond of the shearers. The shearers always felt there was somebody who would help them when times were bad or things went wrong.

When I was growing up one of my younger brothers died and my father's *Baas* advanced him money for the funeral and brought us food. In the 'dry' months - the months when they did not shear, regular shearers could 'draw' which meant that they could get an advance of wages which would be deducted from their shearing pay, without interest. If you could not pay for any reason or other, the farmers would understand but this seldom happened as there was such a good feeling of trust between shearers and farmers, with everybody 'knowing their place'.

A similar account of the life of shearers was given by Ouma Gongo:

Although my husband, Izak, was a shearer and only earned 8/- per 100 sheep (during the shearing season only), and I earned '*n kale tien sjielings*' (a mere 10/-) a month as a 'kitchen girl', in those days we were really well off. We only paid 7/- a year in rates, produced most of our

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own vegetables, dairy products and poultry, and food was extremely cheap. (A bucket of flour cost 3/-, a bucket of mealies 2/-). In addition to his wages, during the shearing season my husband received from his Baas a bucket of flour, a bucket of mealies, 2lbs. of coffee and 4lbs. of sugar a month, as well as a 'side' of meat for each adult member of the family.

Elsie, speaking of her life on the farm reinforced Ouma Gongo's story:

Although money was scarce the farmers looked after us all very well, providing us with regular supplies of meat and plenty of food, and showing real concern for us. In those days we Coloureds (*ons bruinmense*) felt that we were part of the farm, and because of that the Baas would look after us as long as we behaved well and knew our place.

These and other accounts emphasised that although Black people had little material wealth, they did not consider themselves to be poor. Instead their perception of themselves at that time is that, despite their disadvantaged situation relative to the White community, they were part of a concerned and generous community which they considered Nieu Bethesda to have been in the pre-apartheid era. It thus appears that to the Black people of Nieu Bethesda, poverty is not a merely a result or function of material circumstances. In a caring community, where there is social commitment towards the entire community, nobody considers themselves to be poor, however little they may have in material terms. In order to be a recipient of the generosity and care of Whites, however, as was continuously stressed by informants, Black people needed to 'know their place'. In interviews, I was frequently told by Black people '*ek was nie grootgemaak om teen blankes se wil te gaan nie*' ('I was not brought up to go against the will of White people'). Indeed, the supposition that Whites know best and are thus empowered to make decisions for the rest of the community became widely accepted in the colonial era.

This 'knowing one's place' is a lesson which has been unconsciously absorbed by both Blacks and Whites in the village, and is still clearly expressed in every facet of life in Nieu Bethesda today. Social distance between the groups is marked by differential forms of address, by Blacks knowing where to sit in White people's cars, and by a strict separation of the groups when eating. Frequently it was observed that Black and White customers buying goods (at one shop in particular) were addressed in different ways.

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For Whites, the form of address was 'Yes, Sir/Madam, may I help you', whereas for Blacks it was a simple 'Yes?'. When giving lifts to Graaff Reinet, I frequently had to invite my passengers to sit in front, before they would take the initiative of sitting next to me rather than in the back. Sharing of food is a key area where separation is strictly observed. Most Black people who have spent the greater part of their lives in Nieu Bethesda are extremely reluctant to eat meals with Whites, and take any food given them to eat in the kitchen or outside. This was very noticeable when a Black woman from the village came to visit me at my home in Cape Town. She found it impossible to share her meal with me, and preferred to eat alone outside. When questioned, she told me that she had never eaten in the same room as a White person and found it extremely uncomfortable to do so.

It has been argued above that Whites in Nieu Bethesda propagated the dogma of the superiority of the Afrikaner (or White race), which was used to justify their continued domination of the Black population. From as early as the 1930s, in debates on social issues in Afrikaner circles, frequent reference is made to stories from the Old Testament. One story which occurs consistently in relevant documents from 1938 onwards is that of the Tower of Babel. The Afrikaner interpretation of the story of Babel is that 'God had willed the existence and survival of nations, each with its own character, vision and ultimate aim' and that any attempt to unify the races was contrary to God's plan for the universe (Kinghorn, 1994:398). This interpretation, which was generally accepted in Afrikaner circles, would in all probability have been aired from the pulpit in Nieu Bethesda, as was the case in the DRC all over South Africa. Stirling Pienaar, a prominent farmer, an *ouderling* (elder) in the DRC, and a former mayor of Nieu Bethesda told me that he was brought up believing implicitly in the biblical justification for the separation of races. As a young man he was convinced that he was carrying out his Christian duty by treating his *volk* (labourers) with *barmhartigheid* (charity), and that they would never be capable of taking control of their own lives.

Conversely, Black people who were reliant on Whites in every sphere of their lives were able to cope with the deprivation and inequalities with which they were confronted every day by relating every facet of life to the tenets of Christianity. Having been raised in a deeply religious community, disappointments and frustration were accepted as

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'God's will' in a fatalistic way. Church activities became a major focus of their lives and (as in the case of Ouma Gongo's family) many families moved from farms to the village, so as to be nearer to their church, which had become their lifeline.

The magnificent DRC church, built to hold 800 people, never attracted more than a quarter of that number, and separate services were held every Sunday for the Black people who constituted the majority of the population of Nieu Bethesda. Yet Stella told me enthusiastically of how in the 'old days' everyone had attended church on Sundays. When the church bell was rung '*dit was 'n gewoel in die dorp*' (the village was a hive of activity). The fact that the church bell was that of the DRC church which Blacks were not permitted to attend, did not really worry them as everybody 'knew their place'.

Throughout its history, the Church has continued to permeate every aspect of life in Nieu Bethesda. Not only are the owners of the three main trading centres in the village elders in the DRC, but in addition, since its inception until the 1995 Community Elections, the Town Council, the governing body of the village, was always dominated by elders of the DRC. By imbuing people of colour with the ideals of Christianity and treating them with kindness and a degree of compassion, while simultaneously keeping them in subordinate positions, the foundations of apartheid had been laid. The Black population of Nieu Bethesda knew their place and offered little opposition to the implementation of apartheid in the '50s.

In any marginalised community lack of education is a major factor contributing towards the perpetuation of discrimination. In Nieu Bethesda in the pre-apartheid period all White children received a minimum of eight years of schooling, while many Black children were unable for various reasons to achieve even a basic level of literacy. Many older Black informants who grew up in the village intimated that the main factor which prevented them from attending school when young was that they were required either to work, or (particularly in the case of the eldest child), to stay at home and look after the younger siblings while the parents were at work. This is clearly illustrated in the following cases.

Jannie, in discussing his lack of education told me:

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I went to school in Bethesda until Sub B. My father at that time worked as a *touleier* (leader of a team of draught animals) for one of the Pienaars. When I was about fifteen years old, the *transportryers* (transport riders) came to Bethesda and my father took me out of school and hired me out as a *touleier* helping bring all the goods back from Bethesda Road with a donkey cart. I could then write my name, but I've now forgotten how to do that.

Sanna, speaking of how she was unable to attend school said:

Of the ten children in our family, all except the eldest two went to school for at least several years. As a child I used to resent the fact that I had to work so hard and wasn't given the chance to attend school (especially as my mother had had some schooling and could read and write a bit). When I spoke about these feelings one day and told my mother how I felt, my mother explained to me that I was needed in the house and could thus not be given the luxury of an education. She told me that this was how God had planned my life. I then understood the position and accepted the fact that I would never be able to learn to read and write like most of my brothers and sisters. This has always been a disappointment to me, but now I can accept it as I understand it is God's will.

In 1930 there were 39 pupils on the roll of the Independent Mission School, at which Mrs Lettie de Klerk, was the sole teacher. As Mrs De Klerk was not a qualified teacher and was therefore not permitted to teach beyond the level of Standard Four, it was decided that a qualified teacher should be employed so that pupils could complete their primary school education in Nieu Bethesda. In 1931 Mr Joseph Lakay, a qualified Coloured teacher from Cape Town was appointed as principal of the school and to teach children who wished to continue with their education to the level of Standard Six. Mrs De Klerk was extremely incensed at Mr Lakay receiving a higher salary than she did, which she thought was unfair, given that she was both White and older than him. This caused considerable division within the community, but in the end Mrs De Klerk and Mr Lakay taught together quite happily until Mrs De Klerk retired a few years later.⁷

By 1937 of the population of 708 Black people in Nieu Bethesda⁸, only 89 pupils attended school, 64 of whom were in classes between Sub A and Standard Four. Thus while all White children in Nieu Bethesda attended school in their formative years,

⁷ Cape Archives, PAE 34A/CMS 60/60.

⁸ 1936 Census figures

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many Black children received little or no education with the result that the majority of Black pensioners living in the village today are illiterate or semi-literate.

Of the fifty life histories collected in fieldwork, two appeared to illustrate most clearly many of the issues raised in this chapter and to illuminate the different ways in which residents of Nieu Bethesda interpreted their experiences in the period before apartheid. For that reason the stories of the early lives of two of Nieu Bethesda's oldest residents are documented at some length. Although the case studies of Ouma Gongo and Sharwood Pienaar do indeed illustrate many of the issues raised, it is not implied that they are representative of any section of the population. They are merely two individuals who have lived in Nieu Bethesda all their lives and whose stories of their years in the village before apartheid highlight many issues relating to that period.

Case 3.3: Ouma Gongo

Ouma Gongo (whose real name is Nombeko Olifant), is one of the oldest residents of Nieu Bethesda. A diminutive bundle of energy, with twinkling eyes and a keen sense of humour, it is hard to believe that she is 95 years old. Ouma Gongo told me that she was given the nickname of Gongo when still a small child because of the yellowish tinge of her skin⁹. She gave me the following account of her early life:

My parents who were both traditional Xhosas, were born in Kafferland. (My father's surname was Brekvis and my mother's maiden name was Moleka.) At the time of the Boer War they moved to Graaff Reinet, where my father worked as a labourer and my mother as a kitchen girl. In 1915¹⁰ soon after my father's death, my mother decided to leave the farm where my father had worked and bring all of us children to live in Nieu Bethesda. As my mother had joined the Anglican Church and her Christian faith had become an important feature of her life, she wanted to be near the church so that she could attend services regularly. When we arrived in Nieu Bethesda, I was a teenager and already a responsible child. There were four children in our family (one boy and three girls). We were all brought up according to Xhosa tradition, and until we came to Nieu Bethesda, Xhosa was the only language we knew. I never attended school as I was required to look after the family's goats. Every day was spent looking after the herd, in the morning taking them out to

⁹ Gongo is a Xhosa word for someone resembling a Khoisan person..

¹⁰ Gongo remembers this date, as it was the year after the end of World War II. She told me that the end of the war was an important date for Nieu Bethesda because it marked the return from the war of many male members of the community.

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the *veld* to graze, and bringing them home to the *kraal* and milking them every evening. We lived in a small stone house in the location where most Xhosa and Coloured people lived¹¹. Here we rented (from a previous owner) a small house built of grass and clay, for which we paid 2/- a month. We drew our water from the nearby Gats River. We lived in this house for a few years.

After a few years of living in the location, my mother decided that it would be in her interests to own a piece of land. She thus purchased two adjoining plots from a Xhosa man who had bought the land some years before. My mother knew about the Land Act¹² and realized that she would not have been able to purchase land from Whites. Although she did not get a Deed of Sale, Mr Nene (the seller) gave her a receipt for her land and her ownership of the land was never questioned. The sale had nothing to do with the Municipality but was a private deal between my mother and Mr Nene. However, a few years later the Municipality demanded an annual tax on the land. As the tax was a mere 7/- a year, my mother felt it would be best to pay it.

As my mother soon found kitchen work in the village, I was left to look after the home when she was gone. One duty which I clearly remember was the heavy task of collecting wood for the stove. Because of the great shortage of fuel in the Karoo, every day I had to walk for miles in the *veld* to collect wood, which I would carry home on my head.

I left Nieu Bethesda after I married, but returned with my husband, Izak Olifant, some years later to live with my mother. It was in this same house that all my ten children were born. All my babies were delivered in the house according to custom by elderly Xhosa women, and the children were brought up speaking Xhosa and attending the Xhosa school in Nieu Bethesda.

All landowners had *loopregte* (grazing rights) which allowed them to keep up to three head of livestock per household which could be sent out to graze on the village commonage. An extra 2/- monthly was charged for each head of livestock. The charge for using the commonage was 1/- per month per sheep and 2/- per month per cow. The milkcows were brought in each evening for milking. Every six months all the animals were driven into a camp, where owners collected them and paid 2/6d for each head of livestock. We had three cows and two oxen which provided us with all our dairy products. The milk was so rich that we did not worry with butter. We also kept sheep, goats and poultry which gave us a plentiful supply of eggs and meat. We received many guests and had sufficient livestock to be able to slaughter for sacrifices and consumption.

11. This area is now known to all as '*die ou lokasie*'.

12. (Natives' Land Act of 1913)

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All the children attended school, but in those days school fees were just about nothing, and children did not have to wear uniform. In order to buy necessities such as clothes, Izak would sell a sheep, as we had lambs every year. The average price for a sheep was about 8/- with which a whole outfit could be bought. In those days, clothes could be bought at one of the several shops in Nieu Bethesda.

As there was no clinic in the village at that time, people requiring medical attention went to Graaff Reinet by horse cart. We only had a donkey cart, but we were always able to find somebody to take us to Graaff Reinet by horse cart if necessary. Very few people died for want of medical attendance, except during the time of the great flu epidemic.



Ouma Gongo sitting in front of family photographs and a picture of Nelson Mandela

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The second case study is drawn from the life history of Sharwood Pienaar, the oldest member of the Pienaar family living in Nieu Bethesda, who is now in his 80s. The story of his early life, which is related in this case study, shows not only how different the circumstances of White and Black people were even before apartheid was introduced, but also how the worldview of individuals is moulded by historical events.

Case 3.4: Sharwood

Sharwood Pienaar, who is a direct descendant of B J Pienaar, (generally known as the 'father' of Nieu Bethesda) is 77 years old and has lived in Nieu Bethesda all his life. His maternal great-grandfather was an Englishman, Herbert Sharwood who, at the age of 16, left England to seek his fortune in South Africa. As soon as the young adventurer had completed the enforced six weeks of quarantine in Cape Town, desperate for employment, he was hired as a *touleier* (wagon leader) with an ox-wagon transporting petrol from Cape Town to Graaff Reinet.

Shortly after arriving in the Karoo, the young Sharwood found employment in Murraysburg with a farmer named Van der Merwe. Doing the menial work of a shepherd, Herbert soon fell in love with his employer's daughter. In spite of Van der Merwe's opposition to his daughter marrying a *rooinek* (an Englishman) the two married. As his new bride could not speak a word of English, and Afrikaans was the language of his bride's family, Herbert rapidly became proficient in the language of the *boere* and developed a close relationship with the Van der Merwe family. His father-in-law lent Herbert money to buy a shop in Nieu Bethesda, and things seemed to be going very well for the young family. However, during the Boer War, when their shop was burnt down (allegedly by the *boere*), both Herbert and his wife developed a hatred for all Afrikaners which they carried with them to the grave.

Herbert Sharwood's daughter, Charlotta who was the third wife of Barend J Pienaar¹³, was the grandmother of Sharwood Pienaar, the subject of this case study. When Sharwood Pienaar was five months old his mother died of peritonitis as a result of an operation to remove her appendix (which was carried out on the farm). Until his father remarried seven years later, Sharwood was brought up by his grandmother, Charlotta Pienaar, in the family house *Zonnestrahel*, in Pienaar Street. Sharwood went to school in Nieu Bethesda until Standard Six after which he completed Standard Eight at Muir College in Uitenhage.

Sharwood married in 1948 and he and his wife lived in Nieu Bethesda. After three years they went to live on the section of the farm *Steilkranz*, which he had inherited from his father. They had three children who went

¹³. The son of the original B J Pienaar.

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to school in Nieu Bethesda¹⁴. Sharwood then sold his part of Steilkranz to his half-brother, and moved to the village where he and his family lived in the spacious house which had been the original home of his great-grandfather, Barend J Pienaar. This house, which is one of the oldest and most valuable houses in Nieu Bethesda¹⁵, is built on a large and fertile *watererf*, and has many spacious rooms with high ceilings, and an ample kitchen. After moving to the village, Sharwood opened a butcher-shop¹⁶ and a store.

The issues of the way in which Black families were constantly moving between the location and neighbouring farms, the lack of education for Black people, and the influence of the Church are all reflected clearly in the case of Ouma Gongo. Further her story suggests that, as I was repeatedly told by informants, there were in fact no boundaries dividing Xhosa and Coloured families in the pre-apartheid era. More importantly, Ouma Gongo's language in relating her story demonstrates the way in which Black people accepted the subservient role they were forced to play in this period, without visible resentment. The derogatory terms 'Kafferland' and 'kitchen girl' indicate that the language which Whites used when referring to Black people was accepted and internalised by the Blacks of Nieu Bethesda. Another important issue which this case study raises is the question of *loopregte* (grazing rights) which will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

The two case studies provide an insight into the dynamics of life in Nieu Bethesda in the first half of the twentieth century and highlight the vast economic chasm which separated White and Coloured members of the community at that time. In addition, these two case studies reveal the striking disparity between the experiences of Black and White 'booringe' of the village at that time, and indeed the difference in opportunities which South Africa afforded to Black and White people. This difference in economic opportunity was reflected in the story of Neil Sheard and Bootjie Barendse which was related earlier in this chapter.

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14. The youngest (a little girl of four) was drowned in a dam on his farm. Sharwood Pienaar has never recovered from this loss.
 15. It is believed to be the oldest house in the village.
 16. The butcher-shop was housed in the building which is now the bottle store, owned by Sharwood Pienaar's half-brother.

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Although the young Herbert Sharwood arrived in South Africa with no material wealth of any kind, he was able to find work with a White farmer and then, merely by virtue of the colour of his skin, could cross the unstated boundary which separated English and Afrikaans-speaking Whites at that time. Having married into a wealthy White family, and having found favour with his new father-in-law, he was given funds to purchase a shop, which provided him with a steady income. Herbert Sharwood's daughter subsequently married into the wealthy Pienaar family, which guaranteed Sharwood Pienaar of a sizeable inheritance. Thus for him there have been many opportunities and options in life. Primary school education was taken for granted, and continuing with secondary education presented no financial problems to his family. Assured of a stable income, he was able to make the decision to leave school at Std 8 level. Later in life, having inherited a valuable farm, he was able to choose between farming or starting a business venture in the village.

In contrast, Ouma Gongo's entire life has been controlled by the actions of White members of the community, and she has had little or no freedom of choice. Attending school was never an option as she was required to stay at home and look after the younger children. Thus illiterate and uneducated, Ouma Gongo's only option was to find employment as a domestic worker. The only real independence she and her family had at that time was in the construction of their house, and even in this respect, they were restricted to utilising the cheap land available in the location and to building with locally acquired materials which cost them nothing. Whereas Sharwood inherited a valuable property with water rights, Ouma Gongo had merely a hand-written receipt for the land which her mother had purchased. As will be seen in the following chapter, this receipt proved to be worthless.

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been argued that people's subjective reconstruction of the past is a major factor in shaping the way they view the contemporary world. In the early history of Nieu Bethesda several factors gave rise to White people adopting a paternalistic attitude towards the Black population. Conversely the notion that Black people are so innately immature and inefficient that they are unable to take control of their own lives

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without guidance from Whites became absorbed by both the Black and White population of Nieu Bethesda. This became a major factor in shaping the way people in the village related to each other. For both the Black and White population kinship has always been a key factor in uniting the people of Nieu Bethesda and in defining the parameters of social networks in the isolated environment in which they live.

Unlike apartheid, the implementation and demise of which can be traced to definite dates, paternalism cannot be said to have started or ended at a certain time. Indeed, decades before overt segregationist policies were acknowledged and accepted, paternalism with its implied racist connotations, was a philosophy which children of all ethnic groups absorbed from an early age. For more than two centuries the need for subservience has been instilled in Black people from their childhood days, both by their parents and by Whites.

Through lack of education, Blacks in Nieu Bethesda were unable to compete with Whites in the search for employment, which further entrenched their dependence on the White community. Indeed, like the slaves whom Shell (1994:224) described, they were 'scheduled for perpetual childhood and dependence, and the demeaning obscurity that [went] with that fate'. Conversely, the high degree of illiteracy or semi-literacy of the Black community increased the feelings of paternalism and superiority of the White minority in the village. In addition, the Church was extremely successful in ensuring that the judgements made from a position of illegitimate power were accepted and considered moral by the community.

As was previously pointed out, paternalism does not exist in a vacuum, and is not a bounded and clearly definable policy (such as apartheid) but rather an ethos which insidiously pervades a community. Thus in Nieu Bethesda, centuries before the introduction of apartheid, paternalism can be seen to have played a major role in defining social interaction between ethnic groups. When the National Party took over the reins of government in 1948, the paternalistic attitude which Whites had adopted towards people of colour for more than a century in Nieu Bethesda had prepared the ground for the implementation of apartheid policies.

CHAPTER FOUR

In an apartheid worldview, ethnicity represents the basic condition for negotiating a human identity
(Chidester, 1992:11).

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the apartheid era and the impact which apartheid had on life in Nieu Bethesda. While many aspects of apartheid did not affect the day-to-day lives of residents of the village in the same way that it did in other parts of South Africa, the implementation of the Group Areas Act dramatically changed the social character¹ of Nieu Bethesda. For this reason, the Group Areas Act and the effects which its implementation had on the village will be examined in detail.

However, one should be very careful not to reduce the effects of apartheid only to specific legislative measures. As this chapter shows, although several changes did indeed take place in Nieu Bethesda during the apartheid era, not all can be regarded as being directly attributable to apartheid. Many houses which had been owned by Black people for generations became available for resale when their owners were forced to move out of what was then proclaimed a White residential area. When these houses were sold, they were often purchased (at extremely low prices) by people from other parts of South Africa, which resulted in a number of additions to the permanent population of the village. These newcomers brought with them fresh ideas and perspectives, and breathed new life into the conservative little village.

Nieu Bethesda never experienced the violence of pass-raids and political unrest which characterised life for Black South Africans in most other areas of the country. However, it is argued that, even in the absence of physical violence, apartheid can be regarded as a violent system which constituted a violation of human rights. Degenaar (1990:70) points out that although the concept of violence is usually understood in its physical form only, the structural or psychological aspects of violence are equally important. Secondly, the fact that there was no overt or organised opposition to apartheid in Nieu

¹ By social character is meant the interaction which takes place between the residents of the village, at all levels of daily activity

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Bethesda, does not imply that the apartheid legislation that was adopted after 1948 was accepted by the entire population. As is shown in this chapter, several residents - both Black and White - were not prepared to accept the injustices of the system, and did, in fact, consistently challenge, confront and resist the implementation and provisions of the apartheid regime.

Two institutions - the Town Council and the DRC - were a significant influence during this period. During the apartheid era the DRC was the most powerful voice to disseminate government policies in Nieu Bethesda, and its influence in this period is therefore discussed. The role of the Town Council and creation of the Management Committee in this period, as well as the reaction of Black people to these bodies, is examined.

Remarks made to me by several Black people intimate that the strong ethos of obedience to the tenets of Christianity, which developed in Nieu Bethesda over two centuries, made it easier for them to accept their marginalised status. As one informant put it:

In the apartheid days, we felt that we just had to accept everything that happened to us, although we were unhappy about apartheid. I became convinced of this through reading the Bible and by the words of the hymns '*Jou God is skoon en kyk hoe alles verander*' ('Your God is beautiful and see how everything changes').

