

CHAPTER SEVEN

FURTHER ELEMENTS OF BRITISH COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to give a synoptic overview of the type of areas where the British left a mark on the spatial and economic development of South Africa. Obviously it is possible to write a thesis on each of these aspects but this chapter attempts merely to highlight the types of impact in order to set the framework against which the case study (Section C) can be assessed and conclusions drawn with respect to the developmental methodology used (Section D). Not all of these aspects can be ascribed solely to the Royal Engineers; many of these trends are colonialism generally. The contribution of the Royal Engineers to various spheres of development is noted in the text.

7.2 ARCHITECTURE

The most obvious impacts of colonial development were the buildings and statues left behind.

“It was by their buildings that earlier Empires were most arrestingly remembered. Storks upon a Roman viaduct, proud towers in an Andean plaza, the square menace of the Pyramids ... any of these could instantly suggest to an unlettered visitor the age and power of a lost dominion.”
(Morris, 1968:317)

In the early days of the British Empire there was no clear colonial style, if only due to the shared urban influences of Europe at the time. Early colonies such as the Americas show a scattering of buildings of Queen Anne and Georgian styles, reflecting the ordered security of society at home. The Europeans brought with them to the colonies their sense of urban form, housing and order. Often in the Americas the urban form was a deliberate

utopian attempt at addressing the perceived ills of the domestic settlements – hence Pennsylvania, Salt Lake City and Savannah.

The buildings gave a sense of continuity to the British presence, linking the plantations of the old Empire with the Chartered Companies and railway workshops of the new. But the truly recognisable British Colonial style emerged in the Victorian era. “The characteristic form of the height of the British Empire was romantically picturesque, loosely derived from Gothic or Byzantine models, and ornamented all over with eclectic variety. It was not exactly imperious. But in the elaboration of its hybrid forms, the towering exuberance of its fancy, its readiness to accept a touch of the exotic here and there, its colossal scale and its frequent impression of enthusiasm wildly out of control it showed off a grand face of empire” (Morris, 1968:318).

“Cities were focal points of the decision-making process; therefore, controlling them in a social sense was the first step to economic and political continuity for those in power. It was thus, important for colonial powers to develop an urban network, a cultural hegemony, a social make-up and a physical imprint that was recognisable throughout the colony“(Mundigo and Crouch, 1977:398). In short it was important to control the colony by controlling the markets and trade routes and to physically look the part – the towns needed to be recognisably British, be they in the middle of the veldt of South Africa, the steaming tropics or the shores of Australia. All over the Empire buildings copied elements of each other; the cathedrals at Calcutta and Salisbury used to be very similar (until an earthquake knocked the spire off the Calcutta Cathedral) (Mundigo and Crouch, 1977; Morris, 1968).

The domestic architecture of the Victorian Empire was everything it was at home in England, with tropical overtones. Often these designs were hopelessly ill suited to tropical settings. In Johannesburg Sir Herbert Baker (famous for his design of the Union Buildings in Pretoria) is known to have made some basic errors, his home ‘Stone House’ in Parktown, Johannesburg is orientated south, as it would have been in the northern hemisphere, making the home cold and dull, many have speculated that this was deliberate due to the hot climate however, this does not explain the sun dial in the garden which is also incorrectly orientated and hence useless.



Figure 51: Stone House, Parktown Johannesburg designed by Sir Herbert Baker
(Source: <http://www.parktownheritage.co.za/>)

The first thing any conventional colonial magnate did when he had made his fortune was to build himself a really lurid gothic mansion. Public buildings of the most august elaboration honoured the Queen, the Arts and Sciences or the principle of imperial government. Town Halls were scarcely less imposing than Parliament buildings, and clock towers were ubiquitous. Many of these enormous buildings were designed by soldiers, others by celebrated English Architects. It was the spirit of Art for Empires sake (Morris, 1968:322).

A course of architecture was started at the Royal Engineers establishment in 1825 and this was really the foundation of the construction school, barrack construction becoming one of the most important peacetime duties of the Corps. Paisley's School of Architecture produced many outstanding men. The Dublin National Gallery, the Museum of Science and Art in Edinburgh, the Albert Hall, the International Exhibition (1851) and the London Victoria and Albert Museum illustrate a few notable buildings designed by the Royal Engineers (Whitworth Porter, 1889; Weiler, 1987).

7.3 CONSTRUCTION METHODS AND MATERIALS

The Royal Engineers played an important role in the global diffusion and development of building technology. Technology transfer in building materials, structural forms and methods of construction was a two way process. It involved the interaction of European experience with local environments, traditions and techniques. The Royal Engineers provided both military and building technology expertise for British imperial expansion and were therefore in the front line of European interaction with colonial conditions and cultures (Weiler, 1987:364).

The Royal Engineers made their greatest contribution to building technology in the fields of limes and cements, colonial woods, rubber and asphalt. All of these were developed and tested in both Britain and the colonies, demonstrating the importance of the imperial connections of the Royal Engineers and their global building experience. The Royal Engineers contribution to the knowledge of materials was based on informed observation, systematic experimentation and practical verification (Weiler, 1987:450).

7.4 ROADS

The era of colonial expansion under which South Africa developed was not known for its road building. Initially all transport was by ocean going ships thus, development occurred along the coasts of the continents and inland via navigatable rivers. The inland of South Africa (having no navigatable rivers) developed slowly, at the pace of the ox which pulled the wagons over open veldt. A wagon route had developed but prior to any major road construction the railroad was introduced. South Africa was thus opened up by railway, the roads which were built were more a question of bridges, mountain passes and pontoons rather than continuous hard surface routes as we would define roads today, they built only the sections of roads necessary to keep goods and people moving. The great road building era of the Roman Empire was not evident in the British colonies as Morris explains: "It was not an age of great roads, and by the end of the century few of the roads the British were building were on the grand scale: roads into the Ashanti country, to keep the defeated kingdom down, into northern Burma and Rhodesia, into the mountainous interior of Ceylon to supply the new tea plantations. ... Not many of the imperial roads

were surfaced and most were very elementary. In the open frontier country of India they used simply to light a fire at a distant point, and aim their road at the smoke” (Morris, 1968:364; Whitworth Porter, 1889).

7.5 MOUNTAIN PASSES

Andrew Geddes Bain was engaged to construct a military road through the Ecca Pass (between Grahamstown and Fort Beaufort), and displayed engineering talents which led to his being permanently employed as surveyor of military roads under the Corps of Royal Engineers in the Cape Colony in 1836. During this period he had a part in building the Fish River Bridge, then the largest bridge in the country.

He constructed the Queen's Road from Grahamstown to Fort Beaufort. He was appointed inspector by the Cape Roads Board in 1845 and built Michell's Pass near Ceres in 1848 and Bain's Kloof Pass near Wellington in 1853. He was presented with table silver and a candelabrum by grateful colonists. Returning to the Eastern Cape in 1854, he built numerous roads and passes including the Katberg Pass near Fort Beaufort. This occupation created an interest in geology, inspired in 1837 by a copy of Lyell's Elements of Geology. In 1852 he prepared the first comprehensive geological map of South Africa, a work of great merit, which was published by the Geological Society of London in 1856. Most of the early mountain passes in South Africa were built by either Andrew Bain or his son Thomas. His son Thomas Charles John Bain (1830-1893) served as his father's assistant in the construction of Michell's Pass and, after passing first in the Government examinations in 1854, he was appointed road inspector. Thomas Bain built 24 major mountain roads and passes in the second half of the 1800s - Andrew Geddes Bain built eight during the first half of the same century. One of the few passes not built by a Bain during that period was Montagu Pass from George to Oudtshoorn, which was built by a road engineer from Australia named Henry Fancourt White in 1843-47.

The mountain passes were key to opening up the interior of Southern Africa; the Cape Fold Mountains posed a formidable constraint on development beyond the coastal plain.

7.6 RAILWAYS

The era in which South Africa changed to a British colony was also the tail-end of the railway age in Britain. “These were the years of the snort, the hiss and the green-gold livery, mahogany booking offices like gigantic confessionals, railway stations of diocesan gravity. All the ritual of the railways was transferred by the British to the ends of their grateful Empire”(Morris, 1968:365).

Britain’s experience in railway building was unrivalled and the Engineers (both civil and military) and private financiers built impressive railway schemes all over the Empire. The railroad spread west with the colonial expansion in America, in South Africa the railways truly started with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the interior, suddenly there was a need to transport large numbers of people and goods into and out of the interior.

The chronology of railways development is listed below after Kleingeld (2003):

7.6.1 1845 - CAPE OF GOOD HOPE WESTERN RAILWAY

In 1845 the Chairman of the Cape of Good Hope Western Railway, banker and merchant Mr. Harrison Watson, announced his company's planned railway, in the more populous districts in the neighbourhood of Cape Town. The reaction towards this notice was negative and the Cape of Good Hope Western Railway was never constructed.

7.6.2 1860 - NATAL RAILWAY COMPANY

The first railway line in Southern Africa was laid along the Bluff in Durban, capital of Natal, and was not hauled by a steam locomotive but by oxen. The Natal Railway Company was formed in 1859, and its line from Point into Durban, barely two miles long, was opened on 26 June 1860.

7.6.3 1862 - CAPE TOWN RAILWAY AND DOCK COMPANY

The contract to build the first railway line in the Cape of Good Hope was awarded to the Cape Town Railway and Dock Company on 6 August 1858.



Figure 52: 0-4-2 locomotive built in 1859 , Cape Town station (Kleingeld ,2003)

The first line proposed was from Cape Town to Wellington, a short but important line of 45 miles that would serve the wine-growing districts of the Western Cape. The first sod on the construction of the line was turned on 31 March 1859, and the first trains in the Cape Colony started running on this line on the Cape Town to Eersterivier section in February 1862. The 0-4-2 locomotive used during the construction was also used on the inaugural run when the Wellington line was finally opened in 1865. It was built in 1859 by Hawthorns of Leith, and it is at Cape Town station.

7.6.4 1864 - WYNBERG RAILWAY COMPANY

This company was formed in 1861 and their endeavour was to build a line from Cape Town to Wynberg, which was opened in December 1864.

7.6.5 1890 - RAND TRAM

Because of strong anti-railway sentiments in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR), railways did not materialise there until much later. The first concession to build a railway was given to Mr. George Pigot Moodie on 26 August 1872. A short route of sixteen miles between the Johannesburg metropolis and the Boksburg coal mines was completed in 1890. It was named Rand Tram, although it was actually a railway in every aspect. This was officially the first working railway line in the Transvaal. It was also extended to Krugersdorp (20 Miles) and from Boksburg on to Springs in that same year. This was an east-west route along the gold reef. President Paul Kruger deliberately prevented the line from following the more logical north south route to the ports, as most of the Boers were making considerable money in wagon haulage for the mines and did not want the

competition. It was said that shortly before the opening of the railway link to the British rail head the route was lined with dead draught animals.

7.6.6 1892 - THE LINK-UP BEGINS

By September 1892, the lines of the Cape Government Railways from Port Elizabeth and East London on the east coast of the Cape Colony reached Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State, and both the Bloemfontein and Cape Town lines reached the Transvaal, thus opening three ports to the Rand gold fields.

7.6.7 1894 - NEDERLANDSCHE ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E SPOORWEG MAATSCHAPPIJ

The *Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappij* (NZASM) was formed on 21 June 1887 and officially received a concession from *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) President Paul Kruger to build a railway line in the Transvaal from Pretoria to Delagoa Bay (later named Lourenco Marques and since renamed Maputo, in Mozambique). The *Volksraad* of the ZAR gave the company until 31 December 1894 to complete the construction. On 2 November 1894 this line was officially opened.

7.6.8 1898 - THE LINK-UP COMPLETED

By 16 December 1898 the Natal Government Railways also linked into the railway system. Britain, and more specifically the then Prime Minister of the Cape of Good Hope, Cecil John Rhodes, was anxious to control the whole of Southern Africa, and by then the Cape Government Railways was already extending its reach from Kimberley via Mafeking (now Mafikeng) to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). This line through the southern part of Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was eventually sold to the Southern Rhodesian government in 1947.

7.6.9 1900 - IMPERIAL MILITARY RAILWAYS

After defeating the Afrikaner Republics in the second Anglo-Boer war and renaming the Orange Free State and the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) to, respectively, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, the Imperial Military Railways was established in 1900 under the supervision of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Percy Girouard (Kleingeld, 2003).

Girouard was a controversial character born in Canada to an eminent Montreal legal family. He studied first at Montreal College and then entered the Royal Military College,

Kingston when he was fifteen. Following a shortage of young officers in the Royal Engineers, Britain offered four commissions in the Corps to graduates of the RMC who held a diploma in Engineering; he immediately applied and graduated towards the end of 1888 (Kirk-Greene,1984).

Girouard seems to have been an exceptional achiever; he was appointed Governor of Northern Nigeria at 40, he had been knighted at 33. He then became Governor of British East Africa (Kenya) between 1896 and 1908, during which time he laid down a network of railways in northern, south and west Africa, lines which are still in use. Yet at 45 he was compelled by the secretary of state to offer his resignation as governor-general of Nigeria. A similar fate awaited him at the end of his South African Railways term. A comment in the African World concludes "...the ancient truth that the man most capable in war is sometimes most incapable in peace" (Kirk-Greene, 1984:219).

Girouard was a railway engineer of outstanding technical skill, consummate organizing ability and awesome energy. During the Boer War when his requisition was turned down by the War Office, he simply went straight to Chamberlain, who told him to order everything he thought necessary. Without Chamberlain's *carte blanche* Lord Robert's march on Pretoria would not have been possible. Girouard was able to double the line between Bloemfontein and Johannesburg, at one place laying eighty miles of track in forty-eight hours. No wonder that, in his history of the Boer War, Arthur Conan Doyle felt able to refer to the 'famous Girouard' when describing the role of the trustworthy trains in the lines of communication (Kirk-Greene, 1984:217-218).

7.6.10 1902 - CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS

The Imperial Military Railways proceeded to assume control of all lines in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, thereby also absorbing the NZASM, and it eventually became the Central South African Railways (CSAR), still under the control of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Percy Girouard.

7.6.11 1916 - SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS AND HARBOURS

The Union of South Africa was established on 31 May 1910, consisting of the four former colonies, the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, Orange River and Transvaal. As a self-governing state of the British Empire, the Union remained under the formal rule of the British Crown,

represented in South Africa by a Governor-General. All railways in South Africa finally became a unified state-owned railway system in 1916 when the Central South African Railways, the Cape Government Railways and the Natal Government Railways were all merged by an Act of Parliament. Thus was born the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H). Later, when commercial aviation developed, the South African Airways also became a part of this huge land, sea and air transport system.

Railways were central to British colonial expansion, in the previous era ocean-going ships had discovered new lands and developed new ports; railways opened up interiors to large scale settlement. The romance of the imperial railways was very dear to the New Imperialists. When Rhodes first planned his railway across the chasm of the Victoria Falls, where the spray rises from the cataract like a cloud across the plain, he saw the meeting of the steel lines and the eternal waters as a meeting of equals, and decreed that the bridge must stand so close to the falls that the passengers would see the spray upon their windows (Morris, 1968:366). There was no grand plan for the railways of the Empire. In general they were built to British standards and methods, but no attempt was made to standardize the different gauge. Nevertheless, there was grandeur in their conception; Rhodes saw his Cape-to Cairo railway in epic terms – a British highway up the spine of Africa. All round the African coast railways were for the first time taking European trade and technology into the tribal areas of the interior. The South African Railways according to Bryce “...had made Cape Town, Kimberley, Johannesburg and Pretoria a single social unit, where all important people knew each other – Johannesburg and Cape Town” he said “were in closer social touch than Liverpool and Manchester, or New York and Philadelphia” (Morris, 1968:368).

The strategic importance of the railway for carrying supplies and communication can clearly be seen by the number of block houses built along the route during the Anglo-Boer War. Other key infrastructure was also protected by block houses such as town water supplies.

When studying the routes of today's railways it is evident that they were constructed in an era when the economic and political geography of South Africa was different. The railways are skewed towards the diamond fields of Kimberley and the link to the gold fields is clumsy. Railways could play a vital role in the South African economy if new routes,

services and high speed links for both passenger and goods trains were developed. Today the management of the railways needs a great deal of attention as is evidenced by the steady shift in bulk transport to the roads.

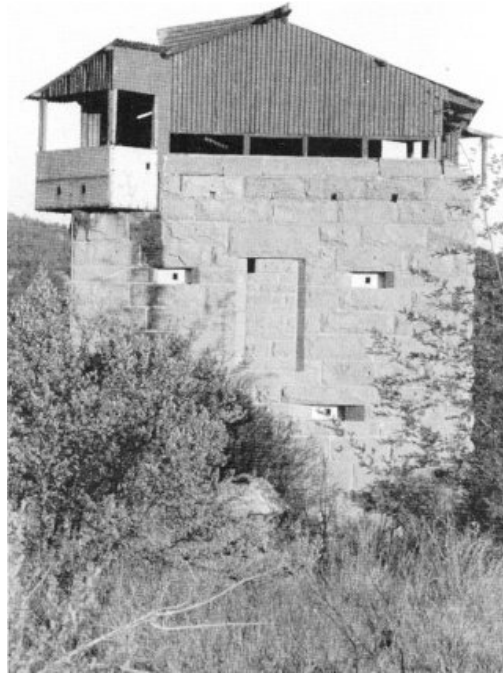


Figure 53: This blockhouse was constructed near the town's water supply- Harrismith. The garrison was to protect it in the event of an attack.(Watt, 1989)



Figure 54: Now a national monument this blockhouse is in the botanic garden of Harrismith. (Watt,1989)

7.7 WATER SCHEMES

Water works had always been the hall-mark of great civilizations and imperial climax, the aqueducts of the Romans strode across France and Spain masterfully, to crumble when the barbarians took over. The irrigation works of Egypt and Mesopotamia flourished under strong rulers; and so the British turned to grand water work schemes. Perhaps the most notable being the irrigation of the Indus Basin through a series of dams and canals. Some of the imperial works were on a colossal scale. In India the whole British-built irrigation system included some 40 000 miles of canals, irrigating nearly 20 million acres. The Aswan Dam was built in Egypt allowing for perennial irrigation for the first time. In Canada the Welland Canal was cut to circumvent the Niagara Falls, in Australia water was piped 350 miles to Kalgoorlie goldfields. In the west of India an astonishing tunnel under the mountains, called the Ghats, conveyed water from the Periyar River on the coastal plain to the flat lands on the eastern side of the mountains (Morris, 1968; Home, 1997). The South African water schemes were less impressive but just as vital. Town water schemes and dams were constructed all over the country. Agricultural irrigation schemes were less evident but South Africa by then was considered a mining economy. The mines, of course, required impressive water schemes, which the mining companies developed.

7.8 TIME

One of the obsessions of Victorian England was punctuality – a vital component of industrial development. Whereas the Afrikaner settlements had at their centre the church and bell tower the British towns were dominated by the Administrative building and the clock tower. Victorians were slaves to time, everything in its place and at the right time. It was the basis of the industrial economy. Accurate time keeping was only truly possible with the advent of the railway system in the UK, in order to keep timetables; a uniform time needed to exist across the country, this was achieved by setting a pocket watch in Greenwich and transferring the time from the watch to all stations as the train passed through.

7.9 POSTAL SERVICE

Initially postal arrangements were private arrangements which had been in operation since the time the Dutch settled on Manhattan Island and on the shores of the Hudson, and the English in Virginia and Massachusetts, continuous, though irregular, communication was maintained with the respective mother-countries by means of trading vessels. On the European side the arrangements were subject to few inconveniences. If the sailing-masters, on their arrival in Holland and England, were regardful of their trust, they would see that the letters placed in their mailbags by the colonists were posted at the nearest post-office, and the postal systems in those countries could be depended on to do the rest. Within the colonies the situation was less happy. As there were no post-offices, those sending or expecting letters had to depend on their own exertions or on the precarious goodwill of friends for information as to the time of arrival or departure of vessels, and for the necessary visits to the vessels. The first colony to apply a remedy for these inconveniences was Massachusetts Bay. On November 5, 1639, the general court of that colony issued an ordinance directing that all letters arriving at Boston from beyond seas should be taken to Richard Fairbank's tavern. In the Cape initially passing ships were known to have left post under the postal stone and ships captains would collect the post which was heading in the same direction as his vessel and leave any mail which needed to head in the opposite direction.

In 1711 an act was passed by the British Parliament which affected profoundly not only the post-office of Great Britain but that of the colonies as well. The whole system throughout the empire was placed under the direction of the postmaster-general of England, who appointed his deputies for the different colonies. The charges for the conveyance of letters were no longer a matter of negotiation between the postal authorities and the local legislatures but were fixed by this act of the British Parliament. As one of the purposes of the act of 1711 was to raise money to help defray the expenses of the War of the Spanish Succession, there was a general augmentation of the rates (Smith, 1916).

