

## **Chapter 6: CASE STUDY – DONKIN RESERVE**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 6 analyses the current situation of the Donkin Reserve as space and place. The analysis sets out to determine whether an integrated application of the guidelines established in the previous chapter would improve the spatial articulation and quality and improve the space to become a meaningful place that encourages people to gather. The aim of this analysis is to make recommendations for creating a sense of place.

This case study includes the contextual, historical and use investigations to provide an understanding of the Donkin Reserve in general. This is conducted to assure that appropriate recommendations regarding the static physical production of space and place are made. The space is investigated graphically to determine the spatial definition and qualities according to the criteria in Chapter 5 and includes the elements for spatial definition: point, line, plane and volume; as well as the variables to modulate place: shape and size, scale and proportion, colour, texture, finish material, light and shade, and views and vistas.

A short overview of the history of the Donkin Reserve provides background knowledge. This understanding is combined with an observational analysis in the form of a descriptive survey, conducted over time to grasp the context and content. The use of interviews and questionnaires allowed for additional data from the perspective of the user. The use of charrettes for the investigation was unnecessary, as adequate data for the purpose of the study was obtained with the use of the descriptive survey method.

### **6.2 Historical overview of the public open spaces in Central Hill**

An investigation into the historical development and growth of Central Hill, in particular the Donkin Reserve, is important for understanding the transformations that appear over time. The social, spatial and historical aspects are all integral to the creation of place.

### 6.2.1 Historical analysis

Sir Rufane Donkin (1773-1841), acting Governor of the Cape from 1819-1821, identified the hill above Port Elizabeth as the site for a memorial in honour of his wife, Elizabeth who died in India in 1818. Today the grounds are known as the Donkin Reserve. Sir Rufane Donkin selected the setting for the pyramid monument due to the elevated and remote nature of the site above the city; the inscription on the monument indicates: "...the town below..." (O'Brien, Curtis & Harradine 1998:25). The map dated 1849 documents the majority of the city development below the Donkin Reserve, the area between the ocean and the ridge. A view of Port Elizabeth by J.F. Cornfield (1823) supports this visually. Observations of old photographs indicate that the current pathways were determined in the 1880s already. It was never officially proclaimed, but it was noted on a diagram of the site that it could never be built upon or be intruded and was set aside as a public open space in the early 1800s. The land has been zoned as passive public open space, as park type (Mercer 2004). Since then, the Donkin Reserve has been used for sports, for recreation, and as a parade ground (O'Brien et al 1998:25).

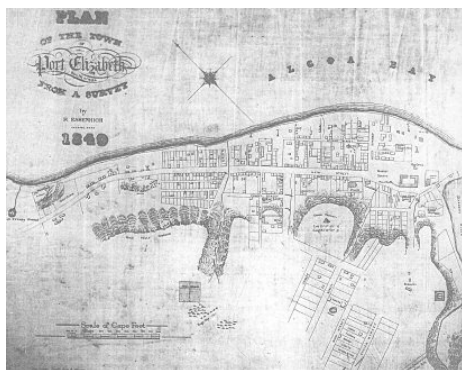


Fig 6-1: 1849 Map of Port Elizabeth  
(Harradine 2002:36)

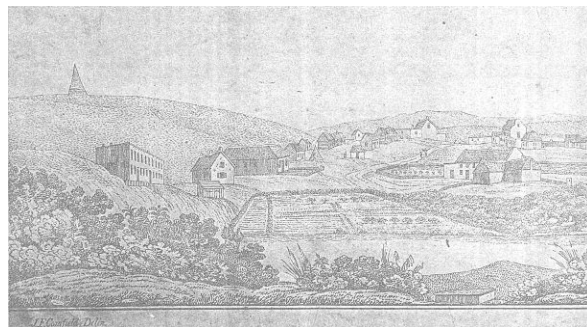
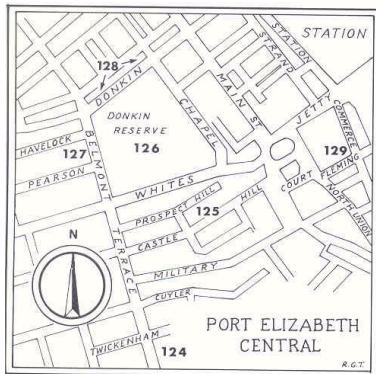