Another informant remarked ruefully:

Die lewe is swaar. Die boere besit alles in the dorp en ons bruin mense moet so sukkel. Maar die Here sê jy mag nie kla nie.
(Life is hard. The farmers own everything in the village and us Coloured folk have to struggle so much. But the Lord says you should not complain.)

The ethic of paternalistic concern shown by Whites towards Black people in Nieu Bethesda played a vital role in preparing both sections of the community for the implementation of apartheid legislation. Thus when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, Blacks in this village were already so accustomed to having their lives regulated and controlled by the numerically insignificant White minority, that a firm

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foundation of segregation existed upon which to develop the ideology of apartheid and build its structures.

The introduction of apartheid in South Africa

Although the implementation of the ideology of apartheid is generally associated with the victory of the National Party in 1948, in practice it took several years for the implications (and later the effects) of this new policy to filter through to all parts of the country. This was particularly the case in smaller rural areas, such as Nieu Bethesda, where people were not subjected to many of the indignities and acts of humiliation that their urban counterparts suffered in their daily lives in the apartheid era.

The apartheid laws which were seen to cause the greatest hardship to Black South Africans were the Population Registration Act of 1950, (in terms of which every citizen of South Africa was allocated to a specific racial category); the Group Areas Act of 1950, (which proclaimed designated residential and business areas for use solely by specific 'population groups'); the web of legislation relating to influx control (which not only separated millions of men from their families, but filled South Africa's prisons with people who were guilty only of being in an urban area without permission); the Separate Amenities Act of 1953, (which required strict racial segregation to be enforced in all public amenities) and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and Section 10 of the Immorality Act, which outlawed sexual relations between 'races'.

Many of the apartheid laws which so drastically altered the lives of other South Africans scarcely affected the village of Nieu Bethesda. Since there were virtually no public amenities - such as cinemas, theatres, beaches, restaurants, sportsfields or public transport - the Separate Amenities Act had little impact on the village. Separate sections for 'Europeans' and 'Non-Europeans' in the post office and the bottle-store, were therefore the only changes needed to comply with the Separate Amenities Act. However, when Coloured people wanted to have film shows in the garage of the old *pastorie* (rectory) which was situated in the 'White' area, it was necessary to obtain a permit to do so. Such permission was readily granted by the Town Council, but, as the following extract from Ds O A Cloete's letter shows, the issue was taken seriously:

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Die byeenkomste sal net deur Kleurlinge as die enigste nie-blankes bygewoon word. Daar mag 'n páár kinders opdaag uit gemengde huwelike - Kleurling en Bantoe - maar hulle word as Kleurlinge aanvaar. Ek wil dit beklemtoon dat die motorhuis aan 'n buitestraat, vêr van blankes geleë is en dat ek onderneem dat niemand gesteur word nie. Die kinders veral word onder streng dissipline om nie 'n geraas (hard praat, lag, skree ens.) te maak nie. (The gathering will only be attended by Coloureds as the only non-whites. A few children from mixed marriages - Coloured and Bantu - may turn up but they are accepted as Coloureds. I would like to emphasise that the garage is situated in an outside road, far from whites and that I undertake to ensure that nobody will be disturbed. The children will be strictly disciplined not to make a noise (loud talking, laughing, shouting etc.) (Letter from Ds Cloete, 18/04/1975 in Municipal records).

With no industry and few employment opportunities, residents of the village were more than adequately able to supply any local demand for labour. There were thus no migrant labourers in the Sneeuberg district. Prior to 1948, it appears that sexual relations between Blacks and Whites were virtually non-existent, and, as this situation did not change in the apartheid years, there was no need for the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, and Section 10 of the Immorality Act to be enforced.

Nieu Bethesda and the Group Areas Act

While it is generally accepted that apartheid began when the National Party came to power in 1948, to most people in Nieu Bethesda, formal apartheid is understood as having commenced only when the Group Areas Act came into effect in the village in 1967.²

In terms of the Group Areas Act (No.41) of 1950 all people who did not fit neatly into the racial classification designated for the area in which they lived, were forced to leave their homes and be rehoused in an area designated for their 'population group'. The declared aim of the Group Areas Act was:

² . It is an interesting fact that people in small-scale societies often acknowledge a completely different calendar of historical dates, as their memory of events relates only to the time when their lives were personally affected by episodes of history. Thus events were dated as 'the year of the great flu epidemic', 'the year when our men returned from the war', and other similar events which, although apparently of little national consequence, served as time-markers of a particular era in Nieu Bethesda.

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...to achieve total racial homogeneity in each residential zone and a 'satisfactory' disposition of such zones in any given settlement... (Western, 1981:70).

This Act, which Erika Theron referred to as 'the apartheid legislation which has caused the most embitterment and estrangement' (1981:x) was certainly the one measure in the intricate maze of apartheid laws which irrevocably altered the appearance and social character of Nieu Bethesda.

In her study of changing residential patterns and relationships in the rural village of Greyton in the 1980's, Robinson remarked:

The hardship and frustration caused by these provisions is felt as keenly in a small farming community...as it is in urban residential areas. In fact where agricultural land provides the main source of subsistence, it is clear that removal from that land separates the owners from their means of production as well as their homes and results in additional financial loss (1986:5).

On 8 September 1967, in terms of Proclamation No.205, all the land lying to the east of the Gats River (the river which bisects the village from north to south) was proclaimed 'White' area. The land to the west, which contained most of the fertile farming land in the village, and where many White people had been living for more than a century, was proclaimed 'Coloured' area. No designated 'Bantu' area was proclaimed in Nieu Bethesda in terms of the Group Areas Act, at this or at any later stage.

However, before this proclamation was implemented, it was reversed and a rocky area at the foot of a hill, about a kilometre from the village (and beyond the fertile farming land on the eastern side of the Gats River), was declared 'Coloured' area. There are two entirely different and conflicting versions of why this was done.

Many of the older Coloured residents of Pienaarsig told me that they believed that the original proclamation could never have been acceptable to the White population, as they would have suffered substantial losses had it been implemented. To the west of the Gats river, there were several well-established houses owned by members of the Pienaar family. These homes were built on *watererwe* (plots which have water rights) and occupied some of the most fertile land in the valley. The White owners would definitely not, I was told, have wanted to give up their family homes on such valuable

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properties, even for the sake of the implementation of apartheid policies. For this reason, many Black people believe, the Whites of Nieu Bethesda insisted on using their authority to have the proclamation changed.

White residents of Nieu Bethesda to whom I spoke had an entirely different account of why the original proclamation was reversed. They told me that as the Coloured population was well established on the east side of the Gats River, where there were already a school and churches, they felt it would have been unfair to move them to another part of the village. Also, since several Coloured families had lived on plots with water rights (on the western side of the Gats River), it was felt that it would be unfair to move them to *droë erwe* (plots without water rights). Thus, I was told, out of concern for their Black neighbours, the Whites of Nieu Bethesda sought to have the proclamation changed so that Coloured people could be relocated in an area where running water could be obtained from a borehole.

In 1974 a leading member of the Coloured community wrote an impassioned plea to the Council, requesting that if the Group Areas Act was to be enforced, at least Coloured people should be relocated in an area of which they approved:

...maar dat ons wil hê wat ons voel kom ons toe. Ons sal met niks ander tevrede wees nie.

Ons Kleurlinge besef dat daar opofferings gemaak sal moet word, maar die burgermeester kan getuig dat ons mense bereid is om dit te doen, maar nie sonder voorwaardes nie. So byvoorbeeld gaan jy nie jou grond verruil vir kalk en klippe nie soos een van die sprekers dit gestel het. Ons doen dus 'n besoek op die blankes om ook opofferings te maak.

Dis te begryp dat die Kleurlinge sal voel dat die hele ding die swaarste op hul skouers kom lê het en dan met wantrouige oë na die blanke sal kyk want die meeste gaan hul eiendomme verloor en gaan daar oorkant baie slegter daaraan toe wees. En watter blankes gaan nou eintlik getref word? As hierdie 'n skewe beeld van die blanke is, kan die munisipaliteit dit nog regstel. Dis nog nie te laat nie.

Meneer, kan u werklik sê: Ons was ons hande in onskuld. Die Kleurling leef graag in vrede met almal. Hy is egter ook maar 'n mens met 'n gevoel en wil dus hê dat andere sy gevoel sal respekteer soos hulle van hom verwag. Blankes moet kennis dra van daardie gevoel.

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(...but that we want what we feel is our right. We will not be satisfied with anything else.

We Coloureds realise that sacrifices will have to be made, but the mayor can vouch that our people are prepared to do that, but not without conditions. So for instance you are not going to exchange your land for lime and stones as one of the speakers suggested. We therefore make an appeal to the Whites to also make sacrifices.

It is understandable that the Coloureds will feel that the whole thing rests heavily on their shoulders and that they will then look at the Whites with mistrustful eyes because most will lose their properties and will go over there far worse off. And what Whites will actually be affected? If this is a slanted picture of the White person, the municipality can still put it right. It is still not too late.

Sir, can you really say: We wash our hands in innocence. The Coloured wants to live in peace with everyone. He is however also a person with feelings and thus wants others to respect his feelings in the way that is expected of him. Whites should be aware of these feelings. (9.11.74)³

In spite of vehement protests from the Coloured community, the proclamation was indeed reversed and building on the new township a kilometre to the east of the village was commenced. The first people to be rehoused were those living in the 'location' in stone and clay houses, most of which were in an extremely dilapidated and run-down condition. In many instances, I was told by White residents, walls had collapsed and roofs were sagging making the houses unfit for families to live in. There was no running water in the 'location' and domestic water was obtained from a well, and carried in buckets to the house. Some people rented the plot on which the stone houses were built, while others had purchased land years before. Few of the people living in the 'location' had authentic Deeds of Sale, although some had hand-written receipts for the purchase of land.

Although many of the original residents of the 'location' spoke nostalgically of their happy days in these old houses, Sister Retief, who was the (White) district nurse and midwife during the apartheid years, told me of the dreadful conditions under which people had lived in the 'location'. She recounted her experiences of delivering babies, while standing knee-deep in mud, with no running water available.

³ Records contained in Municipal Office, Nieu Bethesda.

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We see, therefore, that many Whites in Nieu Bethesda were able to convince themselves that they were acting in the interests of Black people when enforcing some of the most evil laws of the land. As Jack posits:

Since we human beings are 'rational' creatures who act to maximise, or at the least, to optimize what we believe to be 'goods' or pleasure for ourselves, those who wish to influence our actions normally do so by trying to show implicitly or explicitly that acting in the way they want us to will be 'good' for us (1983:172).

There were, however, numerous instances of White people merely using the shield of apartheid as a legitimate means of enriching themselves at the expense of the Black population. Several properties which had previously been owned by Black people were bought by Whites in the village at unrealistically low prices.⁴ Moreover, as was so symptomatic of the apartheid regime, the decision to build new houses for the Black population was a unilateral one. At no stage were the residents of the 'location' consulted on their feelings about the move.

The new township became known as Pienaarsig (literally 'view of the Pienaars'). Considering that the Pienaars own most of the surrounding farming land as well as most of the land in the village itself, it seemed an appropriate choice. The name, I was told, was selected in a competition for a suitable name for the new township (for which a prize of R1 was offered) which was held amongst school children. Some of the inhabitants of Pienaarsig felt that, given the history of exclusion of Black people, this was a cynical choice. They told me that they did not want to be constantly reminded that they looked down on all that the Pienaars owned, while they had scant chance of accumulating any wealth in Nieu Bethesda. Others, however, felt that it was a 'beautiful' and most 'suitable' name considering 'all that the Pienaars had done for them', and considering that so many Pienaars had been involved in establishing the township!

⁴ On 08/04/1975 Plots 189, 190 and 193 (the estate of the late Siena Merrington) were sold as one unit to Brigadier Roberts (a life-time resident of Nieu Bethesda) for the sum of R750 (Municipal records).
In May 1984 Plots 397, 405, 411-419 Agatha Street, and 391-395 Van Heerden Street were advertised for R200 each. Objections were called for. (Municipal records).

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The funds to build Pienaarsig emanated from the Department of Community Development. The cost of the houses (which were subsidised by the Department of Community Development) was R3 610 for a four-roomed house and R1 284 for a two-roomed house. Occupants paid according to their income, and costs varied from R3,50 - R8,94 per month. Many Black people who had previously owned small plots of land were forced to forfeit their grazing rights, as the houses in Pienaarsig were all acquired on a system of hire-purchase, and the tenants did not therefore own the land on which they were built.⁵ The land which had been used as commonage was then leased to White farmers, providing the Municipality with a substantial source of revenue. As the houses in Pienaarsig are all built on rocky ground, there is little chance of residents growing any fruit or vegetables as they had done in former years.

The first moves to Pienaarsig took place in 1974. On leaving their homes, the houses were immediately demolished and the stones with which they were built, that people had laboriously dragged down from the nearby mountain with donkeys, were deposited in the river bed. The move to the newly established township was met with mixed emotions. Although delighted at the prospect of acquiring more modern houses, and of being relieved of the labour of drawing water from the well every day, to most people the demolishing of their former homes was a traumatic experience. These often shoddily constructed dwellings had been their homes, where they had lived for all or most of their lives and it was, I was told, extremely distressing to see them being reduced to heaps of rubble.

The houses in Pienaarsig which were basic sub-economic units with no individuality or variation in design, were allocated on a hire-purchase system to Black residents of Nieu Bethesda by the Department of Community Development. The monthly instalment payable included the cost of 'services'. Services were, however, very limited - there is no water-borne sanitation, until 1992 there was no electricity, and the dusty roads are not provided with street lights.

⁵ Previously, all landowners had grazing rights. See Case 4.3, page 89, for details of such grazing rights.

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Once all the houses in the 'location' (now known as the 'old location') had been demolished, the small group of Black people living in the area known as the 'erwe'⁶ were visited by a member of the Town Council and informed that their properties were required for the building of a new school and that they would be rehoused in Pienaarsig⁷. All the people living in the erwe owned the land on which their property stood, and therefore had grazing rights which entitled them to keep a certain number of livestock. In addition to their livestock, most residents in the erwe had gardens where they kept poultry and cultivated fruit and vegetables for domestic consumption. Some even produced a surplus which they were able to sell.

In order to remunerate people who were in possession of a Deed of Sale for the cost of their land, the Town Council asked the Department of Community Development for a loan of R11 580. When the old houses were demolished, if the owner could not be traced, the compensation owed to them was lodged at the Master's Office in Grahamstown in a trust fund known as the *Bevolkings Ontwikkeling Program* (Population Development Programme). In order to claim their money residents were required to provide proof that they were descendants of the original owner of the property.⁸

In 1982 the *Eastern Province Herald* reported that people who visited Nieu Bethesda were impressed with '...the quietness, the serenity and the cheapness of the land. A fair-sized plot can be bought for as little as R110.'⁹ Needless to say, these cheap plots (many of which had previously been owned by Black people who had been moved to Pienaarsig when the Group Areas Act was implemented) were available only to White people.

The experiences of Jannie, an octogenarian living in Pienaarsig, of the implementation of the Group Areas Act are described in the following case study.

⁶. The area where the new Lettie de Klerk school now stands.

⁷. Ouma Gongo, whose family's history was outlined in the previous chapter was one of this group. Each time the permits expired, the Town Clerk reapplied, informing the Department that there was still no suitable accommodation available.

⁸. This information was given to me verbally by Stirling Pienaar, a former mayor of Nieu Bethesda, and one of the most well-known farmers in the district.

⁹. *Eastern Province Herald*, 10 March 1982.

Case 4.1: Jannie

When the Group Areas Act came in, I was told that I would have to move from my property (which was left to me by my father-in-law when he died), as the area was to become a White area. The Deed of Sale still had my father-in-law's name on it. I should have had the property transferred to me and the Master from the Group Areas Board told me to send my wedding certificate and my Deed of Sale to the agent in Pretoria. So I did as he told me and then when he asked for it again, I was told that I could not get the Deed of Sale, as I had to leave the area because of Group Areas. They were taking over the land. There were only two witnesses to the will, and they told me that it was not valid as I needed three witnesses. So they cancelled the will and gave me R550 for the house. The Baases in Pretoria told me what to do. Then I was told by the Bethesda Municipality to go and reserve a house for myself in Pienaarsig. The first decision of the Group Areas was that Coloured people should live to the east of the Gats River, but this was reversed. I don't know why and I never got my marriage certificate. I was not keen on living in Pienaarsig so I decided to leave and go and live in Port Elizabeth. I stayed there for about eight months, but I was ill with asthma all the time and the doctors told me that I needed to get away to a drier climate so I came back to Bethesda. I came back with my second wife Katrina who I met in Port Elizabeth and married in 1973. Katrina was a widow with seven surviving children. Four of her younger children came back with us to Bethesda in the mid-70s. When I came back I saw the mayor, and asked if I could have a house as promised, and was told that I was no longer eligible for a house as I had left Bethesda for Port Elizabeth. I was very upset about this as I felt that they had gone back on their word. I left and went to stay with my cousin on a farm, and immediately I recovered from my asthma. Then I came back to Bethesda and went to see the mayor again and demanded to be given a house in the place of my birth. I was first given a two-roomed house, in Graham Street, but after my sister's death they offered me her house in Hartzenberg Street with four rooms for me and my wife and four children. The other children were in Cape Town. I did not want to stay in Hartzenberg Street because *'dis 'n helse straat daai, die mense bly dronk en hulle vloek en skel'* (that's a terrible street where people are always drunk and swear and scream). Then the Town Clerk told me that I was a Christian and it was my Christian duty to stay amongst people who were not Christians and to influence them for the better. I accepted this, and tried my best to get on with everybody. Six years later I was given the house I was originally promised in Graham Street, this four-roomed house where I now stay

I feel nothing about my old home being demolished. But I feel it was unfairly evaluated by the White Baas from Port Elizabeth. It involved a long struggle with lawyers to get anything for the house, and I received far too little for it. The R550 which I was paid out I divided between my grandchildren. If I had been allowed to keep the house, it would have been worth a lot of money today.

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This account exemplifies the degree of confusion which accompanied the transfer to Pienaarsig of many illiterate or semi-literate people. Jannie, who was accustomed to 'doing as he was told', carried out all the instructions regarding his Deed of Sale, in the belief that the 'White Baas' would sort out his affairs for him. When told that his will had been cancelled and he had no option but to accept the R550 for the home he had inherited, he left Nieu Bethesda. However, his life-long ties with the village proved too strong, and he returned, only to find that he was no longer eligible to obtain a house in the new township. Jannie, however, unlike many other Black people in Nieu Bethesda, refused to accept this decision and continued to challenge the ruling until he was given a house.

Elsie, a Coloured resident living in the White area had similar experiences, but was more fortunate than Jannie, as the following case study shows.

Case 4.2: Elsie

In 1960 Elsie and her husband felt that they wanted a home of their own and purchased the house in which they are presently living, from a 'Coloured gentleman' who was leaving Nieu Bethesda to live in Graaff Reinet. They received a Deed of Sale for the four-roomed house which cost them about £20.

When Elsie's grandfather died in the late 1950s, her mother's brother, Japie Adams, inherited his parent's house in Lekoog¹⁰ and his mother continued living there. Mr Adams was later persuaded by a leading member of the White community in Nieu Bethesda to exchange this house which was built on a *watererf* (a plot with water rights), for a property nearer to the village, which he was told, would be more suitable for his mother (Elsie's grandmother). This was agreed to and the exchange took place with the Adams family receiving a Deed of Sale for their new property. When Elsie's grandmother died in 1968, her Uncle Japie Adams lived in the house for a while and later sold it to the present White owners.

The remains of their old house at Lekoog is still standing and Elsie says the plot has great value as agricultural land as it has plenty of water and the ground is extremely fertile. When her grandfather lived there he had orchards which produced so many peaches that he was able to sell the surplus in the street, in addition to the great variety of vegetables which he grew. She says '*Ons het geëet van daai erf*' ('We used to eat from that plot').

¹⁰ Lekoog was one of the original farms which was purchased to establish the branch of the Dutch Reformed Church in Nieu Bethesda.

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Elsie feels that they were cheated in the swop - when they did the deal the Town Clerk insisted that the old Deed of Sale for the house on Lekoog should be burnt, before they received a Deed of Sale for their new house. She claims that her family suffered a great loss through being duped into an unfair deal.

In 1967 the Davids family was visited by two White people from Port Elizabeth who told them they would have to leave their house because of the Group Areas Act. They also received a letter telling them that they were illegal occupants, as the area in which they were living had been declared a White area. Due to the intervention of a White resident of Nieu Bethesda, they subsequently received a letter granting them permission to remain in their house on a permit which could be renewed each year. Now that the Group Areas legislation has been scrapped, Elsie is delighted that she will be able to leave the house to her children.

In 1990 the Davids family were helped by Billy Kingwill to build on to the house so that Elsie's paternal aunt, who had worked for the Kingwill's for many years and looked after him when he was a child, could live with them. Mr Kingwill paid for and built all the additions to the house, but said that if the Davids family ever asked Elsie's aunt to leave, they would have to pay him out the full sum of R2000, which amounted to the cost of the building.

From the contrasting experiences she had in her property transactions with Whites, Elsie made several deductions. Firstly, she came to understand the harsh reality of the powerlessness of illiterate or semi-literate people of colour, when dealing with Whites. Secondly she discovered, for the first time, that generalities should not be applied to any group of people, whatever their colour or creed. Although it was indeed true that White people were responsible for the implementation of the Group Areas Act, and in Nieu Bethesda most Whites were extremely enthusiastic about enforcing the Act, yet it was through the intervention of concerned White people in the village that Elsie and her family were able to continue living in their home.

Ouma Gongo (Case 3.3, page 89) described her feelings at having to move to Pienaarsig:

I was visited by a member of the Town Council and told that all the houses in the location were to be demolished and replaced with better houses and that I would receive recompensation for my land. It was explained to me that the plots on which my house stood were needed for the new school building. I was perfectly happy in my big house and did not want to move at all. I protested and argued with the Town Council, but I was one of the few who did not want to move, and one person

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cannot fight the government alone. So my family and I had no option. We just had to watch the home which my parents had so carefully built being demolished, and move into the new township. When I saw my house being demolished, I felt desperately sad, and to this day my heart is heavy when I think of it. On the day when I had to leave my home, I told the authorities '*gaan haal die geweer laat ek vir my en al my kinders doodskiet*'. ('Go and fetch a gun and let me shoot myself and all my children'.)

The move to a smaller house meant that I would no longer be allowed to keep livestock and I was told that I would have to dispose of all her animals. Reluctantly, I was forced to sell the animals, which had provided my family with much of our food. Most of the animals were sold to Whites for prices far below their actual value. The walls of the new house were not plastered, there were no ceilings and no floors, and my family and I set about making it more comfortable. We plastered all the walls, put linos on all the floors and planted a small vegetable garden.

Separation of Coloured and 'Bantu' residents of Pienaarsig

In 1979 certain members of the Coloured community, who had now become aware of the relative advantage which their classification as gave them over 'African' began to agitate for the removal of Africans from Pienaarsig. A prominent Coloured resident wrote to the Town Council, asking that African people be given their own residential area:

Vier jaar gelede het die stadsraad ons by monde van die huidige burgermeester belowe dat daar 'n aparte woonbeurt vir die Bantoes sal wees. Ek vra dus dat u hierdie belofte sal nakom.