Initially the Post Office fell under the Colonial Service (the sixteen divisions of which were: Colonial Administrative Service, Colonial Agricultural Service, Colonial Audit

Service, Colonial Chemical Service, Colonial Customs Service, Colonial Education Service, Colonial Forest Service, Colonial Geological Survey Service, Colonial Legal Service, Colonial Medical Service, Colonial Mines Service, Colonial Nursing Service, Colonial Police Service, Colonial Postal Service, Colonial Survey Service, and Colonial Veterinary Service). Before the 1930s there was no unified Colonial Service and not even any unified sub-services. Each colony and protectorate had its own services and prospective officers applied directly to each one. If they wanted to transfer to another colony or protectorate they had to apply separately to the government of that entity.

It is however, evident that the dissemination of information was vital to colonial expansion and trade and therefore, no wonder that the mail service fell under colonial control.

7.10 PUBLIC HEALTH

By the 1850's the British were becoming aware of the link between disease and hygiene, Florence Nightingale started her famous statistical work based on her experiences in the Crimean War and military hospitals were fundamentally reworked following the outcomes.

The British also started to pay attention to tropical health and hygiene. The first school in the world exclusively concerned with tropical medicine was built in Liverpool, home port for the West African trade. In many parts of the world the British were the first heralds of the message that cleanliness and health went together, and they were just beginning to understand a few tropical diseases. They knew that beri-beri was caused by rice from which the outer grain layers had been stripped. They knew that leprosy and cholera were bacterial, and that the filarial worm was the cause of elephantiasis. Sir Ronald Ross, in India, was pursuing the theory that malaria was caused by the anopheles mosquito and Patrick Manson medical advisor to the Colonial Office convinced most that the health hazards of the tropics were seldom due simply to heat (Morris, 1968:373; Home, 1997).

7.11 AGRICULTURE

Alfred Crosby (1986) notes that when the Europeans colonised (in the case he mentions, Australia) "...said meat was not roasted wapiti or kangaroo, but mutton, pork and beef." At first colonists out of necessity ate what was available, "...but in time, in all these locations, they were able to return to a diet based on Old World staples." In short other than exploiting a few new key mass crops from the colonies such as sugar cane, tobacco and maize, the colonists adapted the agriculture to their norm rather than adopting foreign diets. Thus, vast tracks of land were converted to European crops. In all the colonies agriculture strove to produce an excess for export and to this day many former colonies are net exporters of food.

7.12 CONCLUSION

The British Empire was a development agency, distributing technical knowledge around the world, and erecting what economists were later to call the infrastructure of industrial progress – roads, railways, ports, posts and telegraphs. Initially this was achieved in a *laissez faire* manner however, Chamberlain, upon moving into the Colonial Office saw to the systematic diffusion of modern technique as a duty of Empire. To him the Empire was an underdeveloped estate so he turned to technology to make the most of the assets.

After the 1890's the Colonial Office worked on the systematic improvement of agriculture, veterinary medicine and husbandry, tropical disease and social welfare in the Empire, and great strides were made in all these sciences. The main providers of the technical expertise were the engineers, primary military but the British never bothered too much about the distinction between military and private engineers; skills were critical and military engineers often fulfilled civilian posts and equally often co-opted skilled non-military people when needed or when they discovered people with a talent; Andrew Geddes Bain being a case in point.

Having, in the last few chapters, discussed the development of South Africa it is evident that British colonisation was very physical. The British built the infrastructure required to develop the colonial capitalist system. This was done largely through state spending. Very

often the expertise necessary came from the military. The technical experts of the British Army were the Royal Engineers and as such the Royal Engineers had an enormous impact on colonial development and a military order is still evident in the layout and infrastructure today.

SECTION CONCLUSION

This section has sought to give a very broad brush feel of the types of infrastructure and administration which were important to the British in establishing colonies. Not all aspects of which were handled by the Royal Engineers. Two crucial aspects, that is port development and land registration, were unquestionably military in nature. To a lesser extent the railways also showed a strong military influence, specifically during the Anglo-Boer War.

Section C highlights the military influence on British Colonial settlement by using the Eastern Cape and a case study. The section begins by explaining the history of the Eastern Cape and then moves on to the detailed analysis.



SECTION C

CASE STUDY

**THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EASTERN CAPE REGION OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA 1806-1872**

PREFACE

This section seeks to understand the British imperial approach to colonial expansion and development. The Eastern Cape has been chosen as the case study as it was colonised at the peak of British imperial development of South Africa and it offers a fascinating insight into colonial development, towns and attitudes and also the military approach to a turbulent and hostile frontier.

This section focuses on the spatial and the physical development of the Eastern Cape region of South Africa, it is however, impossible to interpret or understand the physical development without placing it within the social and historical context. This section thus, begins with the historical context to set the scene and to paint the picture of the main forces, characters and attitudes of the time. It also aims to give a clear geographic sense of where this history played out and the context of why it developed the way it did. The section then goes on to discuss the physical settlement pattern that resulted from these forces. Chapter 8 deals with the historic background to the Eastern Cape, chapter 9 investigates the forts and defensive structures on the Eastern Frontier and chapter 10 analyses the major towns of the Eastern Cape.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HISTORIC BACKGROUND: EASTERN CAPE

8.1 EARLY SETTLEMENT

The Eastern Cape region of South Africa is the area in which the class, racial and cultural prejudices of the colonial authorities played out. It is an area which experienced a period of one hundred years of intermittent warfare. The Eastern Cape is the region where the differences between the four main groups of people in South Africa became most evident. The four groups were the Khoikhoi, the Bantu (Xhosa), the original Dutch settlers and the British. It was however, far more complex than a simple cultural difference as the area also saw class struggles (particularly within the British settler groups), the difference between agricultural societies (the Dutch and the Xhosa) and commercial agricultural estates (the British) and later the British were further differentiated as skilled artisans. There were also vast differences in public opinion from the liberal humanitarian missionary attitude to the commercial and imperial British colonial government and this was contrasted with the Dutch attitude that they were the chosen race. The Xhosa had tensions within their various tribes as well (De Klerk, 1975; le Cordeur, 1981).

The area historically stretches from the Sundays River in the west to the Great Fish River in the east and from the sea in the south to the mountains of the north (the Zuurberg, Swartwatersberg and the Rietberg). It is the region where the winter rainfall Mediterranean climate of the Western Cape changes to the summer rainfall area of the east and the arid climate of the north. The region goes through periods of both drought and floods but it also experiences perfect growing conditions. Some of the earliest colonial explorers were impressed by the beauty and fertility of the rolling grasslands (Maclennan, 1986:43). (Figures 55 – 57.)

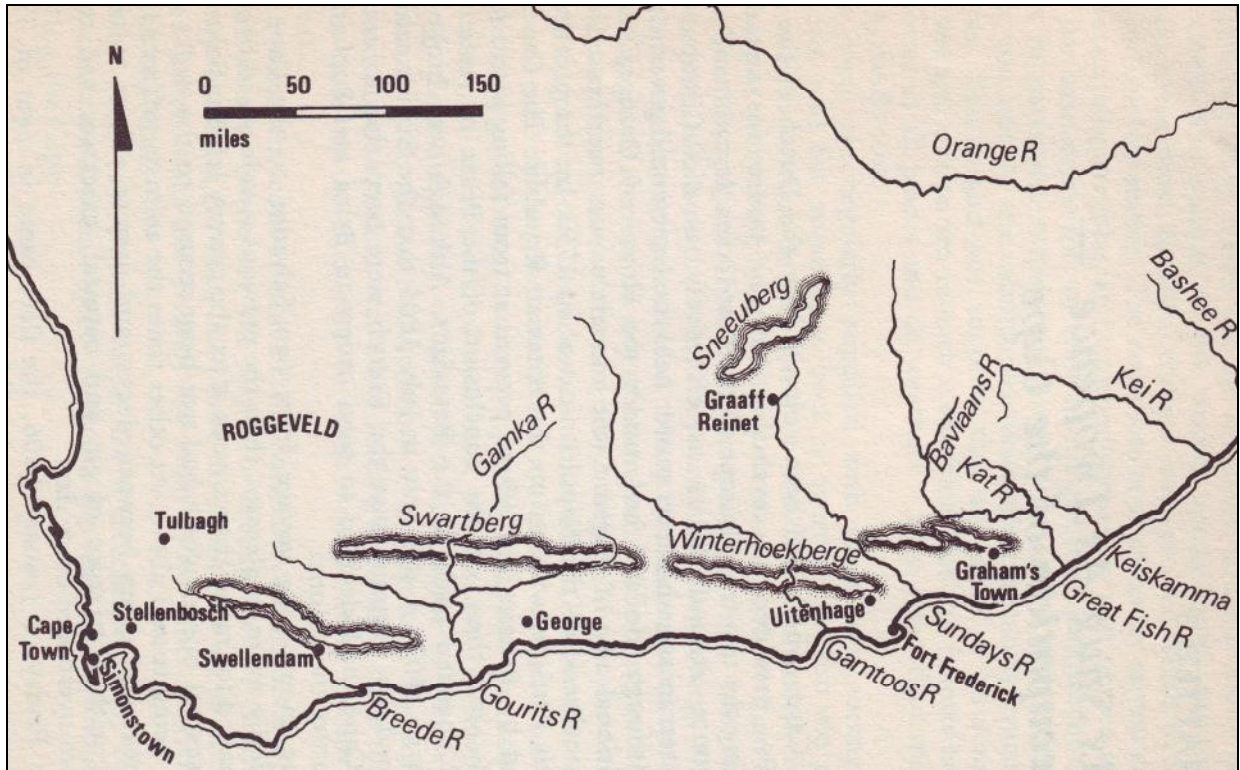


Figure 55: The Cape Colony (MacLennan, 1986:18)

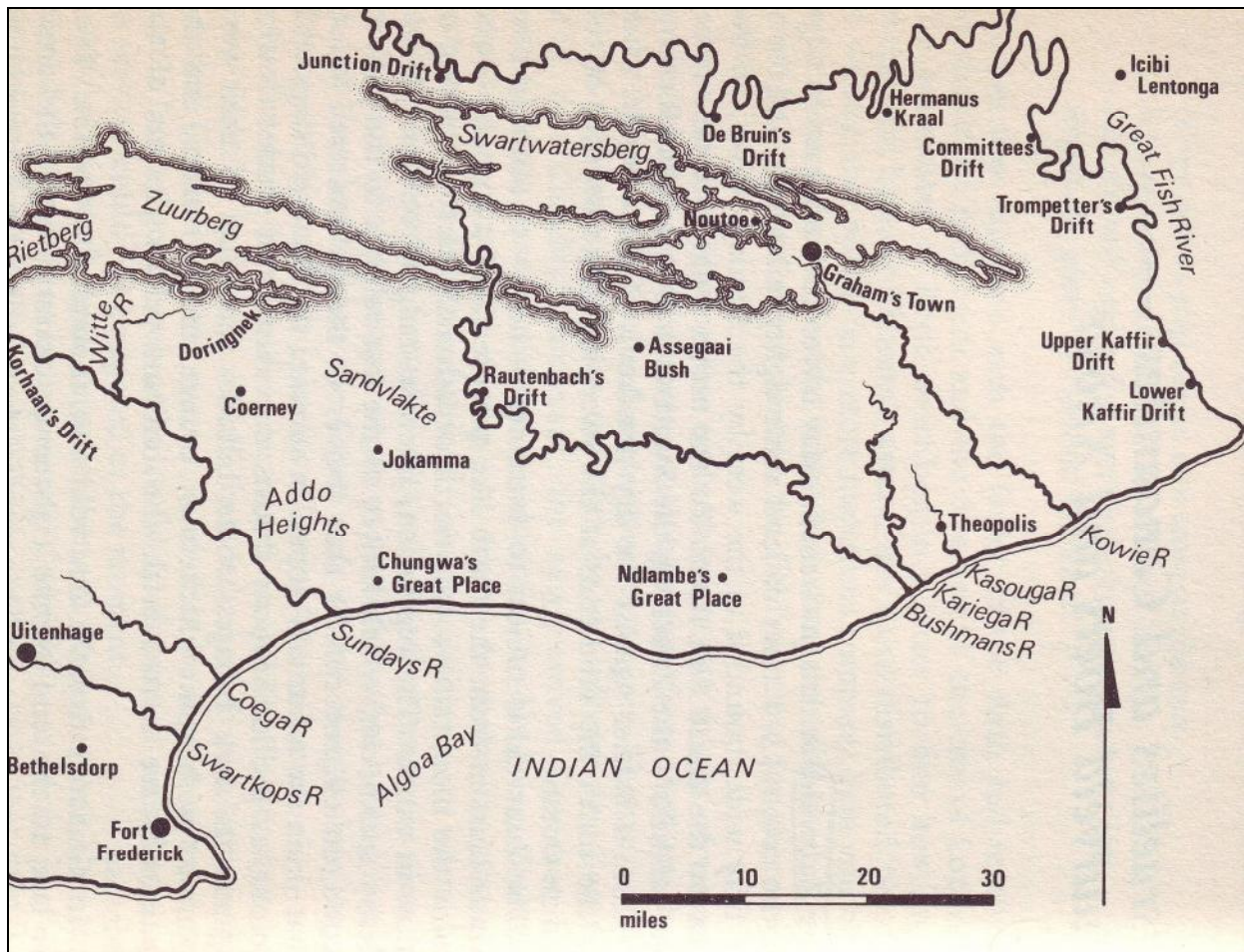


Figure 56: The Zuurveld 1812- 1819 (MacLennan, 1986:42)

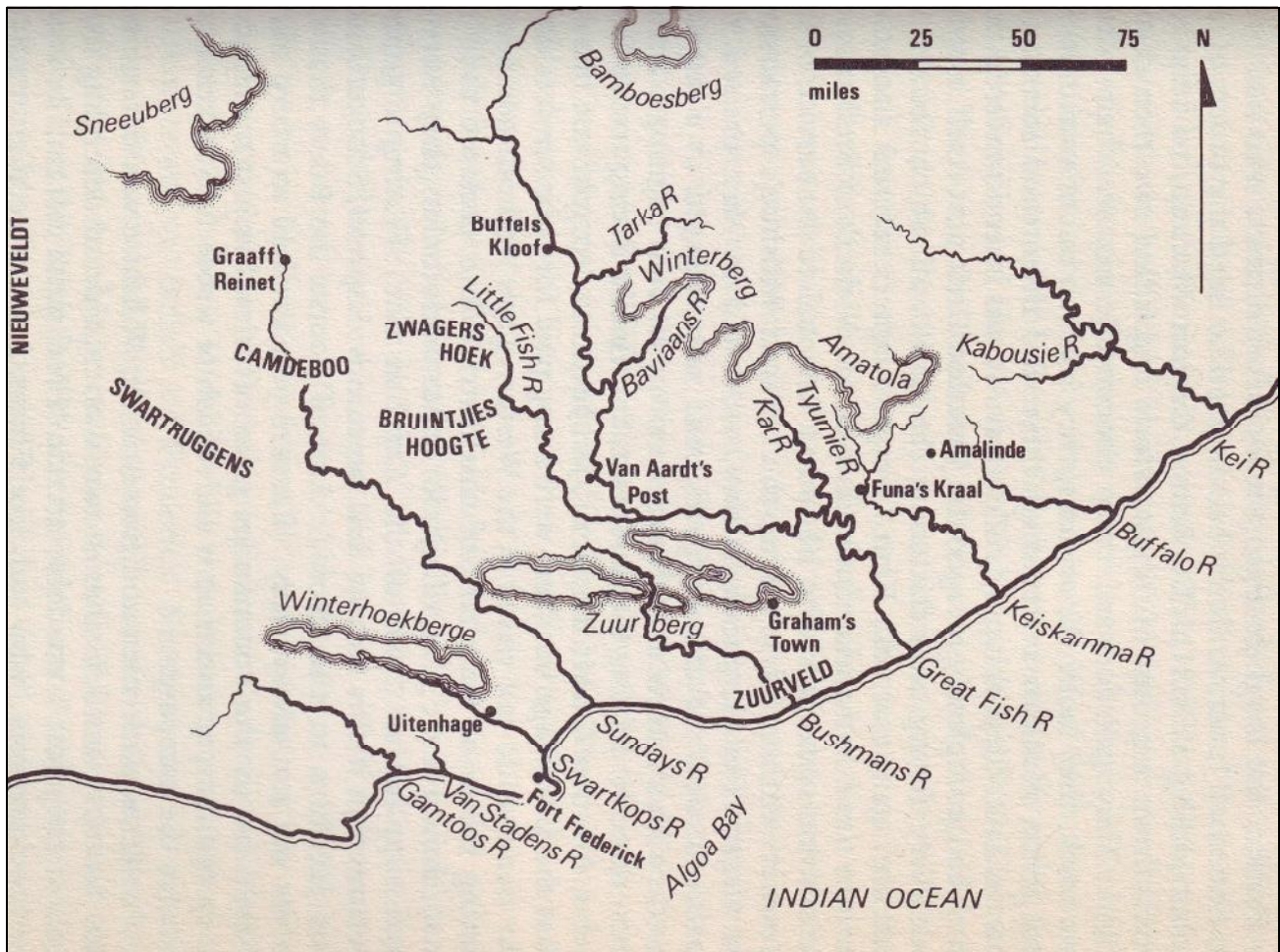


Figure 57: The Eastern Frontier 1812- 1819 (Maclennan, 1986:201)

The history books of this region covering the British imperial period are fascinating as they range from the typical British imperial writings, which are a combination of propaganda and an unerring belief that they were civilizing heathen territory and hence an unquestionable force of good; to the liberal writings of post-apartheid South Africa. Writers such as Egerton (1945) typify the Afrikaner view point of the history of the region. Between all the accounts lies the truth and few involved in the region in the Imperial Era come out smelling of roses. All parties were essentially interested in personal wealth, land and power and they unsurprisingly divided along racial, cultural and class lines.

In the 1760s *Boer* people (Dutch farmers) started moving into what is now the Eastern Cape and in 1786 the first recognized town in the Eastern Cape, Graaff-Reinet (Figure 58), was established by the Dutch. It was in the Eastern Cape that the *Boers* began to refer themselves not as “Dutch” or “*Boers*” but as Afrikaners. They started the missionary endeavour that has had such an influence on South Africa, and it was from the Eastern

Cape that the *Boers* departed on the Great Trek that led to the founding of the other provinces of South Africa (de Klerk, 1975; Lamar and Thompson, 1981).

Some of the earliest settlers in the area were the Khoikhoi. The Khoikhoi were a people, who two centuries before, had been scattered over much of South Africa's fertile coastal belt. In the Western Cape various groups lived a fragile existence as transitory pastoralists. As cattle herders the first Khoikhoi and European contact was mutually beneficial, however, once the Dutch established a permanent station at the Cape and allowed free settlers, the steady expansion of the *freeburghers* (free citizens), and the accompanying dispossession of the Khoikhoi led to the break up of the Khoikhoi nation. The final death knoll occurred in February 1713 when a visiting fleet sent its linen ashore to be washed by the Company slaves. The laundry bore the smallpox virus, which killed hundreds of Europeans and their slaves. The Khoikhoi, who had no natural immunity to the virus, were decimated; some estimates state that the Khoikhoi population dropped from 50 000 to less than 5 000. Some Khoikhoi moved east away from the Cape and its aggressive labour demands and settled in the Eastern Cape shortly before the *Boers* moved into the area (MacLennan, 1986:24).

The Xhosa, who were Iron Age pastoralists, moved westward down the coast, there were a series of clashes with the Khoikhoi, but the Khoikhoi deserted their chief and became part of the Xhosa tribe. When the first *Trekboers* (migrant farmers) arrived in the area, the Xhosa and the *Trekboers* had much in common. In particular, both took intense pride in their cattle. One early traveller recorded of the *Boers* that it was in the number and thriving condition of their cattle, and chiefly the stoutness of their draught-oxen, that these peasants vie with each other. The Xhosa, for their part, had twenty-five names to describe different cattle colours and skin patterns, and seven different names for the shapes of their animals' horns, which they bent in a variety of fantastical forms by scraping almost to the quick the side of the horn towards which they wanted the tip to bend. Both *Boer* and Xhosa lived to a great extent on milk and meat, which were supplemented by corn if the rain had

Figure 58: Graaff-Reinet (Save Reinet Foundation – pamphlet)



been good. Both *Boer* and Xhosa lived in huts made of a mixture of cow dung and mud plastered over a skeleton of branches and bush and both invariably placed the cattle-yard immediately before the front door. Like his Xhosa counterpart the *Boer* child would be dressed in skins, for it was a wealthy farmer who could boast a jacket of handmade cloth or even cutlery to eat with. But although the lifestyle was so similar there was at the same time a vast cultural gulf between the two peoples. A journey from the frontier to the Cape and back took from two to three months by ox-wagon, and many farmers only made the trip once in their lifetime – to get married. Faced with this isolation, the *Boers*, in an attempt to maintain a sense of cultural identity, developed a belief which, based on the texts of the massive Bible that almost every family possessed, set them firmly apart in their minds as a chosen people (Maclennan, 1986:45; de Klerk, 1975).