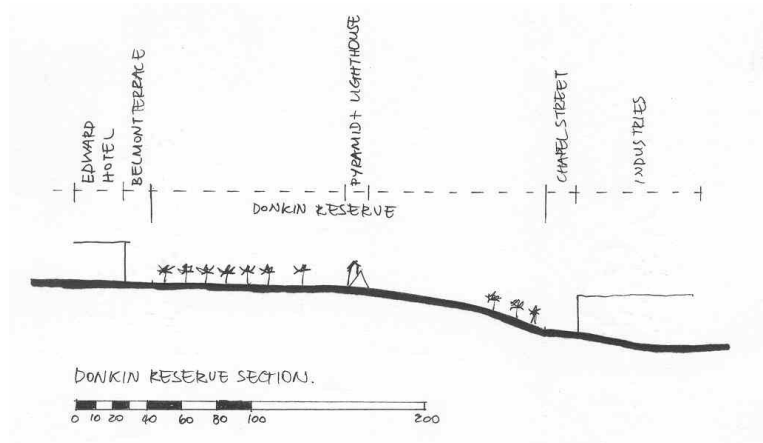
Fig 6-2: View by J.F. Cornfield (1823)  
(Harradine 2002:20)

The Donkin Reserve has been shaped through the adjoining roads that form the boundaries of the park, Donkin Street to the north, Chapel Street to the east, Whites Road to the south and Belmont Terrace to the west. The Reserve has a panoramic view over the sea and the city that has been preserved with height restrictions to the buildings of the city below (O'Brien et al 1998:25). This public park is dedicated to the Light

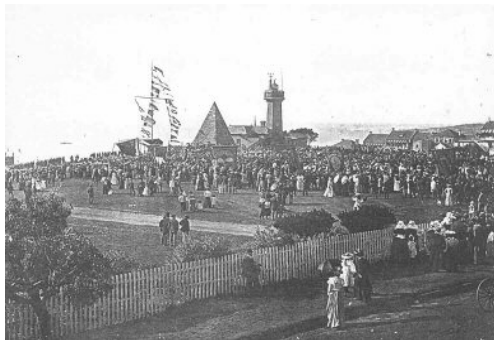
House that was built in 1861; today it serves as a beacon for passing ships. The natural routes across the site still remain as existing operational routes. The palm trees that flank sections of the paths were planted early in the 1960s and today stand tall in defining the upper pathways.



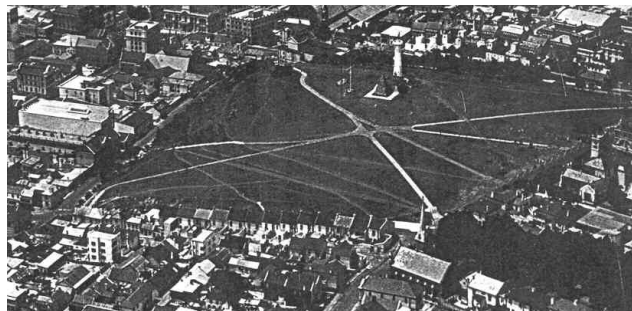
**Fig 6-3: Donkin Reserve location (no. 126)**  
(Oberholzer 1972:132)



**Fig 6-4: Donkin Reserve section**  
(Grobler 2005)



**Fig: 6-5: Donkin Reserve view 1897**  
(Port Elizabeth Main Library [s.a.])



**Fig 6-6: Donkin Reserve aerial view 1940s**  
(Port Elizabeth Main Library [s.a.])



**Fig 6-7: Donkin Reserve view 1965**  
(Port Elizabeth Main Library [s.a.])