Verder wil ek vra dat die betrokke mense daardie wonings ontsê word en dat Kleurlinge, wat dit nodig het, daarin gevestig word. Dit is immers nog regeringsbeleid dat Kleurlinge en Bantoes apart sal woon.

(Four years ago the Town Council, through the present mayor, promised that there would be a separate residential area for the Bantus. I am therefore asking you to fulfil this promise.

Further I would like to ask that the people concerned be denied those houses and that Coloureds, who need them, be established there. It is indeed government policy that Coloureds and Bantus should live apart.)
(Letter dated 14/05/1979 in Municipal records).

To this, the Council replied as follows:

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Die Raad is verplig om die Bantoes, onmiddellik, te ontruim, daar die terrein van die skool dringend benodig word. Dit is, derhalwe, noodsaaklik om die genoemde Bantoes en anders so gou moontlik, te huisves. By die afsterwe of vertrek van die teenwoordige Bantoes, sal geen nuwes hier huisvesting kry nie, die vergunning is net vir die ou bestaande inwoners vir wie die Raad verantwoordelik voel.

(The Council is obliged to evacuate the Bantus immediately as the ground is urgently needed for the school. It is, moreover, essential to accommodate these Bantu, and others as quickly as possible. On the death or departure of the present Bantu, no new ones will be granted housing, as this concession is only for the old existing residents for whom the Council feels responsible.)

(Municipal records, correspondence dated 18/05/79).

Thus, with no 'Bantu' residential area having been proclaimed in Nieu Bethesda, the Town Council decided to separate the Coloured and Xhosa-speaking people and move those deemed to be Xhosa to another area. However, since all families of Xhosa origin had a history of some degree of inter-marriage with 'Coloureds', deciding who was to be moved presented a problem. It was thus decided that every family where the male head of the household was in possession of a 'Bantu' pass, should be considered to be 'Bantu', and moved to the new 'Bantu' area. The families selected in this manner, who were by this time established in their new homes in Pienaarsig, were visited by a member of the Town Council and informed that they were living illegally in a Coloured area and would have to move again. The area to which they were moved was named Kloof Street (as it is on the side of a rocky mountain) although the area was, and still is known to all its residents as *Sonderwater* (Without Water). In total 22 houses were thus established in Kloof Street.

The following case study of one couple's experiences during this period of Nieu Bethesda's history illustrates some of the issues which confronted the so-called 'Bantu' people of Nieu Bethesda in the apartheid years, and in particular the way in which they were affected by the implementation of the Group Areas Act.

Case 4.3: Sanna and Freddie

In the early '70s Sanna was visited by a member of the Town Council who told her that the old location was to be demolished and that better houses would be built for the Black people of Nieu Bethesda. They were overjoyed at the prospect of acquiring a more modern house with running water and felt very grateful to the Whites of the village for looking after the interests of the Black people in this way.

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When the first houses were nearing completion, many Black families were consulted as to whom they would prefer to have as neighbours. Thus, to some extent, the fabric of social life which had existed in the old location was preserved when they moved to the new township. When the family moved into Pienaarsig, they were delighted with their new home, and immediately began developing and improving their property. As the houses initially did not have floors, they put cement floors in the house, some of which they covered with linoleum. They built a wood shed at the back of the house and Sanna planted fruit trees and vegetables in the garden. They were really pleased with their new home and felt they had benefited from the move, although living costs were higher.

Having lived happily in Pienaarsig for about five years, Sanna was visited by a member of the Town Council and told that as she was married to a 'Bantu', she would no longer be able to live in the 'Coloured' area. It was explained to her that it was government policy for Coloured and 'Bantu' people to be separated and that a separate residential area was to be created for 'Bantu' people. Sanna was most upset about the prospect of yet another move, but offered no opposition - *'ek was nie grootgemaak om teen blankes se wil te gaan nie'* (I was not brought up to go against the will of White people). She said that the details of government policy were explained 'very nicely' to her by the Councillor, and it was not for her to argue with Whites. She felt the government must know what they were doing and have good reasons for wanting them to move again. Freddie, however, was not so accepting and initially intimated that he had no intention of leaving their new home. But having heard stories of what happened to Blacks who transgressed the laws of the land, he was nervous about offering any opposition to the Town Council.

Thus, when the new house was finished, with great reluctance, the family moved to Kloof Street. Sanna and Freddie were not recompensed for any of the improvements made to their house in Pienaarsig, and had to start all over again making the house comfortable. As the soil in Kloof Street is extremely rocky and there is very little water, there was no chance of making a garden. The older children refused to live in Kloof Street and left Nieu Bethesda to look for work in Cape Town.

The fact that her husband had to carry a pass in the apartheid years while she was not required to do so did not worry Sanna at all - she says the government knew what they were doing and must have had their reasons for requiring Black people to be issued with passes. Her children, however, refused to have passes and changed their surnames to Sanna's maiden name. The first three children were born before Sanna and Freddie were married and thus had their mother's surname (Toontjies), but the later children all had their father's surname, Botlani. Sanna doesn't know how the three younger children changed their

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surname to Toontjes but thinks it was through the magistrate. She is aware that the fact that his children did not want to bear his surname was painful to Freddie, but feels that her children must have had reasons for doing so, even if she does not understand their motivation.

Sanna and Freddie say that there had never been any strife between Africans and Coloureds and they had all lived together without any problems. They feel that there was no need for the move to Kloof Street, (many of whose residents can not even speak Xhosa) and that the 'sorting out' of people according to colour has resulted in a greater awareness of ethnic differences. They are not happy in the Kloof Street house and have nothing in common with their neighbours. In the old location and in their first house in Pienaarsig the close relationship with their neighbours that they enjoyed has gone for ever. Reflecting on her feelings about the injustices of life, Sanna said:

I often used to feel bitter about Whites having so much in comparison to Black people, but then I read my Bible and realised that it was a sin to covet, so I tried to put it out of my mind. All I have ever really wanted and what I still want most in life is a big house so that all my six children can visit me with their children. I have never longed for anything else in life. Maybe God will answer my prayer one day.

Sanna and Freddie, who unlike Jannie, were not willing to challenge the authority of Whites, complied with the instruction to move to Kloof Street. This was not an instruction which could have been enforced by law, had the 'Bantu' families contested the legality of being moved, when no 'Bantu' area had been proclaimed in Nieu Bethesda. Accustomed as they were to doing as they were told, they were too nervous to disobey any White instruction and moved again at considerable personal loss to themselves.

Ouma Gongo was not as compliant as Sanna and Freddie, and refused to be moved for a second time:

Case 4.4: Ouma Gongo

After a few years of living in the new house, I was visited and told by a member of Council that the law had changed and that Xhosa and Coloured people were no longer allowed to live together, but had to be 'sorted' according to race. I was told that a new section was being built for the Xhosa people and when the houses were completed I would be forced to move again. I refused flatly and said they would have to carry me out of the house dead before I moved again. Twelve years later I am still staying in the house I was told to vacate.

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I must admit that the new house *is* more convenient, but I feel that we had a better life in her old house and were far happier in the home I had inherited from my parents. Living costs in the new house are much higher than they were when I was able to keep livestock, as now I have to buy all my food at prices Black people can't afford.

When I was told that my house was to be demolished I was promised recompensation, but no figure was mentioned. I feels it is a big scandal that they only paid me '*n kale R150*' (a miserable R150) for my house and the additional plot I owned.

In February 1981, Ouma Gongo's daughter, Mabel, who worked as a nursing sister at a clinic in Graaff Reinet, wrote to the Mayor of Nieu Bethesda, and enquired:

May I know then sir, since my mother has to leave the house she now occupies which is her own personal property and has to pay rent monthly for the council house she is to live in, what and when she is getting compensation for that? (Letter contained in Municipal records)

to which she received the reply:

The matter of your mother vacating her house and occupying one of the Council's was essential as explained to her. The question of compensation will take time as your mother cannot produce her transport.¹¹ As soon as her ownership can be proved, she will be duly compensated. Trusting this matter has been cleared. (Letter contained in Municipal records).

Georgina, a daughter of Ouma Gongo's who had left Nieu Bethesda several years previously, had gone to Bloemfontein, where she found work and married. In the early '80s, when the new houses in Pienaarsig were in the process of being built, Georgina's husband was murdered by *tsotsis* and she decided to return to Nieu Bethesda, where she had been born and brought up, to be with her elderly mother. In reply to her letter to the Council requesting a house in the new township, she received a letter telling her that when 'Bantu' people died or left Nieu Bethesda, no houses would be available to their family.

Die vergunning is net vir ou bestaande inwoners vir wie die Raad 'n verantwoordelikheid voel. Pienaarsig is 'n Kleurlinggebied en by die afsterwe van u moeder, Gongo, moet die huis aan 'n Kleurling toegesê word. Nieu Bethesda is nie Bantoe geproklameer nie en die Raad is dus nie by magte om huisvesting aan Bantoes te verskaf. (Records of Municipal Office)

¹¹. *Kaart en transport* is the Afrikaans term for Deed of Sale.

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(This concession is just for old existing residents for whom the Council feels a responsibility. Pienaarsig is a Coloured area and on the death of your mother, Gongo, the house must be promised to a Coloured. Nieu Bethesda has not been proclaimed for Bantus and the Council is thus not in a position to provide Bantus with housing.)

The establishment of a separate 'Bantu' area in Kloof Street is an example of how the notion of paternalism and the ideology of apartheid permeated the thinking of the people of Nieu Bethesda (Black as well as White). Legally, the Town Council could not have forced Xhosa-speaking people to move to a in Nieu Bethesda. Most of them were ill-informed of their legal status and unaware of their rights, and accustomed to following the tenet of '*die Wit baas weet wat is goed vir ons*' ('the White master knows what is best for us'). Thus, although many were reluctant to be moved yet again, they allowed themselves to be relocated in the barren area of Kloof Street, for fear of reprisal. Only Ouma Gongo stood firm in her refusal to obey the commands of the Town Council.

There is no doubt that many Whites had been extremely concerned about the '*haglike toestand*' (appalling conditions) in which many people in the 'location' lived, and that the Group Areas Act provided the ideal opportunity to use government funds to improve the housing situation in Nieu Bethesda. However, coupled with this genuine altruism, the Act gave Whites the opportunity of enriching themselves at the expense of the Black population, and of increasing the separation of racial groups, thus exacerbating existing racial divisions. As can be seen from the details of the sale of houses previously owned by Coloured people quoted on page 103, a few White people in the village used this opportunity to great advantage. However, the degree of altruism associated with the building of houses for Coloured people, was certainly not a factor in the decision to establish a separate area for 'Bantu' people. This section of the township was built merely to ensure that Nieu Bethesda could be seen to be a true model of the grand apartheid plan for South Africa.

Removal of Coloured residents from the 'White' area

Having completed the first stage in the implementation of the Group Areas Act, the Town Council of Nieu Bethesda then turned their attention to the Coloured people living

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in established houses, in what had by then been proclaimed 'White' residential area. These people were visited by a member of the Town Council and informed that they would have to vacate their homes, as they were now living illegally in the 'White' area. When vacated, the houses which Coloured people had owned were purchased by Whites¹² or by the Department of Community Development. In 1982 the Town Clerk reported to the Department of Community Development that there were still 22 Coloured families (approximately 100 people) living 'illegally' in the 'White' area of the village. (See *Appendix C*).

Several prominent Coloured people living in the 'White' residential area were granted permits to remain in their homes in the 'White' area of the village. These permits, which were applied for by the Town Clerk and renewed annually, were granted mainly to people who rendered valuable service to the community, such as Sister Alice Meyer, the district nurse and midwife, and her brother, Pieter Meyer, who was headmaster at the Lettie de Klerk school. In order to have the permit for such people renewed, the Town Clerk wrote annually to the Department of Community Development telling them that there was not yet any suitable housing available in Pienaarsig and thus the person for whom the permit was requested could not be rehoused. However, all these Coloured people who owned property in the 'White' area, were repeatedly reminded that on their death, their property would have to be sold to a White person.

In 1978, Sister Alice received a cordial letter from the Town Clerk, assuring her that her 'services, example and good influence in respect of the non-White occupants of Nieu Bethesda' were greatly appreciated. Further, the letter went on, 'the Council sees no reason for you to leave your dwelling while your services are of inestimable value to us'. However, in the final paragraph, Sister Alice was reminded that, in terms of the provisions of the Group Areas Act, on her death, the house in which she lived, which her father had bought and which his children had inherited, would not be able to be passed on to any member of the Meyer family, but would have to be sold to a White person¹³.

¹² Although there were instances of residents of Nieu Bethesda purchasing these houses, the majority of purchasers came from other parts of South Africa, such as Cape Town and Johannesburg.

¹³ Letter dated 20/04/1978 in Municipal Office records.

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Effects of the Group Areas Act on Nieu Bethesda

Although the Town Council (which was responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Group Areas Act), carried out their task with great enthusiasm, ironically, in Nieu Bethesda people were dispossessed of their property in a most considerate way. Nobody was moved until a new home was available, people were consulted as to whom they would prefer as neighbours, and as they were moved to within a kilometre's distance of their old homes, the implementation of the Act caused far less social dislocation than it did in other parts of South Africa. Indeed, for many people who had previously lived in the ramshackle and inconvenient stone and clay structures in the 'location', the new houses in Pienaarsig presented them with an opportunity to obtain housing which they would never otherwise have been able to afford.

A less charitable (and perhaps more realistic) view is that, as in many other parts of South Africa, some Whites in Nieu Bethesda eagerly seized the opportunity for self-enrichment with which they had been provided by the laws of the land. Whatever the motivation for its implementation, the Group Areas Act changed the appearance and character of the village for ever, and resulted in the impoverishment of the majority of the Black population. For many the loss of grazing rights and of available agricultural land deprived them of their subsistence, which given the lack of employment opportunities in Nieu Bethesda, was a serious loss. Most of their livestock owned by Black people were sold to Whites; Black people felt that they had often been forced to sell at prices far below their market value. In addition, the status which many people had acquired through ownership of property and livestock was removed, and everybody was reduced to a common living standard.

While it can indeed be argued that the new houses in Pienaarsig are more comfortable and convenient than the original shoddily built dwellings in which Black previously lived, and the establishment of this township thus constitutes a degree of progress, few residents of Pienaarsig agree that they are now in more favourable circumstances than they were in their old stone houses. Many informants intimated that in retrospect, had they been able to participate in the deliberations regarding the prospect of improving

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their living conditions, they would have preferred to have been given the opportunity to improve and upgrade or rebuild their existing houses, and remain in the 'old location'.

Shoddy as they were, even the houses in the 'location' bore a stamp of individuality, having been custom-made by their owners. People who had owned houses in the *erwe* claim that they had beautiful homes, spacious and personal, and that the advantages of owning livestock and arable land far outweighed the disadvantages of lack of running water and leaking roofs. As Jannie, an elderly resident of Pienaarsig, put it:

Pienaarsig does have its advantages, although I feel they should rather have upgraded all the old houses. They could easily have done so and people would have not been dislocated (*uit mekaar uit geruk*) in the way they have been. In the old days relations between us Coloured people and Whites were better than they are today and Coloured and Bantu people lived together in perfect harmony. In ploughing time and shearing time we all worked together as a team. Bantu and Coloured people knew their place and that's why relations were fine in the days before apartheid. That business of sending the Bantu people to Kloof Street was a disgrace as the ground is terrible in Kloof Street. I had many fights with the authorities over this.

Apart from the financial losses incurred by those Black people who had previously owned property in the 'White' area of the village, and the loss of grazing rights and access to agricultural land described in the previous chapter, the implementation of the Group Areas Act had far more than economic implications. Apart from its economic value, to most rural people:

...land is not merely an economic asset. It is the place of belonging of a person at which he or she may live and die and be a human being through face to face relationships with people who are close to him or her. Land is space that has been set aside and shaped by humans to live together and depend on one another in an orderly way. Land puts its marks on people and they in turn put their mark on the land (Kistner, 1990:21).

In summarising the findings and recommendations of the Theron Commission Report, Sheila van der Horst commented as follows:

Prior to the proclamation of group areas coloured persons lived largely in communities with status, churches, community halls, recreation facilities and so on, frequently erected on their own initiative and with their own funds. On the other hand, there were many instances of slum conditions having developed. Nevertheless, the life-style was on the whole peaceful, while contacts on a variety of terrains had led to healthy relations between white and coloured (1976:62)

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Other findings of the Theron Commission were that although the declared policy of residential segregation was intended to avoid friction, evidence was that the implementation of the Group Areas Act caused frustration and embitterment (*ibid*).

The move to Pienaarsig and the demolishing of their old stone houses was an irreversible step and one which rendered Black people even more dependent on the handful of Whites in the village than they had previously been. The culture of dependency which is one of the many results of decades of paternalism is, as has been stated throughout this thesis, a serious impediment to change. In addition, frustration caused by their greater inability to provide for their families, with minimal prospects of employment in the village resulted in an increase in the use of alcohol and dagga-smoking by the people of Pienaarsig, with the usual accompanying increase in domestic violence.

In discussing the effects of apartheid in Nieu Bethesda, Johnny (a young man from Pienaarsig, whose story is documented in case 4.6 on page 124) felt that the implementation of the Group Areas Act in the village had resulted in great losses to Black people, many of whom had been led to believe that the move to Pienaarsig represented a material gain:

Apartheid definitely made life harder for people, although they did not feel it as much in Bethesda because they had so few amenities. They don't realise that they have not really gained, but perhaps one day they will realise it - it was pure robbery the way houses were appropriated by the Department of Community Development and people lost out.

However, for those who had previously lived in the *erwe*, being forced to move to the new sub-economic houses, and to accepting a lowering of status, meant an economic loss to many, both in terms of produce from their land, and in terms of the capital which ownership of their land represented. Sandile Dikeni, whose grandfather, Voorslag Dikeni, had lived in the *erwe* wrote cynically of this chapter of Nieu Bethesda's history:

Where the massive house once stood stands a poplar tree. Dead. The stem, hollowed by disease; the tree stands ominous on the hot soil. Burning in my pocket is a hundred rands. The hundred rands they paid him [Voorslag Dikeni] for the land in 1978, the year Sobukwe died. (Cape Times, 24/07/1993).

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For others - those who owned potentially valuable property in the 'White' area - the loss was far greater. A number of Coloured people owned or rented houses to the west of the Gats River, where they had lived for generations. During the apartheid years, many houses and plots formerly owned by Coloured people were sold to Whites for extremely low prices¹⁴, and these properties then changed hands several times, each time for a higher price. Whereas until the beginning of the '90s, there were many houses standing vacant in the village, now almost every house has been sold and there is virtually no property available for resale in Nieu Bethesda.

Although the Group Areas Act has now been repealed, Coloured people who previously owned homes in the village have little or no prospect of ever being able to own that property again. Firstly, most Coloured people who were forced to sell their family homes to White people to comply with the provisions of the Group Areas Act, have left the village and are now established in other areas. Secondly, if a house in the village does become available for sale now, the price is far in excess of what most of the Coloured people living there can afford. This has caused a great deal of hard feeling, which will persist as long as the original owners or tenants of these houses are alive.

It took many years for people to realise fully the implications which the establishment of the new township would have on the social life of the village. The general feeling amongst the Coloured community today is that the implementation of Group Areas was the greatest disservice ever done to them. As Dikeni said, once people had been dispossessed of their land, it was irreversible:

...it is not easy to recover the land. It is not merely a case of taking out a hundred rands and saying: 'This was my grandfather's land - I want it back.' We cannot take out our Okapi knives and demand the land (Cape Times, 24/07/1993).

Local government during the apartheid era

The Municipality of Nieu Bethesda is (and always has been) managed by a Town Council. Although this council consisted solely of White members, in pre-apartheid

¹⁴ See footnote on page 103 for details of such transactions.

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days, when election to the Council was closely contested and voting took place, Coloured people were allowed to vote for members of the Council. I was told by the Meyer family that considerable lobbying took place for the votes of Coloured people. With the dwindling White population, elections for Council have not been held for several decades and it is now purely an appointed body.

After the Tricameral Parliament came into being in 1983, Coloured Management Committees were established in every municipality. In Nieu Bethesda no elections were held for members of this committee, and six Coloured people willing to serve on the body were appointed. They met separately, and having no real power played a subservient role to the Council.

At the Annual Congress of the Association of Management Committees held in Port Elizabeth on 26-29 September 1988, one of the delegates, Mr James, told the congress that it was not worth the trouble to join the Management Committee, as they were dictated to by the Council:

*Wat hulle besluit is wet en ons lede is bloot daar as adviserende lede.
Die Blankes in baie gevalle is steeds besig om hul wil op ons af te dwing.*

(What they decide is law and we members are simply there as advisory members. The Whites in many cases are forever forcing their will on us.)
(Municipal Records).

In addition, the Management Committee was held in such low esteem by the Coloured community, that some members felt they were compromising themselves and jeopardising their personal safety by serving on the Committee. In his letter of resignation, a former member said:

Ek voel net dat ek terwille van my en my gesin se veiligheid my lidmaatskap van die bestuurskomitee moet beëindig.

(I feel that in the interests of the safety of me and my family I must end my membership of the Management Committee)

Minutes of the Management Committee, dated 13/11/90 (Municipal Records).

Management Committees, which were established all over South Africa in 1983, proved to be both without any real power, and unacceptable to Black people. In Nieu Bethesda this was precisely the case. However, had they been given more power, it is doubtful

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whether many of the members of the Management Committee would have been able to contribute much to the running of the village, given their lack of education and unwillingness to take any initiative.

Some significant influences during the apartheid era

Although not every change in the apartheid era can be directly attributed to legislative measures and government policy, it is clear that several aspects of village life changed during the apartheid era. Apart from the effects of the Group Areas Act, another and less obvious effect of apartheid was a heightened awareness of ethnic identity amongst people of colour. Epstein describes identity as being essentially a concept which:

....represents the process by which the person seeks to integrate his various statuses and roles, as well as his diverse experiences, into a coherent image of self. The contemporary sociological significance of ethnic identity...embraces and integrates a whole series of statuses, roles and lesser identities (1978:101)

Whereas formerly, African and Coloured people had (apparently) lived together in the location in harmony, during the apartheid years Coloured people became aware of the relative advantage they had over Africans, in terms of classification of the Population Registration Act. Some tried to use this to their advantage. (This was demonstrated in the letter on page 109, requesting that Black and Coloured residents be located in different residential areas.)

Culture, as Thornton (1988) shows, is an essential resource used to construct an individual version of the social reality of the particular circumstances in which people find themselves. The people of Xhosa origin in Nieu Bethesda had been born in the district and lived there all their lives and thus identified more as part of the '*bruin*' (brown) community than as Xhosa people. Very little of Xhosa culture remains in the social reality of Nieu Bethesda, and for those residents of the village categorised as 'Xhosa', the reality of their culture was merely the disadvantage of being labelled in this arbitrary manner. Apartheid forced these people to adopt the label of a culture with which many found it hard to identify.

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In South Africa, the concept of ethnic identity, as embodied in the policy of apartheid, was effectively used by those in positions of power to secure group interests and collective material advantages (Adam and Giliomee, 1979). Conversely, as can be seen from the case studies recorded in this dissertation, some marginalised people, in their struggle for access to scant resources, managed to use the ethnic identity which had been forced on them as a valuable resource.