In the early days the area was relatively peaceful and the two sides traded. Although the colony was later to lay claim to the Zuurveld, there was never any question that the area was originally Xhosa territory; in 1778 Governor van Plettenberg sealed a boundary agreement with several minor Xhosa chiefs recognising the Zuurveld as Xhosa territory. The following year however, tensions flared over the expansion of the *Boer* farming, competition over water sources and cattle rustling (Maclennan, 1986:46).

8.2 THE FRONTIER WARS

The Frontier Wars covered a period of 100 years of intermittent warfare between the Cape colonists and the Xhosa. This was one of the most prolonged struggles by African peoples against European intrusion; it ended in the annexation of Xhosa territories by the Cape Colony and the incorporation of its peoples. This section aims to give a synoptic and objective overview of the wars; the major skirmishes, the tensions, the characters and the reactions.

8.2.1 THE EARLY FRONTIER WARS (1779 – 1781 AND 1793)

The early Frontier Wars occurred as a result of a clash over land as the settlers moved eastward and the Xhosa expanded westward. At this time there were internal tensions between the Xhosa chiefdoms. In 1778 the Xhosa monarch, Gcaleka, died and was

succeeded by his son Khawuta. Seeking power for himself, Rharhabe, brother of the dead paramount, made an unsuccessful attack on the young king. Rharhabe's defeated followers were driven north-west away from the mother chiefdom and across the Kei River. Within a few years they had absorbed many scattered Khoi and San communities and become the dominant force between the Kei and Fish Rivers (Stapleton,1994:21). Rharhabe and his son were killed in battle, leaving an underage grandson as heir. A paternal uncle, Ndlambe, became regent until the grandson came of age and the Rharhabe flourished and drove smaller Xhosa chiefdoms west over the Fish River (also referred to as the Great Fish River). The tribes fleeing westwards battled with the Dutch settlers in the Frontier Wars of 1779-81 and 1793. When Rharhabe's grandson, Ngqika, came of age Ndlambe refused to relinquish power; civil war erupted and Ngqika's forces expelled Ndlambe and his followers across the Fish River, increasing the conflict for land with the Dutch settlers (Stapleton,1994:21).

In the first three Frontier Wars (1779, 1793, and 1799–1801), frontier Dutch colonists fought against members of several minor Xhosa chiefdoms that had moved westward from the main body of the Xhosa east of the Kei River into the area known as the Zuurveld, between the Fish and Boesmans Rivers. These wars were caused by disagreements regarding access to land, water and the cattle trade that dominated the colonial economy, and they ended in a stalemate. For the colonists the third of these wars—in which the Xhosa were joined by an uprising of Khoisan servants, who deserted their white masters, taking guns and horses—was particularly serious. British troops, occupying the Cape during the Napoleonic Wars, appeared on the eastern frontier in 1811, in the fourth war (Welsh, 2000; Thompson, 2006; Lamar and Thompson, 1981; Meredith, 2006; Caffrey, 1973; Garson, 1992).

The chiefdom system at the time is described by Stapleton (1994:22) as a system of cattle patronage. Under the patronage system the royal herds were lent out to subordinate chiefs on an increase-sharing basis. In turn, commoners cared for the animals and received their milk and blood. The vassals were kept in line by the ever-present threat of cattle repossession or fines. A commoner could not reduce the herd by a single head and only aristocrats were empowered to slaughter cattle. As late as the 1850's William Holden, a British missionary, reported that: "the retainers of a chief serve him for cattle; nor is it expected that he could maintain his influence, or indeed secure any number of followers, if

unable to provide them with what at once constitutes their money, food and clothing” (Stapleton, 1994:22). Commoners relied on agriculture as their primary means of subsistence, the chiefs controlled the time of planting and received tribute from the harvest (Stapleton,1994:22).

The hostilities that flared in 1779 continued as sporadic skirmishes throughout 1780, so the Cape Colony proclaimed the Fish River as the boundary of the colony and authorised a commando unit to ‘forcibly compel’ the Xhosa to cross the Fish River (Maclennan, 1986:46).

This commando unit was the first of many that were to go charging about the frontier with varying degrees of success over the next two decades. The climax came in 1799, in the wake of an unsuccessful rebellion against the first British administration by the *Boers* of the frontier districts. The British commander, having quelled the *Boer* uprising, then decided to kill two birds with one stone and ‘gently push the Xhosa back into their own country’. The Khoikhoi and Xhosa combined in a campaign that cleared the country as far west as the Gamtoos River of all Europeans except for a besieged detachment of troops at Algoa Bay. The British were forced to negotiate a peace in terms of which the Zuurveld Xhosa were to be allowed to ‘remain at their kraals on the banks of the Sundays and Bushmans Rivers’, or in other words the situation in which the British found them (Maclennan, 1986:47).

It was not an auspicious start for the British in the Eastern Cape, neither morally nor tactically.

8.2.2 BRITISH OCCUPATION AND CONTINUED WAR ON THE FRONTIER

The conflict which began between the *Boers* and the Xhosa over land and grazing rights in 1779 continued after British occupation, this was to be the longest colonial struggle in the history of Africa. At the same time events in Europe were coming to one of their perennial crises and the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon caused the British to become concerned about the French taking over the Cape, especially after Holland was overrun in

1799. Consequently in 1806 the British took over the Cape Colony but to their horror this also included the Eastern Cape region, which was now in its second decade of conflict.

In 1799, recognising the need for a military base in the eastern parts of the Colony, which would be easily accessible from Cape Town and from which troops could be deployed to trouble spots involving either the *Boers* or the Xhosa, the British constructed Fort Frederick at Algoa Bay. The creation of new administrative centres in the interior was continued when in 1804 the southern districts of Graaff-Reinet were in turn formed into the separate districts of Uitenhage, and after the expulsion of the Xhosa from the Zuurveld the garrison post at Grahamstown (in 1812) and Cradock (in 1813) became sub-*drostdies* (Sub-magisterial districts) of Uitenhage and Graaff-Reinet respectively, each under a deputy *Landrost* (magistrate) (le Cordeur, 1981:2).

In the period after 1815, following the final defeat of Napoleon, the British embarked upon a more systematic policy of converting the Cape Colony into a fully-fledged and permanent British possession. There was a marked degree of centralisation and a far greater assertion of governmental authority. When such power was enforced the *Boers* rebelled. The Graaff-Reinet Rebellion was easily suppressed by the British by cutting off the *Boers'* ammunition supply, but tensions continued to simmer. The enforcement of power by the British was often sporadic exposing the Cape Colonial government to be a 'weak despotism' (Macmillan, 1927:41).

The *Boers* had acquired land on a quit rent basis, the British however, only recognised title if the land had been settled and improved. The *Boers* thus, had very insecure rights to the land on which they farmed. At the same time the British abolished slavery and thus, the *Boers* lost their labour and through corruption few if any of them received the promised compensation from London. Consequently resentments amongst the *Boers* continued to grow.

Public opinion in Britain - the opinion of the few people who took interest in the subject - and colonial public opinion were at hopeless issue on the question of the treatment of the African population. The fixed idea of the English was that the constant practice of the Dutch colonists was to enslave and tyrannize the local inhabitants. In accordance with this view, Lord Goderich directed that Dutch farmers should not be allowed to settle in the new

frontier districts. As stated previously the history of this region varies depending on when and by whom the history was written. Egerton (1945) wrote from the Afrikaner view point: “Thus Sir Lowry Cole wrote with regard to the alleged ill-treatment of the “coloured” (sic) people: ‘It might suit the views of some writers to hold up the local government and the colonists to the detestation of mankind . . . and to represent the native tribes (sic) as the most injured and innocent of human beings, but those who have the opportunity of taking a dispassionate view of the subject would judge differently” (Egerton, 1945:290).

By 1817 the Gcaleka, under a new chief Hintsá, had regained strength and showed interest in re-establishing rule over the Rharhabe chiefdoms west of the Kei River. A potential alliance between Ndlambe and Hintsá threatened Ngqika’s already declining dominance – he sought allies, firstly with the large Thembu chiefdoms to the north but the main aim was to secure alliances with the colonialists. The chief who gained the favour of the powerful Cape Colony could exercise control over all the Xhosa groups between the Fish and the Kei Rivers (Stapelton, 1994:25). Thus when the British governor, Lord Charles Somerset, requested a meeting with Ngqika, the paramount leapt at the opportunity. At the meeting (referred to as Kat River Conference) Ngqika expressed a great desire that his people should be allowed to trade with the colony. Somerset agreed that the Xhosa might come to Grahamstown, the colonial frontier capital, twice a year for that purpose provided they obtained permission from Ngqika himself. By this statement the colonial officials recognised Ngqika as the senior Xhosa chief west of the Kei River. In return, the paramount conceded to a Spoor Law which permitted settlers to track stolen stock beyond the colonial Fish River boundary and seize animals from kraals suspected of harbouring thieves. The paramount chief had no option but to agree, he was desperate to secure the assistance of European firearms against any future anti-Ngqika alliance of rival chiefs. Throughout the remainder of 1817 and the beginning of 1818, Ngqika placated the colony by sending scores of horses and cattle to Grahamstown. This prevented settler patrols from entering his domain and ensured the goodwill of the colonial government. Two colonial agents, Agnátius Mulder and William Nell, visited Ngqika’s kraal and demanded tribute. These settlers were given several dozen head of cattle and returned to the colony with favourable reports. Subsequently, stock-hungry whites descended on other chieftains. Within a month of the Kat River Conference one hundred British dragoons raided the kraal of the Dange chief, Habana. In the subsequent skirmish five Xhosa men were shot dead, many more wounded, and a large quantity of cattle taken to the colony. The colonial press

portrayed Ndlambe as a 'restless freebooter' who 'encouraged those depredations which have proved so ruinous to our borders' (PP C538 of 1836 Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) p 589). In late 1817 a small *Boer* commando attempted to seize stock from some of the chief's villages but was repelled by an overwhelming number of warriors. Ndlambe refused colonial demands that he surrender 2 000 head of cattle; to a chief dependent on pastoral patronage that would have been suicidal. On 8 January 1818, Major George Fraser led an expedition of 300 British infantrymen and 150 mounted settlers across the Fish River and into Ndlambe's territory. Marching for several days the expedition reached the Keiskamma River and met Ndlambe with 2000 warriors. Two days of stand-off did not persuade the chief to comply with the colonial ultimatum and Fraser decided to use brute force. When a detachment of horsemen began gathering nearby cattle, Ndlambe's men surrounded them and shouted threats. The British infantry fired a thunderous musket volley over the warriors' heads causing them to retreat in fear. Fraser seized 2 060 of Ndlambe's cattle, only 600 of which were identified as colonial stock. The cattle were distributed to white farmers (PP C538 of 1836 Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) p 589; Stapleton, 1994:27).

Over the following years Ngqika's Xhosa showed increasing interest in christianity and European ways; allowing a christian convert to become an important councillor and also allowing a missionary, Joseph Williams, to set up a mission station near Maqoma's village. Ndlambe, for his part became increasingly resentful of Ngqika and his aggressive European allies. Tensions then reached a climax. Retaliating against Ngqika for the incursion of the Fraser commando, Ndlambe seized stock from one of his rival nephew's sub-chiefs (Pringle, 1835:278). While requesting military assistance from the colony, Ngqika mobilized his entire army, they marched on Ndlambe, and straight into an ambush. The carnage lasted most of the day, finally at sunset the remnants of Ngqika's army managed to detach and fled to the slopes of Ntaba ka Ndoda. They sent repeated and desperate messages to the colony for help. In November 1818, Major Fraser visited the paramount in his mountain hiding place and assured him of British support (Stapleton, 1994:31).

Returning to Grahamstown, Fraser briefed his superiors and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Brereton, military commander of the colony's eastern frontier, was detailed to gather all the

regular soldiers and mounted *burghers* (Dutch citizens), who were available. On 1 December Brereton's force, with two artillery pieces, left Grahamstown and two days later were joined by Ngqika and his surviving warriors on the banks of the Koonap River. On the 5 December they crossed the Kat River and began driving Ndlambe's people south. They captured 6 000 head of cattle. By 7 December Brereton had crossed the Tyumie and Keiskamma Rivers to enter the enemy heartland. For several days the soldiers bombarded the warriors, destroyed kraals and burned fields. When the expedition headed back to the colony on 15 December, they had taken 23 000 head of cattle, 11 000 of which were presented to Ngqika. Within the colony the rest of the booty was sold to farmers in order to offset the expense of the Brereton adventure (Cape Town Gazette, 2 January 1819).

Shortly thereafter, Ndlambe counter-attacked by launching a sweeping invasion of the colony. The Europeans were caught completely by surprise and many isolated farms were destroyed. Throughout the early months of 1819, British soldiers and Afrikaner settlers were besieged in Grahamstown and a few other small posts (Stapleton, 1994: 32).

Lord Charles Somerset declared martial law and despatched the 38th Regiment of Foot to Grahamstown, he also ordered the *Landrost*, Andries Stockenstroom, to organise a large *burgher* militia (citizen force) (The Cape Town Gazette, 28 August and 11 September 1819; Stapleton, 1994:32). However, before the British could assemble their forces Ndlambe's warriors appeared to withdraw. In reality, they were assembling for a massive attack on Grahamstown itself. On 22 April 1819, 10 000 warriors, led by the prophet Nxele, shocked Wilshire by a daylight assault on the frontier capital. "Facing the Xhosa were forty-five men of the Light Infantry of the 38th, thirty-nine horsemen of the Colonial Troop, most of them exhausted by the race across the flats, one hundred and thirty-five red-jacketed men of the Royal Africa Corps, eighty-two of the Cape Corps, thirty-two armed civilians and a handful of artillerymen with their weapons – nearly three hundred and fifty men" (Maclennan, 1986:192). After initial confusion the defenders rallied and brought murderous firepower to bear against the spear-wielding enemy. Hundreds of Xhosa were killed (Stapleton, 1994:32; Stretch, 1876:297-303; The Cape Town Gazette, 15 May 1819). The settlers, vastly outnumbered, had no compunction about using their technology to their advantage. The mixture of substantial buildings for fortified shelter and massively superior military technology was fully exploited.

For the Xhosa, the battle had been more than a mere military defeat. In 1812, encumbered by their women, children and herds, they were forced to give way. In 1819, they had to acknowledge that there was no chance of regaining what they had, it was a question of hanging grimly onto what little they had left in the face of the inexorable advance of a vastly superior foe (MacLennan, 1986:199).

Lord Charles Somerset visited the frontier again in October 1819 after the Battle of Grahamstown. He conferred once more with Ngqika and the assembled chiefs, and the Xhosa agreed to cede a strip of country between the Keiskamma, Tyumie and Great Fish Rivers. This was to be a neutral zone, unoccupied but patrolled by troops stationed at two military posts, Fort Willshire and Fort Holloway within the ceded territory. The latter was never built but the first Fort Willshire, the most ambitious and most forward military station, was started in November, 1819 (Garson, 1992; Meredith, 2006; Thompson, 2006). On the 14th October 1819, Somerset declared the whole area between the Fish and the Keiskamma Rivers a neutral zone, to remain depopulated. This neutral territory comprised upwards of a million acres of the most beautiful and fertile country in the eastern frontier districts. The neutral zone, which was cleared of Xhosa by the usual methods, soon came to be referred to by Somerset as the Ceded Territory, and the Keiskamma River was eventually regarded by the colonial authorities as the eastern boundary of the Cape Colony (Stapleton, 1994:38).

8.2.3 THE 1820 SETTLERS

In an attempt to try to secure the frontier, the authorities in Whitehall decided on a scheme to settle people from across the British Isles in the Zuurveld. Cuyler (a controversial colonial official) was soon to rename the Zuurveld after his birthplace, Albany, the capital of the State of New York. The authorities felt that British settlers would act as a buffer against the Xhosa to protect the Cape, and at the same time relieve the economic difficulties at home.

“The 1820 settlers, some of whom had arrived at Algoa expecting to find apricots growing wild in the thorn bush soon discovered how brash Somerset’s words about the new land

had been. There were the inevitable Xhosa raids; the locations were too small for cattle farming and unsuitable for growing crops; they experienced both drought and floods which, in October, 1823, swept away much of the produce of all the best available lands, and disease, which destroyed three successive wheat crops” (MacLennan,1986:226). Many settlers flocked to the towns where they found outlets for their skills. Others, after the government belatedly realized its folly and in 1825 enlarged the grants of land, began to breed Merino and other types of woolled sheep. Not least among the reasons for the popularity of this type of farming was the belief that since the Xhosa were not themselves sheep farmers they would seldom steal more than the odd one for food. In 1826, the shipment of wool from the colony totalled only 53 500lbs in weight, valued at £545. A decade later the weight of export wool from the Eastern districts alone was more than £100 000; and Thomas Pringle could write that “there are about 12 000 fine-wooled sheep in Albany, the owners of which are realizing large profits; this promises to prove a mine of inexhaustible wealth for South Africa” (MacLennan,1986:226). Sheep farming however, was more labour intensive than stock farming as sheep need to be sheared and the fleeces washed before shipping.

The earliest stirrings of settler protest in Albany were prompted by the acute distress caused by the breakdown of the emigration scheme which had brought the settlers to the colony (Edwards, 1934:50). ‘Rust’ destroyed the wheat crops in three successive years, and in October 1823 torrential rains washed the soil for ten days until the rocks were exposed. The essential cause of the failure of the scheme though, was that it had been ill-conceived. Since land grants were limited to 100 acres for each immigrant, the only type of farming that was possible was agricultural production. But in view of the poverty of much of the soil, the scarcity of water and other factors, of which both the colonial and imperial governments were ignorant, agricultural production on 100 acre allotments was impracticable in Albany. Nor did the immigrants generally possess the skills necessary for the successful cultivation of the soil: about fifty per cent of them came from English industrial cities; their absurd efforts at farming were ridiculed as being those of ‘Cockney gardeners’ (le Cordeur,1981:2). Coming from the northern hemisphere they even planted some early crops in the wrong season. Even when they were able to produce an agricultural surplus, they had great difficulty in disposing of it; the government’s Somerset Farm at the foot of the Boschberg enjoyed a monopoly on production for the colonists of

the east and freight rates were so high that easterners could not sell their products on the Cape Town market except at considerable loss (le Cordeur,1981:3).

The acting Governor, Sir Rufane Donkin, made conscientious efforts to provide relief for the settlers. He issued full rations to them until September 1821 and half rations for the remainder of the year. After the failure of the first crop, he had seed corn despatched from Cape Town. He persuaded the colonial office to remit the charges for the hire of wagons by the settlers at the time of arrival. By the end of the first year he had agreed to allow those in the 'ornamental trades', who could not easily be employed on the locations, to seek work where they wished; a year later, the governor, Lord Charles Somerset, extended this right to all. Artisans, labourers and indentured servants, favoured by the labour shortage and the current high wages, deserted masters who could no longer pay or feed them, and readily obtained employment in Grahamstown and other parts of the colony. Some were soon in far better circumstances than the men of means to whom they had originally been indentured (Butler(ed),1974:175-6).

To the self styled 'gentry' or 'proprietors' of Albany the breakdown of the scheme dealt a far heavier blow. They were men of standing or education; some were retired army or navy officers; not a few of them were socially well-connected in Britain. They had seen in the emigration scheme an opportunity for the profitable investment of their capital by bringing out parties of labourers under indentures to work on their locations or estates for a specified number of years. For the most part the gentry hoped to reproduce in the colony the stratified society of the mother country. In Britain the Colonial Office had negotiated directly only with the 'heads of parties', who fancied themselves as future squirearchy (le Cordeur,1981:3). Once arrived in the colony, they noted with satisfaction that the Cape government, too, had had the good sense to issue instructions to all its officials 'to communicate only with heads of parties' (Circular of deputy colonial secretary (Henry Ellis) to heads of parties, 1 May 1820, enclosed in Ellis to Captain H. Somerset, 1 May 1820, 1/ay, 8/1). Their authority and prestige were systematically bolstered by Donkin, who appointed them to public office and enlarged their land-holdings, 'so as to generate, by degrees', he explained to the colonial secretary, 'a sort of aristocracy or intermediate class between the government and the labourers...' (Donkin to Bathurst, 29 September 1822, Records 1/AY 8/1 p 104). For at least the first half-dozen years after 1820, leadership in the settler community was assumed by the gentry as a matter of right (le Cordeur,1981:3).

Donkin, believing that Somerset's 1819 policy of an uninhabited neutral belt on the frontier between the Fish and the Keiskamma Rivers would not assure the colonists sufficient protection, had extended the district of Albany to include the whole of the neutral territory, the Zuurveld and the Uitenhage division east of the Sundays River. Somerset was furious. Contrary to Somerset's intention that the settlers should provide their own protection, Donkin had taken steps to afford them military protection by the erection of forts in what had previously been the 'ceded territory'; and at Fredericksburg, in the heart of the territory, he had attempted to settle Khoikhoi officers and men being discharged from the Royal African Corps by granting them land around Fredericksburg (leCordeur, 1981:7).

Tensions were rising. "Stockenstrom, who went on to become a controversial Lieutenant-Governor of the Cape, and sat as an elected member of the colony's first parliament, wrote with cynical insight in 1827 that the colony could not expect a large influx of labourers from Xhosaland so long as that region was 'in a state of peace and space aplenty' (le Cordeur, 1981:228). Collins, in 1809, had estimated the strength of the Xhosa nation at about fifty thousand people, scattered over a swathe of territory from the Fish to the Bashee Rivers. The traveller George Thompson's estimate fifteen years later, was one hundred thousand. As the colonial authorities, by sword and pen, extended British domination to cover the whole of Xhosaland and beyond, 'independent' Xhosaland shrunk until by 1855, according to Governor George Grey, ninety thousand people living west of the Kei were crammed into nine locations totalling only two thousand four hundred and fifty square miles. At the time when the average frontier farm considered sufficient to support one colonial family was over nine square miles in extent, the Xhosa area gave a density of just over thirty-six persons per square mile. Starvation makes a good servant; as Stockenstrom predicted, the sheep farmers got the labourers they wanted (le Cordeur, 1981:228-9).

The labour shortage at the Cape dated back to van Riebeeck's time. Solved in some measure by the importation of slaves from West Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar and the East Indies, the demand for cheap labour increased as steadily as the colony's relentless eastward expansion, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century labour was still scarce and expensive (Maclennan, 1986:50). When slaves deserted they often headed to Xhosaland, where according to van Reenen, 'they enjoyed the same privileges as the Xhosa'. Besides his value as a labourer, a slave was a valuable piece of property, worth

from five to six hundred rixdollars, thus as early as 1780 there were proposals that slaves who had escaped to Xhosaland, and been recaptured, be put in irons to prevent them from repeating the bid. The *Boers* hit hardest by these desertions were, of course, those closest to the Xhosa. Often the slaves who deserted took with them the firearms with which they had been provided for the protection of the livestock entrusted to them. However, while the *Boer* had to pay for a slave the Khoikhoi were readily available – and readily expendable. The Khoikhoi constantly complained to the *Landdrost* that they did not receive their promised wages. Another frequent complaint was that when the agreed period of service expired, they were not permitted to leave, their women and children being detained by the *Boer* to ensure that the man remained (Maclenna, 1986:51).

The colonial labour shortage became acute in 1827. Indentured Khoikhoi servants and captive San were not meeting settler requirements. Covertly, Afrikaner and English farmers in the Eastern Cape were purchasing Sotho and Tswana people who had been seized by Griqua horsemen north of the Orange River. This was doubly illegal. London had banned the slave trade and Cape Town had forbidden Africans from independent chiefdoms from entering the colony (PP, C252of 1835, pp 21-23; Bourke to Goderick, 15 October 1827).

The settlers began to demand cheap labour to support their agricultural enterprises (Cobbing, 1991:8). With experience as agriculturalists, Xhosa women and children were a tempting target. However, London had banned the slave trade in 1807 and Xhosa people were not interested in abandoning the familiar safety of traditional society for the uncertainty of alien rule. Additionally, Governor Somerset's border arrangements of 1819 forbade members of independent chiefdoms to enter the colony. Local officials were besieged by labour-hungry colonialists (Stapleton, 1994:38).

Throughout the early 1820's, the colony developed an increasingly aggressive and violent policy towards its Rharhabe neighbours. Captain Richard Blakeman, commander of the newly constructed Fort Willshire, had been ordered to shoot any Xhosa who wandered into the neutral zone. Luring some of Ngqika's subjects across the boundary by promises of trade, British soldiers shot these unsuspecting people and confiscated the agricultural produce and stock they had planned to barter (PP, C538of 1836; 143-145 Evidence of Captain Richard Blakeman).

Although subordinate to acting Governor Major General Bourke, Somerset's interests were initially bound with those of the frontier settlers. With correspondence to Cape Town taking nearly two weeks, officials in Grahamstown could easily circumvent colonial regulations and invent cover stories that would never be investigated. Somerset needed a powerful justification to bring many more Africans into the Eastern Cape. Under the watchful eyes of a few idealistic missionaries and philanthropists, it was difficult to launch large-scale labour raids against the Rharhabe chiefdoms on the frontier. People further away from the colony ideally would become the targets. The mythical image of the wicked Zulu King Shaka had already been publicized by illegal British slavers operating in Natal. It had been an effective cover-up. Enhancing this concept, Somerset and his settler henchmen invented the image of 'Fetcani' hordes, set in motion by Shaka's wars of conquest, threatening the colony and driving refugees towards the border (Stapelton, 1994:49).

Throughout 1827 and 1828, the commandant dispatched patrols beyond the colonial frontier and informed Cape Town that he was collecting intelligence on the 'Fetcani' threat and protecting helpless Africans. According to Stapelton (1994) in reality, these expeditions were capturing people for service on settler farms. Somerset was the real raider. Official reports claimed that the labourers were refugees who had fled Shaka¹ and were brought to the colony and 'apprenticed' to Europeans for humanitarian reasons (Cobbing, 1988:29; (CA) CO333, Somerset to Colonial Secretary, 1 Jan 1827).

A separate, but related cover story was fabricated for the enslavement of the Rharhabe. Displaced by the colonial cattle raids, many frontier Xhosa living around certain mission stations were described as 'Fingoes' who had fled Zulu-ravaged Natal. This allowed them to be brought into the colony and hired out to settlers – a sort of coercive labour recruitment camouflaged as philanthropy. Supposedly these Fingoes were being delivered

¹ Shaka was the Zulu King responsible for the Mfecane – a series of Zulu and other Nguni wars and forced migrations of the second and third decades of the 19th century that changed the demographic, social, and political configuration of southern and central Africa and parts of eastern Africa. The Mfecane was set in motion by the rise of the Zulu military kingdom under Shaka (c. 1787–1828), who revolutionized Nguni warfare. The rise of Shaka's kingdom, which took place during a time of drought and social unrest, was itself part of a wider process of state formation in South-eastern Africa, which probably resulted from intensified competition over trade at Delagoa Bay. The pattern of the Mfecane, in which tribe was set against tribe over an ever-increasing radius, was highly successful in areas weakened by overpopulation and overgrazing.

from the barbarity of their own society ((CL)MS 9037, minutes of the Presbytery of Kaffaria, Vol I, Report of Thompson, 8 August 1827; Webber, 1991:30).

Around this time Somerset intended to promulgate Ordinances 49 and 50, which would free indentured Khoi servants and also allow Africans from independent Chiefdoms to enter the colony as employees for colonial farmers (Macmillan, 1963:50). Officially passed in July 1828, Ordinance 49 gave the settlers permission to invite African workers into the colony. Later in the same month Major William Dundas, a frontier *Landdrost* (magistrate), led a mounted expedition of thirty-one *Burghers* (civilians) and twelve British soldiers beyond the Kei and Mbashe Rivers. Somewhere near the modern town of Umtata, this force attacked what Dundas described as 'Fetcani'. Bringing back 25 000 captured cattle and 100 slaves, the *Landdrost* fabricated the story that the region beyond the Kei River was about to be invaded by the Zulu army ((CA) CO357, Somerset to Colonial Secretary, 8 May 1818; (CA) CO357, Captain Armstrong to Somerset, 14 May 1828; Brownlee, 1828; Cobbing, 1988:21).

Under the guise of defending the colony from Shaka and protecting the distant Gcaleka, Thembu and Mpondo, Lieutenant Colonel Somerset mustered the largest European army ever assembled in South Africa. One thousand strong, the column crossed the Kei and rendezvoused with 26 000 warriors from Hintsa, Gcaleka, Vusani's Thembu and Faku's Mpondo. These chiefs allied with the European raiders in order to capture large herds of cattle and prevent colonial aggression against their own subjects. On 28 August 1828 a massive force attacked Chief Matiwane's Ngwane. According to the commandant, his African allies slaughtered thousands of men, women and children and seized all the victim's livestock. Somerset captured 100 women and children in order to 'save them from Hintsa and Vusani'. The prisoners were brought to Fort Beaufort and sold to colonial farmers (Stapleton, 1994:56; (CL) MS 9037, minutes, Reports Ross, 15 September, 6 November, 4 December 1828).

In 1834 D'Urban was assigned to administer a new policy. The civil establishments were to be greatly reduced, the expenditure was to be brought within the revenue, and the balance scrupulously applied to the payment of the public debt. The system of dealing with the Xhosa was to be altered, and friendly alliances were to be formed with the chiefs. D'Urban started with the sincere belief that the colonists were wholly in the wrong, the experience

of the war, which broke out at the end of 1834, taught him the value of the idyllic picture as drawn by the missionaries. After the close of the war he considered it necessary to annex to the British possessions the tract of country between the Keiskamma and the Kei Rivers. The dispatch announcing his intentions was thus answered by Lord Glenelg (December 26 1835): ' In the conduct which was pursued towards the Kaffir (sic) nation by the colonists and the public authorities of the Colony through a long series of years, the Kaffirs (sic) had an ample justification of the war into which they rushed with such fatal imprudence . . . urged to revenge and desperation by the systematic injustice of which they had been the victims, I am compelled to embrace, however reluctantly, the conclusion that they had a perfect right to hazard the experiment, however hopeless, of extorting by force that redress which they could not expect otherwise to obtain. In these circumstances the claim of sovereignty over the new province . . . must be renounced. It rests upon a conquest resulting from a war in which . . . the original justice is on the side of the conquered not of the victorious party' (KAB, Accession, A519 Papers Sir B D'Urban Collection, Cape Archives 1823 – 1854). Lord Glenelg further announced that a Lieutenant-Governor would be sent out to the eastern district, and that an Act was being drafted to enable courts of law to take cognisance of offences committed by British subjects beyond the borders of the Colony. The new Lieutenant Governor proved to be Captain A. Stockenström, whose main title to distinction at the time was that he had just been bringing the strongest accusations against his fellow-countrymen before a Committee of the House of Commons. The composition and findings of that Committee indicated very clearly the tone of the English public opinion of the day. The missionaries who highlighted the unjust way in which the local population were treated shaped public opinion in Britain.

The new Lieutenant Governor, in accordance with his instructions, negotiated treaties with the chiefs, under which the two parties were placed on a footing of perfect political equality. ' Colonists were to have no more right to cross the boundary eastwards without the consent of the chiefs than the Xhosa had to cross westwards without the consent of the Colonial Government. In D'Urban's words, the new and reckless policy had '... sufficed to dispel the salutary fear of our power...to shake-if not altogether to alienate the respect and confidence with which we have been regarded by our friends, to banish the flower of the frontier farmers, and to leave those who yet remained in a state of the most fearful insecurity '. D'Urban, at least, was not wanting in the courage of his opinions. His reply to Lord Glenelg's indictment of the colonists was to demand compensation for 'faithful

subjects who had been visited with calamities rarely paralleled, undeserved by any act of the sufferers' (Egerton, 1943). The result was the exodus of the Dutch farmers, which began in 1836. This had a far-reaching result on South African history.

What, then, were its causes? To the omniscient Lord Glenelg they seemed clear enough: 'The motives of the emigrants were the same as had in all ages impelled the strong to encroach upon the weak, and the powerful and unprincipled to wrest by force or fraud from the comparatively feeble and defenceless wealth or property or dominion' (KAB, Accession, A519 Papers Sir B D'Urban Collection, Cape Archives 1823 – 1854). In a similar spirit, he afterwards wrote that the proceedings of the emigrants must be checked 'in order to put an end to the scenes of havoc and destruction which have hitherto attended their course'. To D'Urban, on the other hand, who was on the spot, and had the opportunity of testing theory by fact, the causes of the exodus were the insecurity of life and property occasioned by the recent measures, 'inadequate compensation for the loss of the slaves, and despair of obtaining recompense for the ruinous losses by the Xhosa invasion'(KAB, Accession, A519 Papers Sir B D'Urban Collection, Cape Archives 1823 – 1854). The view of the emigrants themselves was thus stated: 'We despair of saving the Colony from those evils which threaten it, by the turbulent and dishonest conduct of vagrants who are allowed to infest the country in every partWe complain of the severe loss . . . by the emancipation of our slaves and the vexatious laws which have been enacted respecting them. We complain of the continual system of plunder, which we have for past years endured from the Kaffirs (sic). We complain of the unjustifiable odium, which has been cast upon us by interested and dishonest persons under the name of religion. We are resolved that wherever we go we will uphold the just principles of liberty, but, whilst we will take care that no one is brought by us into a condition of slavery, we will establish such regulations as may suppress crime and preserve proper relations between master and servant. We quit this Colony under the full assurance that the English Government has nothing more to require of us and will allow us to govern ourselves without its interference in future' (Egerton, 1943). The argument has been put forward that the primary cause of the Great Trek was the emancipation of the slaves. It has however, been pointed out that, whilst 56 per cent of the total slave population belonged to the districts of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, 98 per cent of the emigrants were from the districts of Beaufort, Graaff-Reinet, Somerset, Albany and Uitenhage, wherein there had only been 16 per cent of the slave population. In these circumstances, it is impossible to connect the

emancipation of the slaves and the emigration as cause and effect. Another opinion maintained is that the emigration was merely a continuation of what had been going on since the beginning of the eighteenth century, but there is all the difference in the world between the movement necessitated by defective methods of agriculture and the need of new lands, and the deliberate exodus of masses of people who abandoned or sold for small sums some of the choicest land in South Africa, and who left the colony with the avowed determination to set up independent communities.' D' Urban remarked that the Dutch farmers who were leaving the colony were 'a brave, patient, industrious, orderly and religious people - the cultivators, the defenders, and the tax-contributors of the country'(Egerton, 1943). (Refer to figures 59 and 60)

The English government found itself confronted with a most difficult question. The strict legal aspects of the case might be clear enough. The maxim *nemo potest exuere patriam*² applied no doubt to the case of subjects who had become such by conquest. But when the case was transferred from the grounds of dry law to its merits, every kind of difficulty stood in the way. In the first place, the emigrants could not be detained. The Attorney General recognized that 'it seemed next to an impossibility to prevent persons passing out of the Colony, by laws in force, or by any which could be framed '. The emigrants must therefore be allowed to leave, but it seemed equally clear that the new country, to which they might proceed, must not be claimed as British territory. On this point, of the necessity of no further extension, all English statesmen were agreed. Yet if the emigrants were to still be regarded as British subjects, while the country in which they lived remained foreign territory, were they still subject to British law. The State, which abjures responsibilities, will in the long run find itself to have lost rights. The English however, saw themselves as the trustees of the African peoples, and, according to the received view of the Dutch emigrants, their action would almost certainly imperil those interests. Moreover, in a direct fashion, the doings of the emigrants might affect the Cape Colony. Their relations with the Africans might result in the pressing southwards upon the Cape frontiers of masses of

² The old doctrine of nationality was stringent: *nemo potest exuere patriam*. Everyone born in the land owed allegiance to its King—and this tie continued unbroken until severed by death. A breach of allegiance, which was consequent thus on the mere accident of birth, might expose the offender to the inhuman horrors inflicted upon traitors. (Magna Carta, see bibliography)

Xhosa: a danger to the colony, which must at all costs be averted. The *Voortrekkers*³, thus never truly broke free of British interference and the entire nineteenth century was marked by the British inability to clearly resolve the issue. This saw a series of treaties, annexations and recognitions of independent states, but ultimately it culminated in the Anglo-Boer Wars.

In early October 1844 the Governor summoned all of the Ngqika chiefs, including Maqoma, to Fort Beaufort, where in the presence of 400 mounted Dragoons they were informed of the Colony's new border policy. The new Governor of the Cape Colony, Maitland, decided after the murder of a white farmer, allegedly by Xhosa rustlers, that Stokenstroom's treaties were no longer valid and reaffirmed the right to armed patrols. Additionally the Xhosa living at mission stations would no longer be subject to traditional law. The disposed Xhosa had many internal problems of their own at this stage, caused in no small part by their loss of land, overcrowding and continual threat of cattle raids; Stapleton's book Maqoma: Xhosa resistance to Colonial Advance (1994) gives a good account of all the characters and motives.

Shortly thereafter, the Jingqi, who had resettled in the upper Kat River area were forcibly evicted. On the morning of 4 May 1829 the colonial expedition escorted 3 000 cattle south to Fort Beaufort, and Maqoma led his warriors east of the neutral zone. Reluctantly they entered Ngqika's domain. Under the supervision of Nothonto, the Jingqi women worked feverishly all day to harvest the crops. Since this process usually required several weeks, not half of the produce was salvaged. The following day a weeping Helen Ross (the missionary's wife) observed hundreds of displaced women and children walking east with huge burdens on their heads. Ngcwenxa was abandoned; the chieftom expelled (Stapleton, 1994:60-61; (CL)MS 7720, J Ross to mother, 6 May 1829; (CL)MS 9037, minutes, reports of Thompson, 4 May 1829; PP, C252 of 1835, pp 32-43, Sir L Cole to Sir George Murray, 14 June 1829).

³ Voortrekker: a member of a band of Afrikaner pioneers who, in the early 19th century, left the British-ruled Cape for the interior of South Africa

Towards the end of 1834–35 fighting erupted again, and for the first time the war was carried into the territory of the Gcaleka Xhosa, whose paramount chief, Hintsa, was shot while in British custody. After the failure of several treaties, war broke out again, in 1846, over a trivial incident, and in a bitter struggle the Xhosa were defeated once more. After this war the British government annexed the old neutral territory as the Crown Colony of British Kaffraria (sic). After the deposition of the Xhosa paramount, Sandile, in 1851, this territory was reserved, apart from the British military outposts, for occupation by Africans. Resentments in British Kaffraria (sic), however, resulted in the eighth and most costly of the wars. Once again the Xhosa resistance was immensely strengthened by the participation of Khoisan tribesmen, who rebelled at their settlement of Kat River. By 1853 the Xhosa had been defeated, and the territory to the north of British Kaffraria (sic) was annexed to the Cape Colony and opened to white settlement (Welsh, 2000; Thompson, 2006; Lamar and Thompson, 1981; Meredith, 2006; Caffrey, 1973; Garson, 1992).