As Adam has said, in a period of social change, people often either disassociate themselves from their upbringing or alternate between several group identities depending on which identity results in the greatest advantage in each particular circumstance (1979:14). The case study of Ouma Mollie clearly demonstrates this point.

Case 4.5: Ouma Mollie

Ouma Mollie sits in the sun with a piece of nylon thread round her neck which has replaced the traditional Xhosa necklace made of 'inkomo yekhaya' (the cow of the home) which was worn by Xhosa people to bring good health. When asked about her necklace she explained that this is for her health but she doesn't know why she wears it - she has always done so. She bemoans the fact that her language is being forgotten in Bethesda and that children speak of Xhosa as 'kaffertaal'. Without any prompting, however, Ouma Mollie told me that she supported F W De Klerk, because he had always been the one to look after people.

The influence of the Dutch Reformed Church during the apartheid era

After 1948 segregation in the church, which had existed, became even more strictly enforced. The only occasions on which people of colour were allowed to enter the Dutch Reformed Church in the village were at the funerals of Whites. For this they had to obtain permission, and were only allowed to sit in designated pews at the back of the church. Only Whites were allowed into the 'White' cemetery, and Black mourners were forced to remain outside the cemetery gates. Members of the Meyer family recall their disappointment at not being allowed into the cemetery at the funeral of Andries Erlank, although they had spent the night in his house with his family when he was dying. They were, however, permitted to form part of the choir of Black children which sang outside the cemetery gate.

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Discussing the separation of Whites and Blacks in Nieu Bethesda, Stella felt that this was not in line with the teachings of Christianity, and was undermining the faith of Black people:

I love all the Whites but I feel that there should be more communication between them and *'ons bruinmense'* (us Coloured people). The Bible says that you must communicate and work together and we should all have each other's interests at heart. I would like to go to the White church as it is the most beautiful building in Bethesda and should be used by all *'Bethesda se mense'* (Bethesda's people). But we still feel that we are not welcome there. People in Bethesda do not go to church so much anymore and are forgetting their faith - in the old days when the church bells rang on Sunday, everybody came out in their best clothes *'en dit was 'n gewoel in Bethesda'* ('and it was hectic in Bethesda').

An incident concerning the separation of 'races' was related to me with some bitterness by Mattie Cupido, a daughter of Pieter Meyer (mentioned on page 79). During the apartheid era, Mattie, who was by then a qualified teacher and was well-known for her excellent needlework, returned to the village to see her family. She was immediately requested by a White member of the church to repair a torn carpet in the Dutch Reformed Church. However, before allowing her to enter the church, permission had to be obtained for her to do so. Mattie repaired the carpet, and was thanked profusely for her excellent work. But to this day she still regrets not having refused to do so.

Despite the discrimination with which it has treated people of colour in Nieu Bethesda, the Church has proved to be highly successful in their mission of producing a God-fearing and submissive community. Through implicit faith in God, and by relating every misfortune to biblical injunctions to humility and submission to authority, disadvantaged people have been able to accept their marginalised position in society without question.

Challenges to apartheid

In Nieu Bethesda, where competition for employment and scant resources is intense, the authority of Whites is seldom overtly challenged by Black people. This is partly due to the desire to gain access to resources in a society where subservience is a prerequisite and questioning of authority is regarded as 'cheekiness'. Conversely, most

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Black people have become accustomed to being treated like children by Whites, and expect to have their lives regulated by orders from Whites. Instructions from the new Nationalist government about where they would live and how they would go about the daily business of their lives therefore met with very little overt opposition from Black people.

While this thesis has consistently highlighted the subservience of the Black population, such subservience should be viewed in the context of an apparent hierarchy of compliance with authority. Most Whites in Nieu Bethesda considered themselves to be servants of the ruling National Party, and executed the legislation of apartheid with an almost religious fervour. In similar fashion, the majority of Blacks in the village regarded their White 'masters' as superior beings, whose authority was unquestionable. Secondly, although the majority of the population appear to have been acquiescent, presenting little opposition to apartheid, there were nevertheless a number of people in the village who challenged the system in various ways. One of those was Johnny, whose experiences of growing up in the apartheid era are illustrated in the following case study.

Case 4.6: Johnny

Johnny's parents, who were both born in Bethesda, attended school in the village. His mother passed Standard Four and his father Standard Three, after which they left school in order to earn a living. His mother did domestic work in the *dorp* and his father was a shearer. They were married in the N G Sendingkerk and lived in the old location in a six-roomed house which the family hired from the Municipality for the cost of a few shillings a year. Johnny attended school in the old Lettie de Klerk school and was a keen pupil. Even at this early stage of his life Johnny recalls that although he used to play with White children (mainly the children of owners of holiday homes in the village), they always ended up fighting, and that he resented the White children for all they had.

While he was in Standard Four, Johnny's step-brother, who was then at high school in Graaff Reinet, introduced him to reggae music which provided the inspiration for his first political ideas. Thus when Johnny heard the news of the 1976 Soweto uprisings, he was more politically aware than most teenagers in Nieu Bethesda, and began to think about politics. For the first time he began to relate the political feelings of the young students of Soweto to the situation in Bethesda. He never mentioned his political feelings to his parents as they would not have agreed with him.

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After leaving Lettie de Klerk school, Johnny went to Spandau High School in Graaff Reinet as a boarder. In the beginning Johnny found life very difficult being away from his family and in a strange place. It took him quite a time to adjust. He only came home for holidays and occasional weekends.

During the apartheid years, Johnny says he always felt inferior and had to call Whites 'Baas'. He never knew any Whites as friends in Bethesda although he had White friends in Graaff Reinet. There was not a single White person in Bethesda to whom he felt he could turn in times of trouble. His parents speak of their good relationship with their employers, but in his time it was always been a case of '*die baas doen goed vir die boer*' ('the Master is good to the boy'). Johnny says Whites were always complaining about the noise they made in Pienaarsig if they had dances or concerts, but nobody said anything about the parties at the Tennis Club, and the noise that came from there when the 'boere' had their fun.

During the weekends spent in Graaff Reinet, Johnny visited friends, many of whom were deeply involved in politics and they played reggae music and talked about politics. He then began to have PAC (Pan African Congress) leanings. Although he was never really a PAC supporter, some of their ideas - such as their motto of 'let us fight and drive the Boers back to the boiling water' - appealed to him.

While at Spandau Johnny became involved in a school boycott which centred around 'administrative matters of the school and certain undemocratic rules'. After the boycott, he became increasingly involved with the Rastafarian movement and reggae music which he found most inspiring. He remembers clearly how the introduction of the tricameral parliament in 1984 resulted in a heightening of his political awareness.

In 1985 when Johnny was eighteen years old and in Std 8, he was vice-chairman of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and was interested in the affairs of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). His parents did not know of his political activities and would not in any way have condoned his involvement. They felt strongly that he was receiving the education which they had been denied and they did not want him to waste his chances. At that time Johnny was a supporter of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

At first Johnny was strongly against violence but when he saw the violence of the police and the 'regime' he decided that violence should be rewarded with violence. In the 1984 election for the Tricameral Parliament, the Labour Party candidate (who became the Member of Parliament for the area) chased the students of Spandau school with a gun after they had held a meeting. The students then ran amok smashing cars and breaking windows and slashing tyres.

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In 1985 he attended the funeral of victims of the Uitenhage massacre and the Goniwe funeral, both of which made a great impression on him and firmed him in his resolve to continue as an activist. He met many progressive politicians such as Mamma Molly (Blackburn) and Di Bishop¹⁵, and was very impressed by their activities.

Soon after attending these funerals, Johnny was involved in the burning of the main administrative sections of the school Spandau High School, which it was felt were responsible for the daily administration of discriminatory educational policies. He was arrested and badly beaten with the butt of a gun by a policeman who called him a kaffir. His parents only heard about his arrest a few days after the incident. Johnny was held in a cell in Graaff Reinet, and sentenced to seven years imprisonment, of which he spent four years and nine months in various prisons.

Johnny's story shows clearly how easily young people who have hitherto been ill-informed about national and international affairs, and who have not formerly taken any interest in political matters, can be mobilised into a revolutionary role. Having been reared in a Christian and law-abiding family, where the authority of Whites was never questioned, something as seemingly innocuous as reggae music kindled a small spark of awareness of the unjustness of apartheid. Once out of the protected environment of Nieu Bethesda, and in the company of young activists, this spark soon turned into a flame of political action and violence. This is a vivid illustration of the fact that even in a society such as Nieu Bethesda, where people have been patronised and treated in a paternalistic fashion for generations, there will always be one or two individuals who are prepared to challenge the domination of those in power.

Although the Town Council were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the implementation of the Group Areas Act, not all the White people of Nieu Bethesda viewed the event in same way. Several farmers in the district who had grown up with Black people who had lived on their farms and who now lived in Nieu Bethesda in the 'White' area, fought the rigid implementation of the Act tooth and nail, as can be seen from the case study which follows:

¹⁵ Molly Blackburn and Di Bishop were two Progressive Federal Party members of the Provincial Council, who were well known all over South Africa for their role as activists during the apartheid era.

Case 4.7: Booitjie

In the early 1940s Booitjie Barendse came to Nieu Bethesda, where he worked for the Divisional Council until his retirement. The Barendse family (which included Booitjie's father and mother, his uncle Isak and Isak's sister, Selina, and Booitjie himself) owned and lived on erf nos. 105, 109, 110 and 111 in the village.

When his father died in 1975, Booitjie received a letter telling him that as his father's property was in a White area, in terms of the Group Areas, the estate would have to be sold either to a White person, or to the Department of Community Development within one year of the death of the owner or the date of the proclamation of the area, whichever occurred first. Neil Sheard, through a lawyer in Graaff Reinet, wrote to the Department of Community Development, querying this decision. He received an answer to his letter, reiterating that the property would have to be sold to a white person, and stating that it was extremely unlikely that Booitjie and his family would be given permits to remain on the property.

In October 1975 Neil Sheard intervened on behalf of the Barendse family and requested that they be given special permission to remain in the property which they should by rights have inherited. He pointed out that three generations of the Barendse family had served the Sheard family faithfully for more than fifty years, and that his late father had assisted the family to buy the property so that they could retire there. The land was provided with a borehole, and was large enough to provide a living for the whole family. The Barendse family were all committed Christians (a very important consideration) and would present no problem to their neighbours.

Neil Sheard continued with his efforts to intervene on behalf of the Barendse family, and made an offer to purchase the land, so that they could remain in their home. This offer was turned down, and Neil then wrote to the Department of Community Development, requesting to know the reason for this decision. In July 1976 he received a letter from his local Member of Parliament, Mr Wally Kingwill, informing him that the Regional Representative of the Department of Community Development had taken a 'sympathetic stance' and had suggested to his board that Mr Sheard's offer be accepted. In November 1976 Mr Sheard wrote to the Regional Representative stating:

I am quite prepared to purchase the property for the sum of R2500, as you request. I do not quite understand though why the Community Development would be prepared to purchase this property for R2100,00 and yet I should pay R2500,00 while the Community Development acts in the best interests of the seller.

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Finally, the house was purchased by Neil Sheard for the Barendse family, but this was not the end of the story, as they were still 'illegal occupants' of the 'White' area and permits for their continued residence in their home were required. After the repeal of the Group Areas Act the Barendse family were no longer required to apply for permits, and are now still living in their own home, purchased for them by the intervention of a caring White member of the community.¹⁶ It is somewhat ironic that in this particular case, paternalism which had been previously been used as a mechanism to maintain control over the people of this place, was used in order to circumvent the laws of the country. Purchasing a house for his childhood friend, Bootjie, which can surely be seen as a paternalistic act, was the only way in which Neil Sheard could ensure that the Barendse family would be allowed to stay in the home which they had inherited.

Conclusion

The concept of 'total institutions' used by Nasson (1984) in the context of South African farming communities in which the farmer exerts and maintains total control over the lives of his workers is one which has resonance in Nieu Bethesda, where Whites maintain rigid control over the lives of Blacks. In the apartheid era, when such control was legally enforceable, this became even more true.

However, apartheid in its broader sense did not have quite the same impact on Nieu Bethesda as it did in other parts of South Africa. Families were neither separated by migrant labour and influx control, nor torn apart by strict enforcement of the Population Registration Act. The implications of the Mixed Marriages Act and Section 10 of the Immorality Act completely passed Nieu Bethesda by, and the Separate Amenities Act changed very little. However, the Group Areas Act undoubtedly changed the face of the village for ever, even if, as has been most eloquently argued, the establishment of Piensaarsig was embarked upon purely out of concern for the large number of people living in squalid conditions in the 'location'. As the Theron Commission pointed out, the removal of slums could have been done through the Slums Act (No. 53 of 1934) (Van der Horst, 1976:62), which would probably have caused far less humiliation and anger.

¹⁶ See *Appendix D* for copies of the relevant correspondence.

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It has been claimed that most people are readily induced to adopt new ways by the prospect of immediate gain, and thus social change follows the line of least resistance (Mair,1969:31). In South Africa, in the apartheid years, when all Black people were declared second-class citizens in the land of their birth, there was no gain to be made from the 'new ways' Black people were forced to adopt. Indeed, millions were forced to forfeit land which they had owned or occupied for generations, in order to fit into the jigsaw puzzle of human lives, designed by the architects of apartheid.

If then, one agrees with the tenet that paternalism constitutes:

...action by one person for another's good, but contrary to their present wishes or desires, and not justified by the other's past or present consent.... (Brock,1983:238)

the implementation of the Group Areas Act in Nieu Bethesda was the epitome of paternalism. It was carried out totally without any negotiation or consultation with the people who stood to lose most, and consent was never obtained before demolishing their old houses. People were merely informed of decisions taken by the White minority. The meagre sums paid out for properties appropriated by the Council in no way compensated people for their loss of grazing rights and access to agricultural land. Thus although it is acknowledged that people in Pienaarsig have to some extent benefited from their enforced move, by being provided with more modern houses, with running water, electricity and some sanitation and refuse collection, many would argue that the people of Pienaarsig are in fact in a more impoverished state than they were when living in the 'old location'.

In his discussion of the main points of what he takes to be the standard dialectic of paternalism, Regan argues:

In the context of a traditional utilitarian approach to the problem of paternalism, there is one necessary and sufficient condition for paternalistic coercion - namely, that the coercion will result in more pleasure or happiness overall for the person coerced (1983:113).

In Nieu Bethesda, it is doubtful that the establishment of the township of Pienaarsig resulted in more pleasure or happiness overall for those coerced, and thus in terms of Regan's argument, this action cannot be justified.

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However, as has been shown, despite the apparent compliance with apartheid, and lack of overt resistance to its implementation, there were individuals, both Black and White, who were not prepared to accept the inequalities of the system. It can therefore not be argued that the centuries of paternalistic treatment which preceded apartheid produced a uniformly subservient Black population.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

The post-apartheid era, which will be discussed in this chapter, will be taken to mean the period following F W de Klerk's famous speech in February 1990, in which he announced the unbanning of the ANC, PAC, SA Communist Party and other banned organisations. This speech is considered to be the watershed which preceded the dismantling of all apartheid structures, followed by the first democratic election which took place in April 1994.

During fieldwork many informants intimated that there was little visible evidence of change in Nieu Bethesda, which could be attributed directly to the repeal of apartheid. For them, the change of government had meant little. Many Coloured people felt that, in spite of the injustices of apartheid, they believed that the National Party had looked after their interests, in a way that they felt a predominantly African government would be unlikely to do. Others were clearly confused by the events which were taking place.

By exploring these concerns, this chapter will, firstly, investigate the contention that the effects of the new government's policy of Reconstruction and Development (RDP), which promised to bring material relief to under-developed communities, have not yet been experienced in Nieu Bethesda.

As a corollary to this, the chapter discusses the changes which have in fact taken place in Nieu Bethesda, by addressing three issues. Firstly, the question of material change is discussed. Secondly, the way in which the attitudes that Black and White people have maintained towards each other for centuries have changed as a direct result of apartheid's demise, are explored. Finally, the degree to which interaction between Blacks and Whites in the village has increased in the past five years is examined.

While political developments of the last five years may not have had any noticeable effect on Nieu Bethesda, it is generally acknowledged by most residents in the village that the village has indeed undergone considerable change in the past five years. Several events and processes contributed to this change, and, while not directly

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attributable to the repeal of apartheid, took place in the period under discussion. Thus the impact and effects of the provision of electricity to the village, the growth in tourism, and the increased interest in community participation in development are examined in this chapter. Suggestions will be made as to why it was that relatively insignificant events were seen to be milestones in the history of this little village, while major political developments appear to have made less impact.

With the surge of interest in the Owl House generated by the filming of *The Road to Mecca*, the sense of isolation which Nieu Bethesda formerly experienced has greatly diminished. In addition to the many new permanent residents in the village, there are a number of people who have purchased property in Nieu Bethesda, where they spend their holidays. These newcomers have injected the village with new life and ideas, and have had the effect of minimising the feeling of isolation of its residents, and of making them aware that they are in fact role players in a world outside Nieu Bethesda. This will be discussed in this chapter.

Despite the unusually low income of families in Pienaarsig, and the high level of alcohol abuse, there is a remarkable absence of the abject poverty which characterises many urban townships in the Western Cape, and many rural areas of the Eastern Cape and Transkei. Sister Pienaar, who runs the clinic in Nieu Bethesda, confirmed that malnutrition and deficiency diseases are extremely uncommon amongst children in the township. With little prospect of visible improvement in material conditions in the near future, the question of how people manage to survive in such depressed circumstances arises. It appeared to me that the answer to this question lies in the networks of support which link people in Nieu Bethesda to the outside world and contribute in material terms to their family members in the village. The nature of these links and the extent to which residents of the village are increasingly becoming participants in the world beyond the boundaries of Nieu Bethesda will therefore be examined.

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Absence of visible change

The news of the dismantling of apartheid structures, the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations, the release of Nelson Mandela and the subsequent release of political prisoners was not received by the residents of Pienaarsig with the same degree of jubilation as was shown by many other Black communities in South Africa. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that apartheid had not taken nearly such a violent and brutal form in Nieu Bethesda as it had done in other parts of South Africa. As Elsie, a Coloured woman in her seventies put it:

I never compared the privileges of Whites over Blacks in the apartheid years. *Kyk juffrou, ons het die wêreld gevat soos ons hom kry, soos die Here ons gelei het. Oor die een die meeste het en die ander die minste het het nie die hand gebyt nie* (Look Miss, we took the world as we found it, in the way that the Lord led us. The fact that one had more and the other had less did not bite anybody's hand). Blacks have never been badly treated by Whites in Bethesda.

Secondly, it took a long time for many residents of the village to comprehend what the practical impact of the dramatic changes could be. However, as the people of Pienaaarsig became more aware of developments in the rest of the country, through exposure to television and the return to the village of the handful of Black people who had been actively involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, they began to react to the changing political climate in various ways. Far from being elated at the prospect of a change in government, many of the older people were extremely confused about the imminent demise of apartheid and nervous about their future under an ANC dominated government. Jannie (Case 3.2) told me:

I am a De Klerk man rather than a Mandela man because you can never vote for a man who has spent 27 years in jail. How can you have someone who has been tried and sent to gaol for acts of terrorism as President? I have nothing against Mandela for being African, I am against him because he was in jail and because through him many people have been murdered - murdered by his armies at his request. The murders are still going on. In any case Mandela was put in jail because of all the trouble he made. *(deur die opstand wat hy gedoen het)*. Mandela's influence was felt even in Nieu Bethesda before he was sentenced - a Bantu teacher was sent to jail for making trouble, and he never came back. It was at the same time that Mandela was caught and there was definitely a connection. Maybe Mandela is an honourable man now but how can you trust him?

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Elsie (Case 3.1, 4.2) too, was dubious about Mandela's suitability as the future leader of South Africa, and remarked:

I had never heard of Mandela until just before the election, when people were telling me to vote for Mandela for a better life. But I did not feel that I could vote for Mandela. For years we have all been behind De Klerk so how we can we now suddenly support Mandela? That is how life has misled us.

Although many Black people resented their inferior status, they did not believe that their situation could ever change. Moreover, they were accustomed to playing a subordinate role and to looking to Whites for direction in every aspect of their lives. They were thus nervous about the uncertainties of the future. As Elsie said:

I believe in my heart that apartheid was a great sin. God did not separate us when he created us. We were all just created as people for the Lord - White and Black and everybody together. (*Die Here het mos nie vir ons uitmekaar uit gemaak nie. Ons is maar net mens vir die Here gemaak - wit en swart almal saam*). But De Klerk was always the man at the top of the ladder. Now it is too strange to accept that a Black man must be in that place and that Blacks must rule over Whites, who have always been *Baas*. I really don't understand it all.

In 1984 I voted for the Union of South Africa (that was P W Botha's party). I was very impressed with P W Botha and thought he was a wonderful leader because he gave orders and kept control over the land.

Jannie expressed similar sentiments:

I never liked apartheid but one should not blame De Klerk for that. It was Verwoerd who made life so bad for Blacks not De Klerk. Verwoerd said that the Coloured people are just like a herd of wild animals that have overeaten in the veld. You have to keep your thumb on their necks. (*Die Kleurling mense is net soos 'n klomp wilde beeste wat in die veld dikgevreet het. Die duim moet net op hulle nek gehou word*). De Klerk is the one who has improved the lot of the Coloured people. I also voted for P W Botha when he was a supporter of the Labour Party because he had the interests of the Coloured people at heart. We had Labour Party meetings in Bethesda and I was very impressed with them and decided to join the Labour Party

These comments reflect both the degree of confusion which existed in the minds of Black people after the demise of apartheid, and the extent to which the political leaders of that era had succeeded in convincing people of the merits of an unjust and brutal regime. The tenet that 'where there is smoke there must be fire' was generally

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accepted, and it was agreed by many Black people in Nieu Bethesda that Mandela must have been guilty of a terrible crime to have been sentenced to life imprisonment. As was the case with several other informants, both Elsie and Jannie were in agreement that the National Party government had had the interests of the Coloured people at heart, and that they had been in control of the country in a way that no African government would be able to emulate.

When speaking of the political action of young Black people of which she had become aware in the past few years, Sanna was shocked at their behaviour, which she considered showed little gratitude for all that she perceived the previous government to have done for Blacks: '*Kyk net wat het die wit man vir ons gedoen*' ('Just look what the White man has done for us') (own emphasis).

One Saturday night while I was living in Nieu Bethesda, an incident occurred in Pienaarsig which caused great concern and elicited much comment. A young (Coloured) sergeant in the police force was assaulted by a gang of young men in Pienaarsig, while in the company of one of the teachers of the local primary school. As a result, he received several stitches to his head and nose, and suffered severe bruising. The various interpretations of this single incident which were reported to me indicate that it is not only Blacks and Whites in Nieu Bethesda who are politically divided: the Black population of Nieu Bethesda most certainly do not share a common political philosophy.

Several common threads ran through all the accounts, given to me by residents of Pienaarsig. Firstly, it is believed that there is a gang of youths in Pienaarsig who call themselves 'The Americans', and that they are presently disrupting the peace of the township. Secondly, all agreed that both the policeman and the teacher who was with him at that time were inebriated. It was also agreed that stones had been thrown at the home of Johnny (an ANC supporter whose political activities were described in chapter four), and that an elderly resident living close to Johnny's home, (who was not involved with either side) was terrorized by the combatants.