Part of Sir George Grey's policy of creating a predominantly European British Kaffraria (sic) after the Eighth Frontier War was to recruit members of the German Legion to the colony in exchange for land and village settlements. About 2 500 arrived early in 1857, however the scheme was not a success and many left to fight the Indian Mutiny of 1857 - 1859 (Garson, 1992). Many small settlements were however created by the German settlers such as Hannover. (Refer to figure 61)

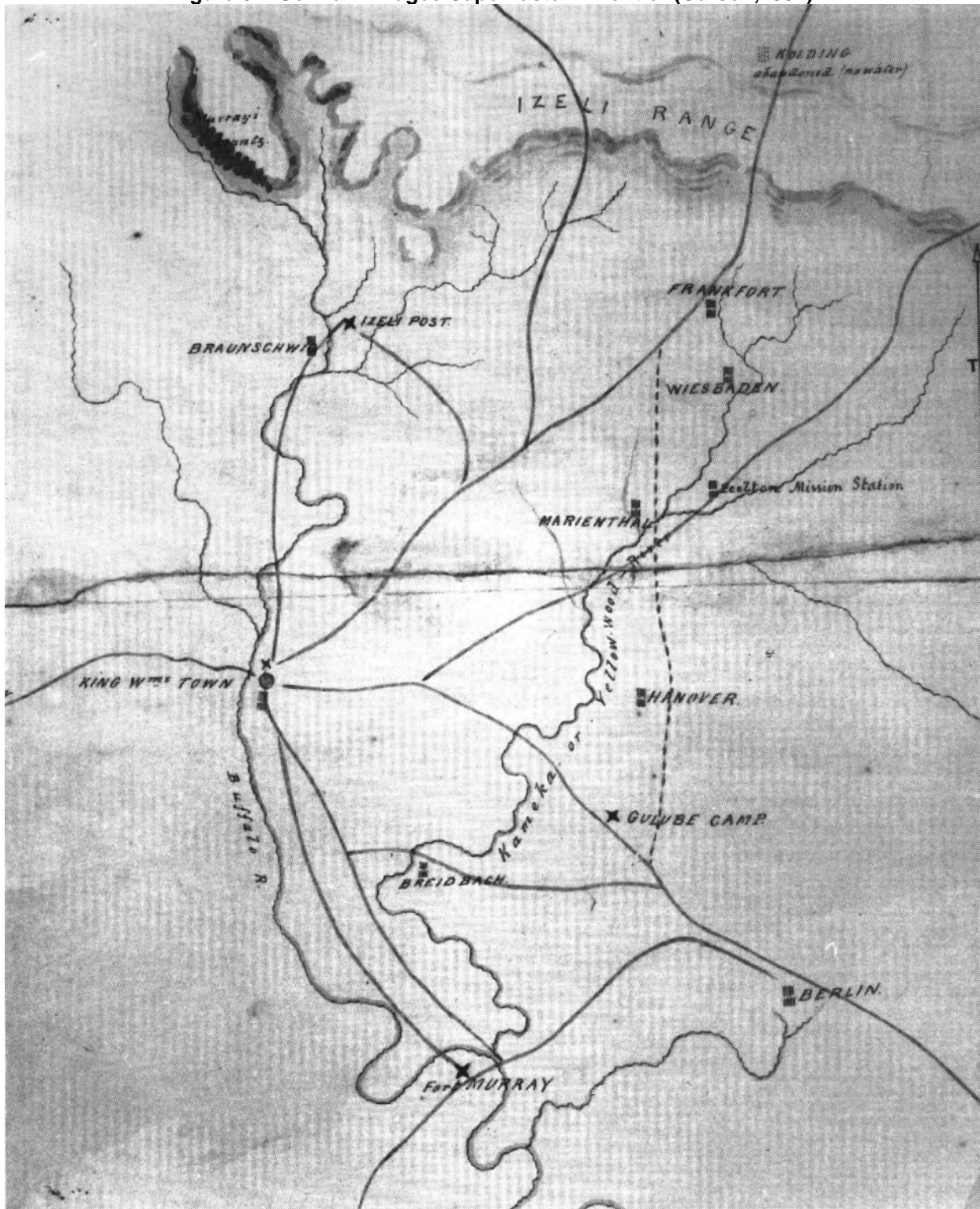
In 1857 the Xhosa were induced by a prophecy to slaughter their cattle in a mass sacrifice that was predicted to be followed by a miraculous overthrow of the British. This disastrous act caused widespread starvation and effectively ended Xhosa military resistance for two decades. The cattle killing has been a subject of much debate over the years, many feel that Sir George Grey incited the visions, but in an in-depth study Peires (1989) came to the conclusion that the visions were believed mainly due to the desperate circumstances of the Xhosa people and a widespread lung sickness epidemic of 1855 which killed as many as half to two thirds of their cattle. Peires' book The Dead will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle Killing Movement of 1856-7 (Peires, 1989) gives an in depth account of this sad episode. From the point of view of this study the movement broke the back of the Xhosa resistance and vast sections of Xhosa territory were taken over by the British.

In 1877–78 the Ngika and Gcaleka sections of the Xhosa, who had acquired guns on the diamond fields and were eager to regain lost lands, unsuccessfully took up arms against the colonists. After these wars the remaining Xhosa territories were gradually incorporated into the Cape Colony (Welsh, 2000; Thompson, 2006; Lamar and Thompson, 1981; Meredith, 2006; Caffrey, 1973; Garson, 1992).

8.3 CONCLUSIONS

This background history serves to illustrate the fraught and complex nature of the settlement and expansion of the Eastern Cape. The military and political approach to the problem has been presented. The next two chapters seek to analyse the spatial development approach adopted in this area. The study has previously highlighted that the British army was used both militarily and as a development agency, these two aspects are explored. The background history presented in this chapter sought mainly to present the story of the development of the Eastern Cape and the main wars, the next chapter seeks to analyse the defensive structures established in an attempt to pacify the frontier. Chapter 10 will look at the development of frontier towns.

Figure 61: German Villages Cape Eastern Frontier (Garson,1992)



CHAPTER NINE

FRONTIER DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The period of the first British occupation at the Cape produced a flurry of fortification work including the upgrading of existing fortifications (most notably around Cape Town) and the building of several new ones (Tomlinson, 2006:1). This chapter focuses on the second period of British occupation and investigates Eastern Cape military structures and infrastructure built and/or designed by the Royal Engineers. The fortifications in the Eastern Cape cover a large region and clearly show the advance and withdrawals according to the fortunes of the combatants and the policies of the home government. The troops were assisted until the late 1830's by *Boer* commandos, after 1822 by British immigrants formed into the 'Albany Levy' (Albany Museum Manuscript SM43), by Fingo tribesmen after 1835 and by the British German Legion from 1857. The wars resulted in a number and variety of fortifications, spread over an area from Port Elizabeth to East London and as far inland as Queenstown (totalling about 80 sites) (Tomlinson, 2006:1).

9.2 EARLY ROYAL ENGINEER DEPLOYMENTS TO THE CAPE COLONY

The Royal Engineers' first contact with the South Africa came when the Cape was occupied by British forces in 1795. During this seven year period of occupation a small Royal Engineer detachment was sent to the Cape, three names which arise out of the archive documents of this era are Captain James Carmichael Smyth¹(Royal Engineer), Captain George Bridges (Royal Engineer) and Lieutenant Henry Smart (Royal Engineer).

¹ **Maj.-Gen. Sir James Carmichael Smyth, 1st Bt.** (22 February 1780 -4 March 1838)

Maj.-Gen. Sir James Carmichael Smyth, 1st Bt. went to school at Charterhouse School, Godalming, Surrey, England. He furthered his education at the **Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst**, Berkshire, England. He held the position of 24th Chief of the Name and Arms of Carmichael. He was **Colonial Secretary at Cape of Good Hope under Sir David Baird**. He fought in the retreat from Corunna. He fought in the Battle of Bergen

Of these men, Smyth (1780-1838) then eighteen, soon demonstrated his talents as an engineer and an administrator, becoming aide-de-camp to the governor, Sir Francis Dundas² in 1800, and Commanding Royal Engineer and acting Colonial Secretary in the early years of the second British occupation of the Cape Colony in 1806 (Bergh and Visagie, 1985:34). He was responsible for mapping, coastal surveys and fortifications, and gained considerable knowledge of the interior of the colony, providing information for Aaron Arrowsmith's map of the Cape Colony, 1805, which was dedicated to him (Garson, 1992:2; Bergh and Visagie, 1985:34).

With the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806, an equally small group of Engineer officers arrived, under the command of Captain Smyth on his second tour of duty

op Zoom, where he was **commander Royal Engineers** in Netherlands under Lord Lynedoch. He was decorated with the award of Order of St. Vladimir of Russia (3rd Class). He fought in the Battle of Waterloo, on the personal staff of Duke of Wellington. He fought in the Battle of Quatre Bras in 1815, on the personal staff of Duke of Wellington. He was decorated with the award of Order of Maria Theresa of Austria (3rd Class). He was invested as a Companion, Order of the Bath (C.B.). He was created 1st Baronet Carmichael Smyth [U.K.] on 29 August 1821. He was invested as a Knight Commander, Hanoverian Order (K.C.H.) in 1829. He held the office of Governor of Bahamas between 1829 and 1833. He held the office of Lieutenant-Governor of Bahamas between 1833 and 1836. He held the office of Governor of British Guiana between 1836 and 1838, where he emancipated the slaves. (Reference: Charles Mosley, editor, *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage*, 107th edition, 3 volumes) and (Wilmington, Delaware, U.S.A.: *Burke's Peerage* (Genealogical Books) Ltd, 2003), volume 1, page 696)

² **Major-General Francis Dundas** (c.1759 – 15 January 1824) was a British general and acting governor of the Cape Colony between 1798 and 1803. Francis Dundas was the second son of Robert Dundas of Arniston and Jean Grant, and the nephew of Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville and War Secretary. He was ordered to the Cape in August 1796 after the first British occupation to become major-general and commander of the forces in May 1797. He first acted as governor from 21 November 1798 to 9 December 1799 and again from 20 April 1801 to 20 February 1803, when the Colony was returned to the Batavian Republic in accordance with the Treaty of Amiens signed on 27 March 1802. During his governorship the Graaff Reinet Revolt of 1798 and the Third Frontier War took place. His administration was seen to be autocratic but fair.

After the Cape he held several important military appointments in Britain. He commanded the Kent division of the army collected on the south coast of England under Sir David Dundas during part of the invasion alarms of 1804-5. (Wikipedia)

to the Cape which lasted until 1808. He was replaced as commanding officer by Captain Henry Smart, who was at times, until 1818, the sole Royal Engineer in office. By then the steadily growing need for the fortification of the eastern frontier against the dispossessed Xhosa brought to the Colony five Royal Engineer officers under the command of Major William Cuthbert Holloway. During his time as head of the Colonial Royal Engineer's department, Holloway chaired a commission to examine the feasibility of building a pass to service Franschoek. The valley was originally settled in 1688 by French Huguenot refugees, many of whom were given land by the Dutch government in a valley called *Olifantshoek* (elephants' corner), so named because of the vast herds of elephants that roamed the area. The name of the area soon changed to Franschoek (French corner), with many of the settlers naming their new farms after the areas in France from which they came. La Motte, La Cotte, Cabrière, Provence, Chamonix, Dieu Donné and La Dauphine were among some of the first established farms — most of which still retain their original farm houses today. These farms have grown into renowned wineries.

The first route over the Franschoek Mountains, the *Olifants Pad* (elephants path/road), was the path that the elephants used when they did their seasonal migration into the valley. This route, however, was not suitable for wagons and could only be crossed on foot or horseback. In 1818 a contract was awarded to a local farmer S.J. Cats to construct a pass. His best efforts resulted only in a very rough road (the Cats Pass), very steep on both sides of the mountain and could not be traversed by a fully laden wagon.

When Lord Charles Somerset authorised the construction of the Franschoek Pass in 1823, there was no proper-engineered road over the mountains from Cape Town. Holloway built the first stone-arch bridge, Jan Joubert's Gat Bridge, on the eastern side over a *kloof* (gorge) with the same name. This bridge was included in all later constructions and was proclaimed a National Monument in 1979. It is still the oldest bridge in the country still in use. The pass served as the main gateway to the *Overberg* (literally over mountain) until 1830, when the Sir Lowry's Pass was constructed. The pass remained unaltered until 1932, when it was reconstructed with improved geometries. In the 1960's further improvements were made, including a bitumen surface. Labour for the construction

of the pass was provided by the 150 soldiers of the Royal Africa Corps stationed temporarily in Cape Town while waiting to be deployed to Sierra Leone. The pass was completed in 1825 and the road was broad enough to allow two wagons to pass each other. Franschhoek Pass was the first professionally designed and constructed mountain pass in the colony.

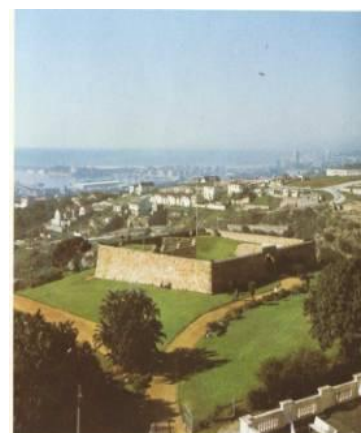
During Major William Cuthbert Holloway's time in the colony the devastating frontier wars meant that the resources of the Royal Engineers were increasingly utilised. The Royal Engineers' work in the Eastern Cape forms the content of this chapter. Where possible names of the Royal Engineers involved are highlighted in the text, however, in many cases the maps and plans are simply stamped Royal Engineers, the names are not present. Most of the fort construction, design, as well as the surveying of the frontier was carried out by the Royal Engineers; although other military and colonial officials were also involved (for example the Surveyor General Robinson surveyed Queenstown – see chapter 10). Many plans are signed by the Governor and thus it is hard to find who surveyed and drew the plans – if they are stamped Royal Engineers then it is evident that one of the Royal Engineer Officers were involved).

9.3 THE FRONTIER WARS

9.3.1 FORT FREDERICK – ALGOA BAY

The advantage of Algoa Bay as a landing place for the defence of the country up to Graaff-Reinet was realised during the first British occupation. In the immense frontier district of Graaff-Reinet that had been established by the Dutch in 1786, the *burghers* (Dutch citizens) were beginning to exercise that freedom of speech and independence of action which had been spread by the ideals of the French Revolution. The English arriving in 1795, inherited both the incipient rebellion of the Graaff-Reinet *burghers* and the warlike raids of both the *Boers* and the *Xhosa* on each other.

Figure 62: Fort Frederick, Port Elizabeth (author's own photo 2007)



On the hill behind the blockhouse, a second blockhouse was erected surrounded by a massive, square stone redoubt. This was named Fort Frederick in honour of the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. It is said that this was the first piece of 'substantial and permanent building ever erected in the Eastern Province' and it is still in existence today.

The Fort has a commanding view of the whole of Algoa Bay. Its walls are eighty feet long and nine feet high, the wide arched entrance with double gate being situated on the western side. Inside the fort was a powder magazine capable of holding 2 000 lbs of gunpowder and to the left of the entrance was a small guardhouse. Inside the wall was a raised platform for patrol duty and defence. The heavy armament consisted of eight twelve-pounders and the garrison consisted of 350 men, most of whom were housed in barracks near the fort and the first blockhouse. In 1803, the Batavian Government took over the Cape by treaty from the British and in 1804, the new district of Uitenhage was created. And so the development of a civilian centre around Fort Frederick was for a time delayed although it apparently remained the military headquarters (KAB Map M1/2004; KAB Map M1/2249; KAB Map M1/2393; KAB Map M2/924; SAB X6/52/39 Historical Monuments Commission).

The second British occupation took place in 1806 when Britain's line of communication with the Far East was being threatened by the ambitious plans of the new French regime and the decline of the Batavian Government (Gledhill,2008).

The British occupation of the eastern frontier illustrates the British approach to colonisation as they expanded via defensible positions and then consolidated their land gains by settling the area. The fort was as much about the control of the colonial civilian population as it was a statement of power to the Xhosa tribes. Unlike the Dutch settlers who moved into the interior, established farms first and then administrative centres; the British started by creating a fort at a natural harbour manned by military people. The move into the interior was in response to the conflict over land between the settlers and the Xhosa and was met by the establishment of military headquarters and lines of defensive forts and signal posts. Civilian settlements came later and generally grew up around the military posts. The forts formed a front line that was largely defensive in nature; however, in times

of battle troops were deployed from Cape Town making use of the ocean as a means of rapidly moving troops to the area. Overland transportation between the Eastern Frontier and Cape Town was limited, slow and unreliable. The harbour posts were thus a fundamental link in the military strategy.

Figure 64 illustrates the importance of the coastal defences; the map, drawn in 1862, is marked with red semi-circular areas in the bay mapping the lines of sight and distances from the coast of 2 500 yards and 6 000 yards. It shows positions of beacons, lighthouses, the breakwater in the harbour and an area marked out for ships riding at anchor. Dangerous reefs and heavy breakers at Cape Recife are depicted and information is also given about the visibility of lights beyond a certain distance out to sea. The plan is signed by Colonel W.T. Renwick (Royal Engineer) and was drawn to accompany his report to Lieutenant-General Wynyard CB (Garson, 1992:77). Although there is little information concerning the function of this map, there is a possibility that it may have been connected with the coastal survey conducted by Captain Bailey (Royal Engineer) and a number of Royal Engineer officers between 1859 and 1862. After the completion of the work the survey party sailed to England from Algoa bay, only to be shipwrecked on the rocks off Struys Point, an ironic stroke of misfortune. Instruments, drawings and observations were lost “to my infinite regret and annoyance”, wrote Captain Bailey. The work had to be reassembled (Garson, 1992:77; KAB 1/413 Cape Archives Report of the Goedetic Survey - Royal Engineers 1892- 1897).

Figure 65, drawn in 1837, depicts the early development of the town with the fort in the north-west and a small linear town along the coast. The plan was drawn to accompany a report by Lieutenant-Colonel Griffith George Lewis (Royal Engineer) after the Sixth Frontier War (1834-1835) and bears the Royal Engineers’ stamp. Lewis is discussed later in the chapter. The plan is included in this section to show the growth of the town after the establishment of the fort.

Figure 64: Coastal Chart around Algoa Bay 1862 (Port Elizabeth) Photographed by author from original Royal Engineer's Collection, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand

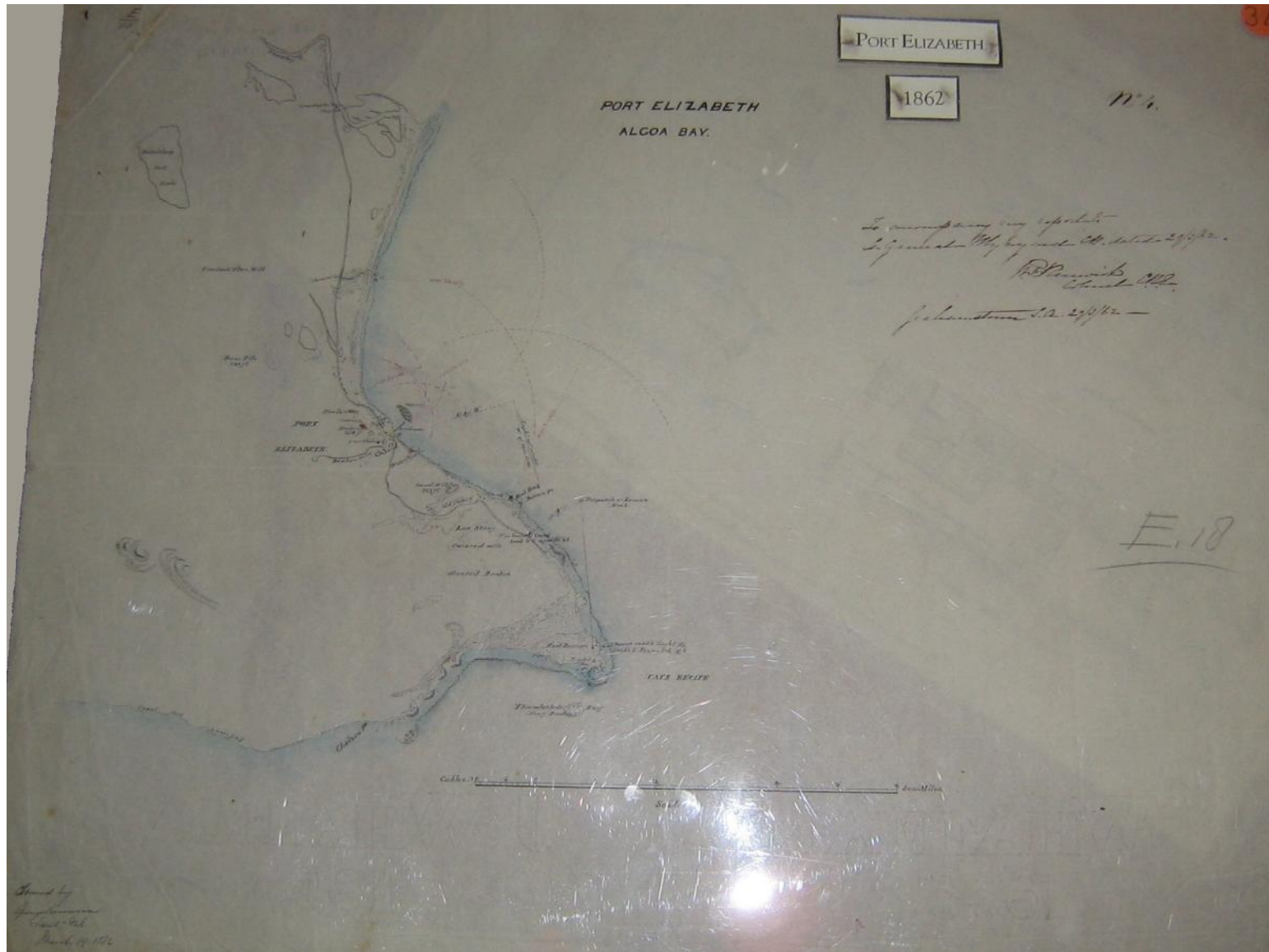
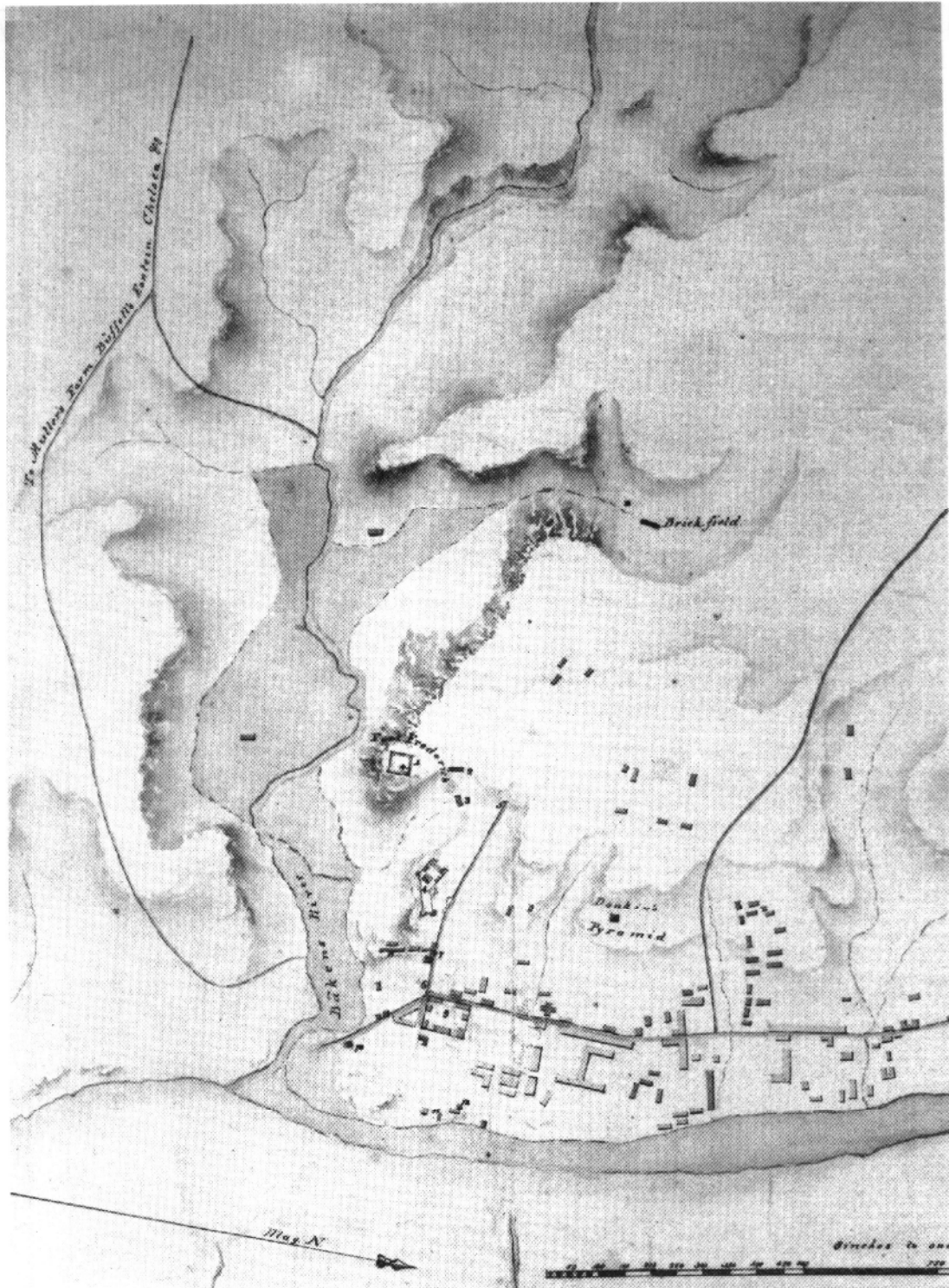


Figure 65: Plan of Port Elizabeth showing the relative situation of the existing and proposed military buildings to accompany an estimate report from Lt Col Lewis Comg. R1 Engr to the Inspector General Fortifications Dated March 18th 1837 Signed by H.W.Piers. Note Donkin's Pyramid, this was a memorial to Elizabeth Donkin, Sir Rufane Donkin's young wife, put up in 1821. Port Elizabeth is named in her honour (Garson,1992:25). (KAB Jeffreys Collection 1894- Photo Donkin Memorial)

Port Elizabeth



9.3.2 THE FIRST ERA OF FRONTIER FORTS

From the earliest British administration fortifications were planned. Colonel Graham³ instituted a series of frontier posts from which patrols could guard the drifts across the Fish River. They were first manned by *burghers* from George and Swellendam. These posts were either rehabilitated farmhouses of wattle-and-daub or stone built shelters enclosed by primitive earthen redoubts. Van Aardt's Post, near the present Longhope siding, was the furthest north and was the recognised crossing place for communication between the colonialists and the Xhosa. Three other posts were the abandoned farm of Conraad Buys; Kranz Drift near the present Pigot Bridge; and Old Kaffir (sic) Drift Post which was later called Cawood's Post. This was about an hour's ride from Upper Kaffir (sic) Drift Post, established about two year's later on the heights overlooking the actual drift, and is not to be confused with Lower Kaffir (sic) Drift about 3km further down the Fish River and about 13km from the mouth (Gledhill, 2008).



Figure 66: Lombard's Post, buildings and walls forming a hexagonal farmyard (the buildings pictured are from the post 1820 settler era).(Gledhill, 2008).

Colonel Graham recommended that two additional military posts be established. One was to be at Noutoe, a farm 13km west of Grahamstown, formerly belonging to the de Lange family and situated on the road between Bruintjies Hooghte and Uitenhage. It was soon abandoned and the site later developed as Table Farm by the 1820 Settler Major T.C. White (KAB GH 23/4 Papers despatched to Secretary of State, London reporting upon

³ **John Graham** is the founder of Grahamstown and is discussed in Chapter 9.

Colonel Graham's military operation 1811, 1812, 1813, 1815; KAB GH 1/19 Papers received from Secretary of State, London Appointment of Colonel Graham as Commandant at Simons Town, 1816).

The other post was established on the loan place (a farm granted on the quit rent basis – see chapter 5) of Commandant Piet Lombard, about 48km west of Fish River Mouth. A few kilometres south-west of it Theopolis, a London Mission Station for Khoikhoi, was founded in 1814. Lombard's Post was a key point in border raids and frontier wars, particularly later on when the area was taken over by settler Benjamin Keeton. In 1835 he erected a fortified farmhouse close to the site of the old post. The stone buildings of the farm, now called Lombard's Post, were placed so as to enclose a spacious hexagonal farmyard and the outer walls were loop holed (Figure 66) (Gledhill, 2008). The stone fortified farms are discussed later as they were a result of later frontier wars.

During the war of 1850-51 Lombard's Post saw its last action; Whittles laager was formed near it and the farm buildings were filled with refugees. From it also a patrol was sent out to quell the rebel Khoikhoi at Theopolis (Gledhill, 2008; Garson, 1992).

These early posts were little more than strategic farms manned by local citizens but linked to the military intelligence as a series of observation and early warning posts (KAB GH 23/4 Papers despatched to Secretary of State, London reporting upon Colonel Graham's military operation 1811, 1812, 1813, 1815). One of the most important contributions of Colonel Graham was the establishment of Grahamstown, named in his honour. The town of Grahamstown is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

9.3.3 SOMERSET'S OBSERVATION POSTS 1814-1819

Lord Charles Somerset signed a treaty with Ngqika, chief of the Xhosa west of the Kei. Troops on the frontier were warned that they were on duty at the outposts for observation and not for aggression. "It is his Excellency's wish that these posts should be improved so as to attain that solidity which many of them (constructed of the slightest materials) had not when he inspected them; but this is a service which must not be hurried, and the greatest attention possible should be paid to having the men's Barracks dry and airy..." (KAB GH

23/5, 1814 Papers despatched to Secretary of State, London Lord Charles Somerset reporting his arrival at the Cape).



Figure 67: Fort Brown, the gun tower from the parade grounds (Gledhill, 2008).

Somerset in his dispatch on September 4, 1818 (KAB GH 23/6, 1818) also urged the officer commanding on the frontier to hasten with the erection of previously recommended Signal Stations so that communication with the front line might be improved, depredations reported and culprits apprehended before they vanished across the Fish River. A Field Officer was to be stationed at van Aardt's on the left wing and another at one of the Kaffir Drift (sic) posts on the right wing (Garson, 1992; Gledhill, 2008).

A series of Outer and Inner Post Lines were created mostly on farms. The most northerly post was Kruger's Farm, near Slager's Nek (1815), followed by Somerset Farm, Prinsloo's and Roodewal (Cookhouse). Going down the river and about an hour's ride from each other were Van Aardt's, Paul Bester's, De Lange's and van der Merwe's. Following the eastward meanders of the river were Junction Drift, Wentzel Coetzee's or Espag's (Carlisle Bridge), De Bruin's, Kranz Drift, Koester's and Hermanus Kraal (Fort Brown). It is uncertain whether Double Drift, Committees and Trompetter's Drift were garrisoned at this time, as they were deep in the valley in dense bush. Waai Plaats and Old Kaffir (sic) Drift (Cawood's) on the flats and Upper and Lower Kaffir (sic) Drifts on the river completed the line to the river mouth, with Lombard's Post further west (Tomlinson, 2006; Garson, 1992; Gledhill, 2008).

The inner line of posts was over the Zuurberg from Grahamstown on the road to Uitenhage; these were Assegai Post, Rautenbach's Drift, Vermaak's Farm, Sandflats, Nieuwepos, Coerney, Addo Drift and Jacobus Oosthuizen's with Klaas Kraal north-west of Uitenhage. (Figures 68 to 70) (KAB GH 23/4 (1814), 23/5 (1814), 23/6 (1818), 23/7 (1825)

Papers despatched to the Secretary of State, London, from Lord Charles Somerset; KAB VC542, Letter from James Barry, 1825).

Figures 68 -70 below are a series of maps accredited to Private John Reid, Royal Sappers and Miners, they demonstrate a remarkable quality of draughtmanship. John Reid would have been well trained at the Royal Engineer establishment at Chatham, where Royal Sappers and Miners who showed an interest in and aptitude for the subjects were given instruction in surveying and draughting techniques. The first significant detachment of Sappers was sent to the Cape in 1834 after repeated requests from the commanding Royal Engineer, at the time Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Thompson. Their services were urgently required for the building of forts, roads, bridges and clerical work as well as for military purposes (Garson, 1992:23; Connolly, 1855:271).

The reference table on Figure 69 is interesting; it is in the form of a diagram headed: "Assumed population of Kaffraria (sic) in the year 1834". It consists of an analysis of tribes under headings such as 'Nation', 'Principal Chiefs', 'Men', 'Women and Children' and 'Remarks'. The last heading refers by different colours to the locations on the map of the individual tribes. The grand total of the population was 395 000. Below the diagram is a note: "those marked thus "x" where (sic) hostile tribes in the late war". This refers to the Sixth Frontier War (Garson, 1992:23).

Bearings and distances between Military Posts

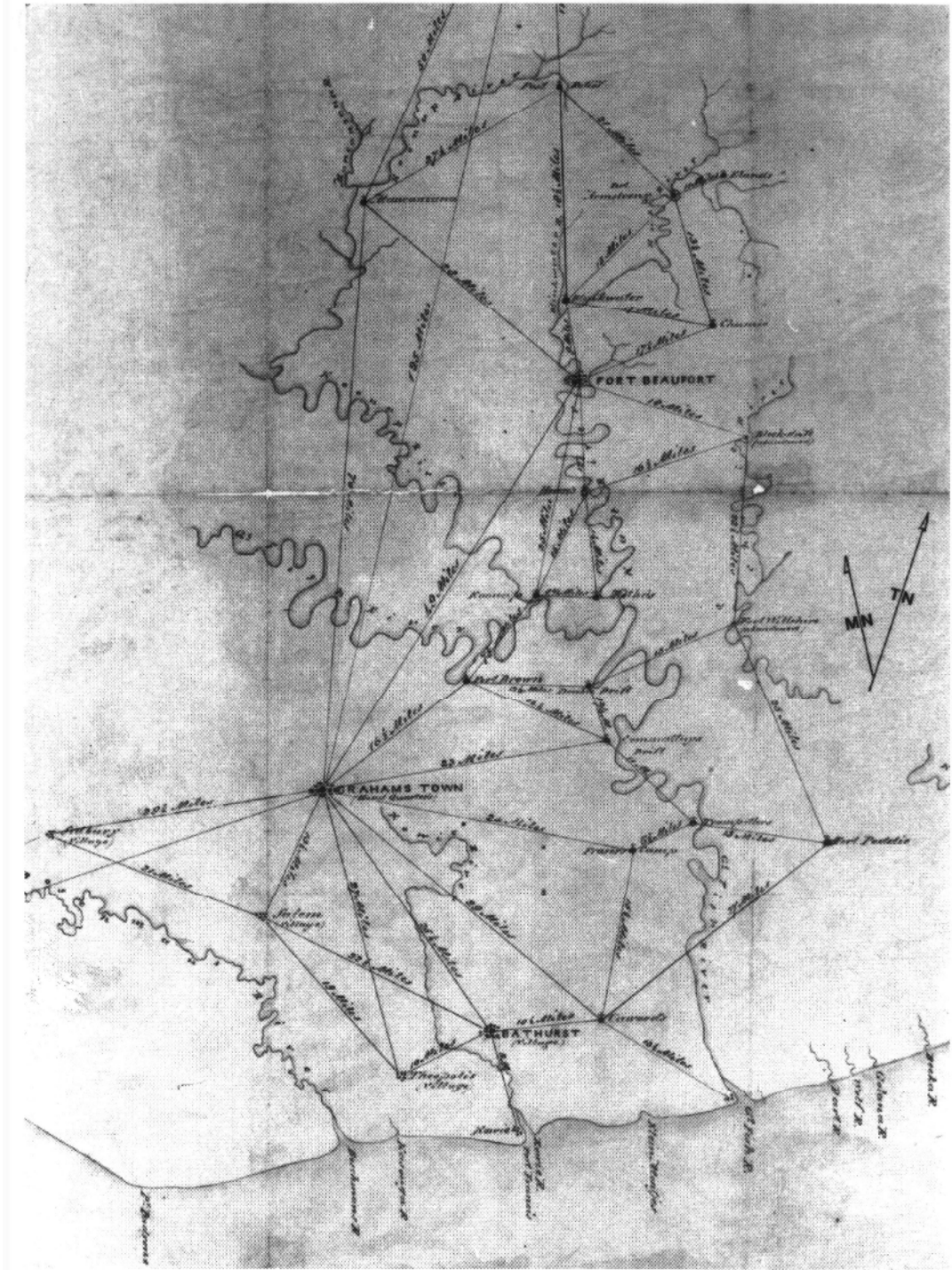


Figure 68: 1844-1845 Bearings and Distances between Military Posts, Eastern Frontier. Sketch showing relative bearings and distances per wagon route between the different military posts on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape of Good Hope (Garson,1992:31)

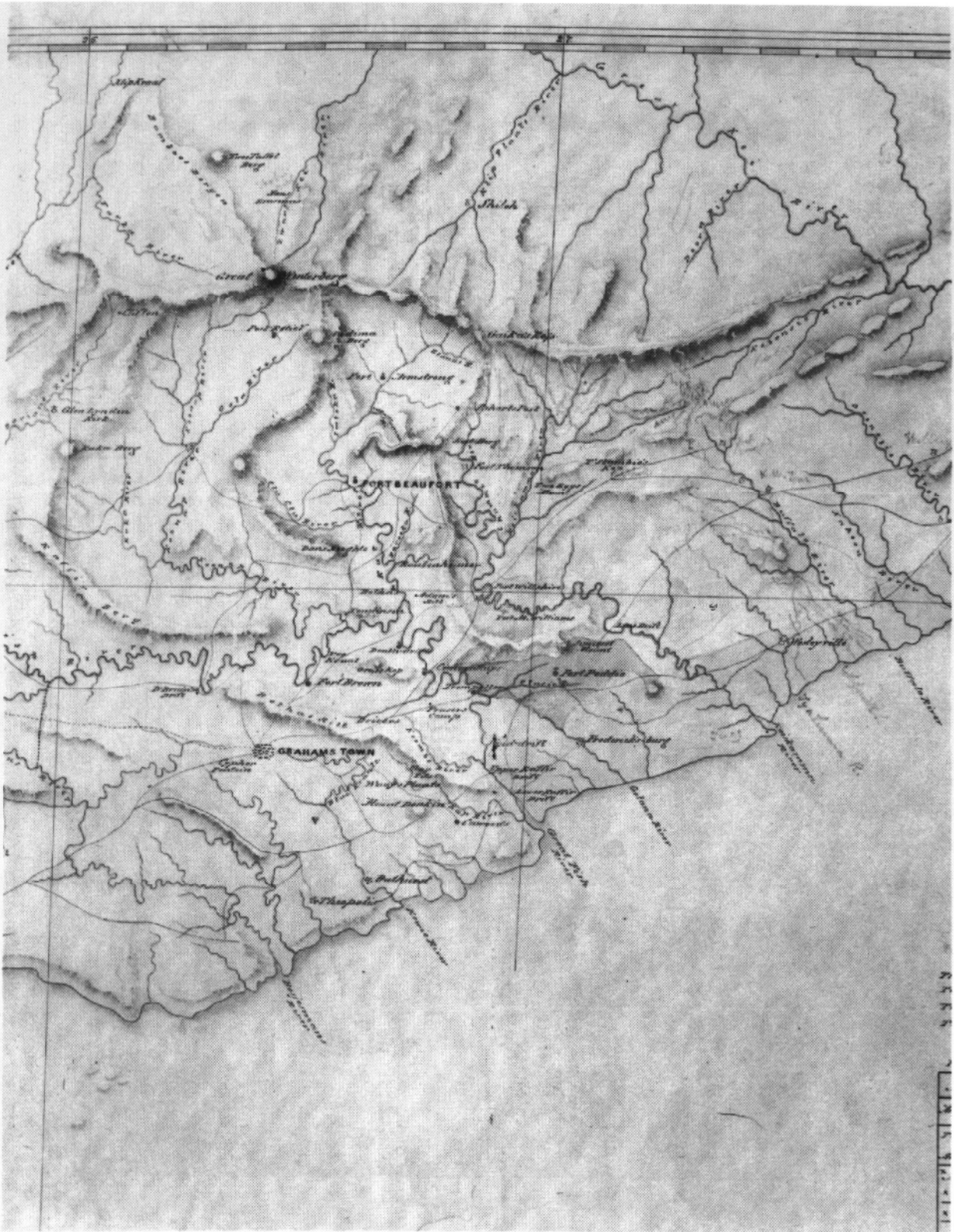


Figure 69: Eastern Frontier 1844 Photographed by Author from the Royal Engineer's collection, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand



Figure 70: Detail of Figure 49 taken from Garson(1992:23)

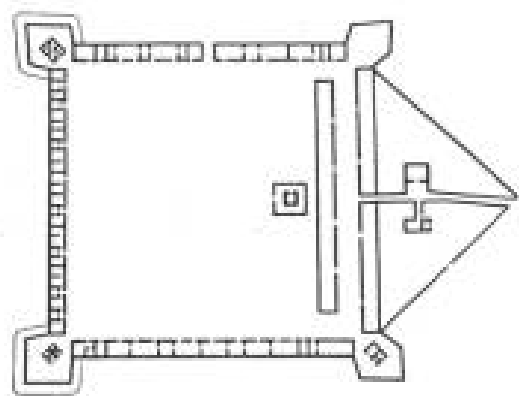
Eastern Frontier



As previously explained in chapter 7; Lord Charles Somerset visited the frontier again in October 1819 after the Battle of Grahamstown. He conferred once more with Ngqika and the assembled chiefs, and the Xhosa agreed to cede a strip of country between the Keiskamma, Tyumie and Great Fish Rivers. This was to be a neutral zone, unoccupied by either colonists or Xhosa; and patrolled by troops stationed at two military posts, Fort Willshire and Fort Holloway within the ceded territory. The latter was never built but the first Fort Willshire, the most ambitious and most forward military station, was started in November, 1819 (Garson, 1992; Meredith, 2006; Thompson, 2006). (Figures 71 and 72) Fort Willshire is actually two fortified barracks about 800m apart. The first fort was built on the orders of Somerset, the plan being an irregular pentagon with curtain walls of lengths 2/66m, 2/60m and 1/81m, with bastions at angles and ranges of buildings against the curtains and freestanding in the interior. However, Somerset went on leave to England in December 1819; only one third of the scheme, including all five bastions, was completed by May 1820, after eight months work; when the Acting Governor, General Sir Rufane Donkin, suspended construction and ordered a second fort to be built nearer to the Keiskamma River, which was the eastern border of the 'neutral territory' at the time. Donkin's barracks was sited on lower ground, it consisted of a square of about 180m with four angle bastions and two castle enclosures forming a blunt arrowhead on one side; the arrangement of the interior was similar to Somerset's fort with the addition of a powder magazine (KAB Accession A1619 1820-1880 Dr van Heerden Papers, Letters by Sir Rufane Donkin 1820; VAB AMPT PUBS IBB, communications between colonial Department and Lieut-General Sir Rufane Donkin, 1827). The second fort was successful until 1830 as a trading station on the eastern frontier (Tomlinson,2006).



**Figure 71: A Fair at Fort Willshire Barracks, 1828
(Gledhill, 2008)**



**Figure 72: Plan of Fort Willshire Barracks
erected in lieu of the first Fort
Willshire.(Gledhill, 2008)**

9.3.4 THE FRONTIER FORTS 1835 – 1845 - PROVINCE OF QUEEN ADELAIDE

By 1822 the spread of Xhosa tribes westwards along the foothills of the Amatole Mountains was now causing some alarm. Maqoma and his followers had settled in the valley near the source of the Kat River. In order to check and watch his movements, Colonel Scott, in 1822, erected a blockhouse and stationed troops on the north-east bank of the Kat River, naming the site Fort Beaufort in honour of Lord Charles Somerset's family. On the route between Grahamstown and Fort Beaufort, Hermanus Kraal grew in significance and Tomlinson's Post, near the juncture of the Fish and Koonap Rivers was established.

Towards the end of 1834 events moved swiftly to a climax, over 12,000 Xhosa invaded the colony, known as the Sixth Frontier War; Fort Willshire was abandoned and refugees poured into Grahamstown. Colonel Harry Smith, after an epic ride from Cape Town, arrived to take command. He directed a three pronged attack from Committees Drift, Trompetter's Drift and Upper Kaffir (sic) Drift. (Figures 73 to 79)

The attack was pushed past the Keiskamma River and troops eventually crossed the Kei River. Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban joined in the final conduct of the campaign, proclaimed the new boundary of the colony to be the Kei River and named the new Province Queen Adelaide (Gledhill, 2008; Garson, 1992; Thompson, 2006; Meredith, 2006).

The first measure Governor D'Urban took for the protection of the new province was to erect Fort Warden, on the west bank of the Kei, overlooking the river crossing, about fifteen miles downstream from the present rail bridge. Fort Waterloo was then established as a temporary observation post on the road east of Gonubie River.

Lieutenant, later Major, Thomas Charles White, 70th Foot, led a party of English settlers to Albany in 1820, where over many years he was a prominent and popular citizen. His former experience of survey in the West Indies brought him to the attention of Major William Cuthbert Holloway, Commanding Royal Engineer (the designer of Franschoek Pass discussed earlier in the chapter), White was made an assistant engineer on the eastern frontier where he conducted surveys and compiled maps for some years.



Figure 73: 1837 District of Albany: Photographed by author from the original, Royal Engineer's Map Collection: William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

District of Uitenhage

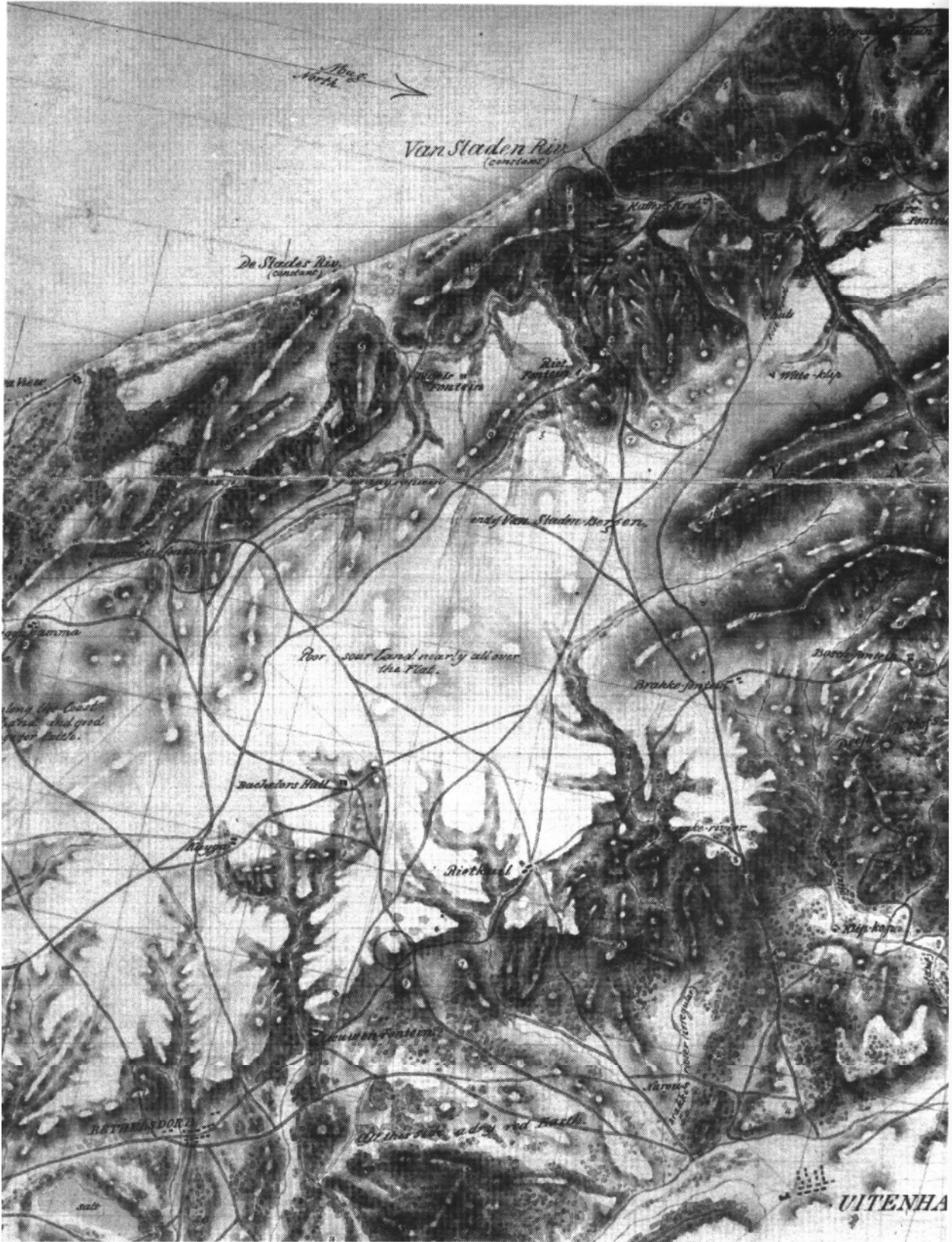


Figure 74: 1822 District of Uitenhage, military survey of part of the district of Uitenhage, signed by T.C.White (Garson,1992:13)

9.3.5 FORTS AND SIGNAL TOWERS OF THE LEWIS LINE (1837 – 1846)

After the war of 1835 the planning of the system of frontier defence fell on three men, Lieutenant- Colonel Griffith George Lewis, Commanding Royal Engineer¹ (1784-1850), Captain W F D Jervis (Royal Engineer), and a civilian employee of the War Office, Henry L Hall (Benyon, 1985:71). Lewis was the commanding Royal Engineer in the colony at the time. He repeatedly expressed his frustration at the tardiness of the British government in allocating funds for the effective defence of the frontier districts. He wrote extensively on frontier defence policy, and complained that for years after the close of the war no clear decisions had been taken on how funds were to be utilised (Garson, 1992:25). Lewis' career was one of great distinction; he was decorated several times for his courage and resource as an Engineer. Owing to severe wounds, one of his legs was amputated above the knee in 1813, when he was twenty-nine years old (Dictionary of National Biography, v.33:184). Jervis, also had a notable career; the young Lt William Drummond Jervis served on the frontier from 1841-8; he is known to have worked on Forts Peddie, Trompetter's Drift, Double Drift and Brown. Four years later Jervis was in Alderney in the

¹ **Griffith George Lewis** – A familiar landmark in Cape Town, the Egyptian building, the first structure of the South African College, built in 1840 and now used by the Fine Arts students of the University of Cape Town; first designed by James Constantine Adamson, was adapted and enlarged by Colonel Lewis, then commanding Royal Engineer. Lewis supervised the building of the structure which is now a national monument (Garson, 1992:6).

Lewis's name also appears in connection with the Geodetic survey in South Africa. Geodetic survey in South Africa is said to have begun in 1751 with the arrival at the Cape of the noted French astronomer and member of the French Academy of the Sciences, Abbé Nicolas Louis de la Caille who provided the groundwork for geodetic and topographical surveys by his remarkable observations and calculations (Garson, 1992:4). But for the interest of Captain George Everest, convalescent in Cape Town from India where he was chief assistant on the Indian trigonometric survey, and after whom Mount Everest was named, de la Caille's work might have remained in obscurity. In 1820 Everest wrote a treatise on Cape geodesy which had the effect of encouraging Sir Thomas Maclear, Astronomer Royal at the Cape from 1834 – 1870, to reassess de la Caille's findings (Dictionary of National Biography, v.18, pp 86-87). In conducting the revision from 1837 to 1848, Maclear was assisted by the Royal Engineers and Sappers. "I must here acknowledge my obligation to my friend Lieutenant (Montgomery) Williams who smoothed the way ... and to Colonel (Griffith George) Lewis the commandant, for various kinds of assistance throughout the work; indeed the value of the zealous co-operation of the engineer department can only be estimated by those acquainted with the Cape of Good Hope. In the friendship of these two gentlemen I was particularly fortunate" (Maclear, 1866:89-90).

Channel Islands, where he spent the 1850's designing and supervising the construction of a whole series of fortifications (it was he who built the Solent forts). He went on to serve as the secretary to the Royal Commission on the Defences of the United Kingdom, subsequently becoming Lieutenant General Sir William Jervois, KCMG, CB, Deputy Director-General of Fortifications, Governor of South Australia 1877-83 and of New Zealand 1883-89 (Tomlison,2006 :9-10).

At the time when a number of rather flimsy forts were being built in the new Province of Queen Adelaide (most of them to be abandoned within twelve months) Lieutenant Colonel Lewis, Commanding Officer of the Royal Engineers at the Cape, drew up the Lewis Scheme (referred to as the Lewis Line) for a series of strongly fortified barracks at Trompetter's Drift, Double Drift, Fort Brown, Botha's Post, Post Retief along the Fish River then the line turned north via the existing Fort Beaufort and finally west to Fort Armstrong. The six forts of the "Lewis Line" were rectangular fortified barracks for infantry and cavalry, each surrounded by a loop-holed wall three meters high. Officer's and men's quarters, commissariat stores, stables, cookhouse, bakery, etc, were ranged around the inside of the enclosure and many of the forts incorporated a two storey piquet or gun tower projecting from one corner, on the flat roof of which was mounted a light 6-pounder or a 4.5 or 5.5-inch howitzer. Some of the forts also exhibit a similar projection at the corner diagonally opposite the gun tower; giving flanking fire along the other two walls. Several of these forts were placed to defend 'drifts' or fords over the Fish River, which marked the border at the time (Tomlinson,2006;Garson, 1992,Benyon,1985:71).

The imperial government also approved of Lewis's scheme for signal towers, and new roads and bridges to improve communications between these forts and the headquarters at Grahamstown where new barracks were to be built on the old Drostdy Ground (Gledhill, 2008). Circa 1843 Henry Hall compiled a map which was later copied by Private John Reid (Sapper); it shows the bearings of principal military posts and remarkable peaks visible from proposed sites of signal towers in the Fish River region (see Figure 76)(Garson,1992:33).

In 1837 Lewis recommended that communications with Fort Beaufort and Fort Peddie be improved by a series of signal towers based on Fort Selwyn in Grahamstown. The system was devised by Lewis and executed by Jervois and Hall between 1837 and 1842 (Benyon,

1985:73). The survey to establish suitable points on which to erect the stations was done by Henry Hall, stationed in the Eastern Cape, 1842 – 1858. The stone-built towers were about 30 metres high. They had only one entrance, to the first floor, and it was provided with a ladder which could be drawn up before the door was closed. A staircase led to the flat roof of the tower on which was mounted a semaphore, a type of signalling mast first developed by Claude Chappe during the French Revolution (Benyon, 1985;Garson, 1992;Tomlinson,2006).

The mast was composed of a 'regulator', pivoted at its centre so that it could rotate and also slide up and down. At either end of the regulator were indicator arms which could each be placed in seven different positions. In practice only 196 combinations of positions were used although there was the possibility of more.

The Fort Beaufort Line of signal stations went from Governor's Kop to Grass Kop, Botha's Post, Dan's Hooghte and Fort Beaufort. When war broke out in 1846, all the towers on this line had been completed and equipped with semaphore masts. A projected extension to Zwart Kei Post was never carried out. Henry Hall, when testing the section between Dans Hooghte and Fort Beaufort, found that the signals made to Fort Beaufort from Dans Hooghte could not easily be read although his signals from Dan's Hooghte were clearly visible at Fort Beaufort. Unless the towers were placed against the skyline, it was difficult and sometimes impossible to read the signals, furthermore the telescopes supplied were not sufficiently powerful. So the signalling system was less than successful.

The signal towers were in fact of very little use for the signals were difficult to decipher, the up-keep of the garrisons expensive and water supply was always a problem. Henry Hall later recorded that 'Within one month of the outbreak of war (1846) all these towers were in ruins, abandoned by us or burnt by the enemy" (Cape Quarterly Review, July 1882:714-716; Rochlin,1961:714; Hall,1859:257) (See Figure 39 p122). Henry Hall became an accomplished geographer and map maker as well as writing extensively, examples of his work are housed in the Cape Archives (KAB Map M1/2180-2185; KAB Map M3/361;KAB Map M1/110; KAB Map M1/1219; KAB Map M1/2047-2054; KAB Map M1/2158-2161; KAB Map M1/2162-2165; KAB Map M1/2621-2624; KAB Map 624, KAB Bound Map PWD2/74; VAB Kaart 1/269;VAB Kaart 1/270; NAB Map M1/93/1-4; NAB Map M2/158/1-4) there is

also a book on Henry Hall as well as his published magazine articles (Cape Quarterly Review, July 1882:714-716; Rochlin, 1961:714; Hall, 1859:257).

Prior to these signal towers there had been a certain amount of signalling in Table Bay and False Bay areas, but nothing as substantial as the eastern frontier semaphore system existed elsewhere in South Africa, and possibly in the British Empire (Benyon, 1985:73). Probably only in Britain itself was the system as extensive as here. In the Cape Monthly Magazine of November 1859 Hall wrote a description of the system. There were two lines of communication, one from Grahamstown (Fort Selwyn) through Governor's Kop tower, Gras Kop, Botha's Post, Dans Hoogte, to Fort Beaufort; the other from Grahamstown again through Governor's Kop tower to Fraser's Camp, Piet Appel's tower and Fort Peddie. A third line down to Bathurst from Fraser's Camp was never constructed. The entire system cost five thousand pounds. The cost of each tower was five hundred pounds. Each was manned by a sergeant and five men (Benyon, 1985:74).

After the Sixth Frontier War of 1834 – 1835, the eastern frontier was considerably strengthened by increasing the number of troops, military engineers and forts (Kirby, 1960; Gledhill, 2008; Garson, 1992).

Vicinity of Fort Beaufort

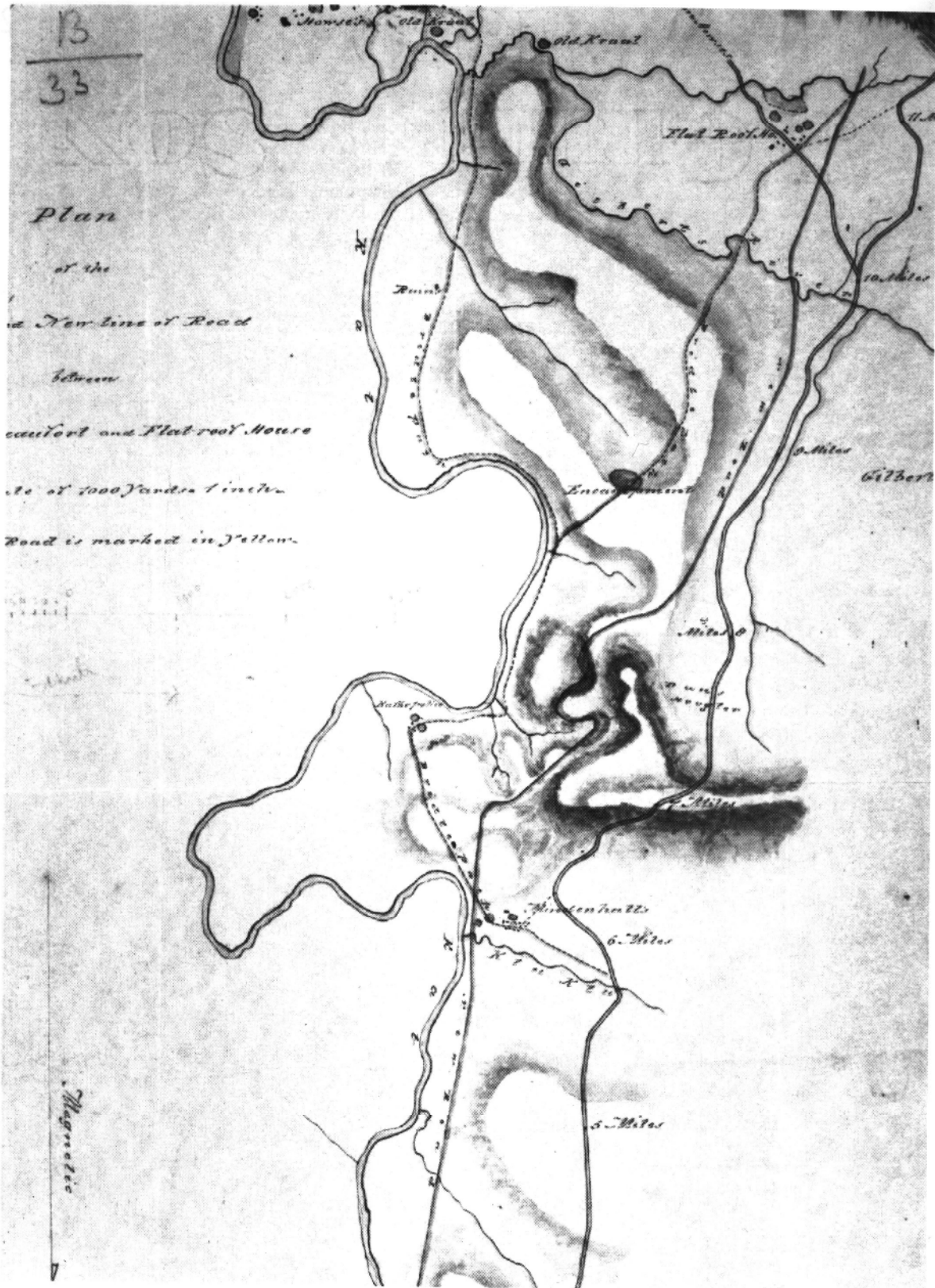
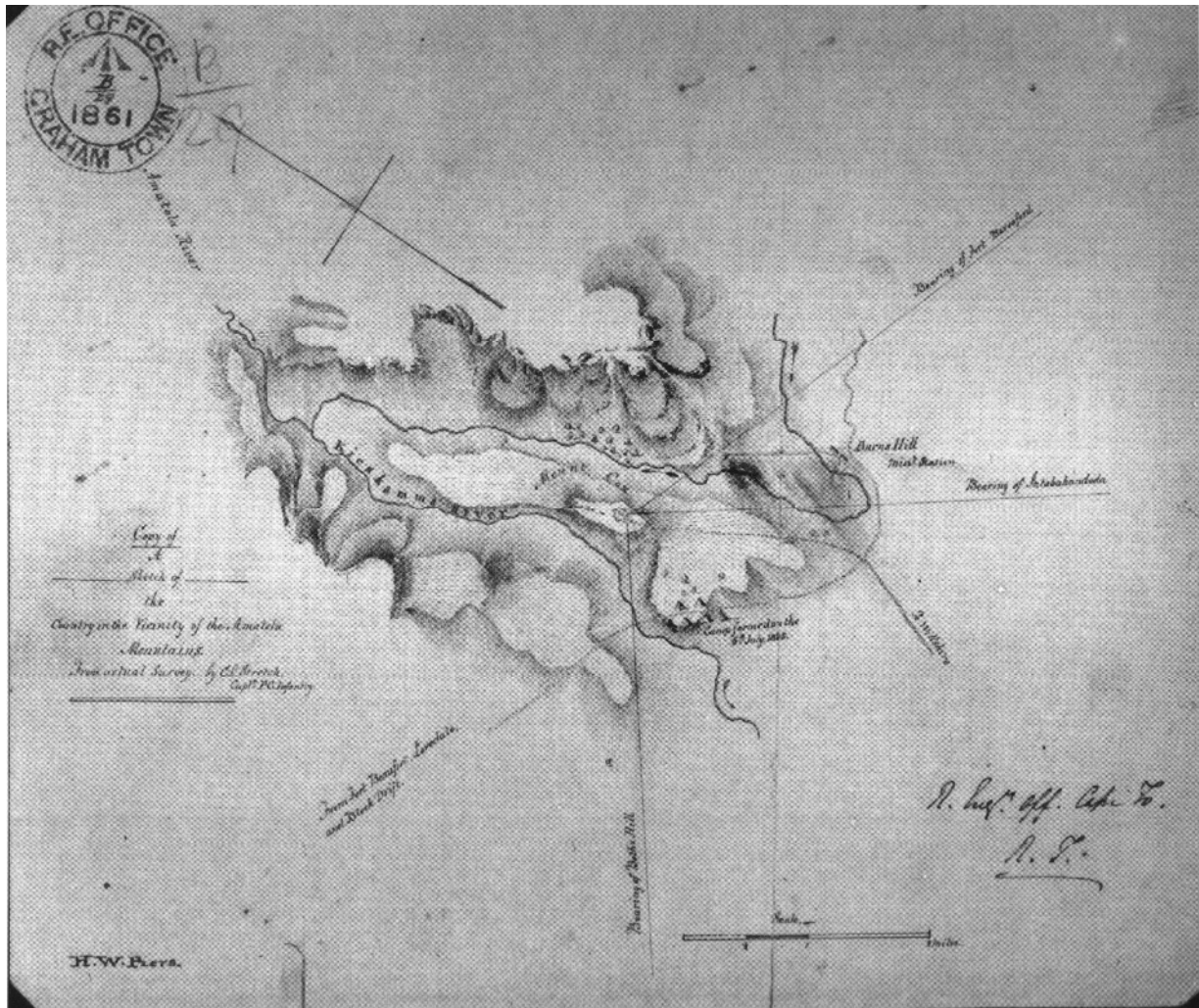