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However, the interpretations of this event varied according to the political perspective of the narrator. An ANC supporter claimed that both the policeman and the teacher, who were extremely drunk, joined in with the Americans, who were terrorising the neighbourhood. According to this informant, an opposing gang then threw stones at the policemen, which 'unfortunately hit him between the eyes'. This in fact 'served him right' as a policeman should never have become involved with the Americans in the first place. As people in influential positions, the policeman and teacher were no example to the community, as they should have been, and 'deserved everything they got'.

A friend of the teacher concerned claimed that the Americans had come into her house and threatened her the previous day (which was vehemently denied by several other sources). This informant felt very sorry for the policeman, and said the people of Pienaarsig should wake up to the threat which young gangsters pose to the community before somebody was killed.

A National Party supporter claimed that ANC youths threatened the policeman and the teacher, and that '.... this is what can be expected under an ANC government. Much of the political activism in Graaff Reinet involves Spandau school pupils who are all ANC members, and many of these pupils are known in Pienaarsig. Look at what Johnny did. Of course this act was ANC inspired'.

A concerned Kloof Street parent, whose son was involved in an incident of violence the previous year, put the incident down to the lack of parental control which characterises the community in Bethesda. She laid the blame on a society which has divided people and has not provided any amenities to keep young people out of mischief. According to her, the action was just *stoutigheid* (naughtiness).

These accounts of a relatively minor incident, which was regarded to be of major importance (in a village where so few newsworthy incidents occur) reflect the many shades of political thinking that can exist in a small village such as Nieu Bethesda. Secondly, they demonstrate that it appears that the political developments in South Africa did not immediately change the way in which people's experiences had shaped their attitudes.

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In urban areas of South Africa, where there is a high degree of stratification amongst Black people (particularly amongst the Coloured population, which has a burgeoning middle class) the repeal of apartheid legislation had more dramatic effects than in rural areas. Whereas in the apartheid era, beaches, restaurants, cinemas, schools, swimming baths and parks had been segregated, and most facilities had been reserved for use by Whites only, almost overnight these became utilised by people of all races. The cities were thus rapidly transformed in a remarkable manner. In addition, a far greater level of integration occurred at schools and in the workplace than had been the case during the apartheid era.

In rural areas, such as Nieu Bethesda, however, no dramatic changes took place. Firstly, there is little internal stratification amongst the people of Pienaarsig and no workplaces where Blacks and Whites meet daily (apart from the master/servant situation). Secondly, there are no White children in the village and the only school is thus attended solely by Black children. Thirdly, with no recreational facilities of any kind, interaction between Blacks and Whites on that level is non-existent. The Tennis Club and the magnificent Dutch Reformed Church, the two venues where Whites regularly meet, are regarded by the people of Pienaarsig as symbols of exclusivity, reserved for Whites only.

Although there are now no legal restrictions which prevent Black and White people from attending services of the Dutch Reformed Church together, this is a domain where few Black people would feel comfortable. As Johnny put it:

I am a Christian and attend church fairly regularly, but we Coloured people don't attend the White church - we still don't feel free to do so. Nobody from the Coloured community would take the plunge and be the first to go to the White church. After all these years we feel that we are not welcome there. It is the same thing with the Tennis Club. I don't see why all the residents of Bethesda can't enjoy the facilities of the Tennis Club, but no Coloured person has yet tried to join.

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When questioned on the subject of social interaction between the White and Black sections of the population of Nieu Bethesda, one young Black man¹, who is unemployed and has little prospect of advancement answered:

They say apartheid is over, but I can't see any difference. They (the Whites) still live in their smart houses and have cars and things and we still stay in Pienaarsig with nothing and our lives never change. If we brown people and the Whites could stand together and really talk to each other, we could maybe make something of Bethesda, but I don't see us ever getting together after all these years

Jannie, who was very dubious about the prospects for social interaction between the two sections of the village, indicated the depth of the divisions between White and Black people in Nieu Bethesda:

Apartheid has now gone - there are no separate signs in the butcher, post office and bottle store. But there is still no integration (*samelewing*) and I don't think it will change in the lifetime of the present generation. There are some Whites in the village who treat Blacks in the same way as Whites, but not the original farming people. I find it very difficult to socialise with Whites, because for so long *ons bruinmense* (us Coloured people) have been brought up to know our place that we can't suddenly change. I was invited by one of the Whites in the village for tea, but I didn't think I could do this and refused.

Look we have two graveyards, one for Whites and one for Blacks, which just shows you. If there is no social integration when we are alive, why should Whites and Blacks be buried together? During my lifetime I drove the hearse for many Whites - I drove the horsecart and had to dress up in a suit and inspan the horses and clean them and unharness them all for 25c. No Blacks were ever carried in that hearse.

Elsie confirmed that she felt that apartheid was live and well in Nieu Bethesda.

Die mense is nog baie in apartheid hier. Dis nog altyd Miesies en Baas en daar is nie samelewing nie.

(The people are still living in apartheid here. It is still always Miesies and Baas and there is no interaction between us).

Stella, a resident of Pienaarsig, summed up the relationship which now exists between the Black and White populations in the village as follows:

One hears that apartheid has gone, but you don't yet feel that it is so - you can't go and drink tea with any White people however friendly they may be. After all these years they are not able to integrate, however

¹ Unlike nearly all the other informants quoted in this thesis, this young man requested that I did not use his name, as he felt it might have result in 'trouble' for him.

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much they say they would like to. *Ons moet dit nou stukkie vir stukkie afbreek.* ('We will just have to break it down piece by piece').

It is somewhat disconcerting that the perception of Black in Nieu Bethesda that the dramatic political changes in South Africa have brought them little relief in material terms, appears to be a valid one. As it has already been shown in this dissertation, Nieu Bethesda is a village where tremendous disparities exist between the Black majority and White minority in all spheres of life. Yet, there has been a surprising acceptance of these inequalities on the part of most Black people, who have become imbued with notions of their own inferiority and dependence on Whites. However, once they became aware that it was likely that the White oligarchy would be replaced by a democratically elected predominantly Black government, Black people in the village began to have high expectations of the new government providing some relief to their poor living conditions and marginalised status. Yet in spite of the political changes which have taken place in South Africa, there is thus far no real evidence of the implementation of the government's policy of reconstruction and development. This has caused a certain amount of disillusionment amongst the people of Pienaarsig, and confirmed the view of some people that they were better off under National Party rule. As Elsie put it:

I must say we are really suffering now and I am sure it is because we have a Black government with Mandela giving orders. He is not in control like P W Botha and F W de Klerk were.

Elsie added hopefully,:

I don't know the words of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika but I will try and learn the words and hope that life will improve.

Interviewed after the election, Jannie was more accepting of Mandela and an ANC-dominated government, but he had misgivings about the prospects of the new government improving the life of Black people, and felt that the promises made before the elections would not be fulfilled. He was also extremely cynical about the policy of land restitution of the new government:

Die lewe is soos 'n donker wolk voor ons en ek sien nog nie lig nie. (Life is like a dark cloud ahead of us and I still don't see any light). Now we will have to wait and see if any of Mandela's wonderful promises will come to anything. I don't believe that Mandela will do all he says - giving people new houses and making their lives better. I just don't believe this. Maybe it will all happen, but we will have to see. But we must all work

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with him to try and make a better life. The new government has brought many advantages such as free education for people and I just hope it will continue like this. I heard that farmers will have to share their farms with Blacks, but it seems this is not going to happen now, which is disappointing. Black farmers don't know how to farm anymore as they have been cut off from the land for so long that they would not be able to farm even if they were given farms.

The wages paid to most Blacks who are fortunate enough to find employment in the village are pitifully low (compared with those of Blacks in similar employment in urban areas). Although this is often justified by the belief that living costs are lower in the country, such a belief is, in fact, clearly untrue. The two small local stores in Nieu Bethesda are obviously not able to offer their goods at prices which compare with the large urban supermarkets, and travel to Graaff Reinet makes the cost of provisions extremely costly. For Whites who have large refrigerators and deep-freeze facilities, as well as motor vehicle transport, this does not present a problem, but for Black people (many of whom have been deprived of their means of subsistence, and who have neither refrigerators nor motor-cars) the cost of living is prohibitive. Yet the myth that Black people's material needs are less costly than those of Whites is one which is firmly entrenched in the minds of Whites, and is often used as a rationalisation for the low wages paid to domestic workers.

For Black people little in Nieu Bethesda has changed. They still live in uncomfortable sub-economic houses with insufficient toilets, and no recreational facilities of any kind. For most, there is still little prospect of employment and they continue to eke out an existence in Pienaarsig, depending mainly on pensions and maintenance grants for survival.

Change attributable to political transformation

Since the dramatic speech of President F W de Klerk which led to the dismantling of apartheid was made several years before the commencement of my fieldwork, direct observations on the reaction to this watershed speech in Nieu Bethesda cannot be included in this thesis. However, early in my research it became clear to me that the White population of Nieu Bethesda had begun to realise that the ruling oligarchy would

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be replaced with a democratic government within a few years, and that improved relations and greater interaction between the Black and White sections of the population would be demanded. Thus, although there was little of the frenzied political action which characterised most parts of South Africa in the post-apartheid era, in Nieu Bethesda an awareness of the political changes which would follow resulted in a shift in the political thinking of many Whites. Some of the more 'progressive' Whites in Nieu Bethesda openly acknowledged that dramatic as the dismantling of the physical structures of apartheid was, this was far easier to accomplish than the changing of attitudes which had been forged over centuries.

Early in 1990 the ANC and PAC exiles, who had formerly been branded as terrorists by the National Party, began to pour back into South Africa and were daily the focus of intense interest in the media². As was happening all over the country, many White people in Nieu Bethesda thus began to realise that, contrary to what they had been led to believe for decades, the majority of the returning exiles who held senior positions in the formerly banned organisations, were well-educated and capable individuals who longed to return and help to rebuild the country of their birth rather than to destroy it. In addition, for the first time, many acknowledged not only the futility of apartheid, but also the dehumanising effect it had had on millions of South Africa's citizens. It became clear that this process of rethinking an ideology that had been accepted by Whites from their youth had begun to be questioned - even before President De Klerk made his now famous speech.

Stirling Pienaar, a great-grandson of the original B J Pienaar, ('father' of Nieu Bethesda), and a former mayor of Nieu Bethesda, told me how his views had changed in the past five years:

When I was young, Verwoerd was my hero, and I really believed that apartheid was the only way to handle the race problem in South Africa. Now I realise that apartheid was the biggest mistake that was ever made in this country, and I am a great supporter of De Klerk and the changes he is making. Although I do not support the ANC, I think they have some excellent people and I am very happy that they can now be a part of a new South African government. I am even glad that the Communist Party is no longer banned, although I am completely opposed to

² Although at this stage Nieu Bethesda did not have television, and most people do not have access to the printed media, nearly every household has a radio.

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communism. I am now for the first time in my life really interested in hearing the views of people of other parties.

Stirling Pienaar and his wife demonstrated that these were not mere words by their action of removing their youngest daughter from the Afrikaans-medium school in Graaff-Reinet and placing her in an English medium school. Both their elder daughters had attended the Afrikaans school, which remained closed to other races when changes were made to the system of education in the '90s, while the English school became a Model C school, open to all races. In addition, the Pienaar's daughter (who later became headgirl of the school) was the first scholar at her new school to volunteer to share a bedroom with an African girl, an action which was greatly supported by her parents. In contrast, some other equally prominent White Afrikaans-speaking families in Nieu Bethesda were critical of such 'liberal' behaviour, and considered Stirling's actions to be something of a betrayal to his Afrikaans heritage. Thus while some Whites were pragmatic about the political changes being introduced in South Africa, there were others in the village who did not welcome the inevitable changes.

Johnny, (a young man from Pienaarsig whose early life was discussed in the previous chapter - Case 4.6), having been involved in political activism and imprisoned for many years, felt that the process of changing attitudes which had been acquired over several generations of racial discrimination would be a lengthy and difficult one. He showed a remarkable understanding for the mental conflict which White people were experiencing:

Most Whites in the *dorp* are changing now, but we have been divided for so long that it will take a very long time for things to change. You cannot expect them to throw away everything they have believed in all their lives all at once.

Agriculture, apart from being the only major industry in the district, and thus essential to the economy, is the one sphere where significant interaction between Blacks and Whites exist, and in which attitudes are determined in Nieu Bethesda.

Mike de Klerk, in an analysis of the labour process in agriculture, points out how difficult it is to replace the master-servant relationship which characterises agriculture with the

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mutual respect and self-respect that goes with institutionalized collective bargaining (1985:28-29).

Andries du Toit (1993), in discussing the relationship between farmers and workers in South Africa posits that:

...to start work on a farm is not merely to enter a business relationship, it is to become *deel van een familie* (part of one family), even *deel van die plaas* (part of the farm) (1993:320).

Du Toit who sees an understanding of farm life as being crucial to any discussion of paternalism, remarks:

Traditional paternalism is distinguished by an 'organic' conception of the farm as a family, with the farmer occupying a central position of unchallengeable authority (1993:314).

Farmworkers depend on their employer for every aspect of living - a house for the entire family, wages (very often paid partly in kind), medical care, education (in the case of farm schools), transport, etc, all of which they will lose if they leave (or are evicted from) their employment. The power of farmers themselves is thus fundamentally economically based. Within the constraints imposed by government legislation, farmers have the power to hire and fire farm workers, and to control their access to housing (Newby, 1977:417). They thus have very little independence or freedom of movement, nor an identity beyond the precincts of the farm on which they live. For farmworkers there is:

...an almost total lack of alternative employment opportunities, dependency for jobs and housing on local farmers, and isolation from mainstream culture are the customary expectations of the average farm worker. His or her social world is characterised by an intense and confining localism (Nasson:1984:1-2).

Indeed, the supposition that the farmer and worker share a common interest in the survival of the farm community denies farmworkers and their families any identity or individuality of their own and prevents them from having a space at work in which authority and self worth can be expressed (Du Toit, 1993:335). Historically deprived of access to land, Black people have little real independence and remain as Du Toit puts it '*deel van die plaas*' (part of the farm).

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While such comments may still be applicable on some farms in the Graaff Reinet region (into which Nieu Bethesda falls), there are many farmers in the district who are keen to improve relations between themselves and their farmworkers, and have in the past five years reacted in a positive manner to the new labour legislation. At the annual general meeting of the Graaff Reinet Agricultural Society held in May 1993, Mr David Kingwill, an executive member stated:

We want our farm labourers to be as proud of their position as any other labourers in any other industry. We want to do the very best thing because, in order to keep our productivity, we need people who are dedicated to the land...We want them to have status as a farm labourer.

We have to show that we want to build bridges in this country, we want to build the kind of platteland where the blacks who need us, and whom we need live together in a way on which we can build a future (*Graaff Reinet Advertiser*, 10/05/1993:1).

The relationship which has developed between the Van Heerden family, who farm a few kilometres from Nieu Bethesda, and the Olifant family, who come from Nieu Bethesda, demonstrates that these words are being put into practical effect and are not mere platitudes expressed to be politically correct in the 'new South Africa'. The Van Heerdens are one of the oldest and most prosperous White families in the Sneeuberg district, and Flip, who is Black, is foreman on their farm.

Case 5.1: Flip and Angelina

Angelina was born in 1950 on a farm a few kilometres from Nieu Bethesda, where her parents worked and lived with their children. When her father died in 1971, her mother continued living on the farm, owned by the Van Heerden family. The Van Heerdens showed great concern for their family, providing them with all their clothes and driving the children to school in the village everyday.

After leaving school (having passed Std 4), Angelina worked away from Nieu Bethesda as a domestic worker for many years, and then returned to the village to marry. Her husband, Flip Olifant who was the son of a Xhosa-speaking man and a Coloured woman, was born in Nieu Bethesda, where he attended school and passed Std. 6. After leaving school, he went to work for the Van Heerden family as a farmworker.

After thirteen years of employment with the Van Heerden family, Flip is now the manager of a large and progressive farm, with nine farm labourers under his supervision and is responsible for all the day-to-day running of the farm. He has his own house on the farm, but Angelina lives in Kloof Street with her children, with Flip returning every weekend

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to stay with his family. They told me that they are perfectly happy with this arrangement.

Flip says there have been two major influences in his life. Firstly, his employers - two generations of the Van Heerden family, whose acts of kindness and generosity Flip constantly mentions. Of Peet and Hanna (the younger generation of Van Heerdens), Flip says 'they are my parents, and have helped and supported me in every way possible'. The second major influence in Flip and Angelina's lives is their faith. They are charismatic Christians, belonging to the Church 'Jesus is the only answer', and spend the greater part of each weekend visiting farms and holding services for the farmworkers.

Compared to most farmworkers in Nieu Bethesda (or in fact, on most farms in South Africa), Flip has succeeded exceptionally well in reversing the disadvantaged circumstances into which he was born, but is the first to acknowledge that this success is largely due to the opportunities given to him by Peet van Heerden, and to the degree of concern shown to his family by the Van Heerdens.

It does appear that in the last few years, the majority of farmers in Nieu Bethesda have adopted a more pragmatic attitude towards labourers whom they employ (and to their families), and now acknowledge the skills of farmworkers and the vital role which these people play in agriculture. It is likely that this is due to a combination of two factors: the realisation that farmworkers are likely to receive more protection under the new government, and a softening in attitudes, in the more enlightened political climate of the '90s.

There were several young Black people from Nieu Bethesda who had been activists during the apartheid years, and when they returned to the village in the early '90s, they became the nucleus of the ANC's activities in Nieu Bethesda. A determined effort was made by them to inform the people of Pienaarsig of the policies and direction of the ANC, and to try and dispel the myths which existed in so many people's minds about the activities of Black people during the apartheid struggle. Johnny (whose early life was documented in case 4.6) described his feelings on returning to the village in 1990 after nearly five years in prison:

Case 5.2: Johnny

When I came back to Bethesda I was well received, although at that time people knew nothing about politics and thought it was a terrible thing I

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had done. Many people did not recognise me, and did not know that I had been in prison. Others who did know me thought it was just naughtiness that had caused me to act as I did, but I felt that nobody understood my reasons for my actions and the nature of violence in South Africa. I could not explain it to anyone, and felt very alone. Today I would never dream of doing such things or of being involved in any kind of violence, but I don't actually feel ashamed of my actions in 1984, as I feel as students at that time, we were driven to it. Our violent actions were necessary to get rid of apartheid.

Everybody in Bethesda was so cut off from civilization that they were out of touch with what was going on in the rest of South Africa and had no understanding or sympathy for violence. Even today people in Bethesda don't know anything of politics and have no understanding of the RDP³ or of any of the plans of the government. They don't even know what the RDP is about. The Black people just accept everything as it is and have never questioned the political actions of Whites. I realized that I would have to win the trust and support of the community before I could get them to change, and I was determined to work to ensure that Black people in Bethesda became better informed. It is like a sore that needs nursing - it takes time to heal. I realised that it would take time and patience informing people and building up their confidence. Many people were frightened of my ANC ideas but when voter education commenced they began to hear ANC ideas from other people as well and began to realise that I was not the only one with such views.

Another young person who was to play a major role in preparing the people of Nieu Bethesda for the General Election in 1994 was Dora, the daughter of Ouma Gongo, whose life was discussed in Chapter Four (Case 4.4). Dora told me about her early life and described how it was that she became politically aware and later a member of the ANC.

Case 5.3: Dora

It was in Cradock that I became aware of political issues for the first time. While I was in Standard 6, I first heard about Nelson Mandela, but I was too scared to ask why he had been sent to prison, because in Cradock, any political activity on the part of scholars met with repressive action. At that time, if politics were spoken in school in many towns in the Eastern Cape, you went to gaol.

I was working in Johannesburg during the unrest of 1985, where the courage of young Black people made a big impression on me. It was at this time that I realised for the first time that if we stood together and resisted the cruelty of the *boere*, we could possibly change things.

³ The Reconstruction and Development Programme which the ANC announced during their 1994 election campaign

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Having made this decision to become politically involved, I became a member of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and went to many political meetings in Johannesburg.

When I returned to Bethesda in 1994 to assist my ageing mother, I brought with me the political ideas and a degree of skill in political organisation which I had acquired in Johannesburg. Although things had not really changed in Bethesda, everybody knew there was going to be an election and the Whites knew that the ANC would win all over the country. So it was no longer dangerous to mobilise support for the ANC. I was soon elected as the ANC youth chairman and set about educating the older people of Pienaarsig, informing them of their rights (of which they were previously unaware) and preparing them for the 1994 general election.

It is not going to be easy to change Bethesda, because most people are old and are so set in their ways that they can't suddenly get used to a new way of life. I try very hard to tell the children to address White people as 'Mr' or 'Mrs' but it is hard. For so many years they would be would not have dared to address them as anything other than 'Baas' and 'Miesies', and they can't change easily. But I think it is a good thing that people like Johnny and I have returned to the village, as we have a definite role to play in educating our community.

While overt physical violence was not a feature of apartheid in Nieu Bethesda, the comments of both these informants highlight the fact that there are young people in Nieu Bethesda who have experienced the violence of the system of apartheid. Unlike most people in Pienaarsig who had lived in the relatively protected environment of Nieu Bethesda, Johnny and Dora, having experienced the brutality of the apartheid system in other parts of South Africa, were able to see the violent acts of Black people as a response to a violent system rather than as senseless criminal acts.

Interaction between two groups of different economic and social backgrounds and where great differences in education are a feature, is always problematic. Where the advantaged group represents such a small proportion of the population (as in Nieu Bethesda) the problem is exacerbated. With the prospect of the abolition of apartheid, some attempts were made by Whites at facilitating a higher degree of interaction between Whites and Blacks on both a formal and informal level. The first step was taken when the Town Council and the Management Committee began to hold joint meetings, and, for the first time, tried to merge their activities in order to operate as one

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body. Although this was obviously not easy for people who had been divided for so many years, it did represent a recognition of the need for greater interaction between Blacks and Whites.

The day of the great 'switch on', when electricity became a reality in Nieu Bethesda, represented a milestone in more ways than one for the village. An official function was held at the Tennis Club which was attended not only by White residents of Nieu Bethesda, but also by members of the Management Committee and their spouses. This, I was told by one resident of Pienaarsig who had attended the function was her first experience of social integration with members of the White community. Secondly, it was the first time that Black people had ever been invited to the sacred Tennis Club as guests, although several had worked in the kitchen of the club when functions were held. Thus the opening of the doors of the Tennis Club on this occasion was seen by many as a symbol of unification.

Although delighted at the prospect of being able to be part of a village celebration for the first time, it was obvious from the remarks of my informant that, contrary to her expectations, she had not found social interaction with White people to be comfortable. She commented that the fact that one of the group from Pienaarsig had drunk too much and behaved in a most undignified way in front of White people been a source of great shame to them, particularly as it was the first time that they had been invited to the Tennis Club. 'What must the White people have thought of us?' she asked. For people who for generations had been accustomed to addressing White people as 'Baas' or 'Miesies', the evening at the Tennis Club must indeed have been something of an ordeal.