Figure 76: c1844 Vicinity of Fort Beaufort, plan of the old and new line of road between Fort Beaufort and flat-roof house (Garson,1992:35)

Figure 77: 1835 Amatola Mountains, Vicinity of Fort Cox. Copy of a sketch of the country in the vicinity of Fort Cox from an actual survey by C.L.Stretch. Capt P.C.Infantry, signed by H.W.Piers (Garson,1992:21)



9.3.6 THE SEVENTH FRONTIER WAR 1846 – 1847

The initial disasters of the war which commenced in March, 1847 were severe. Elands Post was abandoned. A strong punitive force under Colonel Somerset which had pushed across the border of the colony to Burn's Hill near Fort Cox, had to retreat to Block Drift but at the Keiskamma River crossing another heavy attack resulted in the loss of half of the 125 oxwagons carrying military stores. Fort Peddie was overwhelmed. In Lower Albany, Cuylerville, Bathurst and the fortified farmhouses were besieged. Refugees flocked to Grahamstown where the streets were barricaded.

Eventually Fort Peddie was relieved via Committees Drift and Trompetter's Drift and the Battle of the Gwanga ended in a resounding victory for the colonial forces.

A temporary earthen fort was built by seamen of H.M.S. President on the west bank at the mouth of the Fish River as a base for troops crossing into the war zone. It was named after Admiral Dacres. Reinforcements also came by sea from Cape Town and some were landed at Waterloo Bay immediately east of the river mouth. The campaign was pushed eastwards and an advance base was set up at old Fort Warden for the final push across the Kei River.

The new Governor, Sir Harry Smith arrived in December 1847. On landing he issued two proclamations: the first extended the boundary of the colony to the Keiskamma River thus re-incorporating the old Ceded Territory. The chief town was to be Alice and Fort Hare was built to protect it.

By the second proclamation the territory between the Keiskamma and Kei Rivers became British Kaffraria (sic), this was virtually the former Province of Queen Adelaide. Re-occupation of Sir Benjamin Durban's old forts started immediately. Fort Hill was in ruins but King William's Town was re-built as headquarters for the troops in British Kaffraria (sic). Colonel Evelyn wrote of the Rifle Brigade "They built a town, they built a barracks, they built houses for their officers, some of 'wattle and daub', some of bricks, and roofed with various materials. They also made an aqueduct some 3 or 4 miles long to supply the camp with water and for irrigation. When we left they had more than half built permanent barracks of stone..." (Garson, 1992:79)

Fort Glamorgan was established on the west bank at the mouth of the Buffalo River and on January 14, 1848 Sir Harry Smith named the new port East London (Kirby, 1960; Gledhill, 2008; Garson, 1992).

9.3.7 THE EIGHTH FRONTIER WAR 1850 – 1853

The defection of the Khoikhoi began in the Kat River Valley and spread to Theopolis and Whittlesea. Hermanus, the Kat River leader, was killed early in January, 1851 when leading an assault on Fort Beaufort. William Uithaalter, a Cape Corps² pensioner assumed command and with augmented forces led an attack on Fort Armstrong. The colonialists managed to escape and the fort became Uithaalter's stronghold and storehouse for plunder. In February a force assembled at Post Retief consisting of 200 English, 400 *Burghers*, 200 Fingoes and volunteers from Grahamstown under

² **The Cape Corps** started as the first mixed race unit the *Corps Bastaard Hottentoten* (Dutch for "Corps of Bastard Hottentots"), which was organized in 1781 by the Dutch colonial administration of the time. Based in Cape Town and drawing its members from men of mixed Hottentot and White ancestry, this unit had about 400 members. However, the unit was disbanded in 1782.

In 1793 this unit was re-formed in Cape Town as the *Corps van Pandoeren* (Pandour Corps), only to be disbanded again in 1795.

The unit was re-formed again under the British colonial administration in May 1796, this time under the name *Hottentot Corps*. It was headquartered in Wynberg and consisted of about 300 men. In 1798 the headquarters were moved to Hout Bay.

On 25 June 1801 the *Cape Regiment* was formed. It was organized as a British imperial regiment of ten companies and retained all the personnel of the *Hottentot Corps*.

With the Dutch taking over colonial administration of the Cape once again, the *Corps Vrye Hottentotten* ("Corps of Free Hottentots") was formed on 21 February 1803. It was later re-named the *Hottentot Ligte Infanterie* ("Hottentot Light Infantry").

When the British returned to the Cape, they formed *The Cape Regiment* in October 1806. Headquartered in Cape Town, it was organized as a typical colonial unit with British officers and Coloured (sic) other ranks. In later years, the Regiment also had a troop of light cavalry added.

On 24 September 1817 the Regiment was reduced in size (a previous order to completely disband having either been ignored or rescinded) to two small units of about 200 men for the defence of the Cape Colony's eastern frontier. The two units were named the *Cape Cavalry* (consisting of one troop of dragoons) and the *Cape Light Infantry*.

In 1820 these two units were again combined under a unified command and renamed the Cape Corps. (Wikipedia)

Commandant Currie. They proceeded to Fort Armstrong where they met with stubborn resistance. Reinforcements arrived under Colonel Somerset from Fort Hare when other rebels had been successfully repulsed. The attack was pressed home with two howitzers, the walls were breached and 400 women and children were taken into custody.

Sir George Cathcart took office as Governor in March 1852 and by August a large force had been assembled for a concerted drive across the Kei. Sandile fled and Kreli, chief of the Ngqika sued for peace which was proclaimed in March 1853. In response Cathcart introduced his blockhouse policy to police the frontier which called for the erection of eight towers in the area between the Keiskamma and the Kei. Only one of these was ever built, this was 'Castle Eyre', called after Colonel Eyre of the 75th Regiment, and erected on the outskirts of Keiskammahoek. The tower of two storeys was fifteen square foot, with a flat roof which provided emplacement for a swivel gun (Kirby, 1960; Gledhill, 2008; Garson, 1992). (figures 60 and 61)

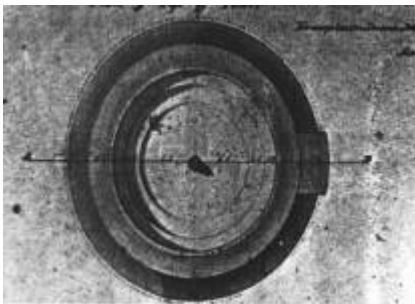


Figure 78: Martello Tower, Keiskammahoek
Emplacement for rotating canon at top of tower
(Gledhill, 2008).



Figure 79: Sectional view showing basement-
magazine, left and store room, right: barrack floor
with entry port; Gun emplacement on top
(Gledhill, 2008).

9.3 CONTEMPORARY MILITARY ARCHITECTURE

The analysis of the Eastern Cape defences above begs the question “how did the approach adopted in the Eastern Cape compare with standard British military defence of the time?” This section aims to give a broad overview of the contemporary military architecture and defence. Obviously defensive structures are as old as human settlement

itself and this study does not seek to analyse all defensive structures nor to study fortified towns in any great detail, this section seeks merely to highlight the trend in military architecture and defence around the time of the settlement of the Eastern Cape of South Africa by way of comparison.

The Peninsular War³ found Britain sadly short of sappers and miners (the non-commissioned soldiers who served under the Royal Engineer Officers), and those they had were used wastefully. The British began to pay attention to military architecture and planning. And so emerged the 'Science of Fortifications', one of the first in a long line of works on the subject was C.W.Pasley's Course of Elementary Fortifications aimed at the training of the professional engineer. In the book he describes the geometrical methods involved in the setting out of fortresses, leaning heavily on the practice of Vauban. His book is the first fully comprehensive English work (Hughes,1974:156). Lt Henry Yule (1820-89) of the Bengal Engineers, later to be knighted and best known for his glossary of Anglo-Indian words, produced in 1851 his Fortifications for Officers of the Army and Students of Military History, meanwhile in 1849 James Fergusson had published An Essay on a Proposed New System of Fortifications. Fergusson was an architect and his book contains a summary of the ideas and recommendations of many of his contemporary European Engineers (Hughes,1974:159). The most thorough, competent and all-embracing early book on fortifications in the English language was written by Captain A. F. Lendy A Treatise on Fortifications or Lectures delivered to Officers reading for the Staff published in 1862. These works showed that by the mid-century the British were not only conversant with contemporary developments but were beginning to put forward new ideas especially in the field of coastal defence. But why the sudden flurry of publications and the interest in military architecture?

The years following the downfall of Napoleon saw the restoration of authority and former kingdoms and an attempt to reassert old orders. Napoleon had however, fundamentally changed warfare by introducing conscription, which had enabled him to raise a standing

³ The Peninsular War was a contest between France and the allied powers of Spain, the United Kingdom, and Portugal for control of the Iberian Peninsula during the Napoleonic Wars. The war began when French armies invaded Portugal in 1807 and Spain in 1808 and lasted until the Sixth Coalition defeated Napoleon in 1814. – As previously stated British troops, occupying the Cape during the Napoleonic Wars, appeared on the Cape Eastern Frontier in 1811.

army of 732 000 in 1796. This had an impact on defence. Prior to this war had been limited by funds and the seasons as the army was only available when the population were not required in the planting or harvesting of crops. When armies were seasonal, defensive structures made sense as you could withdraw into a strong hold and wait out a siege; huge standing armies however, would mow down opposition and fortresses would become no more than knots holding together a strategic web. Fortresses were now no longer fortified towns aimed at protecting the town's population for extended periods, they became secure depots for the vast arsenal and stores required by a modern army and their function was as a tactical point of connection to secure the flank of an army in the field (Hughes: 1974, 160). The response was to add a ring of outer forts to towns designed to prevent a *coup de main*⁴. The next main invention was that of swivel guns; in 1830 Prince Maximilian fortified Linz with 32 round towers. Each tower was sunk into the ground and surrounded by a narrow ditch, in the centre was a three floor structure with only the top floor protruding above the ditch. The roof of the tower housed 11 guns mounted on newly modelled carriages so that they could be easily swung round on the inner circle of the tower (Hughes,1974).

British inventions around this time focused on coastal defence. Coastal defence had often been a problem for the British. King Edward's castles in Wales were serviced from the sea, defences were designed to counter French naval raids up the river Thames and King Henry VIII's forts lined the foreshores of southern England, and the fort at Tilbury was built to pre-empt a repeat of the 1667 raid by the Dutch. One would think that a powerful naval nation would have least need of coastal defences, but no fleet was large enough to be everywhere at once. Before the middle of the nineteenth century the disposition of the fleet was largely determined by the direction of the winds and, although steam power gave it greater manoeuvrability, the advantage was largely offset by the need to patrol ever-increasing areas of the world's oceans to protect the outposts of the British Empire (Hughes,1974).

Up to the time of the Spanish Armada the use of hand to hand combat had predominated and ships were designed primarily as mobile infantry platforms, but from about 1588 the gun became the main naval weapon. The one great advantage that ships had over shore

⁴ *coup de main*: a sudden, fierce, and successful surprise attack against an enemy

defences was that they could swing round and bring a heavy broadside to bear and then make haste to move out of range of retaliation. The number and size of guns was gradually increased so that a ship of the line in the time of Nelson was capable of delivering a broadside of 50 – 60 guns. However, ships suffered from three disadvantages: they were at the mercy of the weather, their rolling decks made accurate gun fire difficult and the ships themselves were combustible. On the other hand coastal defence batteries fired from a stable platform, could be given bombproof protection, and their faces could be constructed of durable materials such as brick and stone and later iron. Gradually more and more guns were introduced until the advantages were slowly eroded by the introduction of shell-firing guns (adopted by the British navy in 1837). Tactics had to change with the introduction of steamships and also metal hulled ships. Coastal defences had to be moved inland out of range of the exploding shell ammunition and coast lines defended with underwater obstacles (Hughes, 1974).

During the Napoleonic wars coastal defence theory was in its infancy, the navies being dominated at that time by the large timber-hulled ships of the line. In 1783 two British frigates bombarded a tower on the coast of Corsica and failed to make any impact. The navy was so impressed that on naval advice the British Government commissioned the construction of similar 'Martello towers' along the coast of Britain and the Channel Islands. The location of the Martello towers was decided upon after General Twiss's review of the defences of the south-east coast in 1803 (Hughes, 1974). As indicated previously in this study a Martello tower was built on the Cape Eastern Frontier circa 1853; although it had a very different purpose at that time being an inland defence position designed to form a platform for a swivel gun (Hughes, 1974).

The next major advance in coastal warfare was the introduction of iron-plated vessels.

In 1794 the Americans, with their extended coastline and innumerable coastal cities, started to look to their defence. Early American forts were traditional, consisting of open works and earth parapets. Some had scraps riveted with timber and others had stone. In 1807, on the threat of another war with Britain they started to construct multi-gun forts of masonry with guns housed in well-ventilated casements. In 1821 the Bernard Board recommended an integrated national defence system for the harbours of the United States. Eighteen first class works and thirty-two smaller ones were planned. In 1850 the

stone walls of these forts were reinforced with iron. Iron was soon to become one of the major materials in defensive works.

The American Civil War of 1861-65 saw the large scale introduction of modern artillery. Muzzle velocity and accuracy were both increased by the introduction of rifling and by the explosive power of shells which had begun to replace solid shot – this spelt the end of masonry forts.

The war also illustrated that the fort alone was powerless at preventing a large fleet from penetrating any channel unless they had underwater obstacles. The torpedo and mine were introduced as well as the historic obstacles such as sunken vessels, rocks, piles, booms and chains. At this stage iron clad fleets started to win out against larger wooden-hulled fleets.

Over time defensive structures started to be provided with fewer guns. The Suez Canal (1869) for example, had forts with no more than four or five guns. Gradually there was also a separation of gun positions and observation posts, made possible by the introduction of field telephones. Colonel Watkin invented a position finder so that guns could be fired by electricity from a distant position finder station. Once soldiers could retreat a safe distance and observe and fire remotely; gun housings no longer needed to be as heavily fortified and forts gave way to isolated lines of guns often only protected by barbed wire and mine fields.

Gradually the gun and defensive factor began to assume greater importance than the bricks and mortar of the fortifications which housed it. The casemate was abandoned, as two major factors emerged. Firstly, the growing popularity of open gun positions, helped by the introduction of smokeless gun powder in 1884. Previous to smokeless gun powder large puffs of smoke had revealed the exact positions of guns – hence the need to defend them. Secondly on the other extreme lay the development of the armoured cupola⁵ with the gun and its mechanisms sunk deep into the earth. With the advent of protected guns which could be fired without tell-tail smoke trails from distant finder stations, long lines of

⁵ Cupola: military - a domed structure protecting a gun, e.g. on a warship; in military railways - a glass observation dome on the roof of an armoured vehicle or railway van

dispersed guns evolved. At first the disappearing guns, were popular, the barrel sometimes sliding below an overhead metal shield providing some protection for the gunners, but with the advent of effective breech loading guns (Britain introduced them in 1882) it was possible to use high-angle rifled ordnance. The guns placed behind the continuous parapet of the cliff were completely obscured from any attacking ships. Not only did guns develop greater accuracy after 1855 but gradually their range improved. In early forts the need had been to provide sufficient interior space for a comparatively large garrison to man inefficient cannon. With the introduction of quick-firing guns and pre-prepared shell and cartridge ammunition the garrison could be drastically reduced and hence also the size of any structure. With the introduction of the magazine rifle, forts could be more easily defended and in any case there was less likelihood of their being attacked by landing parties because warships in the late nineteenth century before the introduction of assault craft, had little space spare for landing parties.

In America the Endicott Board, formed in 1885, shifted the emphasis from the structure of the fort to the weapons contained within it. Forts became simple low-lying structures in reinforced concrete blending with the countryside. Earlier the guns of a fort had cost anything between a sixth and a tenth of the total cost, now they began to assume three-quarters of the overall cost. Their numbers were also reduced.

In 1887 Colonel Voorduin of the Dutch Corps of Engineers produced a simple fort consisting of a low mass of concrete from which projected iron cupolas housing twin guns. The design allowed the guns to fire across the intervening space between forts.

Over the colonial period in question it can be seen that forts and defensive structures gradually gave way to guns, ammunition, surveillance and communication. The need swung from physical defence to strategic defence.

9.5 CONCLUSIONS

A study of strategic defence strategies of the era is informative as the approach adopted in the Eastern Cape, was not only in line with British policy at the time but was also very *avant-garde*, illustrating the flow of information between Britain and its colonies. In short

the British military not only theorised about defence they regularly tested it in the field and the two way flow of information lead to a pragmatic re-evaluation and refining of strategies. British colonisation illustrates the incredible flowering of the sciences and the flow of information throughout the Empire, much of the British dominance can be ascribed to intellectual dominance and the maintenance of their intellectual advantage.

It is also important to note that the British were keen to try new ideas and ready to abandon those which did not work, such as the Lewis Line signals. The approach was pragmatic and theory was regularly tested by practice. It is interesting that even though they were defending the frontier against an enemy armed with assegais and sticks the British did not revert to fortified towns, instead they created defensible lines of signal towers and forts as observation posts, an early warning system and a visual deterrent. One reason for this was that they were trying to defend a vast marginal farming frontier rather than towns serviced by smaller more fertile intensive agricultural areas such as in Europe.

The Eastern Cape frontier illustrates most clearly the British colonial policy of exerting control over an area by means of settlements. All of the settlements in the Eastern Cape have a very strong military component and were very often surveyed and largely constructed by military people – most notably the Royal Engineers. The British tried to subdue the turbulent frontier by settling British immigrants in the area, by establishing towns and when that failed by creating military defence lines by means of a series of forts, military garrisons and signal towers. At this stage the British policy was not to wage war and exterminate the threat but to slowly encroach into tribal areas and cement these gains by settling the area and creating towns and infrastructure in order to manage and maintain the area. Far from wanting to exterminate the Xhosa the British were intent on forcing them into a servile state to provide a labour force for the colony. Military personnel were not only used to create this infrastructure and to layout the towns but in the case of Grahamstown and King William's Town were also the main occupants of the towns.