In the more enlightened political climate, it became clear to a number of concerned White people in Nieu Bethesda that what was needed was a form of development which, through training and providing channels for people to market their products, would empower formerly disadvantaged members of the community to take control of their lives. They also recognised that a vital element of any project of sustainable development in marginalised communities should be the involvement of members of the community in the grassroots planning of the development. This presented a major

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problem in Nieu Bethesda where no democratic structures existed (not even street committees) and where people were accustomed to receiving orders rather than making decisions. In addition, the combined factors of unemployment and lack of recreational facilities, high levels of alcoholism and of illiteracy or semi-literacy, had resulted in a demotivated attitude amongst the population of Pienaaarsig. The fact that most of the population of Nieu Bethesda had very limited education, few marketable skills, and had become so accustomed to playing a submissive role, would make it very difficult to engage Blacks in democratic decision-making with Whites. Conversely, the Whites of Nieu Bethesda had always lived a comfortable life and stood to gain very little material advantage from any proposed development.

The acknowledgement of the fact that the involvement of the local community in the planning stages is vital to the success of any envisaged programme of development can be seen as something of a watershed in bridging the boundaries which had for so many decades separated the Black and White communities. The discussions concerning the need for development was the first time that the two sections of the population had ever participated in democratic negotiations, taking into consideration the opinions of those who stood to benefit from the development. Thus, although the specific aim of the attempts at development in Nieu Bethesda was not to provide a channel through which interaction could take place, the planning of projects did indeed have the effect of bringing Black and White people together at a level at which they had never previously interacted. For this reason the planning stages of development projects in Nieu Bethesda is discussed in some detail.

Prior to the shift in government policy of 1990, a certain amount of aid had been given to the village by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) and the Department of Manpower in the form of school feeding schemes and training programmes in practical skills (such as knitting and sewing). However, the structuring of these projects was done by the two bodies by whom they were funded, with very little consultation with the people of Pienaaarsig, who stood to benefit from development. In the early '90s the courses funded by the Department of Manpower were intensified and an attempt was made by those instructing the courses (members of the local farming community) to involve as many people from Pienaaarsig as possible. These courses which lasted for

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several weeks and which were characterised by an informal and relaxed atmosphere, proved to be an excellent way of bringing Black people into contact with educated Whites, other than on a master/servant basis.

In 1990 President De Klerk, voted R2 billion for relief development throughout the country, with the proviso that the funds be spent in a matter of months. Jan Steyn of the IDT who was appointed to administer the funds, favoured spending the money on health, housing, and welfare - in short on community development. It was stressed that the money should be spent as quickly as possible, but that the manner in which it was spent should be of such a nature that it would have some ripple effect in perpetuating job opportunities. Although the funds allocated did not have any permanent effect on the material conditions of Black people in Nieu Bethesda, they did result in the creation of a sportsfield, and in the commencement of building a much needed pre-primary school in Pienaarsig.



Labourers employed with IDT funds constructing the new soccer field.

The IDT funds allocated to Nieu Bethesda were granted specifically to provide employment for labourers retrenched as a result of the recent prolonged drought. Although by its very nature the term 'Relief Fund' has a paternalistic connotation, and

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the utilisation of this fund could thus not be considered to form part of a programme of sustainable development, the activities generated by the release of the relief fund were to be a catalyst in showing the depressed and submissive community of Pienaarsig that they were capable of making decisions for themselves. Secondly, these activities had the effect of bringing Blacks and Whites into contact with each other in the era when South Africans all over the country were attempting to find common ground.

IDT's instruction that a committee representative of the entire community should be set up to administer the spending of the funds constituted an initial problem, given the divisions within the community, but this was overcome by electing a committee of twelve women representing all the churches in Pienaarsig, and weekly meetings were arranged. Although at first the committee had no idea of committee procedure and minute-taking or of grassroot organisation, under the guidance of Phillida Kingwill they gradually learnt such skills, and began to take their first somewhat tentative steps towards making democratic decisions about matters concerning their future. This was a novel experience for women (several of whom were illiterate or semi-literate) who had been accustomed to having all decisions which concerned their future made for them by Whites. Speaking of their feeling of inadequacy and the need to progress slowly, a member of the Women's Committee (known as the Nieu Bethesda Women's Project) remarked: 'In this democracy business *ons bruinmense* (we Coloured folk) are still at the stage of making fires, while you Whites are already at the micro-wave stage'. For the first time in Nieu Bethesda's history Black people were able to articulate their views about the needs of the community, and to make suggestions as to how these should be resolved.

A project which the Women's Committee had identified as being a priority in Nieu Bethesda was the building of a new pre-school. It had by now become clear to all concerned with development in Nieu Bethesda that careful planning was necessary and that the approval of all sections of the community who stood to benefit should be obtained before embarking on the project. The planning of this pre-school involved interaction between Blacks and Whites of a nature that had not been formerly experienced, and is therefore discussed in detail.

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The first proposal that the building should be constructed of stone, which could be obtained locally, at no cost, initially met with a certain amount of opposition. Many of the older people of Pienaarsig felt that this would be a poor quality building (an idea gained by the fact that people's original stone houses had been demolished in favour of cement-brick structures). To reach consensus on this basic but very important matter, all those who would be involved in the administration of the school were taken out to view a model farm school in the district. Apart from a number of White people from the village, the party included the headmaster of the Lettie De Klerk Primary School in Pienaarsig, the teacher of the pre-primary school, and several other people from Pienaarsig. Although this involved organizing four cars (one of them mine) to transport the interested people to the farm school (which was about an hour's drive away, and was thus a fairly time-consuming exercise) at the end of the day all the participants agreed that it had been a useful exercise. Having seen the school building constructed of stone, which was both attractive and functional, the entire party was invited to tea in the farmhouse by the owner of the farm. Although it was obvious that some people from Pienaarsig felt extremely uncomfortable having tea and socialising with White people, the relaxed manner of our host helped to overcome this feeling. A few members of the group preferred to drink their tea outside, and this wish was respected. By the end of the afternoon all those who had previously opposed the notion of using stone for the building of the proposed pre-school were won over to the idea. The trip was thus a practical lesson in democratic decision-making which gave the people of Pienaarsig the feeling that for the first time they were being consulted about a matter which would affect the lives of their children. Secondly, it provided an occasion for Blacks and Whites to socialise in an uncontrived and relaxed manner. Having reached consensus on this first point, a further meeting was called of all those who would be involved in the building and administration of the school, as well as parents, teachers and any other interested parties.

The attempts to create a programme of sustainable development in Nieu Bethesda have not yet resulted in visible material changes to the marginalised Black people. The planning of projects did, however, have the effect of bringing about interaction between Black and White people.

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Redefining racial divisions

With the political changes that have occurred in South Africa in the past few years, in many places (particularly in urban areas), it appears that stratification is increasingly defined by class, rather than by race or colour. We might thus expect that Black people are more readily accepted by Whites if their socio-economic and educational standards are similar to their own.

Newby *et al* (1978:26) in their study of farmers in East Anglia, stressed the importance of property as a medium of stratification. In agricultural areas, they posit:

...the significance of agriculture in rural society, makes property a far more important feature of the stratification system than either occupation or income *per se* (1978:26).

As it is Whites who own all the agricultural land in the district, this argument has distinct resonance in Nieu Bethesda, where status is achieved largely through ownership of agricultural land and through education.

In Nieu Bethesda, most Black people who have had the benefit of education and have thus improved their status have left the village for urban areas. However, there are a small number of Blacks living in Pienaarsig who have achieved a standard of living similar to that of the Whites in the village, through entrepreneurship or education. Yet the divisions of 'us' and 'them' which has, since the historic period, divided the population of Nieu Bethesda, seem to have remained in the minds of both the Blacks and Whites. However, it does appear that people of colour, who have recently become permanent residents in the village, do not, fall into the category of 'them'. A young 'mixed' couple of high education have been welcomed into Nieu Bethesda and now play an integral role in the life of the village.

The demise of apartheid brought little relief or visible change to the marginalised people of Pienaarsig. However, one area in which Black people did benefit materially, was with regard to repayment for the houses in Pienaarsig into which they had been relocated in the apartheid era. After a survey of the township was completed in 1991, it was announced that residents of houses in Pienaarsig costing R7500 or less, which had been built before 1983, would have their balance of repayment annulled, providing

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they were not in arrears with their monthly instalments. All that people who fell into this category were required to pay, in order to obtain a Deed of Transfer for their house, was a proportion of the surveyor's fee, which amounted to between R226 and R362, depending on the size of the house. Once they had obtained a Deed of Transfer, owners of houses in Pienaarsig would only be required to pay the monthly service fee of R10 for water and refuse collection. All the 24 houses in Kloof Street, which had been allocated to people classified as 'Bantu', were purchased for their parents by children who had Coloured identification books.

In Nieu Bethesda in the past few years, there has been a marked improvement in the living conditions of farmworkers. The majority of farmers now provide significantly improved housing for their workers, and since the provision of electricity, many have built recreational rooms equipped with a TV set for their workers. There are five farm schools in the district, which are run by qualified teachers, several of whom are farmers' wives.

As De Klerk (1985:28) has commented, one of the great ironies of town and countryside is that the politically conservative farmer is often far more caring about the day-to-day well-being of workers on his farm than is the comparatively liberal urban employer, who knows little about the domestic circumstances of workers in his plant. And yet claims De Klerk, it is precisely this well-meaning paternalism, that is the most subtle and all-pervasive form of control. Paternalism, as Newby (1979) points out is most effective on the basis of personal contact. Agricultural workers might be willing to defer to those who control their lives, but would expect in return for their deference, a paternalistic concern for their own welfare, based on the supposition that the boss knows what is best for his workers (Newby, 1979:51).

In spite of having risen to the position of foreman on the Van Heerden's farm, Flip Olifant and his family are still trapped in the 'spiderweb' of which Waldman (1993) speaks. Angelina lives in a sub-economic house in Kloof Street, with no bathroom or inside sanitation, and were Flip to leave his employment, he would be forced to join her there. Were Angelina to move to the farm with her family to live with Flip, she would lose her house in Pienaarsig. Thus, historically deprived of access to land, like all Black

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people in Nieu Bethesda, the Olifants have no real independence and remain as Du Toit puts it '*deel van die plaas*' (part of the farm).

Other sources of change

It has been argued that due to its geographic isolation and lack of communication with the rest of the country, Nieu Bethesda remained relatively uninformed about (and in many ways unaffected by) the political turmoil which the rest of the country was experiencing during the apartheid era. It is thus perhaps not surprising that, while the nation held its breath in anticipation of a new political dispensation in their country, in Nieu Bethesda local events of that era appeared to be of greater interest to most of the community. The prospect of having electricity with all its benefits, including television, was received with greater excitement and eager anticipation by many people than was the news of the release of Nelson Mandela and the prospect of being able to vote for the first time. Whereas many people had never heard of Mandela, and most were very sceptical about the prospect of having a predominantly African government, everybody understood that electricity would make their lives easier.

Apart from its obvious practical benefits, the provision of electricity in 1993 provided the people of Nieu Bethesda with a visual link with the outside world in the form of television. Indeed, for the first time many people in this small rural village began to be aware that they were in fact part of the wider South African society, and not merely members of an isolated and 'forgotten' community.

Although few residents of Pienaarsig could afford television sets, several homes were provided with TV by children living in urban areas. In 1993 it was estimated that about twenty-five percent of homes in this area have television sets. As they readily shared this facility with neighbours and friends, most people in Pienaarsig were thus rapidly introduced to television. Several informants whom I interviewed in 1993, told me of the new dimension which TV had brought to their lives. Whereas formerly few people had been aware of what was happening anywhere beyond Graaff Reinet, through television gradually the population of Nieu Bethesda began to feel that they were in fact becoming role players in the national drama which was developing.

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From what I was told of people's impressions of television, it was obvious that they viewed the political developments in a variety of ways. Many older people were shocked at the things they saw on television for the first time. I was frequently told how disgraceful it was to see Black children running amok and burning everything: '*Die kinders steek vir ons so in die skande, ons moet maar net saamhuif*' (The children make us so ashamed, we can only cry together). Others were amazed and delighted at the sight of Mandela airing his views on the box and began to identify with his aims and ideals, but still others, who claimed to watch television regularly, remained singularly uninformed about national events and were not even aware of the forthcoming general election.

Most informants were extremely critical of what they saw as the uncontrolled rage which accompanied the protest actions of Blacks in the apartheid years, and dubious about what they were now hearing on television regarding the brutality of the apartheid regime and the police. Elsie, who had experienced the effects of the school boycotts in Graaff Reinet, had no sympathy for Black activism or any understanding of the violent actions of Blacks.

Look at all the terrible things the Black children did in the apartheid years like burning down schools and all the boycotts and things like that. My daughter was in Std 10 and could not finish her schooling because they burnt down the Spandau School in Graaff Reinet. There is so much talk about the police and how hard they were on the children but I never heard about that and so why should I believe it. *Wat jy nie sien nie moet jy nie aanvaar nie.* (You can't accept something that you haven't seen). Johnny deserved his sentence, but now he seems such a good boy you can't believe he did such a terrible thing..

From my interviews with people in Pienaarsig, it does appear that, through exposure to the world beyond Nieu Bethesda through the medium of television, combined with the visible presence of the ANC and the dissemination of their ideas many people have begun to listen to these new views, and to incorporate them into their vision of what would be possible in the future. While for some people, it appeared that nothing had changed or would be likely to change, others were able to project a glimpse of how Nieu Bethesda could be transformed into a democratic society. Still others interpreted

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what they had seen in terms of the script of the old right-wing South Africa, which resulted in a reinforcement of their prejudices, rather than a softening of attitudes.

The provision of electricity

The provision of electricity to the village was an event which was welcomed by all sections of the population, but nevertheless one which provided unequal advantages to the majority of Pienaarsig's residents and to the White population. For many Black people the provision of electricity did not mean much more than being able to switch on a light in one room.⁴ For others, having electricity meant that the days of walking for miles everyday to acquire sufficient firewood for cooking and warmth were gone for ever, although there are still residents who cannot afford to purchase electric stoves, and thus continue to use their wood stoves.

To the White population of Nieu Bethesda, having electricity represented a whole new way of life - electric stoves, refrigerators, irons, kettles, micro-wave ovens, food processors, heaters, electric blankets, television and hi-fi sets which they had previously not been able to use. In Pienaarsig, apart from a small number of fairly affluent people, few could afford such appliances, and the change in lifestyle was thus far less apparent.

One person to whom the provision of electricity meant more than merely its utilitarian value was Apools Olifant, the organ 'pumper' (who in the apartheid years was the only Black person who was permitted to attend services in the DRC). When the lights went on in Nieu Bethesda for the first time, Mr Olifant, an 'ailing illiterate' (Sunday Times, 29/11/92) said:

I'm happy I won't have to pump *Onse Vader* any more - it goes on for ever... Now I'll only earn R72 a month from my other jobs, but I'm glad that I'm going to stop pumping that organ. (Sunday Times, 29/11/1992).

⁴ Before the provision of electricity many Black people had made use of an ingenious lamp (the creator of which is unclear, but I was told that it was devised by someone in the village many years ago), which was the most economical means of providing lighting, and thus widely used. Old Brasso bottles were collected, fitted with a bicycle valve and a piece of cloth for a wick, and filled with methylated spirits. Many households still use their Brasso lamps at night to save or supplement electricity, and I was presented with one as a memento.

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To Mr Olifant, although the electrification of the village meant that his old shoulder injury (incurred by the kick of a horse many years ago) would no longer 'ache and occasionally bleed when the congregation sings an overly long hymn' (*ibid*), it nevertheless deprived him of a portion of his income and meant that he would thus have to survive on R72 a month (although he is likely to receive a pension as well). In contrast, Mrs Elize Pienaar, resident organist, welcomed having electricity in the church for entirely different reasons:

He [Mr Olifant] tried hard and was very reliable - although some Sundays he struggled after a heavy Saturday night and other times he fell asleep. With electricity I can practise whenever I want (*ibid*).

It is hard to believe that these two individuals were discussing the same subject, given the disparity between their accounts of what they regarded as the benefits which flowed from having electricity.

Increase in tourism

The clearly visible changes which have taken place in the White section of the village in the past five years can be attributed, not to new government policies, but rather to the world-wide acclaim with which the film, *The Road to Mecca*, was received. This resulted in a tremendous influx of newcomers to the village (about 10,000 visitors annually). However, the only material benefit of the increase in tourism to the people of Pienaarsig is the limited number of temporary jobs which are created for domestic workers, which provide a few individuals with a welcome source of income. Thus while it is generally agreed that the interest in the Owl House has revitalised an economically ailing village, this is yet another instance of the existing and already profound differentiation between the Black and White sections of the population in Nieu Bethesda being increased rather than diminished.

Whereas formerly few people had ever heard of Nieu Bethesda, now the majority of people in the Western and Eastern Cape know of its existence, and many people have visited the village to view the famous Owl House. Many of the new residents were drawn to the village by interest in the Owl House, and found the sleepy, rural atmosphere of Nieu Bethesda so appealing that they decided to settle there. The White

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population has almost doubled in the last five years, and the new residents come from varied backgrounds and professions. There are now several artists, working in various different mediums living in the village, who hold exhibitions and sales of work, which attract additional visitors. Many homes, which had for years stood empty, have been converted into guest houses, and two enterprising young women, who now live permanently in the village, have started a small restaurant, which is a popular meeting place. During the June holidays when the Grahamstown Festival takes place, it is almost impossible to find accommodation in Nieu Bethesda, as many people make a detour and spend a few days in the village.

Some of the artists in the village are passing on their skills to the local population. One such case is Elgin, who is learning the art of *papier mache* under the guidance of Derek Luyt, a sociologist, and an accomplished artist, who now lives permanently in the village and has converted an outbuilding into a workshop. Elgin, who is in his mid twenties, told me of the change this has made to his life.

Case 5.4: Elgin

I was born in the old location in a *kliphuisie* (stone house) and attended the village school as far as Std 5. My father died when I was still young and my mother then lived with another man. I wanted to continue with my schooling, but my mother and her 'husband' decided that I should go apple picking in the Boland. After a while I came back to Bethesda and with no work, I felt so empty and in 1986 I started drinking. I don't like drinking and wish I could stop, but it is hard when all my friends drink so much and invite me to join them.

When Derek came to the village and took an interest in me, my life changed. Although I still drink, I feel I have something to live for, as I love art and now I am learning to make beautiful things. Derek is not like other White people - the other Whites in the village - push us brown people down (*druk ons bruinmense af*), but Derek treats me differently even when I drink.

Unfortunately, the majority of young people in Pienaarsig have not been as fortunate as Elgin, and have few opportunities of interacting with the talented White people who have come to live in Nieu Bethesda. Although the many tourists to the village have, indeed, resulted in a significant broadening of ideas, for Black people contact with newcomers to the village is extremely limited. As tourists all stay in the centre of the village and seldom venture into Pienaarsig, they have little communication with this

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section of the population, other than as employers of casual domestic workers. However, merely seeing people whose lifestyle is different to the Whites with whom they have grown up, makes Black people realize that not all South Africans relate to them in the same way as the original Whites of Nieu Bethesda had always done.

It is likely that the reformulating of entrenched political views was accelerated by the arrival of newcomers to the village. Inevitably many of the newcomers and tourists to Nieu Bethesda have brought with them varied and more progressive ideas than those to which the population of the village had formerly been exposed. Thus the White residents of Nieu Bethesda have become acquainted with a range of people from widely differing backgrounds with whom most would never otherwise have come into contact. In any small community, contact with external influences and the ideas of people of varied political, religious and cultural backgrounds can lead to a challenging of accepted ideas and norms and a broadening of people's perspective of the world, and for the Whites of Nieu Bethesda this certainly appears to have been the case.

A comment which was frequently made by Black people when discussing tourists to the village, was that the tourists usually treat Black people with greater respect than the White people with whom they had formerly interacted. Several informants told me that they were amazed when their temporary employers introduced themselves by their first names and requested that they should not be addressed as 'Baas' or 'Miesies'. Older Black people in Nieu Bethesda find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change from being subservient in the presence of Whites. Indeed, as so many of my informants told me: '*Baas en Miesies sal baie swaar afgaan*' (It will be very difficult to get rid of Baas and Miesies). For the first time, many Blacks have begun to realise that the way of life in Nieu Bethesda and the paternalism to which they have been accustomed all their lives is not the only manner in which Black and White people can interact.

Several owners of holiday homes in Nieu Bethesda have found employment in their home towns for young people from Pienaarsig. As such employment is often related to particular projects and thus of a temporary nature, there is a constant flow of people to and from Pienaarsig.

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Networks of support

In Nieu Bethesda, where most Black people depend heavily on remittances from family members living away from the village, the views of social scientists regarding household composition and networks are particularly helpful when trying to understand how families survive on incomes which appear completely inadequate. For this reason some of the arguments put forward in this regard are discussed.

The social relations in which every individual is embedded may be viewed as a network. The concept of personal network thus provides an interface between local and national levels (Boissevain, 1974:25). Because households are a fundamental social unit, it follows that an understanding of the structure and composition of households is extremely important to any investigation of the economic position of a society. As Foster (1984) argues:

.....household structure may provide a way of linking small-scale sociocultural processes to global structural properties of communication, in much the same way that family composition mediates between postmarital residence and demographic processes on the one hand and household composition on the other (1984:84).

The conventional understanding of a household relates to functional elements such as kinship, common residence, and economic co-operation. In such terms a domestic group could be viewed as 'a dwelling unit, a reproductive unit including sexual and socialization functions, or an economic unit of production and consumption' (Wilk and Netting, 1984:3). However, as Ross (1993:37) shows, in recent years it has been acknowledged by social anthropologists that such a definition excludes people who are forced for economic reasons to work away from the basic family unit, but who contribute in material terms to the household. Thus two categories of people who exercise rights in and fulfil obligations for rural domestic units have been defined (cf. Murray, 1981; Spiegel, 1990). While the *de facto* category comprises people considered to be members of a household who are actually present in a unit at the time of research, the *de jure* groups, consists of:

....people who are emically regarded as members of a particular domestic or residential grouping even if they are temporarily absent (Spiegel, 1990:258).

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Murray (1981:48) argues that, whether or not its members are physically dispersed at a given time, the household remains the unit of economic viability. The term household is therefore a useful one for to retain for the purpose of recording household membership while conducting fieldwork. However, enquiries into the collective incomes of households can be misleading if the household is taken to be merely the sum of people living in a particular homestead at a given time. As Spiegel (1979) found in his study of the impact of a migratory wage-labour system on the relations of production and of distribution in rural Lesotho, a purely spatial definition of the homestead does not provide any information relating to the dynamics of the homestead's growth as its occupying household grows and matures.

Characteristics of households in Pienaarsig are the changes in composition which constantly occur, the cyclical nature of such changes, and the reciprocal quality of the relations between members of households. As it has been mentioned several times in this thesis, Pienaarsig is characterised by an abnormally high percentage of pensioners, and a low proportion of wage-earners. The greater proportion of these pensioners are women, caring for young children whose parents no longer live permanently in the village. With scant chance of employment, most young people leave Nieu Bethesda to live in urban environments, where they are more likely to find employment. Households are therefore extremely fluid with a constant movement in and out of the homestead, as children grow up and leave, return to have babies, leave their children with parents in Nieu Bethesda, or return to look after ageing parents. In many instances younger members who return to care for elderly parents, stay on and take over the role of household head after their parents' death. A common feature of Pienaarsig appears to be that children born in urban areas to parents who had grown up in Nieu Bethesda are sent back to the village where they are cared for by their grandparents during their early years. When asked why this was done, many elderly people intimated that their children preferred to send their offspring to Nieu Bethesda, to be reared in the safe environment in which they had grown up.

In addition to sending regular remittances to their parents to cover the cost of caring for their children, many contributed both financially and in material terms to the households in Pienaarsig. Although few mentioned these contributions as regular sources of

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income, most households intimated that they would not survive without the remittances they receive from their children living away from Nieu Bethesda. This is illustrated in the following case study, which is typical of many Black families in Nieu Bethesda.

Case 5.5: Sanna and Freddie

Sanna and her husband, Freddie, live in Kloof Street, and neither have permanent employment. Freddie is medically unfit for work and receives a pension, and Sanna is employed once a week by the owner of a holiday house in the village. The regular monthly income of the family is in the vicinity of R500 (which varies according to whether Sanna is able to find odd jobs in the village). However, this meagre income is supplemented by regular maintenance which they receive for the two grandchildren who live with them and attend school in Nieu Bethesda.

Julie, one of Sanna and Freddie's daughters, attended school in Bethesda until Std 5. Although she longed to continue her education, she was not able to do so as her family could not afford the cost of sending her to boarding school in Graaff Reinet. After leaving school, she stayed at home for a few years, doing odd jobs when she could get work, and helping her parents in the home. She then left Nieu Bethesda and went to Cape Town, where she started working as a nurse-aid at the Volks Hospitaal. She continued studying through correspondence and has now passed Std 8 and is a registered nurse. It is Julie's aim to become a nursing sister, and she is therefore continuing with her studies. She has a boyfriend and one child, but does not want to marry, as she feels that if she did so, she would have to put the interests of her own family before those of her parents.

Julie sends regular remittances to her parents which vary from month to month, but which enable them to survive. She returns to Bethesda for a month every year bringing with her large quantities of food and clothing and other presents for her parents. Julie feels that in spite of the deprivation her parents have suffered, they have given their children so much in the way of loving nurturing and security, that she would like to make them her first priority for the rest of their lives.

Sanna and Freddie have six children, all of whom have left home, and all of whom contribute towards their parents' living expenses, to some extent. It appears that Julie provides the major support to Sanna and Freddie, but as she was the only one with whom I was able to meet, I could not discuss the matter with her siblings. The problem of ascertaining to what extent individuals living away from home are contributing to the household is one which Spiegel (1979) mentions. He found that in such cases he had merely to rely on the respective respondents' perceptions of their household's

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boundaries, which were often related to jural rights of residence in a homestead (1979:50).

Many young people, who have left Nieu Bethesda to work in urban areas, return when their elderly parents become increasingly unable to care for themselves adequately, and their roles are then reversed. One such case is Ouma Gongo, who all her life had cared for her grandchildren, while their parents were earning a living in other parts of South Africa. Although Ouma Gongo is still remarkably active, her daughters realise that as she is in her nineties, she can no longer be expected to play the role of household head and child-minder. Dora has therefore returned to live with her mother and care for her during her remaining years. Ouma Gongo, who since her husband's death, has been the household head and driving force in her home, now has two daughters, three grandchildren and a great grandchild living with her, and is able to relax with the understanding that should anything happen to her, her daughters will be able to take care of the children and run the house.

In addition to the actual cash donations which children make to their parents, many contribute financially in other ways such as settling debts, paying for medical treatment if necessary, or providing essential items for the home. This was particularly true after the provision of electricity when few Black people could afford to purchase electrical appliances. During fieldwork, when questioned about how elderly people who obviously would not have sufficient funds to purchase appliances such as refrigerators or stoves, or even less expensive items such as electric kettles, had acquired such relative luxuries, I was invariably told that these had been supplied by children.

Another point which became evident is that in Nieu Bethesda, the general knowledge and 'street wisdom' which young people acquire in urban areas, equips them with greater knowledge of how to act in times of crisis than their parents, who have never left the protected environment of Nieu Bethesda. In many instances I was told by elderly people in Pienaarsig that they had lost vital documents, such as identity documents or vital receipts, or did not know the procedure to follow in certain situations, but that their better-informed children had 'sorted things out' for them. The ties of being

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'n booring van Bethesda are hard to sever, and such ties are vital in ensuring that the links which connect social networks remain intact.

From these examples, the reciprocal nature of the networks of support which exist between families in Pienaarsig and their kin in urban areas can be understood. Vital material support is provided to elderly people who would not otherwise be able to survive, while in turn, urban parents feel secure in the knowledge that their children are being cared for in the same sheltered surroundings which they had taken for granted in their childhood years. Many times I was told how strange it is that in order to appreciate Nieu Bethesda, one needs to have lived in the city and experience the insecurity of urban life.

Conclusion

It is a disconcerting fact that in spite of the promises which the ANC made before the general election of 1994, in Nieu Bethesda there are few visible signs of the new government's policy of reconstruction and development. However, there is now an awareness of the need to involve the entire population in any decision-making which will affect their future.

In a community with minimal recreational facilities, where for centuries the population has been divided on racial lines, and where there are gross economic and educational disparities, social interaction is unlikely to take place in the near future. Similarly, opportunities for interaction in the workplace or in schools and universities as has occurred in urban areas are negligible.

It appears that the more modern outlook which newcomers have brought to the village is having a marked effect on the conservative attitudes which have characterised race relations in the village throughout its history. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the post-apartheid era is that the boundaries of many people living in the isolated environment of Nieu Bethesda are being extended beyond the limits of the Sneeuberg region. Whereas formerly, they had little conception of any world outside their own village, they are now beginning to realise that they are in fact role players in a national and international sense.

How do you reshape the building that has been built with 300 years of apartheid into a building that is worth living in for all human beings? A building of justice, tolerance and a real sense of community (Wilson, 1994:6)

CHAPTER SIX

The initial aim of this study was primarily to describe the changes which have taken place in a village, in the period immediately following the famous announcement by President De Klerk that 'apartheid is dead'. However, as it is generally accepted, the process of change will be a long and arduous one. As Nelson Mandela has said:

Democracy means more than just the vote. It must be measured by the quality of life of ordinary men and women, young and old, rural and urban. It means giving all South Africans the opportunity to share in the country's wealth, to contribute to its development and improve their own lives (Mandela, 1994:15)

Although the first democratic election of 1994 was welcomed with the now well-known words of Archbishop Tutu, 'Free at last', it is indeed true that people are not freed merely by being able to vote. Freedom has thus far meant little for the Black residents of Nieu Bethesda. Even insofar as changes have emerged in the attitudes of Whites, it could be argued that these are of little relevance, given the continuing White exodus from the village. By contrast, the relative stability of the Black population merely emphasises the limited freedom of choice (in terms of mobility) they enjoy. A comparison of the economic position of Black people in Nieu Bethesda with the wealth which the vast areas of farming land represent for the handful of White members of the district brings this feature further into perspective. Sandile Dikeni, who grew up in the Karoo and knows the deep-rooted and symbolic relationship which exists between people and land, declared:

The land, the soil, the goddamn land! It is all about that, isn't it? It is about this dry soil, where poplar trees wither and die but still miraculously stay alive...It is an end. It is a beginning...(Cape Times, 24/07/93).

Conclusion

In large measure, both sections of the population of Nieu Bethesda still accept the right of Whites to own and control most of the land and resources in the village. Thus in the apartheid era, although stripped of their small plots of land and without any marketable skills, the majority of Black people in this small rural community were grateful to their White masters for making decisions for them in the paternalistic way they had always done, even when such decisions were not in their long-term interests. It does appear that the worldviews of people who have lived in Nieu Bethesda all their lives indicate a high degree of continuity and inability to change, suggesting that the ethos of paternalism has in fact persisted in the post-apartheid era. Insofar as this thesis has suggested that minimal change has taken place in Nieu Bethesda as a direct result of apartheid, this raises questions regarding the long-term prognosis for the village.

Notwithstanding the absence of employment opportunities, there is still a relatively large Black population in Nieu Bethesda. The large proportion of elderly people in the village are too old or unskilled to find employment in urban areas. And, despite the inequalities and paternalism which pervades the thinking of Whites, the perceived advantages of remaining in the village have thus far ensured that many of the older generation of Blacks choose to remain in the place where they were born. There is little indication that this trend will change in the foreseeable future. The daily face-to-face contact which residents have with their friends and kin, the lower level of crime, and the relaxed lifestyle can never be found in an urban environment, and this was frequently articulated by informants. For these reasons too, many people who were born in Nieu Bethesda and have spent their working lives in urban areas are lured back to the place of their birth when they retire.

However, with no available agricultural land, no secondary school, and no industry of any kind, few young people remain in the village. They leave to find work in the urban areas and improve their chances of upward mobility. The village has thus become a community characterised by an abnormally high percentage of pensioners, many of

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whom are caring for their grandchildren, providing them with a safe environment in which to grow up, away from the dangers and temptations of city life. It is likely that this situation will be repeated for many generations, with at least one member of the younger generation of families now living in Nieu Bethesda returning to the place where they grew up when they retire. Having had greater exposure to the changes which are taking place in South Africa, they are unlikely to be as acquiescent and submissive as those who have never left the village, and are therefore likely to instil new ideas in the minds of those who remain.

Residents who have left the village for economic reasons have created networks of support for those remaining in the village. As Mitchell (1969) argues, frequency of contact is not a significant criterion for the durability and intensity of relations between absent members of family and their kin in rural areas. Social networks, as Rogers and Vertovec (1995) posit, may be regarded as resources. In Nieu Bethesda this argument is particularly apposite, where women are increasingly being obliged to create new networks of child-care and mutual assistance.

While the attitudinal legacy of which Welsh (1994) speaks is less tangible than material conditions (and often more difficult to assess), this aspect of apartheid's legacy constitutes a formidable obstacle to change.

Feelings of superiority, resentment and exclusion will be hard to overcome - systems of privilege cannot be broken down overnight. Apartheid's legacy will be long and enduring (Harker, 1994:18).

As has been the case in many small towns and villages in South Africa, demography is a key factor in examining change. In many places where there is an overwhelming majority of Blacks (such as the Transkei), the majority of Whites were reluctant to remain with a Black government in power (Johnson, 1994). After the Transkei was granted 'independence' in 1976, a large number of White people packed up and left. In other areas (such as Greyton), where Coloured people were forcibly moved from the

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village and resettled in a nearby township, the town became repopulated with Whites eager to get away from the tensions of urban life (Robinson, 1983).

Important as demography is, Connerton (1989) has argued that differences between village life and urban life do not only relate to space and population density. Small villages provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised. In rural villages such as Nieu Bethesda, where a major exodus to the cities took place towards the middle of this century, it seemed that mainly Whites with a conservative outlook remained in the village. It could thus be argued that those who continued living in the village represent a self-perpetuating pool of conservatism, resistant to any radical change in the *status quo*.

Long and Long (1992) have argued that in the field of development, an 'actor-oriented' sociology of development is required, in which the research focuses on individual actors. Central to such an approach, is the recognition of the 'multiple realities' and diverse social practices of the various social actors, and the networks and discourse in which the actors are involved and which they reproduce. In order to meet the challenge of relating theory to practice (which is one with which sociologists are continually confronted). Long and Long advocate:

.....the development of a more actor-oriented approach which builds upon theoretical work aimed at reconciling structure and perspectives (1992:4).

Such an approach is reflected in this dissertation, which focuses to a large extent on the actions and views of individual actors and the networks they create and in which they are involved. In telling the story of the people of Nieu Bethesda, the thesis has recognised the multiplicity of voices which contribute to this story, and negates the notion of a shared set of ideas and values sanctioned by its population.

Conclusion

In Nieu Bethesda Blacks have not been brutally treated in the physical sense, and there is a remarkable degree of goodwill between Whites and Blacks. Although I have not returned to Nieu Bethesda since the local elections of 1995, I have been in contact with several residents of the village, from both population groups, who are enthusiastic about the change in composition of the Town Council, which is predominantly Black. The Mayor, who is the (Coloured) headmaster of the Lettie de Klerk school, was born in Nieu Bethesda and has lived in the village for the greater part of his life. However, having had the opportunity to leave the village to continue his studies, he is well-educated and in touch with national and international affairs. This gives weight to the argument that change is likely to come from outside influences, rather than from within the village itself. Johnny (Case 4.6, 5.2) is now a member of the Town Council, and his input and ideas are, as I was told by a White resident of the village, generally considered to be 'of great value'. He too is an individual whose ideas and political philosophy were formed beyond the boundaries of Nieu Bethesda.

However, the outlook for material change is less optimistic. It does not appear that any solution to the depressed conditions of the majority of people in Pienaarsig is likely to be found in the foreseeable future. With the majority of the Black population consisting of pensioners and children, there is little scope for major development projects which would significantly alter the economic situation of residents of Pienaarsig. Observation of the change which is taking place in the village at present would suggest that any future transformation of the social order is unlikely to occur through state intervention in the form of development projects. As Nuijten (1992:206) has argued, studies of political economy and of local organization in development are 'constrained by a particular conceptualization of the theoretical problem - and of its significance for state policy and political strategy'. Any material change is therefore more likely to take place as a result of the injection of new ideas and skills which newcomers have given the village, than as a result of a change in state policy. The influence of new residents who, in addition to broadening the worldview of the older villagers, are bringing artistic and entrepreneurial

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skills to Nieu Bethesda, may in time help people in a limited way to realise some of their aspirations.

However, until a radical restructuring of the economy takes place the material conditions of the residents of Pienaarsig are unlikely to change. Empowerment is what is needed most in Nieu Bethesda, and this will be an arduous and lengthy process. As Boyd (1989) says:

Empowerment is a process by which people acquire real powers and command real resources within their locality; by that, I mean recognised power over material resources and recognised power institutionalised within the political structures. It constitutes an affirmation of confidence that one has the tools, the mechanisms and the resources to make decisions capable of solving one's own problems (Boyd, 1989:109).

A key element of the perpetuation of the collective memory of any group is communication between individuals. In a social group, where parents are forced through economic reasons to live away from their children, older members transmit their representations of the past to the younger members. The grandparents, therefore, more than the parents, act as mediators of the memory of the group. In Nieu Bethesda, where there is a high percentage of pensioners and the majority of children are cared for by grandparents, this may have contributed, and is likely to continue in the future, to the perpetuation of a conservative outlook.

Reference has been made throughout this dissertation to the idea of Nieu Bethesda as a community. The geographic isolation of the village, its small population, and the fact that almost all its residents have been born and reared in the village, have produced strong feelings of belonging to a unique community. In spite of the material disadvantages of living in Nieu Bethesda, the fact of being "*n boorling van Bethesda*" (one born in Bethesda) appears to create a lasting bond with all those born there, and yearning for the strong family ties and kinship bonds of a small and close-knit community draw people back to the place of their birth.

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While it may appear that the democratisation of South Africa alone is unable to bring about radical change in the village in the immediate future, it is probable that change will come about through the greater contact which Nieu Bethesda now has with the rest of the world and through the influence which outsiders are able to exert on the original population. Although, as has been shown, paternalism is both persistent and persuasive, even in an isolated community such as Nieu Bethesda it is not static. Thus, as Van Onselen (1991) argues, marginalised people should not be regarded as being inherently submissive or incapable of changing. However submissive a group of people may be appear, there are usually a number of individuals within their ranks who, unlike the majority, are not prepared to accept their disadvantaged situation. This was demonstrated in the case studies of Johnny (Cases 4.6 and 5.2) and Dora (Case 5.3). In both cases the informants, through exposure to education and political influences beyond the boundaries of Nieu Bethesda, were able to present a different philosophy to their family and friends when they returned to the village.

Societies create and preserve powerful images of themselves as existing over time (Connerton, 1989:46). This dissertation has relied on both historical reconstruction, based on an investigation of facts, and social memory, based on images and individual interpretations of events and processes. As an individual's consciousness of time is to a large extent an awareness of that continuity which the society creates there is, as Connerton (1989) points out, a need to distinguish between social memory and historical reconstruction. This is particularly true in a small village such as Nieu Bethesda, where social memory is an important factor in determining individuals' places in society.

Through performance and ritual, religion is a powerful means of conveying and sustaining images and recollected knowledge of the past. Christianity, as Connerton (1989:40) argues, teaches that:

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.... divine revelation has assumed a historical form, that God has intervened in the history of humanity, and that the vocation of the Christian is to remember and commemorate the history of that intervention in society (Connerton, 1989:46).

In Nieu Bethesda, where the Church has been a major focus of activity, and where for two centuries adherence to the teachings of the Gospel has been advocated, Christianity has been a unifying factor and an element of continuity. For the majority of both the Black and White populations, membership of a church is the one aspect of their lives which is focused in the same direction. However, as the majority of the population have been excluded from the church around which the village was established, the Church has also proved to be a source of division and resentment.

The question of how to alter the culture of dependency so prevalent in many small economically-deprived communities in post-apartheid South Africa is one which could present a challenge to social anthropologists in the future. For any development project to be sustainable in Nieu Bethesda, (as has been the case in many other parts of the country), the culture of dependency which has developed in the village over more than a century will need to be reversed.

As Sharp and Boonzaier (1995) point out, the perception into which White (and indeed many Black) South Africans have been socialized for decades is that Black and White people are so inherently different that they can be categorized into mutually exclusive groups. In the apartheid era Whites used their political power to realize this cultural perception in a whole range of practical ways (1995:65). With the changes that are taking place following the transition to a democratic government, the false sense of security which paternalistic treatment had afforded Black people has been eroded. Similarly, the old established order, where Whites were secure in the belief that they could exercise complete control over Blacks, has fallen away. In order, to bring meaning to their lives, people are seeking new and diverse ways to reconstruct the turbulent events of the past and present eras in terms of their own individual culture

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and experiences, which is confusing and worrying for both Blacks and Whites. This presents new challenges to anthropologists and emphasises the need to broaden the focus of social anthropologists (Sharp and Boonzaier, 1995:64).

Some reflections on fieldwork

On completion of a research project of this nature, it seems appropriate that certain aspects of fieldwork which could be regarded as problematic be considered and documented. When away from the field, one is often able to stand back from the subject with a certain objectivity not possible while immersed in fieldwork.

Firstly, a strong argument can now be made that the timing of the research project was unfortunate as it commenced too soon after the announcement that apartheid was to be dismantled. Insufficient time has elapsed for significant changes to manifest themselves. It has even been difficult to discern patterns of change which might be extrapolated into the future.

Secondly, when considering Nieu Bethesda both in its historical context and in the context of future events, the issue of interaction between Blacks and Whites has not been given much coverage. This is obviously related to the small number of Whites remaining in the village. However, I have tried to emphasise the structural conditions which militate against significant interaction, even after the demise of apartheid. At the same time, I am of the opinion that such population imbalance between White and Black as exists in Nieu Bethesda is probably not atypical of ratios to be found in many other contexts where Blacks and Whites might interact.

The unusually small population of Nieu Bethesda also meant that individual role players, rather than patterns and processes (which are the normal indicator of social change) became the focus of research efforts. Although I recognise that it was

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originally the small number of people in the unit of study which forced me in this direction, I still feel that this emphasis is an important one which should be carried over to other anthropological research. Such a belief is confirmed by Long and Long (1992) who advocate an actor-oriented approach to the analysis of social change and development intervention. For example, while it can be argued that the two long case studies in chapter four (Cases 4.4 and 4.5) illustrate many features of life in Nieu Bethesda (patterns and processes), they were selected primarily to emphasise the uniqueness of individual experience.

As pointed out by Featherstone (1991), actor-oriented research emphasises the need to look more closely at networks of communication which individuals create and utilise. However, in order to produce a complete study which pursued the emphasis placed on networks by the actor-oriented thrust of the study, it would have been necessary to follow people beyond the boundaries of Nieu Bethesda. Unfortunately, apart from the isolated cases mentioned in Chapter Four (Pieter Meyer [jnr] who I was able to visit in Graaff Reinet, and his sister, Mattie Cupido, who I visited in Cape Town), time and scope precluded this.

In an ethnography of this nature, participant observation is generally the major method used to observe the village activities. However, in Nieu Bethesda, where there are so few opportunities for recreational activity, uncontrived participant observation often proved to be problematic. Thus most of the data for this thesis was obtained through informal interviews. It is acknowledged that participant observation, where spontaneous information is elicited, is preferable to interviews, where the information is obtained through response to specific questions. The only occasions where I was able to listen, rather than to ask questions, were at the Manpower courses and on the occasions when I gave residents of Pienaarsig lifts to Graaff Reinet.

Conclusion

A substantial part of this dissertation relates to the past, rather than to the dynamic changes which are currently taking place. However, this can be justified in terms of Touraine's argument that:

....it is only when a society is capable of debating its choices, of recognizing the complementarity of cultural orientations common to most and clearly opposed social interests, that it may have a history (1992:145).

If we accept that '...the lucid knowledge of the interests of each [individual] determines the organization of society by a cascade of rational choices and political compromises' (Touraine,1992:145), an examination of the history of a society is crucial to an understanding of its contemporary dynamics. I am also convinced that the past does play a very significant part in the lives of people in Nieu Bethesda, which is independent of my own propensity to steer conversation in that direction, and I do not think that the theme of persistent paternalism is one which has been artificially constructed as a result of any fieldwork bias.

Finally, there is the question of how applicable my observations in Nieu Bethesda may be to other parts of South Africa. Throughout my period of fieldwork I was reminded of the uniqueness of Nieu Bethesda, and of the extent to which it was atypical of other villages in South Africa. However, the themes of persistent paternalism and the importance of social networks (especially those linking remote villages with urban areas) might have a much broader relevance, which should be investigated elsewhere. I hope other researchers will take up the challenge of trying to investigate their relevance in other contexts, thereby adding to what is presently a very limited body of village-based ethnography.

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1 May 1893

Appendix A (3 pages)

15 Apr 1893

2nd June

New Bethesda
Dist of Graaff-Reinet
New Bethesda 15th April 1893

Immigration of

To the Honourable
the Colonial Secretary
Cape Town

Sir

The undersigned residents of New Bethesda desire to call the very serious attention of the Government to the continuous and ever increasing immigration to this Colony of Indian coolies of a very low type, and of other undesirable Asiatics.

It will be in the knowledge of the Government that these immigrants, or at least the greater number of them, employ themselves almost exclusively in hawking from door to door in our principal towns and villages, fruit, vegetables, and dairy produce, and as the class form a numerous and rapidly augmenting body of nonproducers, while their aggregate contributions to the general and local revenues are manifestly altogether disproportionate to the additional

and

and special charge their presence
in our midst necessitates.

They add very appreciably
to the already numerous number
of non-producers with which
the country, prior to their
advent, was notoriously over-
burdened. Their habits of life,
social and domestic arrange-
ments, predilections, and
surroundings, and the low
standard of morality usually
obtaining among them are
such as to entirely unfit them
to become a useful, much less
an acceptable and desirable
addition to our population;
indeed, they constitute about
the most costly and objection-
able accession to our already
sufficiently mined and coloured
class that it could possibly
receive.

For these and other cogent
reasons which must be
obvious to every thinking
colonist, your memorialists
would very strongly urge upon
the immediate and favourable
consideration of the Government
the absolute need for legislation
in the following directions:—

1 May 1893

376

1st To restrict as far as possible
and regulate the immigration
of Asiatics -

2nd To provide for their segregation,
as also of those of this class
already in the country -

3rd For subjecting these people to
special direct taxation by means
of a hawker's license or otherwise -

We have the honour to be
Sir

Your Obedient Servants -

C. J. Immelman
M. J. Venter
J. J. Pienaar
J. J. d. Home
S. P. Luanepeel
B. Pienaar
J. Bondesio
E. F. Enslin
R. P. de Merve
J. H. Jansen
A. G. Erlant
W. H. Vande
P. S. Rofson
E. J. Penaar
Ph. J. Penaar

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SIR HENRY BROUGHAM, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Colony of the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and of the Territories and Dependencies thereof, and Her Majesty's High Commissioner, &c., &c., &c.

WHEREAS under and by virtue of the provisions of the Ordinance No. 9 of 1836, the repeal of Regulations Nos. 117 and 118 for the Municipality of New Bethesda has been agreed to, and Regulations substituted therefor have been framed and adopted by the Resident Householders of that town, and the aforesaid repealed and substituted Regulations have been transmitted to me for my approval or disallowance, by and with the advice of the Executive Council: and whereas the repeal of the said Regulations Nos. 117 and 118, and the substitution thereof of the said amended Regulations have been approved and allowed by me, by and with the advice of the Executive Council: Now, therefore, by virtue of, and in conformity with the provisions of the said Ordinance No. 9 of 1836, I do hereby proclaim and make known that the repeal of the aforesaid Regulations Nos. 117 and 118, and the substitution thereof of the aforesaid amended Regulations have been approved and allowed, which said amended Regulations I have directed to be published herewith in the *Government Gazette* in the usual manner.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my hand and the Public Seal of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, this 28th day of March, 1892.

HENRY B. LOCH,
Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor in Council,

No. 105, 1892.

J. W. SAUER.

MUNICIPALITY OF NEW BETHESDA.

REPEALED AND ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS.

Regulations Nos. 117 and 118 are hereby repealed and the following Regulations are added and substituted in their place, viz.:

1. It shall be lawful for the Commissioners to appoint a Superintendent of the Native Location.
2. Any person wishing to erect a hut or dwelling within the Native Location must make application to the Superintendent, who shall, if the application be granted, point out the plot of ground upon which such hut or dwelling shall be at liberty to erect such hut or dwelling and who shall supply such applicant with the necessary instructions. Any person proceeding with the erection of such hut or dwelling within the Native Location without the written permission of the Superintendent, will render himself or herself liable to a fine of not exceeding £1 sterling, in addition to having such building material as he may have collected thereon removed from the Location.
3. The occupier of each hut or dwelling shall monthly pay in advance to the Commissioners, the sum of two shillings and sixpence sterling (2s. 6d.) as a hut tax.
4. Any occupier of a hut or dwelling who receives into such hut or dwelling any person not provided with a proper permit shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £2 or 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour.
5. Any person desirous of becoming an inhabitant of the Native Location without erecting a hut or dwelling may, on his or her satisfying the Superintendent that he or she follows or intends to follow a lawful occupation, receive from the Superintendent a three days' permit for the purpose of finding some registered occupier of a hut or dwelling with whom he can be domiciled, and if at the expiration of such time such person does not satisfy the Superintendent that he is to be domiciled, such person may be ordered by the Superintendent to remove, and on neglecting or refusing to do so shall be subject to a penalty not exceeding 10s. for each offence.

6. The Superintendent shall keep a register of persons applying to him for permission to erect huts, dwellings, or for permission to reside with any registered occupier of a hut or dwelling, in accordance with a form to be supplied by the Commissioners, and the register shall set forth the name, race and occupation of all such applicants, and when permission is refused shall be submitted to the Board of Commissioners for their information, and the number of inmates of every hut and domicile.

7. Any person who shall have been refused permission by the Superintendent to erect a hut or dwelling, or any person who shall have been refused permission by the Superintendent to domicile himself or herself as a registered occupier of a hut or dwelling, may make application to the Commissioners aforesaid, who shall finally decide upon all such applications.

8. The Superintendent shall number each hut of residence, and shall receive all rent payable monthly in advance, and pay same over to the Treasurer of the Municipality.

9. Every hut-holder or other resident in the location shall be obliged to satisfy the Superintendent of the manner in which he obtains his livelihood.

10. Every adult male person domiciled with a registered occupier shall be bound within the first three days of every month to appear before the Superintendent and obtain a Location permit, and for every such permit a fee of two shillings and sixpence sterling (2s. 6d.) shall be payable to the Superintendent. The number of domiciled persons to be permitted to reside in any hut shall be left to the discretion of the Superintendent.

11. For the purpose of enabling the Superintendent to keep such register as aforesaid, it shall be the duty of every inhabitant of the Location to give to the Superintendent such information as he may require for the purpose, and every such person who upon being required by the Superintendent so to do, shall neglect or refuse to give any such information within twelve hours after being so required, shall be liable to a fine of not exceeding £2 or fourteen days' imprisonment with hard labour.

12. Any person found in the Location without such permit, as provided, or who shall

obtain such permit when requested so to do by the Superintendent or officer of the law, shall, unless some sufficient cause is made for such non-production, be summarily apprehended and conveyed before the Resident Magistrate of the District to be dealt with under the section; or any occupier of a hut or dwelling who resides into such hut or dwelling any person not provided with such permit, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £2 or 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour.

13. It shall not be lawful for any adult person within the location to appear outside any hut or dwelling without being clothed with such articles of dress as decency requires, under a penalty of 10s. fine, or seven days' hard labour.

14. It shall be the duty of the Superintendent, with the sanction of the Commissioners aforesaid, to point out from time to time a place where rubbish, filth or litter of any kind may be deposited, together with places where privies may be erected, or where pits may be dug; and any person depositing any rubbish, filth or litter of any kind or erecting a privy, or committing any nuisance except at such place or places as shall have been so pointed out, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £1 sterling, or 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour for each offence.

15. It shall be lawful for any person duly authorized by the Commissioners at all reasonable times to enter any hut or dwelling for the purpose of sanitary inspection, and any occupier of a hut or dwelling who shall not therewith conform to any lawful order of the Superintendent or person authorized by the Commissioners to clean such hut or dwelling, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £1 sterling or to have his or her location permit cancelled.

16. Any person certified by the Health Officer, or by some duly qualified Medical Practitioner authorized by the Commissioners, to be affected with any disease obnoxious to the public health, may be warned to remove from the location, or to reside in a portion of the location to be reserved for such persons, while such order is in force; any person infringing this regulation shall be liable to have his location permit cancelled, and be ordered to move, and be removed from the town and commonage.

17. Any person found committing any act of indecency shall be for each offence liable to a fine not exceeding £1, or in default to a term of imprisonment with or without hard labour not exceeding one month.

18. Any inhabitant of the location who shall obstruct the Superintendent or other officer in the execution of his duty, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £5, or to a term of imprisonment with or without hard labour not exceeding one month's imprisonment with or without hard labour.

19. No shop or trading station shall be allowed within the location, except with the approval and during the pleasure of the Commissioners.

20. No open air dancing or assemblies shall be allowed within the location without the consent and approval being first had and obtained from the Superintendent, under a penalty for each offender of a sum not exceeding 10s., or not exceeding ten days' imprisonment, with or without hard labour.

21. Any person after having his location permit cancelled, shall be deemed a stranger within the meaning of these rules, and be liable to a penalty provided for in Section 4 hereof.

22. In case the fines named in the foregoing regulations shall not be paid, it shall be lawful for the Resident Magistrate, when not specially provided, to sentence the offender to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a period not exceeding one month.

23. Any person or persons contravening any of the foregoing regulations wherein no punishment is specially provided for, shall upon conviction be liable to a fine of not exceeding £1 sterling, or to a term of imprisonment with or without hard labour not exceeding 14 days.

24. The Native Location shall remain on the place appointed by the Consistory to the east of the village.



27 Augustus 82

Die Streekvertegenwoordiger
 Dept. van Gemeenskapsontwikkeling
 Privaatsak X3913
 Port Elizabeth

Meneer

DIE WET OP GROEPSGEBIEDE, 1966: ONWETTIGE OKKUPASIE IN
 DIE BLANKE GROEPSGEBIED VAN NIEU BETHESDA:

U skrywe 8/6/1982, het betrekking:-

Die volgende kleurlinge woon in blanke gebied:

Van Heerdenstraat:

Liesbet Vywers	met 4 kindersErf 396
Agathastraat	Erf 398	Annie Kayster en 5 kinders
..	399	Joey Vywers en 3 kinders
..	400	Japie Adams en 2 kinders.
..	401	Lettie Koopman en 3 kinders.
..	402	Bdl Jan Jacobus (leeg)
..	403	Koelie Vywers
..	404	..
..	410	James Davids. vrou en 2 kinders.
Pienaarstraat	441	Bdl: Freek Swarts
..		Frank Swarts en 2 kinders en 4 loseerders.
..		Pieter Barendse, vrou en 8 kinders.
..	460	Mieta April 5 groot en 6 kleinkinders.
..	461	Karliën April lgroot en 2 klein kinders
..	461	Oktober April vrou en 6 kinders
..	462	Abraham April vrou en 1 kind.
..	462	Koos April vrou en 5 kinders
..		Freek van der Merwe vrou en 2 kinders
..		Andrew April vrou en 2 kinders.
Martinstraat	443	Bdl; Piet Meyer (Suster Alice)
Martinstraat	501	Jan Meyer .Huurder Piet v d Merwe 3 kinders en 2 loseerders
..	500	Sam Jacobus Piet Jacobs vrou en 1 kind
..	499	Leah Brookes.(Verblyf permit)
..	498	Jan Minnaar en 6 kinders
..	497	Rosie Reid en 7 kinders
..		Martha Reid.
Murraystraat	105	A Barendse en suster (Verblyf permit)
Noordstraat	109	Izak Barendse en 2 susters.
Naudestraat	90	Abraham Jacobs vrou, seun dogter 4 kinders en 3 kleinkinders.
..	..	Nicolaas Jacobs, vrou en 2 kinders.

Jammer vir verdragings.

Die uwe

Stadsklerk.

Nienaber & Horn

BUNYAN SEPTIMUS HORN

PROKUREURS, NOTARISSE,
BOEDELBEREEDERAARS EN
WAARDEERDERS

ATTORNEYS, NOTARIES,
ADMINISTRATORS OF ESTATES
AND APPRAISERS

TELEPHONE } 996 & 277
TELEPHONES }

VERWYSINGS/REFERENCES
U MNR. YOUR MR.....
ONS MNR. HORN/RO
OUR MR.....

Appendix D (eight pages)

POSTBUS } 17
P.O. BOX }

TELEGRAMME } "KIRBER"
TELEGRAMS }

KERKBTRAAAT 14 CHURCH STREET,
GRAAFF-REINET.
6280.

15 October 1975

Mr. N. Sheard
P.O. Box 205
MIDDELBURG K.P.
5900

Dear Sir

ESTATE LATE J.J. BARENDSE

With further reference to this matter we enclose copy of a letter received from the Department of Community Development at Port Elizabeth which explains the position in full.

We doubt very much whether the Department will issue a permit for the relatives of the deceased to stay on in the premises. You are of course at liberty to contact them at Port Elizabeth but from past experience we do know that they are rather strict and seldom issue these permits.

To enable us to proceed with the administration of the estate please advise whether you are interested in purchasing this property.

Yours faithfully
NIENABER & HORN

Per:

SATERDAE GESLUIT - CLOSED ON SATURDAYS

MS

The Valley

Posbus 205

Middelburg

K.P.

5900

23 Oktober 1975

Mnr. P.F. de Klerk

Waterval

Graaff Reinet

Geagte Heer

Tans woon daar op die dorp Nieu Bethesda op erf nos. 105, 109, 110 en 111, wat in die Blanke groepsgebied val, Kleurlinge wat nou kennis gekry het van die Departement Gemeenskapsbou om die eiendom te verkoop aan Blankes.

Die Kleurlinge wat daar woon is Isak Barendse, ongetroud, godsdienstig en ongeveer 63 jaar oud; Abraham Barendse, ook ongetroud en ongeveer 50 jaar oud en Abraham se ma wat ongeveer 80 jaar oud is en totaal blind. Dan is daar ook twee ongetroude susters van Abraham wat ook om en by 45 jaar oud is.

Al hierdie Kleurlinge en hulle voorgeslagte, hulle oupa en pa en weer huule, het my famielie getrou gedien vir solank ek kan onthou - meer as vyftig jaar - eers my oupa, toe my pa en myself.

My oorlede pa het hierdie Kleurlinge gehelp om hierdie eiendom te bekom om hulle oudag daar deur te bring. Die grond is voorsien van 'n boorgat en enjin en is groot genoeg om vir hulle 'n bestaan te verseker.

Omdat ek 'n verantwoordelikheid voel teenoor hierdie mense sal ek dit hoog op prys stel as u by die Minister van Kleurlingsake om die volgende spesiale vergunning vra in ag nemend die ouderdom en omstandighede van die betrokke Kleurlinge:

KJ. L 4299/6/9

The Valley
P.O. Box 2005
Middellburg Ct.
5980
2-7-1976

The Regional Representative
Department of Community Development
Dodge Building
Port Elizabeth
Dear Sir

Following our telephone conversation on 1/7/76
in which you asked that my request regarding
the purchase of property belonging to estranged people
in their bedsheets be made & in writing, I hereby
submit same.

Firstly the cover in question belonging to
the family Bowdler was acquired many years
ago awarded by my father and Grandfather
before him. The reason being that my father and
Grandfather felt that this family who had so
faithfully served our family farm for
Generations should have a place to retire to
in their old age

My father awarded financially in enabling

2

a good house to be built, borehole to be
sunk with engine and cement down so that
these people would have a garden to
supplement their income.

Now your department has seen it fit to
give these people final notice to move and
the property to be sold. As you are aware
I then made an offer to purchase this property
and am prepared to do so with the adjoining
plots too. Your department again turned this
offer down. I would like to know the reasons
for this please.

Further my intention is to obtain transfer
of the ground if possible and to obtain permits
for the present occupants to remain here until
their death. I may add the present occupants
are the mother was blind and helpless, a son
and two daughters all unmarried and in
the age group of 1-40-50 years so there is
no possibility of this situation recurring.

I have proposed
~~I feel that I could purchase both these~~
properties is it allows me to acquire this
ground without resentment or ill feeling

3

which I feel is what our home minister has urged us to maintain. Should anything else take place I ~~cannot~~^{am} sure not only these people's strong faith in God be damaged but their faith in us as whites.

Should the price I offered not be acceptable I am prepared to increase the offer and pay these families an annual amount on which to live.

The properties are on the very edge of the village and there is only one white family anywhere near and they and the Mayor have no objection to them living there.

Hoping to receive an early and favourable reply,

Yours faithfully,
H. Neil Beard



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

108 Fernkloof
Park Drive
PORT ELIZABETH
— 20 JULY 1976

Mr Neil Sheard
Box 205
MIDDELBURG CAPE

Dear Neil,

re: Purchase property from disqualified persons
in Nieu-Bethesda

I acknowledge with thanks your letter of 3rd instant as also copy of your letter to Regional Representative of the Dept. of Community Development.

I have discussed the matter with Mr du Preez. He has taken up a sympathetic stance and has suggested to his Board that your offer of R500 be accepted.

If the Board does not agree the matter will be referred back to me before any final decision is taken.

Assuring you of my co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

W.G. Kingwill M.P.
P E CENTRAL

The Valley
P.O. Box 285
Mudellburg
5900

H. - 10 - 1976

Mr. Mueller
Regional Representative
Private Bag 3913
North End
Port Elizabeth 6056

Dear Sir
Ref L/4299/6/9

In reply to your letter of 16-9-1976
regarding ref 105 New Belvedere.

I am quite prepared to purchase the
property for the sum of R2 500,00 as you
request. I do mean not quite understand
though why the Community Development
would be prepared to purchase this
property for R2 100,00 and yet I
should pay R2 500,00 while the Community
Development acts in the best interests of
the seller.

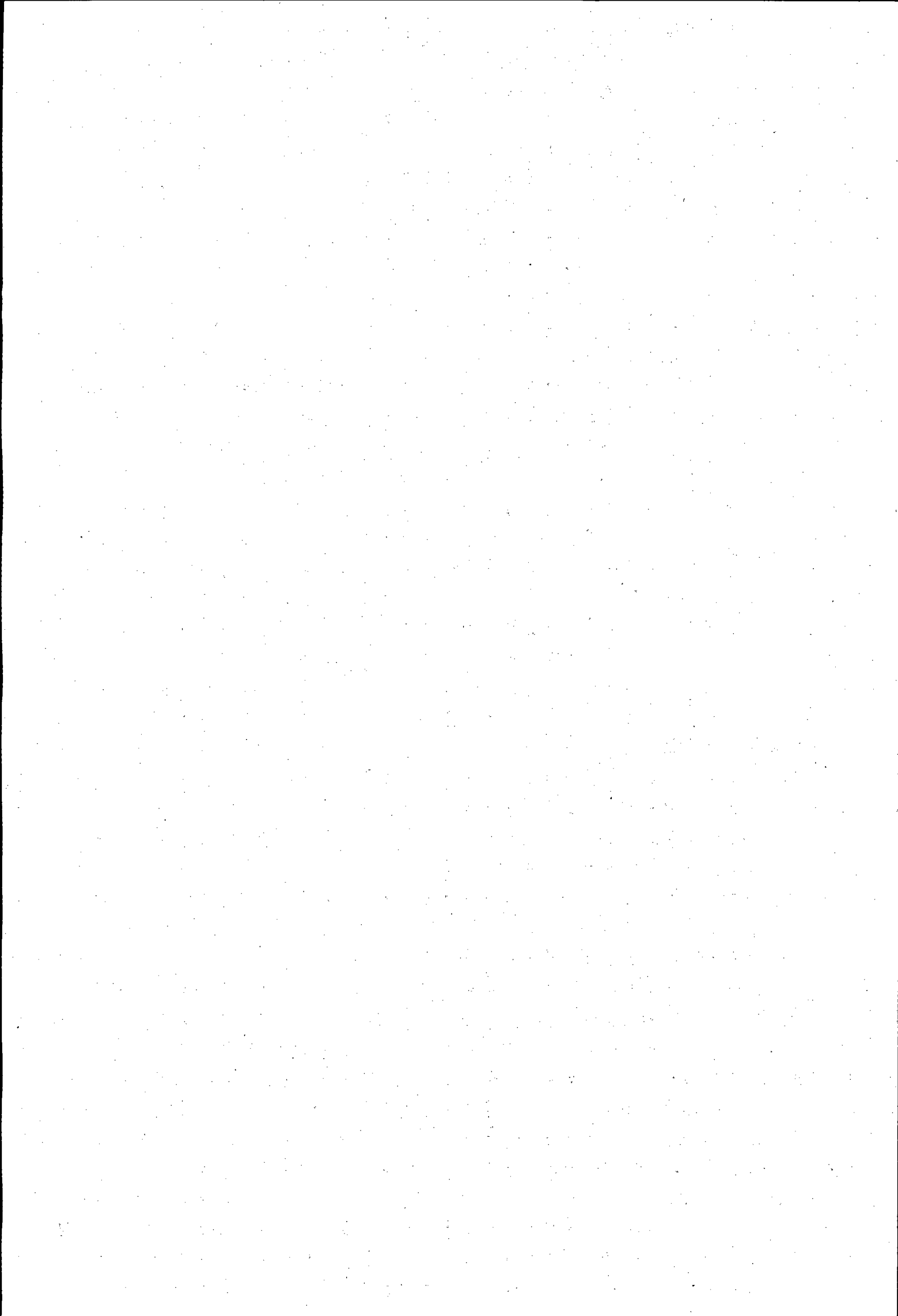
2.

Please let me know what the next
step is. I assume a new draft of sale
would have to be drawn up. Should
this have to go through the lawyer as
before?

Hope this will solve this problem.

Yours faithfully

H. Neil Stewart.





PERMIT

Nº 002283

[Uitgereik kragtens artikel 21 van die Wet op Groepsgebiede, 1966 (Wet 36 van 1966)]
 [Issued in terms of section 21 of the Group Areas Act, 1966 (Act 36 of 1966)]

Lêer No. 13/4/4/1/2/4299/1
 File No.

1. Uitgereik aan ABRAHAM EN CATARINA BARENDOSE (KLEURLING)
 Issued to

2. Ten opsigte van die grond of perseel ERF 105 SYNDE-MURRAYSTRAAT (BLANKE GROEPSGEBIED)
 In respect of the land or premises NIEU-BETHESDA

3. (a) Doel waarvoor uitgereik OM TE OKKUPeer VIR RESIDENSIële DOELEINDES
 Purpose for which issued

(b) Onderworpe aan die voorwaardes DAT DIE OKKUPASIE INGEVOLGE HIERDIE VERGUNNING
 Subject to the conditions INTREKBAAR IS TER ENIGE TYD NA GOEDDUNKE VAN DIE MINISTER

4. In die geval van 'n verkryging van onroerende goed of die okkupasie van grond of 'n perseel verval hierdie permit
 In the case of the acquisition of immovable property or the occupation of land or premises this permit will lapse
 as die betrokke onroerende goed nie verkry of die grond of perseel nie ingevolge die permit geokkupeer word
 if the immovable property concerned is not acquired or the land or premises occupied in terms of this permit
 binne (6) SES maande vanaf die datum hiervan nie.
 within months from the date hereof.

Datumstempel
 Date stamp

DEPT. VAN GEMEENSKAPSONTWIKKELING
DIE STREEKVERTEENWOONIGER PRIVAATSAK/PRIVATE BAG 73913
1984-08-02
6056 NORTH END, PORT ELIZABETH THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE
DEPT. OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Gemagtigde Uitreikingsbeampte
 Authorised Issuing Officer



DEPARTEMENT VAN GEMEENSKAPSONTWIKKELING
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mnr. N. Sheard
The Valley
Posbus 205
MIDDELBURG KAAP
5900

• STREEKVERTEENWOORDIGER/REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Eben Döngesgebou/Building
h/v Hancock- en Robertsstraat
Cor. Hancock and Robert Streets
Privaatsak/Private Bag X3913
PORT ELIZABETH 6056

Telefoon 041-546611 Uitbreiding
Telephone Extension
Tel Adres BEWONING Teleks ~~24020X~~ 24-2051
Tel Address Telex

Navrae Mej. L. du Preez / RC
Enquiries

U verwysing
Your reference

My verwysing L/4299/7/7
My reference 13/3/1/1/4299

Meneer

1984 -08-09

DIE WET OP GROEPSGEBIEDE, 1966 (WET 36 VAN 1966) :
HERVESTIGING VAN ONBEVOEGDE KLEURLINGGESINNE TE
NIEU-BETHESDA : ISAK BARENDSE

Ontvangs word erken van u skrywe gedateer 9 Julie 1984 betreffende
bogenoemde aangeleentheid.

Kennis is geneem van die probleem waarmee bogemelde te kampe het. Indien daar
egter nie alternatiewe akkommodasie beskikbaar is voor die verstrykingsdatum
van die betrokke kennisgewing nie, sal uitstel aan hom op meriete verleen word
tot tyd en wyl alternatiewe akkommodasie wel aan hom aangebied kan word, indien
hy op die voorgeskrewe wyse daarop aansoek doen.

Die uwe

STREEKVERTEENWOORDIGER